

History and leadership: How a head monk uses historical narratives to facilitate change in a Buddhist temple

Hee-Chan Song

Assistant professor

Sasin Graduate Institute of Business Administration
Chulalongkorn University

Sasa Pathasala, 254 จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย ถนน Wang Mai,
Pathum Wan District, Bangkok 10330, Thailand

Email: heechan.song@sasin.edu

Citation

Song, H.-C. (2025). History and leadership: How a head monk uses historical narratives to facilitate change in a Buddhist temple. *Journal of Applied Psychology*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0001281>

Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful to Tima Bansal for her feedback on earlier drafts of this manuscript and ongoing support of this study. I would also like to acknowledge the following people for their helpful advice in the development of this manuscript: Joep Cornelissen, Diego Maganhotto Coraiola, Evan J. Douglas, William (Bill) Foster, Roy Suddaby, Eero Vaara, and the members of the qualitative research communities of the Ivey Business School (Western), the Rotman School of Management (Toronto) and the Schulich School of Business (York).

History and leadership: How a head monk uses historical narratives to facilitate change in a Buddhist temple

Abstract

Leadership and historical narrative studies suggest that leaders strategically use history as a source of narratives to facilitate change. Yet the dynamic micro-process of how leaders craft and recraft their historical narratives to shift the organizational members' understanding of current reality and thereby facilitate change remains unexplored. Using the case of a Korean Buddhist temple that confronts significant societal change and financial shortage, this study investigates how the head monk—the leader of the temple—strategically creates and modifies historical narratives to achieve change and how the organizational members respond to the leader's narratives. To deeply immerse myself in the context, I engaged in four months of ethnographic fieldwork in a Korean Buddhist temple where the tension between tradition and change was most salient. The findings show that some narratives effectively reshaped the members' understanding of the need for change while others unexpectedly failed. By theorizing this sensegiving and sensemaking process, this study reveals that crafting effective historical narratives is a messy process, which manifests as an evolving trial-and-error process of leaders' sensegiving and members' sensemaking.

Keywords: Leadership, Change, Historical narratives, Sensegiving and sensemaking, Buddhist temple, Qualitative method

Organizational changes often surface an implicit tension between the past and the future that turns history into an arena of action in the present (Gioia, Corley, & Fabbri, 2002; Suddaby & Foster, 2017). Scholars have captured this tension and examined how leaders develop change narratives to reframe the past and disseminate new meanings to ongoing changes (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Oreg & Berson, 2019). In this stream of research, history is conceptualized as “essentially a *narrative* of the past” (Suddaby & Forest, 2017, p. 31, *italic added*) that highlights “the strategic use of the past as a persuasive strategy to manage key stakeholders of the firm” (Suddaby, Foster, & Trank, 2010, p. 157). An underlying rationale is that changes can be facilitated by leaders’ selective interpretation of the past (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Bartunek, 1984; Bartunek, Krim, Necochea, & Humphries, 1999) and by using their rhetorical skills to impart convincing narratives aimed at reducing members’ resistance to change (Boje, 2014; Oreg, Vakola, & Armenakis, 2011; Vakola, Armenakis, & Oreg, 2013). It concerns the usability of history for present purposes, characterizing history as a managerial resource for storytelling that facilitates change (see Ge, De Massis, & Kotlar, 2022; Suddaby, Foster, & Quinn-Trank, 2010; Wadhwani, Suddaby, Mordhorst, & Popp, 2018). This idea has been investigated in multiple contexts such as beer brewing (Hatch & Schultz, 2017), fast food (Foster, Suddaby, Minkus, & Wiebe, 2011), consumer goods (Maclean, Harvey, Sillince, & Golant, 2018), financial services (Basque & Langley, 2018), hospitality industry (Illia & Zamparini, 2016), and traditional family businesses (Sasaki, Kotlar, Ravasi, & Vaara, 2020).

While these studies provide a compelling insight that history can be indeed strategically used for the present purposes, a dynamic micro-process by which leaders deploy *multiple* rhetorical histories, undergo trial-and-error, and recraft them has been less explored. This gap is partly because organizational leaders are depicted as masters of history in complete control of the

interpretation and storytelling of the past. However, discovering appropriate historical stories, developing them as a coherent narrative, and speaking to the right audience is an intricate task because history *in* narratives can be conveyed, perceived, and interpreted in many unexpected ways. Addressing this concern is important not simply because there is little prior research, but because it can extend our understanding of the realistic trial-and-error process that leaders may go through to select ideal historical narratives and deploy them effectively. Thus, this study asks the following question. *How do leaders revise and reconstruct historical narratives to persuade organizational members who are resistant to change?*

Answering this question requires simultaneous examination of organizational members' sensemaking (i.e., the members' meaning-construction process to interpret and grasp the ongoing changes) as well as a leader's sensegiving (i.e., the leaders' role to influence the meaning-construction of the members toward the intended changes), ideally in a real-time change process (e.g., Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Sonenshein, 2010). Using the context of a religious organization undergoing substantial real-time changes, I focus on the leadership of a head monk (Master Monk T, hereafter) and his efforts to implement a new strategy in a Korean Buddhist Temple (B-Temple, hereafter). The field data show a dynamic, iterative, and trial-and-error process where Master Monk T engaged in constructing and disseminating his historical narratives. In-depth interviews with B-Temple monks revealed their sensemaking modes and cognitive mechanisms that indicated whether the monks resonated with the leader's narratives and why they finally accepted the changes.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Leadership and organizational changes

Scholars taking the interpretive view of change define organizational change as an outcome of managerial narratives (Balogun, Bartunek, & Do, 2015; Corley & Gioia, 2004; Ybema, 2014). In this view, whether a sense of continuity or rupture with the past is created through leaders' rhetoric is considered more important than substantive changes in organizational practices, programs, and identities (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Sonenshein, 2010). The interpretive view rejects the context-free view of the past, suggesting that the past entails various sociocultural materials, artifacts, and stories (Decker, Hassard, & Rowlinson, 2021; Rowlinson, Hassard, & Decker, 2014; Wadhvani, Suddaby, Mordhorst, & Popp, 2018). Accordingly, the past is understood as a malleable entity that the present actors can strategically discover, interpret, and incorporate into their managerial narratives.

Meanwhile, the leadership literature highlights that successful organizational change can be attained when leaders overcome members' cognitive resistance (Furst, & Cable, 2008; Oreg & Berson, 2011), emotional anxiety (Bartunek, Rousseau, Rudolph, & DePalma, 2006; Huy, 1999, 2002), and even fear (Schein, 2010). The process is fundamentally a rhetorical process that the leaders strategically employ to invoke a cognitive shift in interpreting the current organizational vision, identity, and strategy (Foldy, Goldman, & Ospina, 2008; Sonenshein, 2010). This stream of research has documented that a change process inevitably involves reconstituting the present reality, and that communication between the leaders and members is a means through which to coordinate and construct the organization's core missions, rather than merely a linguistic expression to describe pre-existing realities (Carton, Murphy, & Clark, 2014; Carton, 2018).

In this regard, it is unsurprising that change and leadership studies together have conceptualized leaders' narratives as *sensegiving* and *sensemaking tools* used to construct new meaning systems (Fenton & Langley, 2011; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Maitlis & Lawrence,

2007). Vaara, Sonenshein, and Boje (2016, p. 496) define organizational narratives “as temporal, discursive constructions that provide a means for individual, social, and organizational sensemaking and sensegiving.” Sonenshein (2010, p. 480) views change narratives as “a discursive construction that actors use as a tool to shape their understanding (sensemaking), as a tool to influence others’ understandings (sensegiving), and as an outcome of the collective construction of meaning.” Likewise, the leaders’ narratives are assumed to serve as disseminators to members of a new understanding of changes and thereby facilitate changes (see also Gioia & Thomas, 1996).

Studies extend the abovementioned thesis by digging deeper into the rhetorical styles and strategies of the narratives. For example, Logemann, Piekkari, and Cornelissen (2018) revealed how “forms of language” embedded in leaders’ narratives effectively guide members’ sensemaking during a change process. Carton et al. (2014) documented that a combination of a large number of vision statements and a limited number of abstract values can most effectively arouse a shared sense of organizational goals. In a similar vein, Carton and Lucas (2018) showed that leaders’ obsession with overwhelming word selection instead deactivated image-based rhetoric, as it failed to communicate vivid mental images of the future. Other scholars have shown that the effectiveness of the leader’s narrative is attributed to a specific element of the rhetoric that leaders skillfully develop and perform in their communication (e.g., Cornelissen, Mantere, & Varra, 2014; Ocasio, Laamanen, & Vaara, 2018).

My essential theoretical concern here is about what is unique to the *historical* narratives, given that prior studies have already uncovered the distinct characteristics of leaders’ narratives and the members’ reactions. In other words, one may ask whether the past stories, legends, and myths can indeed serve as an *effective* storytelling source of change narratives. Answering this

question requires a much deeper theoretical investigation of what the *history* of historical narratives is and how the historical sensemaking process actually works. This leads us to a sociological discussion on history.

Leadership and historical narratives

In unpacking the sensemaking process triggered by leaders' historical narratives, sociologists have long advanced a compelling perspective that history is *a set of collective memories* symbolically shared and recalled among community members (Olick, 1999; Olick & Robbins, 1998). They have captured that strong collective memory evokes community members' nostalgic sensemaking of "who we were" and "what we did" (Zerubavel, 2003). Such remembering is believed to shape the members' present identities and role boundaries (Ocasio, Mauskapf, & Steele, 2016; Ravasi, Rindova, & Stigliani, 2019), and is understood as a collective and socially constructed practice that keeps the distant past relevant (Basque & Langley, 2018; Cunliffe, Luhman, & Boje, 2004). Zerubavel (2003, p. 13) elaborated that,

One of the most remarkable features of human memory is our ability to mentally transform essentially unstructured series of events into seemingly coherent *historical narratives*. We normally view past events as episodes in a story, and it is basically such *stories* that make these events historically meaningful (italic original).

Building on this idea, organizational scholars have begun to identify the strategic use of historical narratives that aim to reshape the present reality. The leaders' role has been particularly important. They are depicted as change agents who proactively discover and reinterpret factual historical records and convert them to "a material form of memory" (Ravasi et al., 2019, p. 3). Scholars suggest that the memories are utilized as a symbolic reservoir to craft narratives (Hatch & Schultz, 2017; Sasaki et al., 2020) and put new meanings on existing identity labels around the present social reality (Lyle, Walsh, & Coraiola, 2022). Thus, leaders' historical narratives serve the bridging role of connecting the past to the present by triggering the collective remembering

of organizational memory. The role of organizational leaders is two-fold here. First, they search for appropriate past artifacts, materials, and stories to develop effective historical narratives (sensemaking), and second, they then strategically utilize the narratives to reconstruct the latent collective memory and deliver them to organizational members (sensegiving).

Unfortunately, despite such rich references to the role of leaders and the extant sensemaking and change literature, prior studies have paid little attention to potentially more detailed, iterative, and trial-and-error processes that leaders may go through to craft and recraft historical narratives in response to members' reactions (see also Oreg & Berson, 2019 for this point). For example, Clark (1972) coined the term "organizational saga" to explain how top managers rhetorically build new managerial values in a change process; Sasaki et al. (2020) documented how Japanese family firms deployed discursive strategies to maintain a sense of continuity with founders' corporate mottos while promoting changes to the organization; and other scholars observed that firms strategically invested in corporate museums to house tangible symbols of corporate history that are translated to core stakeholders (Nissley & Casey, 2002). While these studies reveal that leaders proactively employ organizational history to implement their decisions, what specific sensegiving mechanisms they activate in redirecting the audiences' sensemaking, what strategic purposes they seek, and what latent dynamic micro-process is involved in the process remain largely unexplored.

Three inductive studies focusing on members' detailed sensemaking modes of history, among others, may be directly relevant to my inquiry. First, using the case of a Canadian cooperative financial institution founded in 1900, Basque and Langley (2018) showed five sensemaking modes of how organizational members use the stories of founder figures to reconstruct the present organizational identity. Second, Hatch and Schultz (2017) theorized a

historicizing process to explain how members of the Carlsberg Group used existing organizational stories about a historical artifact *Semper Ardens* i.e., “always burning” in English, carved above the corporate doorway to create the present identity statement. Third, Ravasi et al. (2019) demonstrated a cross-temporal sensemaking process through which organizational members engage with historical stories and artifacts displayed in four corporate museums. These studies certainly shed light on the detailed micro-sensemaking process of organizational history. However, what the studies theorize is members’ direct engagement with history, not mediated through leaders’ narratives. Further, the studies did not proceed to investigate which particular sensemaking processes or modes were effective in shifting members’ understandings of the present reality. In sum, we know the importance of leaders’ dual roles—historical sensemaking and sensegiving—in facilitating changes, yet the more nuanced and dynamic micro-process the leaders go through has not yet been adequately addressed.

