

# **Information Practices of the Buddhist Temple**

**Mahamewnawa Asapuwa**

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## **Certificate of Original Authorship**

I, PETHIGAMAGE KURUWITAGE LAMITH LAKNUWAN PEREREA declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Arts and Social Science at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

This research is supported by the Australian Government Research Training Program.

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## Published papers

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## **Abstract**

This study used an ethnographic approach to explore the information practices of members of a religious organisation, the globalised Mahamevnawa Buddhist Temple. It was informed by an information practices theoretical perspective, complementing theoretical and practical work from Schatzki, Bourdieu, Lloyd and Olsson, and Gherardi, with work from a variety of disciplines, including Castells' work on networked society, Sassen's work on globalised organisations and Sack's work on space and place. The study's concern is with three aspects of this approach: what are the practices of monks and devotees of the Temple, what are the outcomes of these practices and how do monks and devotees understand the notion of the Temple. In this insider study, data was gathered from participant observation, interviews with both monks and devotees and email follow-ups, and analysis of the online presence of the temple through its website and other social media sites. The findings show that participants' information practices lead to a range of outcomes, expressed in terms of the Bourdieusian notion of capital, with karmic capital emerging as a very important outcome of these practices. They also show how participants think the Temple exists not just in space but also in time, through temporary place. A key contribution of this study, situated in the context of the non-Western context of the Sri Lankan Buddhist diaspora, is its challenges to Western assumptions about information practices and their outcomes.