Suddaby, Israelsen, Mitchell, and Lim’s (2023) recent work offers a useful conceptual framework that can illuminate what the dynamic micro-process might be. Those authors theorized a set of storytelling devices entrepreneurs can develop to gain the support of divergent stakeholders. A central thesis of their study is that entrepreneurs’ storytelling strategies should be based on coherent and collectively shared narratives of the past to effectively construct the present and paint a vision of the future. The study proposed four historical tropes i.e., nostalgia, postalgia, dystopia, and dystoria, “which structure the temporality and *emotion* of historical rhetoric” (p 224, *italic added*). The proposed function of historical tropes is to create *temporal-emotional bonds* that trigger audiences’ distinct emotional resonance with the past, present, and future. Well-crafted historical tropes can be even combined into meta-narratives to appeal to broader stakeholders with heterogeneous temporal orientations (Suddaby et al., 2023). Here, the

obvious challenges for entrepreneurs involve searching for and interpreting crucial collective memories of a community and strategically conveying them. Even though this thesis is focused on entrepreneur and stakeholder relations, it can be applied to leader and member relations, given that the challenges for organizational leaders in a change process are similar to entrepreneurs seeking to convince divergent stakeholders to provide support.

A remaining question is then how such nuanced storytelling devices are manifested in a dynamic micro-process that leaders may need to undergo to facilitate change. Boje (1991, p. 106) argued that an organization is “a collective storytelling system in which the performance of stories is a key part of members’ sensemaking.” Multiple stories around organizational identity, power, and ideology lead the members to make different sense of the present reality. Whereas some stories may successfully draw members to shift their interpretation of the present reality and reduce resistance to change, others may even reinforce the resistance. Vaara (2002, p. 217) suggested that “central in the narrative approach is that it highlights the narrator’s ability to describe organizational change in different ways.” This study examines the leader’s rhetorical strategies building on historical narratives and members’ cognitive responses to those narratives to shed new light on how leaders achieve change.

METHODS

Empirical context

The empirical context of this study is a Korean Buddhist temple. The temple has three separate functions: (1) *Dhyana* (spiritual meditation practice), (2) *Adhyayana* (research), and (3) *Vaiyapriya* (management). One senior monk is in charge of each function, and a Master Monk, equivalent to the CEO of a firm, oversees the three functions. In effect, the Master Monk and the three head monks constitute the top management team of the temple.

One can imagine that Buddhist temples can be sustainable only if the three functions operate in harmony. However, the harmony has been shaken in Korea owing to radical societal changes over the past few decades (Song, 2023a). For example, the rapid decline in the birth rate led to a societal-level shift from extended families to nuclear families, and individualistic materialism has permeated every corner of society. Such social phenomena created two significant challenges to Korean Buddhist temples. First, people who grow up in nuclear families become reluctant to be ordained as monks, due to traditional monastic rules and the communal lifestyle.¹ This means that the temple has difficulty recruiting enough monks to sustain daily functions. Second, lay Buddhists began to question the traditional role of Buddhist temples and urged that temples provide additional services such as mindfulness classes, cultural events, and even tourist attractions that are beyond the traditional role (Kaplan, 2010). This changing environment required various changes in the temples' organizational identity and function (Song, 2023a).

Furthermore, the emerging financial difficulties of Korean Buddhist temples force them to diversify their financial sources. Donations previously constituted a major portion of income, but have decreased dramatically. Although financial records are not disclosed, this can be inferred from the decrease in Buddhist believers regularly attending temples. According to a survey conducted by Gallup Korea in 2014, only 6% of 1,500 Buddhist samples answered they attend temples more than once a week while 80% of protestants said they do. Census data reported that the proportion of Buddhists in Korea was 23.2% in 1985 and decreased to 15.5% in 2015. This is essentially why Buddhist temples "started assuming the form of capitalistic

¹ According to World Bank data, Korea's birth rate was 5.95 in 1960, and 0.84 in 2020. Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, Korea's representative Buddhist sect, reported that the number of new apprentice monks was approximately 1,000 in the 1960's, yet the number decreased to 200 in the 2010's.

operations, charging money for retreats and other programs” (Park, 2014, p. 480). Thus, the importance of the temple-owned businesses including cultural tour programs and souvenir shops has been largely increased. However, temples still struggle to diversify financial sources, as profit-seeking businesses run counter to the sacred traditions of the monastic life.

To deeply immerse myself in this context, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in one of the most traditional Buddhist temples in Korea from January 1st to April 29th, 2017. Subsequently, I revisited the temple and collected additional data, from September 14th to 30th 2017, from December 23rd to 27th 2018, from September 19th to 23rd 2019, and from November 2nd to 9th 2021.² In the meantime, I was formally ordained to be a Buddhist monk in Thailand, which allowed me to continuously access B-Temple with informal privilege.³ The observations, interviews, and archival data collected from the multi-stage fieldwork finally allowed me to identify real-time organizational changes, the Master Monk’s strategic use of historical narratives, and members’ implicit reactions.

Data sources

Participant observations. Participant observation was my main data source. Following the guides for conducting the ethnographic fieldwork (Geertz, 2000; Van Maanen, 2011), I tried to follow daily organizational routines while not contacting outside people. In the latter stage of the initial fieldwork, I took up a fellowship to act as a secretary to the Master Monk T and was allowed to carry a small pocket notebook. I wrote down what I observed in various settings such

² This fieldwork has been approved by Institutional Review Board of Chulalongkorn University (chief committee members: Emeritus Professor Theraphan Luangthongkum and Associate Professor Nunghatai Rangponsumrit, project Number: #002/63).

³ I was temporarily ordained as an apprentice monk in a Thai forest temple from October 2017 to March 2018 and formally ordained from November 2019 to July 2020. My first contact with B-Temple in January 2017 was possible through a senior monk from another Korean temple with whom I was very close. He contacted B-Temple and explained this research on my behalf before I started the fieldwork in B-Temple. In the fieldwork process, I was granted permission by Master Monk T to observe and take notes of my conversations with the monks.

as tea times, collective cleaning times, morning routines, B-Temple committee meetings, religious events, and other important settings. The field notes consist of the time, place, and people involved in the observations (Van Maanen, 2011).

In-depth interviews with B-temple monks and Master Monk T. I conducted two rounds of interviews. The first round was conducted with 14 B-Temple monks during the initial four-month fieldwork phase. The interviews aimed to understand the nature of the ongoing changes and their opinion. In total, 76 hours of in-depth interviews were conducted. After the fieldwork, the sensemaking mode of the monks emerged as a significant theme. I thus returned to the temple for the second-round interviews to identify 34 B-Temple monks' reactions toward Master Monk T's narratives. Of the 34 monks, 14 were those who already participated in the first-round interview. I also conducted seven recorded, unstructured interviews with Master Monk T during and after the initial fieldwork. The purpose of the interviews was to learn the leader's managerial philosophy and rhetorical strategies to communicate with the B-Temple monks and external stakeholders such as local lay Buddhist believers. Each interview with him lasted between one and three hours.

Field researchers often bring a set of pre-developed questions to ask the interviewees. However, prepared questions tend to cause researchers to impose their conceptual presuppositions on the research participants' accounts and actions (Mees-Buss, Welch, & Piekkari, 2022). In this study, interview items were crafted based on my observations and reading of internal and external archival records. For example, after reading a local newspaper article about changes at B-temple, I asked Master Monk-T the next morning, "Many people say that religion must change. How is B-temple responding to the call?" During such a conversation, other questions emerged e.g., "Given the long history of Korean Buddhism, there might be some

monks who reject the change you mentioned. How did you convince them?” Master Monk T spoke about relevant stories and repertoires he utilized to persuade internal members. As the research theme was narrowed down to historical narratives, I also asked B-Temple monks for their responses, asking “Master Monk T’s historical stories were interesting. How did you think?” The interviews often developed into lengthy discussions related to Buddhist temples’ identity and role, which was sufficient to examine how the interviewed monks responded to Master Monk T’s historical narratives and changes.

Since trust had been established during the extensive fieldwork process, 25 monks permitted voice recordings in the second-round interviews. For 9 monks who disagreed, I wrote down important notes during the interview. Three monks who could not participate in the interviews sent me a short memo answer. The average length of the total interviews was about two hours per person.

Archival documents (1): Master Monk T’s historical narratives. The research question of this study emerged when I repeatedly noticed that Master Monk T related the same stories of former Master Monks and particular periods of Korean Buddhist history. This observation motivated me to collect archival data on Master Monk T’s past speeches and written commentaries. Specifically, I collected four sources that could show his repeated narratives: (1a) formal speeches to believers and the public at various religious rituals and event settings, (1b) conversations with monks in B-temple’s regular committee meetings where secretary monks recorded or wrote discussion agendas, (1c) formal conversations at various tea time settings, and (1d) formal interviews in Buddhist newspapers and local newspapers discussing Master Monk T’s change initiatives. For these sources, I documented the place, time, and audience to specify the characteristics of the narratives (Van Maanen, 2011).

Archival documents (2): Supporting records. I additionally collected several documents that offered relevant information about Master Monk T's narratives. The data included: (2a) issues of B-temple's monthly magazine, (2b) historical records archived in B-temple's museum, and (2c) secondary scholarly works including Buddhist scholars' writings and books published by the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism. All these works were available online.

Data Analysis

In this study, I undertook four distinctive analysis phases. The focus of each phase was respectively (1) B-temple's ongoing changes, (2) Master Monk T's historical narratives, (3) B-temple monks' response to the narratives, and (4) B-temple monks' response to changes, detailed as follows.

Phase 1: Identifying ongoing changes in B-temple. First, I created a list of organizational changes that B-temple had initiated. Three categories of changes emerged from this process: Changes in monastic rule (C1), Changes in the role of Buddhist temples for society (C2), and Changes in resource procurement (C3). For example, B-temple changed the formal wake-up time from 3:00 a.m. to 5:00 a.m. This change is a significant relaxation of the monastic rule because the 3:00 a.m. wake-up time held the symbolic meaning of strict monastic discipline. In my coding notes, this change was noted as a change in the monastic rule (C1). Other organizational changes in B-temple have been codified in this way.

Phase 2: Identifying Master Monk T's historical narratives. In the second phase, I tried to identify Master Monk T's historical narratives used to reshape members' understanding of the present reality that helped facilitate change. In so doing, I first documented what Master Monk T said when facilitating his change initiatives identified in Phase One (codified as C1, C2,

and C3). This involved manually sorting out *historical* narratives from the other narratives.⁴ To achieve this, I printed out all of Master Monk T's formal speech data, written records, and observation notes, and identified coherent content based on past stories, legends, and myths to distinguish historical narratives from the rest. Over time, I identified three overarching storytelling narratives that respectively constituted three narrative forms. The first set of narratives aimed to reinterpret the temple's traditional rules that were conceptualized as "Reinterpreting Organizational Tradition (ROT)" with relevant literature (Basque & Langley, 2018; Foster et al., 2011; Hatch & Schultz, 2017; Ravasi et al., 2019; Sasaki et al., 2020). The second set of narratives, which I conceptualized as "Spanning Organizational Categories (SOC)", was synthesized with category literature (Glynn & Navis, 2013; Vergne & Wry, 2014). Finally, the third set was labeled as "Implanting Survival Frames (ISF)", mainly integrated with Schein's (2010) work that captured the leaders' role of assessing the viability of the organization by overseeing organizational resources. Not only were these narratives categorized by their purposes and characteristics, but also distinguished by their storytelling sources. His ROT narrative relied on Buddha and the preceding Master Monk M, while the storytelling sources of SOC and ISF narratives were from two historical periods of Korean Buddhism, the Goryeo Dynasty (918–1392) and the Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910), respectively. This finding is elaborated in the findings section.

I additionally focused on two potential mechanisms: temporality (Hernes & Schultz, 2020; Maclean, Harvey, Suddaby, & Coraiola, 2023) and audience (Foster et al., 2017, Song, 2023b). For temporality, one can capture the timing of the use of the historical narratives by

⁴ For example, Master Monk T often referred to how Korean Catholic churches change when describing the successful model of changes in religious organizations. He also spoke about how his meditative experience have changed over time. In the former case, a neighboring religion was used as a narrative source, and in the latter case, his own story and experience were used. While the two narratives aimed to facilitate changes, both are not *historical* because they do not build on any past story, legend, or myth.

marking when the leader's narratives were spoken and written to the audience. This was possible, as I recorded the timing of the use of the narratives in the field. Archival data also showed the exact publication date. More difficulty emerged with the audience analysis. Capturing all audience demographics was difficult. I only differentiated internal audiences (B-Temple monks) and external audiences (government, media, people from the local community, and the public) by checking data sources (see Song, 2023b). Although it is not ideal to divide the complex audience groups into two groups, such a simple distinction is more appropriate, given the purpose of this study that only considers differences between organizational members and external stakeholders.

Finally, I examined whether Master Monk T used a historical narrative strategically for a specific organizational change codified in Phase One. For example, I noticed that in one interview with a local newspaper, Master Monk T quoted monastic life in Buddha's era to justify the wake-up time change. That is, he reinterpreted the traditional monastic rule (via Buddha's story) to justify the change in wake-up time. If reinterpretation of tradition (ROT) narrative is consistently used to facilitate a change in monastic rules, then a match can be created between a change category (among C1, C2, and C3 codified in Phase One) and Master Monk T's narratives (among ROT, SOC, and ISF narratives codified in Phase Two). In the case of the Buddha's story above, it is coded as ROT-C1, meaning that Master Monk T tried to facilitate the wake-up time change (C1) by reinterpreting the current organizational tradition (ROT). This 3 x 3 analysis resulted in nine match codes, "ROT-C1," "ROT-C2," "ROT-C3," "SOC-C1," "SOC-C2," "SOC-C3," "ISF-C1," "ISF-C2," and "ISF-C3."

Phase 3: Identifying members' responses to historical narratives. In the third phase, I analyzed 37 B-temple monks' responses to Master Monk T's narratives. One of the viable ways

to identify the members' narratives is to extract several common patterns emerging from the audiences (Vaara et al., 2016). I tried to capture if each monk changed their understanding of the ongoing changes by manually tagging a series of factual descriptions, self-reflections, opinion phrases, and even unstructured thought flows that reflect their sentiment on changes. This was revealed in my in-depth interviews and memo writings with 37 monks. I re-tagged relevant parts of the texts to examine how the sentiments linked to their shifted or unshifted understanding of the changes. I repeated the process for all 37 monks in turn. In this process, three theoretical dimensions arose, which I labeled as "Context focusing (CF)", "Fact verification (FV)", and "Self-visualization (SV)", informed by the sensemaking literature (e.g., Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Sonenshein, 2010). Figure 1 shows the data structure.

----- Insert Figure 1 about here -----

Phase 4: Identifying members' responses to changes. Based on all these findings, I used interviews and observation notes of each B-Temple monk to determine whether the monks participated in the leader's change initiatives. Participation here means that the members convince themselves and *voluntarily* join the leader's change initiatives.⁵ For example, I often observed that some monks chose to mingle with believers and local villagers during B-Temple mealtimes, yet others still kept their distance from non-monk groups. The former is an observed change that Master Monk T initiated (C1), while the latter is a behavior to keep the existing monastic rule and is therefore not a change. For this observation, one might be concerned whether or not they were genuinely influenced by Master Monk T's narratives and joined the

⁵ Although the authority of the leader monk varies from temple to temple, each monk in large temples is recognized as a sacred meditation practitioner. Thus, the leader monk is generally not supposed to order them to accept changes. Rather, monk leaders often confront a situation where they must persuade the monks to change. Also, external monitoring from local medias and believer committees makes it even harder for the leaders to force the monks to accept changes. Therefore, the key to facilitate change in Buddhist temples lies in the voluntary participation of the fellow monks.

change, and what “cognitive shift”, defined as “a change in how an organizational audience understands an important element of the organization’s work, as a desired outcome of the sensegiving process” (Foldy et al., 2008, p. 514), triggers such behavioral outcomes.

The abovementioned concern was why I coded all B-Temple monks to confirm if they underwent significant cognitive shifts and behavioral changes. Informed by a central thesis of historical narrative studies that collective memories serve as shaping and reshaping the present organizational and role identity (Hatch & Schultz, 2017; Oertel & Thommes, 2018; Ravasi et al., 2019; Lyle et al., 2022; Schultz & Hernes, 2013), I focused (1) whether the leader’s historical narratives cognitively shifted the monks’ perception of *organizational identity* of Buddhist temple, (2) whether they shifted their perception of *role identity* as a Buddhist monk, and finally (3) whether the cognitive shifts led to any behavioral change. Meaningful patterns were only observed in monks’ identity shifts (cognitive shift) and behavioral changes (behavioral outcome). This analysis was conducted separately after all the previous analyses had been completed.

Transparency and openness

I described all my sampling plans, data exclusions, and any manipulations, and adhered to the *Journal of Applied Psychology* methodological checklist. Recorded data are not available as the research participants of this study do not agree to its disclosure. This study’s design and analysis were not preregistered.

FINDINGS

Organizational changes in B-Temple

It is important to note that Master Monk T’s change initiative and leadership style are highly uncommon in Korean Buddhist society. During the four-month main fieldwork process, I often heard that Master Monk T has been known as “the master of administration.” One senior

monk visiting B-Temple depicted him as having “the Midas touch,” saying that “whatever he touches, he creates something new.” One local newspaper reporter similarly mentioned that “he is a change maker, a true exemplar of charismatic leadership.”

Master Monk T has emphasized the importance of managing roles since he recognized the radical societal changes in Korea as a threat to the continuity of Buddhist temples. His managing philosophy was manifested in one of my interviews with him, where he said:

I think that regardless of any religious belief all religions should be rooted in society. If religion tried to rule over society, religion and society would collapse together ... Buddhist temples only exist within society. To co-exist, monks should pay attention to society and think about the benefits we can give to people.

His philosophy highlighted social contribution, modernization, and globalization, which inevitably conflict with traditional ways of monastic life that value sacred spirituality. Despite the conflict, Master Monk T attempted to transform the temple to reflect a new organizational mission. His change initiative was manifested in monks’ daily monastic lives as three areas of change (C1, C2, and C3). Table 1 summarizes the evidence.

----- Insert Table 1 about here -----

Changes in organizational rules (C1). Master Monk T changed a set of monastic rules that had been taken for granted in Korean Buddhist temples. One striking example is the rule change in the B-temple’s wake-up time from 3:00 a.m. to 5:00 a.m. The earlier 3:00 a.m. remains the formal wake-up time in other Korean temples. In monastic life, the wake-up time has a significant symbolic meaning that reinforces strict discipline and traditions. Monks following the 3:00 a.m. rule show seriousness and strictness in their ordainment. That is, a change in wake-up time could be a direct violation of the traditions. I expected a profound philosophical motto behind the change, but Master Monk T simply responded: “Do you wake up at 3:00 a.m. and go to sleep at 8:00 p.m.? Nobody wakes up at 3:00 a.m. these days.” The change made monastic life

more relaxed.

Another example was the relaxation of the food choice in monastic life. B-Temple offered monks jam and butter, along with their humble bread, and allowed them to listen to classical music during breakfast rather than to eat in silence. I also observed several senior monks and young Buddhist believers dining together during mealtimes. These observations offer three important pieces of information. First, the choice of food was relaxed; second, eating manners were relaxed; and third, the separation between monks and believers disappeared. This reflected Master Monk T's belief that Buddhist temples should modify strict traditional rules to interact with the local community.

Changes in organizational role (C2). Master Monk T's vision led to this second category of change. In extending the organizational role, he opened B-temple's sacred meditation hall to the public and developed practical classes such as traditional tea ceremonies, temple food cooking, and gardening, which introduced visitors to a unique cultural experience in a temple. He benchmarked a common corporate social responsibility (CSR) metric i.e., donations back to society, and proclaimed that every year, B-Temple donated 10% of its annual budget to society. After the appointment of Master Monk T, B-Temple also began to develop various new social programs such as online educational programs, regular scholarships for community students, and free accommodations for travelers. Master Monk T vigorously sought ideas from the outside world and adopted new practices and strategies that could help renew the temple's role in society.

Changes in resource procurement (C3). The most substantive change observed at B-temple was the collaboration between the temple and local companies. Master Monk T claimed that Buddhist temples should play a pivotal role in stimulating local economies. He worked to revitalize the regional economy by providing local business leaders with opportunities to

collaborate with B-temple. During the main fieldwork period, I observed that seven local business leaders visited Master Monk T to discuss business collaboration projects. While collaboration in most temples was limited to maintaining the temple building and operating the souvenir shop, the collaboration at B-temple explicitly prioritized financial profit.

For example, I had an opportunity to participate in a specific project between B-Temple and a local brewery that had a long history of offering traditional alcoholic beverages to residents. The company faced bankruptcy because the market for its major product had declined dramatically due to increased competition. Master Monk T decided to revive this brewery despite anticipated controversy. With support from Master Monk T, other senior monks and brewery executives created an independent team for the revival project. They finally decided to keep the original recipe but change its bottles from a traditional shape to a narrow wine bottle shape. As a result, the target market changed from older consumers to the younger generation, and the positioning of alcoholic drinks changed from traditional alcohol to upscale wine to emphasize its exclusivity. Monk G, one of the team members, commented that “this level of collaboration was very unusual in our community. This is indeed a big change.”

Throughout all these change processes, internal concerns arose because opponents cautioned that the changes would ultimately destroy the B-Temple’s sacred traditions. Master Monk T addressed the resistance by crafting and disseminating three historical narratives.

Master Monk T’s historical narratives

Table 2 provides the selected quotes that constitute the ROT (Reinterpreting Organizational Tradition), SOC (Spanning Organizational Categories), and ISF (Implementing Survival Frames) narratives. Table 3 shows the frequency data of three narratives by the timing and the data source. The tables show several patterns and characteristics of narratives. First,

Master Monk T chose distinct storytelling sources to develop his historical narratives. He mainly used the stories of Buddha and the former B-temple Master Monk M for the ROT narrative; the stories on the Goryeo Dynasty (918-1392) for the SOC narrative; and the stories of the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910) for ISF narrative.

----- Insert Tables 2 and 3 about here -----

Second, the tables offer important insights related to the *temporality* of narratives and the *audience* of narratives. Regarding temporality, Master Monk T used the ROT narrative mostly at first and then employed the SOC and ISF narratives while rarely returning to the ROT narrative during this later stage. The shift to the SOC and ISF narrative from the ROT narrative shows that Master Monk T undertook a significant revision of his rhetorical strategy. He began by trying different forms of narratives and either continued, discontinued, or pivoted to another narrative based on their effectiveness. This process indicates that early negative feedback leads the leader to craft new narratives.⁶

Table 4 shows the findings of the matching analysis, a correlation between narratives and changes, which reconfirms that his narratives were strategically crafted. That is, Master Monk T mostly used a *specific* narrative to facilitate a *specific* category of change. He used the stories of the Buddha and the former B-temple Master Monk M to facilitate changes in organizational rules (C1), and the story of the Goryeo Dynasty to facilitate changes in organizational roles (C2). Lastly, the story of the Joseon Dynasty was used to facilitate changes in resource procurement (C3). I now elaborate on these findings.

----- Insert Table 4 about here -----

Reinterpreting organizational tradition to facilitate changes in organizational rules

⁶ The members' feedback is reported later in this findings section.

(ROT-C1). First, Master Monk T used stories of the Buddha and Master Monk M to encourage organizational members to rethink the present organizational rules. To justify the new wake-up time, he invoked historical anecdotes about the Buddha in statements such as: “We are not changing our rules,” “We are just going back to Buddha’s age,” and “Buddha himself never woke up at 3:00 a.m.” Master Monk T intentionally avoided using words like “change,” “transformation,” “modernization,” or “innovation.” Instead, he focused on why the 3:00 a.m. wake-up time was not a rigid tradition that all Buddhist temples must follow. Thus, he framed his change initiative not as change, but as a return to the roots of a differently interpreted tradition of Buddhism.

He also used Buddha as a source of narratives to justify his open-door policy. In doing so, he questioned why Buddhist temples should be separated from secularism. He noted that:

Buddhism has become too isolated from society. It is not what Buddha tried to achieve ... We should rethink our tradition. Buddha himself had many collaborations that aimed to help others. Buddha said: ‘The Buddhist monastery is not ours. It exists for all of us.’ We should open our temple to people, as Buddha did.

Master Monk T relayed Buddha’s anecdotes to encourage rethinking the meaning of tradition.

The second source of the reinterpretation narratives was the B-temple’s past Master Monk M. Master Monk M had been ordained at the B-temple in the early 1,900s and was known for his idea that ‘every human activity could be a meditation.’ The conventional way to practice meditation is to maintain a strict posture under the formal guidance of a meditation master. This reflects the traditional rule of Korean meditative Buddhism. Master Monk M viewed meditation practice as being present in a chef’s efforts, a singer’s practice, an artist’s agony, a scholar’s work, and even a cartoonist’s drawing. This idea aimed to both reduce the authority of Buddhist meditators and redefine the traditional meaning of meditation practice. Master Monk T used this story to reinterpret the traditional view that meditation should be practiced in a strict posture.

During the speeches in senior monks' committee meetings, he asked his audience to redefine the meaning of meditation and elaborated on Master Monk M's idea.

Our Master Monk M said that monastic life is just a tool for meditation ... He liked calligraphy and said that doing calligraphy can be a different form of meditation. He realized that anything can be meditation. We do not need to approach meditation in that way [a strict posture with formal guidelines]. If calligraphy is a kind of meditation, why shouldn't cooking, running, and other activities be meditative activities?

Thus, Master Monk T slightly changed Master Monk M's philosophy to frame meditation as a fun activity that can be related to other secular activities.

Spanning organizational categories to facilitate changes in organizational roles

(SOC-C2). While Master Monk T related stories of historical figures (Buddha and previous Master Monk M) to shift members' firmly held belief system about traditions, he used a historical period of Korean Buddhism to change members' narrow self-categorization of their organization as a sacred religious organization to a broader general category that encompasses a religious organization, a non-profit organization, or simply an organizational system. For example, Master Monk T viewed Buddhist temples as general organizations that need to fulfill their social responsibility to serve society. A strong signal of this change was his idea of adopting CSR practices. To legitimize the adoption of extended religious responsibility to society, he specifically used stories from the Goryeo Dynasty period that illustrate how Buddhism can serve as a dynamic hub for diverse ideas and cultures. Under the Goryeo Dynasty, no strict boundary separated secular and monastic life. Buddhist monks actively engaged in art and music, various scholarly pursuits, construction, and even politics. Buddhist philosophy was enriched through intellectual debate and shared among various social classes. Master Monk T remarked to a local newspaper reporter:

During the Goryeo Dynasty, Buddhist temples were located in the city, so that people could come and go to the temple freely. The temple at the time was a school, hospital, and community hub. But nobody questioned whether Buddhist temples were

secularized at the time. The temple was not an isolated place.

Master Monk T drew heavily on stories from this historical period to change current beliefs about the temple and its role. By rhetorically spanning the role of an organization, he tried to shift the conventional definition of Buddhist temples to a new definition (a temple as a community hub), thereby encouraging members to rethink the core stakeholders of Buddhist temples from a narrow community of loyal believers to a wider socio-political environment.

Glynn and Navis (2013, p. 1127) noted that “a categorical perspective defines the organization’s identity in terms of its membership in one or more groupings (or categories) and, in particular, its embodiment of (or assimilation to) the categorical prototype.” The SOC narrative was intended to motivate B-Temple monks to recategorize their organization’s identity, which persuaded them to accept new tasks and roles that were yet to be categorized as their principal roles.

Implanting survival frame to facilitate changes in resource procurement (ISF-C3).

Overall, the ISF narrative was most prominent in Master Monk T’s historical narratives. It was mainly used to transform members’ framing of ongoing changes as issues of survival. Previously, the dominant cognitive framing of the changes that B-temple monks shared was *tradition versus change*. Through the ISF narrative, Master Monk T attempted to shift the framing to *survival or non-survival*. This strategy enabled him to avoid value-laden debates around changes and transform them into simply a matter of survival.

The main storytelling source for the ISF narrative was the Joseon Dynasty. Master Monk T referred to this period in multiple ways. On the one hand, he described how Buddhism had survived for 500 years, despite harsh persecution under the rulers of the Joseon Dynasty, who had introduced Chinese Neo-Confucianism as a ruling philosophy. Many Buddhist temples were attacked and destroyed by the Dynasty in the process of reinforcing Neo-Confucianism. Master

Monk T exemplified this period to stress the importance of current business work. In an interview with a Buddhist newspaper, he noted that:

Monastic communities in Joseon could be self-sufficient because they worked hard. Nowadays, I cannot see monks working hard. We need to rethink the meaning of labor. Why did monks work very hard at the time [Joseon]? They knew that unless they worked, Buddhist temples would disappear.

This quote is consistent with my informal conversations with Master Monk T. He often remarked that hard work is an important aspect of monastic life. He observed that the current emphasis on meditation practice is biased, and argued that one reason Buddhist temples struggle to survive is that monks do not work hard. By relating stories about hard times during the Joseon Dynasty period, he tried to justify why monks should engage in commercial business even if it violated the conventional monastic rule. He stressed that Buddhism survived under the Joseon Dynasty simply because the monks worked hard.

To motivate them, Master Monk T further narrated a particular historical anecdote about the monks' solemn decision to join the Joseon army to fight the Japanese invasion of the Korean peninsula in 1592. Figure 2 portrays the army monks on a battlefield in 1592. The monks serving in the war sacrificed their religious convictions to protect the country and possibly obtain religious legitimacy from the kingdom, thereby sustaining their organization in the Confucian Dynasty. Master Monk T tried to convince B-Temple monks that they were required to work hard to survive.

----- Insert Figure 2 about here -----

On the other hand, he interpreted the Joseon Dynasty period to illustrate the reason for the persecution of Buddhists at that time. His *selective* interpretation demonstrates how the past can be interpreted in different ways for the present actor's purpose. His narrative repertory was that Buddhist temples under the Joseon Dynasty failed to adapt to the changing environment

because they lost sight of the external environment. At one senior committee meeting in B-Temple, he said:

During the Joseon Dynasty, Confucianism was the principle of society. It was the way people lived. Buddhism collapsed because it failed to accept Confucian values at the time. Today, capitalism is a principle of society, and it is the way people live. The fact that it cannot be aligned with Buddhism does not mean that we should get away from it. It is easy to deny something different, but we need to accept a different idea to live together. If not, we repeat the Joseon period.

He often ended conversations by saying, “Accepting opposite values is the ultimate mercy Buddhism has taught.” In justifying collaboration with for-profit organizations, he emphasized that “Prosperity sometimes requires finding a creative way to work with those who have different beliefs.” Although doing well in business is not core Buddhist teaching, Master Monk T believed that temple business is imperative to survive, and he disseminated this belief by implanting the survival frame based on historical stories.

Members’ responses to leader’s historical narratives

My analysis of 37 B-Temple monks’ interviews and observations shows how they reacted to the leaders’ narratives. Three theoretical themes emerged in the process: Context focusing (CF), Fact verification (CV), and Self-visualization (SV). Table 5 offers selected evidence, and Appendix A shows a list of each monk’s responses

----- Insert Tables 5 about here -----

Context focusing toward ROT narrative (ROT-CF). While Master Monk T narrated the stories of Buddha and the past Master Monk M to reinterpret the organization’s traditional rules, his fellow monks paid more attention to the story *context* than the historical figures. Monk U said that “Buddha’s era and Master Monk M’s historical context fundamentally differ from the present time.” Monk N stated, “I was not entirely convinced by the stories because the context of the stories just differs from the present day.” Master Monk T seemed to borrow the authority of

Buddha and Master Monk M to reframe organizational traditions, yet monks captured different dimensions of the stories, which in turn distracted them from the intended points of the stories.

Pentland (1999, p. 713) argued that “narrative texts typically contain more than just the bare events. In particular, they contain a variety of textual devices that are used to indicate time, place, attributes of the characters, attributes of context, and so on.” In the monks’ responses toward the ROT narrative, different facets of the stories are manifested between the speaker and the audience. Master Monk T tried to highlight the attributes of characters and personal philosophies (Buddha and Master Monk M), yet most of the members focused on the narratives’ context. Such context focusing led them to question how organizational rules accepted in the past could be re-accepted in the present.

Fact verification toward ROT narrative (ROT-FV). B-Temple monks also challenged Master Monk T’s ROT narrative and its authenticity. Owing to skepticism, the monks did not immerse themselves in the stories in the ROT narrative. Monk Ub said, “I think there is no historical evidence of Master Monk T’s talk about the ancient monastic life.” Monk G beside him agreed that “No one knows how Master Monk M lived. His life is merely considered as a legend.” Monk W said, “I think that stories on Master Monk M are somewhat exaggerated by the next generations of people.” The B-Temple monks questioned if the stories of Buddha and Master Monk M were “accurate and authentic representations of historical events and processes” (Vaara & Lamberg, 2016, p. 638). Thus, they questioned the stories’ veracity.

Self-visualization toward SOC narrative (SOC-SV). As Master Monk T spoke about the status of Buddhism in the Goryeo period, B-Temple monks vividly visualized the period and used specific words such as “remember,” “remind,” “recall,” and “sympathetic” to express their sentiments. Such words demonstrate the members’ immersion in the narrative.

Specifically, B-Temple monks connected the multi-role model of Buddhist monks in the Goryeo period to the present. A junior Monk K mentioned “I like his speech because it is a story of what we used to do. We were not just a meditator isolated from society. We did more than what we do now.” During teatime after a ceremony, Monk U, who strongly disagreed with the ROT narrative, surprisingly advocated for Master Monk T: “I think Master Monk T’s message is clear. We should transcend the ideological concern and think about how we can change.” Monk J seemed to fully recognize the importance of broader contributions to society that his leader highlighted through the SOC narrative when he said:

We have invested so much energy in fixing our philosophy, our identity, and our ultimate aim. But we have never focused on how we can survive in this chaotic environment. I was completely convinced by his message. We must stop arguing about who is better and what is better for our temple and society.

Master Monk T’s SOC narratives certainly drew out a sense of nostalgia by mentioning “who we were” and “what we did.”

Self-visualization toward ISF narratives (ISF-SV). The self-visualization response was more dramatic toward the ISF narrative. While Buddhism blossomed in the Goryeo Dynasty, its status in the Joseon Dynasty was severely undermined. B-Temple monks’ descriptions illustrated the situation e.g., “Monks were living in a desperate condition at the time” (Monk K), “Monks were treated like beggars and bandits” (Monk E), and “They breathed just to survive” (Monk P). Such visualizations were intense as if they had lived in the period. The monks particularly expressed strong emotional reactions to the Joseon monks’ participation in the 1592 invasion. Monk Y said, “The Joseon monks must have felt extremely frustrated by being in a situation where their goal was to protect the kingdom and Buddhism, yet they needed to kill people.” The intense visualization illustrates a concrete way of remembering the past, which was what Rowlinson et al. (2010) depicted. Rowlinson et al. (2010, p. 74, *italic added*) pointed out that

“Memory is not a repository of knowledge about past events. Instead, it consists of recollections of past events that express *feelings* about those events.”

With this memory, B-Temple monks applied a survival meaning to the new work and duties of daily monastic lives, which led them to take action. Monk G, currently in charge of finance, said “He is right. Someone needs to do the work [finance] to sustain our community.” In his written statement, he offered his reflection, “If the [Joseon] monks had not made the decision [to join the army], we could not even exist in this world. We must change. It is a matter of survival.” As Master Monk T intended through the ISF narrative, B-temple monks framed the collaboration as *survival or not* rather than *tradition versus change*.

Members’ reactions to organizational changes

So far, the findings have shown that only the SOC (Spanning Organizational Categories) and ISF (Implanting Survival Frame) narratives induced monks’ self-visualization, while the ROT (Reinterpreting Organizational Tradition) narrative failed to convince the monks. With these findings, I further examined how the SOC and ISF narratives influenced the monks’ responses to organizational changes. As noted, the responses concerned the monks’ cognitive shifts and behavioral changes. Appendix B shows the results. The second and third columns of the table present the monks’ self-visualization (SV) mode toward the ROT, SOC, and ISF narratives. Thus, they are identical to the self-visualization section of the results presented in Appendix A.

There are two important observations. First, 18 monks underwent a significant cognitive shift that led them to redefine the monks’ *role identity* from spiritual meditator to service provider.⁷ For this nuanced shift, I had a long reflexive conversation with Monk Kb who began

⁷ The goal of Buddhist spiritual meditation is known as liberation (Nibbāna in Pāli) that is typically understood as “an amoral or [a] supramoral [status] ... experienced either above or below morality in the sense of thought, word, and deed” (Keown, 1991, p.

to work with Master Monk T to prepare for a traditional market revival project in B-Temple. He said:

I think the reason Master Monk T's historical lectures [SOC and ISF narratives] are so important to us is that he tries to send a message that contemporary Buddhism must redefine the role of monks. I used to meditate all day in a dark room in the temple. But it is time to rethink our identity. Nowadays, many secular meditators can teach meditation better than us.

Monk D who participated in an ongoing team project to promote local tourism in B-Temple said, "Master Monk T's story [the SOC and ISF narratives] changed the way I think of being a Buddhist monk. We really need to think about what we can provide to people."

Those monks, who claimed a service provider model of Buddhist monks, certainly no longer searched for the monks' identity in a traditional definition. They found them in the new vision presented by Master Monk T who advocated that monks must be reborn to serve society. Of the 14 monks who showed self-visualization responses to both SOC and ISF narratives, 10 monks agreed with Master Monk T's philosophy on the redefinition of monks' identity. The SOC narrative served as a catalyst for those monks to redefine what it means to be a Buddhist monk in contemporary society. ISF narrative, on the other hand, aroused its urgency and legitimacy of why it should be so.

The second observation is about behavioral outcomes. Monks who had undergone the cognitive shift *voluntarily* participated in the changes led by Master Monk T. This was confirmed through my day-to-day observations during the four-month fieldwork in B-Temple. For example, Monk G, Monk E, and Monk Ib were participating in the local brewery project. As noted, I was one of their team. Other than the project, Monk N, Monk Kb, and Monk Mb, at the expense of

10). It is often understood as a one's solitary path "not to be found in any new service to mankind, any heightening of the love for one's neighbor, and nay good deeds done by a new person" (Keown, 1991, p. 15). Yet, Buddhism, as a culture, also performs service functions such as funeral ceremonies, tea ceremonies, and cultural festivals to meet the general public's demands. Thus, 'spiritual meditation' and 'religious service' are considered two important activities in contemporary Buddhist temples that define the role of Buddhist monks—spiritual meditators and service providers (Song, 2023a).

their meditation time, joined new social responsibility activities at a local welfare facility initiated by Master Monk T. Six monks (Monk H, Monk Lb, Monk I, Monk S, Monk M and Monk D) were developing a new tourism program that combines temple spaces and local attraction spots to attract tourists to B-Temple. Most of those monks showed a self-visualization response to the SOC and ISF narratives. It is important to note that before Master Monk T spoke about any historical narrative, only senior Monk N, agreed and joined the suggested changes. Over time, 12 monks voluntarily joined. This means that Master Monk T's rhetorical strategy using historical narratives played a meaningful role at least for 12 monks. They then became a part of the change their leader initiated.

DISCUSSION

Figure 3 summarizes the findings that show an iterative dynamic micro-process of how a leader crafts and recrafts historical narratives in response to members' reactions. The early negative feedback, manifested as monks' inaction, led the leader to craft new narratives, SOC and ISF narratives. Unlike ROT narrative, SOC and ISF narratives successfully activated a self-visualization mode and eventually triggered a cognitive shift in defining monks' role from spiritual meditators to service providers. This could justify the members' decision to participate in the leader's change initiatives. Subsequently, the leader saw an increasing number of fellow monks participating in his change projects and interpreted that the observation as positive feedback to continue using the SOC and ISF narratives. These findings offer several contributions and implications in the area of change leadership and historical narratives.

----- Insert Figure 3 about here -----

Theoretical contributions and implications

This study contributes to the leadership and historical narrative literature by elucidating

a nuanced, iterative, and dynamic micro-process of how a leader crafts historical narratives to facilitate changes. Although most studies have been conducted at the organizational level (e.g., Basque & Langely, 2018; Coraiola, Suddaby, Foster, 2018; Foster et al., 2011; Holt, 2006; Sasaki et al., 2020; Schultz & Hernes, 2013; Sinha, Jaskiewicz, Gibb, & Combs, 2020; Song, 2023b; Suddaby et al., 2010; Illia & Zamparini, 2016), there has been an increase in studies highlighting the micro process at the individual level where organizational leaders are portrayed as maestros of history (e.g., Hatch & Schultz, 2017; Ravasi et al., 2019; Suddaby, Coraiola, Harvey, & Foster, 2020). This study reveals that the micro process of uncovering appropriate historical stories, crafting them into convincing narratives, and communicating them to target audiences is rather a messy process. The leader in this study drew upon a variety of narrative sources including Buddha (at the beginning of Buddhism 2,500 years ago), Master Monk M (in the early 20th century), Goryeo Dynasty (918–1392), and Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910). His tapping into these multiple sources appears to be unplanned initially but emergently captured through an evolving iterative process with the audience. In other words, the leader went through a series of trial-and-error processes along with organizational members' implicit feedback cues. This finding suggests that when approaching a certain phenomenon around the use of history, we may need to look at how potentially multiple rhetorical histories could be emergently utilized from different temporal reference points. This approach allows narrative analysis to identify how and why different historical sources are activated and deactivated.

With regard to the effectiveness of historical narratives, this study shows what factors contribute to the composition of effective narratives. This finding cannot be discovered in a type of study where researchers approach historical cases *ex post* that have already been found to be successful. If researchers select and analyze a successful case, their questions can only capture

why a certain historical narrative was *necessarily* effective. Such a research program essentially limits the possibility of multiple rhetorical histories that can be simultaneously or subsequently activated by leaders. Deviating from such an approach, this study identified which historical sources used in three different narratives served to determine the effectiveness of historical narratives for facilitating change.

Thus, this study goes beyond analyzing a micro-historicizing process already identified in prior studies (e.g., Boje, Haley, & Saylor, 2016; Hatch & Schultz, 2017), as it documents why some are effective and why others are not. The findings show that SOC and ISF narratives were effective because they successfully induced the members' emotional arousal. A unique characteristic of the two narratives was that the emotional arousal was nuancedly linked to temporality inherent in the narratives. Previously, this point has been tackled by Hatch and Schultz's (2017) research on historical authenticity and Hernes and Schultz's (2020) thesis on temporality (see also, Foroughi et al., 2020; Hernes, Feddersen, & Schultz, 2021; Wadhvani et al., 2018). Much recently, Suddaby et al. (2023) conceptualized four historical tropes that are categorized by emotion (positive and negative) and temporality (retrospective and prospective). This study offers a compelling empirical case to confirm and extend those prior works. Below, I shed more light on this point through unique characteristics of the three narratives utilized by Master Monk T.

Spanning Organizational Categories narrative and temporality-based emotional arousal: Continuity. First, the source of SOC narrative was the Goryeo Dynasty period. Unlike the Joseon Dynasty (Neo-Confucian) and present-day Korea (Non-religious secular), Goryeo was a Buddhist dynasty where Buddhist temples served as a local community hub and performed various non-religious functions. That is, recalling the Goryeo period in B-Temple provoked a

strong *nostalgia* that served to create “a sense of *continuity* between the past and the future and justifies change by making the future appear similar to the past” (Suddaby et al., 2023, p. 225, *italic added*). This strategy was successful, as organizational members visualized the era and voluntarily joined the leader’s change initiatives triggered by the nostalgic memory. This was exactly what Master Monk T intended i.e. letting his fellow monks imagine the future as similar to the utopian Goryeo Dynasty. Such mnemonic pasting enabled the organizational members to view the past, present, and future “as parts of *an integrated whole*” (Zerubavel, 2003, p. 37, *italic added*). The temporality of the SOC narrative is then understood as “a product of the *mental* integration of otherwise disconnected points in time into a seemingly single historical whole” (Zerubavel, 2003, p. 40, *italic original*). What mnemonically bridged the B-temple monks (the present actors) to the Goryeo period (the past) was the nostalgic historical model that Master Monk T strategically utilized through the SOC narrative to evoke the collective memories symbolically shared among community members.

Implanting Survival Frame narrative and temporality-based emotional arousal:

Discontinuity. The second effective narrative, ISF, draws out an even more compelling contribution in light of Suddaby et al. (2023)’s notion of historical trope. The source of the ISF narrative was the Joseon Dynasty period that persecuted Buddhism. It was a symbolic historical time that the present monks absolutely did not want to repeat in the future. Master Monk T explicitly evoked this traumatic memory hidden in a Korean Buddhist community.

This strategy relies on two historical tropes. First, it uses *dystoria* defined as “a historical trope that motivates potential stakeholders by creating a sense of *discontinuity* between the past and the future (Suddaby et al., 2023, p. 228, *italic added*). Thus, it “is a type of rhetoric based on the practice of historicizing the past by imposing temporal and emotive distance between the past

and the present and/or future” (Suddaby et al., 2023, p. 228). The focus here is discontinuity, not continuity. B-Temple monks felt that the past history must not be repeated in the future and that immediate change is needed to prevent the repetition. The ISF narrative aroused such anxiety, the feeling that “unless we change, something bad will happen” (Schein, 2010, p. 301). On the other hand, the survival anxiety also closely resonates with the second historical trope, *dystopia*, which aims to give the audience “a warning for the urgent necessity of change” (Suddaby et al., 2023, p. 227). Dystoria and dystopia together created a historical myth, *Entropy*, suggested by Suddaby et al. (2023) which “captures the notion that systems tend to decline gradually and naturally toward a state of disorder or chaos” (p. 232). In light of this notion, one can imagine if the leader had not proactively utilized the ISF narrative, members might not have been aware of the current trajectory of their organization toward disorder or chaos.

Further, the ISF narrative introduced another collective memory. The memory was about a specific temporal reference point, “a singular historical event”, defined as “uniquely perceived historical occasions that embody particular symbolic or practical agency” (Hernes & Schultz, 2020, p. 8). The event was the Joseon monks’ decision to join the national army in 1592 which served as what Rubin and Kozin (1984) described as an “emotional bookmark.” It activated another emotional arousal, sympathy, for the Joseon monks’ decision. While survival anxiety drew fear, sympathy brought out a strong sense of oneness. The two emotions subtly enabled the members to accept the leaders’ change initiatives. Hence, the narrative was effective.

In sum, the SOC and IST narratives together suggest that change recipients’ emotional patterns such as nostalgia, fear, and sympathy can be mediated through leaders’ distinct historical narratives on the past, not necessarily shaped by narratives on change events in the present as depicted in extant research (e.g., Bartunek, Krim, Elfenbein, 2007; Bartunek, 2006; Huy, 1999,

2002).

Reinterpreting Organizational Tradition narrative and lack of emotional resonance.

The ROT narrative failed to arouse members' self-visualization and any meaningful emotional resonance because organizational members activated context-focusing and fact-verification modes. The fact verification mode was so strong that they doubted the "authenticity of history" (Gill, Gill, & Roulet, 2018) and became highly cynical about the changes (DeCelles, Tesluk, & Taxman, 2013). The low perception of authenticity led them to challenge the leader's historical stories with skepticism, which made the change narratives ineffective. In Carton and Lucas's (2014) terms, the ROT narrative only remained as "meaning-based rhetoric" that overemphasized imparting guiding values with overwhelming concepts, which could not invoke imagery of the future. Yet, the SOC and ISF narratives were "image-based rhetoric" (Carton et al., 2014) that effectively visualized what the leader intended to convey. Owing to the absence of vivid visualization, the ROT narrative failed to arouse nostalgic memory, fear, sympathy, or any associated feeling that could motivate members to do the temporal work of either connecting or disconnecting.

Iterative trial-and-error process of crafting effective historical narratives. The importance of the ROT narrative surfaced when looking at the entire trial-and-error process Master Monk T went through. As shown in Table 3 (timing of three narratives) and Appendix B (members' reactions), the failure of the ROT narrative served as an important feedback cue for the leader to stop using the ROT narrative and craft the new narratives. Note that the use of the ROT narrative aimed to relax traditional monastic rules that could make the monks' lives less strict. It was presumable that at least some monks with health issues might welcome the relaxation, as they must lead a strict monastic life unless rules are relaxed. Unexpectedly, B-

Temple monks refused to join the proposed changes in monastic rules, and Master Monk T realized that his ROT narrative failed.

Over time, he suddenly switched his rhetorical strategy to SOC and ISF narratives, as shown in Table 3. Compared to his ROT narrative, the purpose of his SOC and ISF narratives not only demanded more physical labor and worldly affairs but also required the monk to sacrifice their meditation time to contribute to organizational operations. However, the fact that they willingly joined the proposed changes implies how effective the SOC and ISF narratives were. These findings challenge some of previous studies that oversimplified the responses of organizational members to changes (see Bartunek et al., 2006; Oreg et al., 2018; Oreg & Sverdlik, 2011) and emphasized explicit feedback cues (Sonenshein, 2010). The silence of the organizational members to the ROT narrative was a key signal. This study shows that even no reaction could be a valid response to challenge the leader's change narrative, particularly in a context like a religious organization where silence is a significant communication method.

Limitations and future research directions

As with any ethnographic study, this study has limitations that call for future research. First, this study categorized potentially more complex audience groups into only two groups, organizational members and external stakeholders. This simple distinction was needed because the focus of this study is on the internal audience's sensemaking of history. One fruitful direction for future research here is to further characterize the audience in much detail and examine how diverse groups of audiences perceive the speakers' historical narratives. Second, this study showed why certain historical narratives are effective and others are not and how the different narratives evoke members' affective and behavioral reactions. Studying both historical sensegiving and sensemaking simultaneously can illuminate the practical, varied impact of

historical narratives beyond the established knowledge that the past influences the present organizational phenomenon. Future research can examine which features of rhetorical history evoke targeted or unexpected reactions, especially when speakers use multiple historical narratives.

CONCLUSION

Organizations try to redefine their purpose and identity as the environment changes. In the situation, leaders inevitably confront a situation where they need to persuade members who are resistant to change. This study shows that leaders can best facilitate changes by combining the SOC (spanning organizational category) and ISF (implanting survival frame) narratives. The combination of the two effectively encourages organizational members to redefine the meaning of their work by recalling the nostalgic past while simultaneously reminding them that if they refuse to do so, they risk a gloomy dystopian future. This study reveals that these two could be a powerful combination for change that leaders may be able to employ strategically.

Leadership, narrative, and history converge when “narratives bring together a linguistic, semiotic, and performative order that integrates past, present, and future into a single structure of meaning” (Coraiola, Suddaby, & Foster, 2018, p. 59). But this “requires constant attention and negotiation in an ongoing present” (Hernes & Schultz, 2020, p. 4). In the temporal negotiation process, history becomes alive as a set of collective memories strategically activated by the leader. Such leaders may be called temporal architects who continuously learn and connect the past, present, and future at the present moment. I conclude this article by hoping that it fuels further investigations to unpack the temporal architectural role of leaders.

REFERENCES

- Adorasio, A. L. M. (2014). Organizational remembering as narrative: 'Storying' the past in banking. *Organization*, 21(4), 463-476.
- Balogun, J., Bartunek, J. M., & Do, B. (2015). Senior managers' sensemaking and responses to strategic change. *Organization Science*, 26(4), 960-979.
- Balogun, J., & Johnson, G. (2004). Organizational restructuring and middle manager sensemaking. *Academy of Management Journal*, 47(4), 523-549.
- Bartunek, J. M., Krim, R., Necochea, R., & Humphries, M. (1999). Sensemaking, sensegiving, and leadership in strategic organizational development. *Advances in qualitative organizational research*, 2(1), 37-71.
- Bartunek, J. M., Rousseau, D. M., Rudolph, J. W., & DePalma, J. A. (2006). On the receiving end: Sensemaking, emotion, and assessments of an organizational change initiated by others. *The Journal of applied behavioral science*, 42(2), 182-206.
- Bartunek, J. M. (1984). Changing interpretive schemes and organizational restructuring: The example of a religious order. *Administrative science quarterly*, 355-372.
- Basque, J., & Langley, A. (2018). Invoking Alphonse: The founder figure as a historical resource for organizational identity work. *Organization Studies*, 39(12), 1685-1708.
- Boje, D. M. (1991). The storytelling organization: A study of story performance in an office-supply firm. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 36(1):106-126.
- Boje, D. M. (2014). *Storytelling Organizational Practices: Managing in The Quantum Age*. New York, NY: Routledge
- Boje, D. M., Haley, U. C., & Saylor, R. (2016). Antenarratives of organizational change: The microstoria of Burger King's storytelling in space, time and strategic context. *Human Relations*, 69(2), 391-418.
- Carton, A. M. (2018). "I'm not mopping the floors, I'm putting a man on the moon": How NASA leaders enhanced the meaningfulness of work by changing the meaning of work. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 63(2), 323-369.
- Carton, A. M., & Lucas, B. J. (2018). How can leaders overcome the blurry vision bias? Identifying an antidote to the paradox of vision communication. *Academy of Management Journal*, 61(6), 2106-2129.
- Carton, A. M., Murphy, C., & Clark, J. R. (2014). A (blurry) vision of the future: How leader rhetoric about ultimate goals influences performance. *Academy of Management Journal*, 57(6), 1544-1570.
- Clark, B. R. (1972). The organizational saga in higher education. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 17: 178-184.
- Coraiola, D. M., Suddaby, R., & Foster, W. M. (2018). Organizational fields as mnemonic communities. In J. Glückler, R. Suddaby, & R. Lenz (Eds.), *Knowledge and institutions* (Vol. 13, pp. 45-68). Berlin: Springer.
- Cornelissen, J. P., Holt, R., & Zundel, M. (2011). The role of analogy and metaphor in the framing and legitimization of strategic change. *Organization Studies*, 32(12), 1701-1716.
- Cornelissen, J. P., Mantere, S., & Vaara, E. (2014). The contraction of meaning: The combined effect of communication, emotions, and materiality on sensemaking in the Stockwell shooting. *Journal of Management Studies*, 51(5), 699-736.
- Corley, K. G., & Gioia, D. A. (2004). Identity ambiguity and change in the wake of a corporate spin-off. *Administrative science quarterly*, 49(2), 173-208.

- Cunliffe, A. L., Luhman, J. T., & Boje, D. M. (2004). Narrative temporality: Implications for organizational research. *Organization Studies*, 25(2), 261-286.
- Decker, S., Hassard, J., & Rowlinson, M. (2021). Rethinking history and memory in organization studies: The case for historiographical reflexivity. *Human Relations*, 74(8), 1123-1155.
- DeCelles, K. A., Tesluk, P. E., & Taxman, F. S. (2013). A field investigation of multilevel cynicism toward change. *Organization Science*, 24(1), 154-171.
- Foldy, E. G., Goldman, L., & Ospina, S. (2008). Sensegiving and the role of cognitive shifts in the work of leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 19(5), 514-529.
- Foroughi, H., Coraiola, D. M., Rintamäki, J., Mena, S., & Foster, W. M. (2020). Organizational Memory Studies. *Organization Studies*, 41(12), 1725-1748.
- Foster, W. M., Suddaby, R., Minkus, A., & Wiebe, E. (2011). History as social memory assets: The example of Tim Hortons. *Management & Organizational History*, 6(1), 101-120.
- Furst, S. A., & Cable, D. M. (2008). Employee resistance to organizational change: managerial influence tactics and leader-member exchange. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 93(2), 453.
- Ge, B., De Massis, A., & Kotlar, J. (2022). Mining the past: History scripting strategies and competitive advantage in a family business. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 46(1), 223-251.
- Geertz, C. (2000). Thick description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture. In Geertz, C. (Ed.), *The interpretation of cultures* (pp. 581– 612). New York: Basic Books.
- Gill, M. J., Gill, D. J., & Roulet, T. J. (2018). Constructing trustworthy historical narratives: Criteria, principles and techniques. *British Journal of Management*, 29(1), 191-205.
- Gioia, D. A., Corley, K. G., & Fabbri, T. (2002). Revising the past (while thinking in the future perfect tense). *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 15(6), 622-634.
- Gioia, D. A., & Chittipeddi, K. (1991). Sensemaking and sensegiving in strategic change initiation. *Strategic Management Journal*, 12(6), 433-448.
- Glynn, M. A., & Navis, C. (2013). Categories, identities, and cultural classification: Moving beyond a model of categorical constraint. *Journal of Management Studies*, 50(6), 1124-1137.
- Gioia, D. A., & Thomas, J. B. (1996). Identity, image, and issue interpretation: Sensemaking during strategic change in academia. *Administrative science quarterly*, 370-403.
- Hatch, M. J., & Schultz, M. (2017). Toward a theory of using history authentically: Historicizing in the Carlsberg Group. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 62(4), 657-697.
- Hernes, T., Feddersen, J., & Schultz, M. (2021). Material temporality: How materiality ‘does’ time in food organizing. *Organization Studies*, 42(2), 351-371.
- Hernes, T., & Schultz, M. (2020). Translating the Distant into the Present: How actors address distant past and future events through situated activity. *Organization Theory*, 1(1), 1-20.
- Holt, D. B. (2006). Jack Daniel's America: Iconic brands as ideological parasites and proselytizers. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 6(3): 355-377.
- Huy, Q. N. (1999). Emotional capability, emotional intelligence, and radical change. *Academy of Management Review*, 24(2), 325-345.
- Huy, Q. N. (2002). Emotional balancing of organizational continuity and radical change: The contribution of middle managers. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 47(1), 31-69.
- Iannaccone, L. R. (1994). Why strict churches are strong. *American Journal of Sociology*, 99: 1180-1211.
- Illia, L., & Zamparini, A. (2016). Legitimate distinctiveness, historical bricolage, and the fortune

- of the commons. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 25(4), 397-414.
- Kaplan, U. (2010). Images of monasticism: The temple stay program and the re-branding of Korean Buddhist temples. *Korean Studies*, 127-146.
- Kelly, D. M. (1986). *Why conservative churches are growing: A study in sociology of religion with a new preface*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press.
- Keown, D. (1991). *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*. New York: Macmillan.
- Logemann, M., Piekkari, R., & Cornelissen, J. (2019). The sense of it all: Framing and narratives in sensegiving about a strategic change. *Long Range Planning*, 52(5), 101852.
- Lyle, M. C., Walsh, I. J., & Coraiola, D. M. (2022). What is NORML? Sedimented meanings in ambiguous organizational identities. *Organization Studies*, 43(12), 1991-2012.
- Maclean, M., Harvey, C., Sillince, J. A., & Golant, B. D. (2018). Intertextuality, rhetorical history and the uses of the past in organizational transition. *Organization Studies*, 39(12), 1733-1755.
- Maclean, M., Harvey, C., Suddaby, R., & Coraiola, D. M. (2023). Multi-Temporality and the Ghostly: How Communing with Times Past Informs Organizational Futures. *Journal of Management Studies*.
- Maitlis, S., & Lawrence, T. B. (2007). Triggers and enablers of sensegiving in organizations. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50(1), 57-84.
- Mees-Buss, J., Welch, C., & Piekkari, R. (2022). From templates to heuristics: How and why to move beyond the Gioia methodology. *Organizational Research Methods*, 25(2), 405-429.
- Nissley, N., & Casey, A. (2002). The politics of the exhibition: Viewing corporate museums through the paradigmatic lens of organizational memory. *British Journal of Management*, 13(2), 35-45.
- Ocasio, W., Laamanen, T., & Vaara, E. (2018). Communication and attention dynamics: An attention-based view of strategic change. *Strategic Management Journal*, 39(1), 155-167.
- Ocasio, W., Mäuskopf, M., & Steele, C. W. (2016). History, society, and institutions: The role of collective memory in the emergence and evolution of societal logics. *Academy of Management Review*, 41(4), 676-699.
- Oertel, S., & Thommes, K. (2018). History as a source of organizational identity creation. *Organization Studies*, 39(12), 1709-1731.
- Olick, J. K. (1999). Collective memory: The two cultures. *Sociological Theory*, 17(3), 333-348.
- Olick, J. K., & Robbins, J. (1998). Social memory studies: From "collective memory" to the historical sociology of mnemonic practices. *Annual Review of sociology*, 24(1), 105-140.
- Oreg, S., Bartunek, J. M., Lee, G., & Do, B. (2018). An affect-based model of recipients' responses to organizational change events. *Academy of Management Review*, 43(1), 65-86.
- Oreg, S., & Berson, Y. (2011). Leadership and employees' reactions to change: The role of leaders' personal attributes and transformational leadership style. *Personnel Psychology*, 64(3), 627-659.
- Oreg, S., & Berson, Y. (2019). Leaders' impact on organizational change: Bridging theoretical and methodological chasms. *Academy of Management Annals*, 13(1), 272-307.
- Oreg, S., Vakola, M., & Armenakis, A. (2011). Change recipients' reactions to organizational change: A 60-year review of quantitative studies. *The Journal of applied behavioral science*, 47(4), 461-524.

- Park, P. (2014). Buddhism in Modern Korea. In M. Pocesky (Eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to East and Inner Asian Buddhism* (466-484). New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.
- Pentland, B. T. (1999) Building process theory with narrative: From description to explanation. *Academy of Management Review*, 24(4): 711-724.
- Ravasi, D., Rindova, V., & Stigliani, I. (2019). The Stuff of Legend: History, Memory, and the Temporality of Organizational Identity Construction. *Academy of Management Journal*, 62(5), 1523-1555.
- Rowlinson, M., Hassard, J., & Decker, S. (2014). Research strategies for organizational history: A dialogue between historical theory and organization theory. *Academy of Management Review*, 39, 250-274.
- Rubin, D. C., & Kozin, M. (1984). Vivid memories. *Cognition*, 16(1), 81-95.
- Russell, J. A. (2003). Core affect and the psychological construction of emotion. *Psychological Review*, 110(1), 145.
- Sasaki, I., Kotlar, J., Ravasi, D., & Vaara, E. (2020). Dealing with revered past: Historical identity statements and strategic change in Japanese family firms. *Strategic Management Journal*, 41(3), 590-623.
- Sasaki, I., Kotosaka, M., & De Massis, A. (2024). When Top Managers' Temporal Orientations Collide: Middle Managers and the Strategic Use of the Past. *Organization Studies*, 01708406241236604.
- Schein, E. H. (2010). *Organizational culture and leadership*, Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Schultz, M., & Hernes, T. (2013). A temporal perspective on organizational identity. *Organization Science*, 24(1), 1-21.
- Schultz, M., & Hernes, T. (2020). Temporal interplay between strategy and identity: Punctuated, subsumed, and sustained modes. *Strategic Organization*, 18(1), 106-135.
- Sinha, P. N., Jaskiewicz, P., Gibb, J., & Combs, J. G. (2020). Managing history: How New Zealand's Gallagher Group used rhetorical narratives to reprioritize and modify imprinted strategic guideposts. *Strategic Management Journal*, 41(3), 557-589.
- Sonenshein, S. (2010). We're changing—Or are we? Untangling the role of progressive, regressive, and stability narratives during strategic change implementation. *Academy of Management Journal*, 53(3), 477-512.
- Song, H. C. (2023a). Identity conflict amidst environmental change: An ethnography of a Korean Buddhist temple. *Journal of Management Studies*, 60(4), 889-923.
- Song, H. C. (2023b). How buddhist monks use historical narratives to delegitimize a dominant institutional logic: the case of a Korean buddhist organizational field, 1910–1962. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 32(4), 295-312.
- Suddaby, R., Coraiola, D., Harvey, C., & Foster, W. (2020). History and the micro-foundations of dynamic capabilities. *Strategic Management Journal*, 41(3), 530-556.
- Suddaby, R., & Foster, W. M. (2017). History and organizational change. *Journal of Management*, 43(1), 19-38.
- Suddaby, R., Foster, W. M., & Quinn-Trank, C. (2010). Rhetorical history as a source of competitive advantage. In J. A. Baum & J. Lampel (Eds.), *The Globalization of Strategy Research* (147-174). Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing.
- Suddaby, R., Israelsen, T., Robert Mitchell, J., & Lim, D. S. (2023). Entrepreneurial visions as rhetorical history: A diegetic narrative model of stakeholder enrollment. *Academy of Management Review*, 48(2), 220-243.

- Vaara, E., & Lamberg, J. A. (2016). Taking historical embeddedness seriously: Three historical approaches to advance strategy process and practice research. *Academy of Management Review*, 41(4), 633-657.
- Vaara, E., Sonenshein, S., & Boje, D. (2016). Narratives as sources of stability and change in organizations: Approaches and directions for future research. *Academy of Management Annals*, 10(1), 495-560.
- Vakola, M., Armenakis, A., & Oreg, S. (2013). Reactions to organizational change from an individual differences perspective: A review of empirical research. In S. Oreg, A. Michel, & R. Todnem (Eds.), *The psychology of organizational change: Viewing change from the employee's perspective* (pp. 95-122). Cambridge University Press.
- Van Maanen, J. (2011). *Tales of the field: On writing ethnography*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Vergne, J. P., & Wry, T. (2014). Categorizing categorization research: Review, integration, and future directions. *Journal of Management Studies*, 51(1), 56-94.
- Wadhvani, R. D., Suddaby, R., Mordhorst, M., & Popp, A. (2018). History as organizing: Uses of the past in organization studies. *Organization Studies*, 39(12), 1663-1683.
- Ybema, S. (2014). The invention of transitions: History as a symbolic site for discursive struggles over organizational change. *Organization*, 21(4), 495-513.
- Zerubavel, E. (2003). *Time maps: Collective memory and the social shape of the past*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Table 1. Changes initiated by Master Monk T at B-temple

Changes in organizational rules (C1)	
<i>Changes</i>	<i>Traditions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B-temple monks wake up at 5:00 am every day. • Classical music is played as background music at mealtimes. • Bread and coffee are allowed at mealtimes. • Monks and believers eat together and freely talk with each other at mealtimes. • Monks, believers, and even visitors freely meditate together in the central Buddha hall. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monks wake up at 3:00 am every day. • Monks maintain total silence during mealtimes. • Monks' food choices are technically restricted in monastic life. • Monks and believers eat separately at mealtimes when they eat in the temple (Kitchen spaces are often separated). • Meditation is practiced in isolation from secular people.
Changes in Organizational roles (C2)	
<i>Changes</i>	<i>Traditions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B-temple publicly opens its meditation hall to the community. • B-temple invites community people and visitors to its new cultural programs. • B-temple donates 10% of its budget back to the community. • B-temple monks often engage in community matters, serving as if they are service providers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The temple is a quiet place for monks' meditation practice. • The temple plays the role of the monks' home rather than a community hub. • The temple uses all budgets for temple management. • The monks' role is to engage in meditation.
Changes in Resource procurement (C3)	
<i>Changes</i>	<i>Traditions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B-temple launches its own profit-generating businesses. • B-temple collaborates with local companies to pursue shared value. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The temple runs the organization on donations. • The temple collaborates with other organizations only in restricted areas of work such as building maintenance.

Table 2. Selected quotes of Master Monk T's historical narratives

Three sets of strategic historical narratives	Selected quotes	Narrative sources
Reinterpreting Organizational Tradition (ROT)	<p>“One day, Master Monk M looks down at one of his disciples meditating with a painful face. He says, ‘You look like you are being punished.’ If you do not feel comfortable sitting on a cushion, find other ways to meditate.”</p> <p>“I am not sure if Buddha restricted monks’ food choices. Buddha himself recovered as he drank milk soup after years of painstaking asceticism. At the time, milk soup was even a luxurious food for an ascetic.”</p> <p>“Buddha enjoyed watching the sunrise when he woke up. Imagine how one can exactly measure time at that time. They naturally woke up as the sun rose. Buddha never said ‘All monks must wake up at 3:00 a.m.’”</p>	Buddha and Master Monk M
Spanning Organizational Categories (SOC)	<p>“Monks in the Goryeo period always serve society and poor people. Now, the society serves monks. Monks pay too much attention to their meditation progress only, and we do not have time to look for people around us. So, what is our role?”</p> <p>“It is a strongly biased belief that a Buddhist temple is only monks’ property existing for monks’ meditation. In [the] Goryeo period, [the] Buddhist temple was thought to be a community hub. People have the right to use this place for their interests.”</p> <p>“The Buddhist lantern festival in the Goryeo period was like a national festival. Meditators, artists, merchants, farmers, and beggars came to the temple and enjoyed exchanging their daily lives. Diversity is a key teaching of Buddhism. Do we have the diversity now?”</p>	Goryeo dynasty (918 – 1392)
Implanting Survival Frame (ISF)	<p>“We all know that Joseon monks joined the army to save the country. They literally sacrificed all the Buddhist moral precepts to save the country and Buddhism. Had they not done so, we would no longer exist here. Then, let me ask you. What have you done for this temple?”</p> <p>“Sometimes, we mindlessly enshrine just what we are familiar with... That was exactly what happened in Joseon. Joseon Buddhism finally fell because monks mindlessly adhered to whatever they called tradition. We do not want to repeat that.”</p>	Joseon dynasty (1392 – 1910)

Table 3. Frequency data of Master Monk T's historical narratives

Historical narratives	Reinterpreting Organizational Tradition (ROT)	Spanning Organizational Categories (SOC)	Implanting Survival Frame (ISF)
Target change initiatives	Organizational rule (C1)	Organizational role (C2)	Resource procurement (C3)
Narrative sources	Buddha & Master Monk M	The Goryeo Dynasty (918 – 1392)	The Joseon Dynasty (1392 – 1910)
By timing (Temporality of narratives)			
Apr 5 th , 2017 – Jun 30 th , 2017	11	2	1
Jul 1 st , 2017 – Sep 30 th , 2017	1	2	4
Oct 1 st , 2017 – Dec 31 st , 2017	4	5	12
Jan 1 st , 2018 – Apr 19 th , 2018	5	11	20
Total (78)	21	20	37
By data sources (Audience of narratives)			
<i>Public sources (External audiences)</i>			
Speeches at religious events (4)	3	0	1
Speeches at non-religious events (1)	1	0	0
B-temple monthly magazine (2)	2	0	0
Korean Buddhist newspaper A (9)	5	2	2
Korean Buddhist newspaper B (5)	2	1	2
Local community newspaper (4)	3	0	1
Public sources total (25)	16	3	6
<i>Internal sources (Internal audiences)</i>			
Regular morning gardening time (20)	3	6	11
Tea time with B-temple monks (18)	0	4	14
Tea time with other temple monks (7)	2	4	1
Committee meetings (4)	0	2	2
Internal report to Jo-Gye Order (1)	0	0	1
Special lectures to student monks (3)	0	1	2
Internal sources total (53)	5	17	31
Total (78)	21	20	37

Table 4. Matches between change codes and Master Monk T's narrative codes*

	Reinterpreting Organizational Tradition (ROT)	Spanning Organizational Categories (SOC)	Implanting Survival Frame (ISF)	Total frequency
Organizational rule (C1)	19 (ROT-C1)	3 (SOC-C1)	2 (ISF-C1)	24 (30%)
Organizational role (C2)	2 (ROT-C2)	12 (SOC-C2)	4 (ISF-C2)	18 (22%)
Resource procurement (C3)	0 (ROT-C3)	5 (SOC-C3)	31 (ISF-C3)	36 (48%)
Total frequency	21 (27%)	20 (26%)	37 (47%)	78 (100%)

*Note:

ROT-C1: Reinterpreting organizational tradition to facilitate changes in organizational rules

ROT-C2: Reinterpreting organizational tradition to facilitate changes in organizational roles

ROT-C3: Reinterpreting organizational tradition to facilitate changes in resource procurement

SOC-C1: Spanning organizational categories to facilitate changes in organizational rules

SOC-C2: Spanning organizational categories to facilitate changes in organizational roles

SOC-C3: Spanning organizational categories to facilitate changes in resource procurement

ISF-C1: Implanting survival frame to facilitate changes in organizational rules

ISF-C2: Implanting survival frame to facilitate changes in organizational roles

ISF-C3: Implanting survival frame to facilitate changes in resource procurement

Table 5. Selected evidence of B-temple monks' reactions to Master Monk T's narratives

Reaction code	Selected interview quotes (I), observation (O), document (D), and monks' memo (M)
Context focusing toward ROT narrative (ROT-CF)	“Rules are made by the environment people live in. Buddha’s era is different from how we live now ... I do not think it is right to directly apply monastic rules in Buddha’s era to now” (I).
	“Of course, right action, right mind, and right teaching must not change over time. It is an absolute thing. But, rules can always change ... Rules set in Buddha’s context definitely do not work now” (M).
	“I think Master Monk T’s stories are half right and half wrong. Buddha lived 2,500 years ago. We should follow his teachings, but from a life perspective, Buddha and we live in an entirely different world” (M).
Fact-verification toward ROT narrative (ROT- FV)	“I am not sure his story on Master Monk M is true. I read Master Monk M’s writings several times. But, I have never heard of what Master Monk D told us. The way I remember him [Master Monk M] is that he was the one who strongly encouraged strict posture meditation” (I).
	“When he told the story to us, I was wondering whether it is really true. Theravada monks still wake up at 3:00 a.m.” (I).
Self-visualization toward SOC narrative (SOC-SV)	“His talk reminds me of the most prolific moment of Buddhism [Goryeo period]. Diverse cultures and ideas coexisted at the time ... I agree that we should revive that time ... Something should be changed” (I).
	“Yes. I think monks need to be multi-players. In the Goryeo period, monks were given many different roles. At the time, people did not think that Buddhist monks were all meditators. Nowadays, all monks want to be meditators. This trend is, I think, wrong ... It was very common for monks to engage in society at the time. I think we should follow the model” (I).
	“Master Monk T’s talk is true. In the Goryeo period, monks helped people, and people helped monks. It was a sort of authentic mutual relationship. I think all religious people should ultimately serve society. Only by doing that, will people respect us” (I).
Self-visualization toward ISF narrative (ISF-SV)	“What we are doing is wrong. We should go back to Buddhism in the Goryeo Dynasty and develop a plan to prosper” (M).
	“Monks let their hair grow long just to survive. They were treated like beggars ... That must have been really hard. Now, we are rich and strong. I think we have forgotten something because of this rich life. We should change” (I).
	“His talks made me imagine monks’ harsh lives at the time [Joseon]. It must be so hard. Being treated like a human being by local people might have been just the only hope for them ... Buddhism withered in this country. Now, it is time to change” (I).
	“Master Monk T’s argument is a provocative thought. I agree that accepting an opposite idea is the central idea of Buddhism. The idea of capitalism in this time might be something like a Confucianism equivalent to Joseon.” (M).
“I completely agree with his argument. What would be the most important thing at the end of the day? Before doing whatever we want to do as monks, we should first work to survive” (I).	
“Master Monk T is right. We become so lazy. I am not an exception. I have also become lazy” (O).	

Figure 1. Data structure

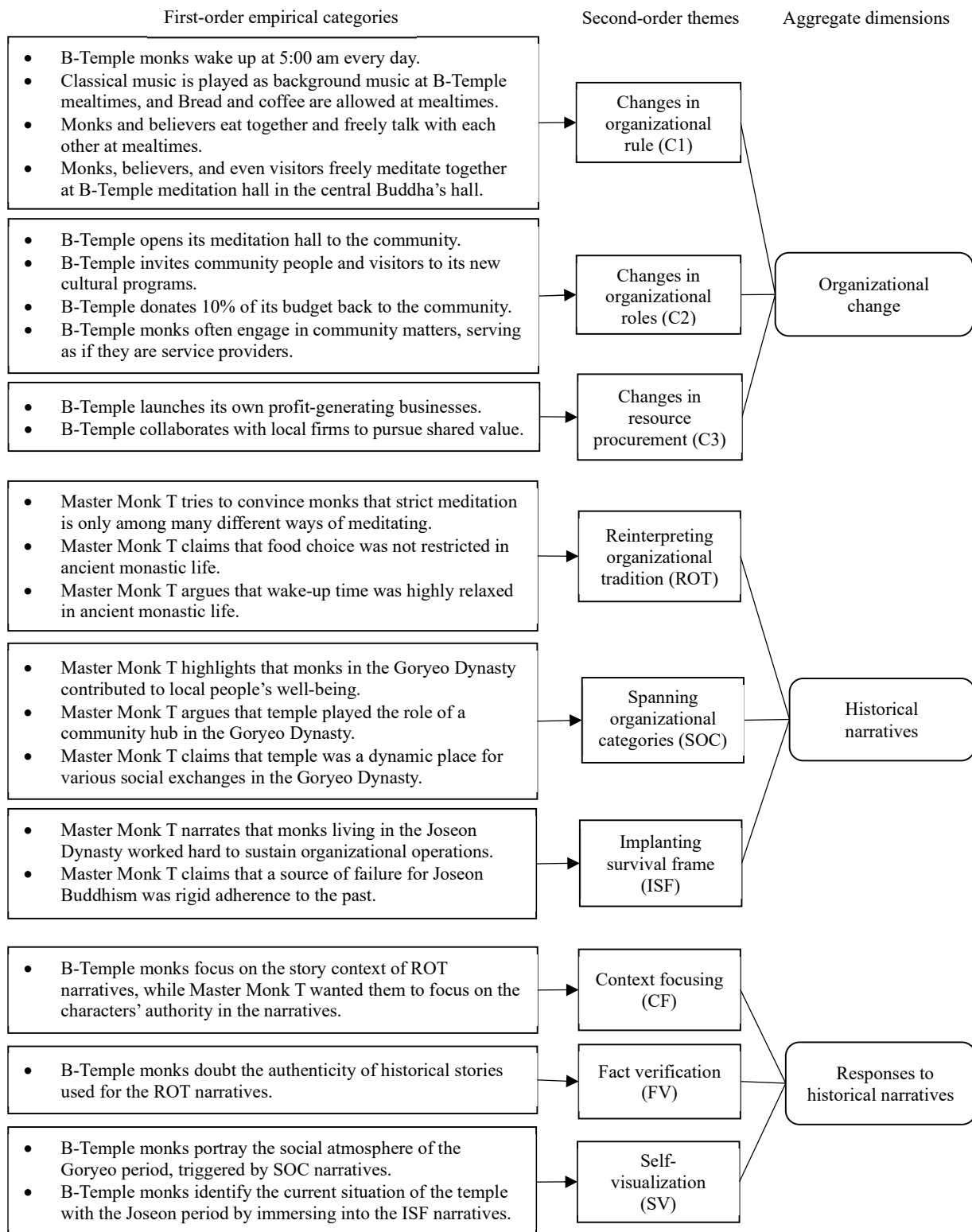
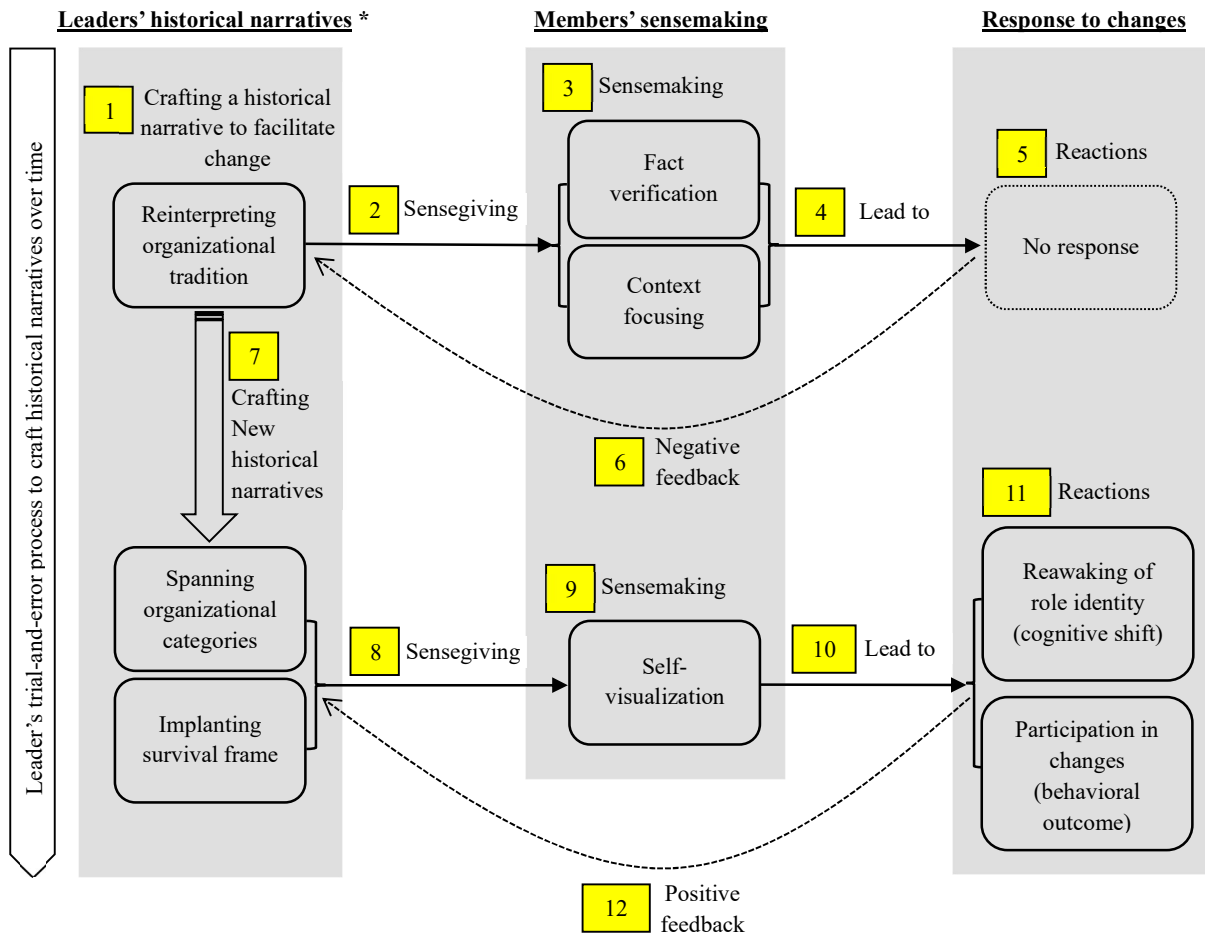


Figure 2. The Venerable Monk Seosan and His Monk's Army in a Battle Field in the 1592 Japanese Invasion*



* Source: The War Memorial of Korea (drawn by Kwangjin Park in 1976)

Figure 3. Summary of how leaders’ historical narratives influence members’ response to changes



* Note:
 Reinterpreting organizational traditions was used to facilitate changes in organizational rules; Spanning organizational categories was used to facilitate changes in organizational roles; and Implanting survival frame was used to facilitate changes in resource procurement (see Table 4).

Appendix A. B-temple monks' reaction to Master Monk T's historical narratives

B-temple monks code	Observation in the fieldwork (O)	Interview in the fieldwork (Int-1)	Interview after the fieldwork (Int-2)	Reaction toward ROT narrative			Reaction toward SOC narrative			Reaction toward ISF narrative		
				CF	FV	SV	CF	FV	SV	CF	FV	SV
Monk U	O	O	O									
Monk N	O	X	O									
Monk Ub	O	O	O	CF								
Monk O	O	O	O		FV							
Monk K	X	X	O					FV			FV	
Monk Ob	X	X	O	CF								
Monk G	X	X	O		FV			FV	SV			SV
Monk H	O	O	O									
Monk L	O	O	X	CF	FV	SV				CF		
Monk Lb	O	X	O		FV							
Monk J	X	X	O									
Monk Lc	O	X	O									
Monk Uc	O	X	O									
Monk R	O	X	O	CF	FV			FV				
Monk I	O	O	O									
Monk Kb	O	X	O		FV							
Monk P	O	O	O					CF				
Monk B	X	O	X		FV	SV						
Monk H	O	O	O	CF								
Monk E	O	X	O									
Monk C	O	X	O	CF				FV				
Monk Cb	O	X	O		FV							
Monk M	O	X	O									
Monk D	O	X	X	CF	FV							
Monk Jb	O	X	O	CF								
Monk Bb	O	O	O					CF				
Monk Y	O	O	O		FV							
Monk Mb	O	X	O									
Monk R	O	X	O	CF		SV						
Monk Bc	O	X	O									
Monk Nb	O	X	O		FV			FV			FV	
Monk Eb	O	O	O	CF								
Monk Oc	O	X	O									
Monk Ib	O	X	O	CF	FV							
Monk Db	O	O	O									
Monk Jb	O	X	O		FV							
Monk S	O	O	O		FV	SV						

*Note:

ROT: Reinterpreting organizational tradition

SOC: Spanning organizational categories

ISF: Implanting survival frame

CF: Context focusing

FV: Fact verification

SV: Self-visualization

Appendix B. Observed B-temple monks' response to organizational changes

B-temple monks code	SV toward ROT narrative	SV toward SOC narrative	SV toward ISF narrative	Cognitive shift	Behavioral outcome
				Role identity	Participation in changes*
Monk U					
Monk N					
Monk Ub					
Monk O					
Monk K					
Monk Ob					
Monk G					
Monk H					
Monk L					
Monk Lb					
Monk J					
Monk Lc					
Monk Uc					
Monk R					
Monk I					
Monk Kb					
Monk P					
Monk B					
Monk H					
Monk E					
Monk C					
Monk Cb					
Monk M					
Monk D					
Monk Jb					
Monk Bb					
Monk Y					
Monk Mb					
Monk R					
Monk Bc					
Monk Nb					
Monk Eb					
Monk Oc					
Monk Ib					
Monk Db					
Monk Jb					
Monk S					

*Note:

Major change initiatives led by Master Monk T include developing new tourist programs, opening meditation hall to people, giving dharma talk (teaching on Buddhism) to people in public institutions, working with private local companies, offering donations back to society, and inviting secular meditators and scholars to learn from them, which involve in significant modification of monastic traditions (see Table 1).