

**JIN NIKĀYA: DEVELOPMENT, ORGANIZATION, PRACTICES,  
AND SOCIOPOLITICAL INTERACTIONS IN THAILAND**



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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to examine the sociopolitical roles Jin Nikāya has played in different periods of development, its internal organization, major practices, as well as its interactions with a variety of external institutions from the monarchy, the Supreme Sangha Council, Chinese lay Buddhist society and Chinese Buddhist missionaries in Thailand. After a careful examination through multiple approaches including examination of temple-documents, interviews, participant observation and questionnaire investigation, the findings suggested: 1) that Jin Nikāya has historically played various sociopolitical roles ranging from medical-server; conflict moderator, to diplomatic envoys at people-to-people level; 2) it was well organized by its long-established hereditary Dharma-transmission, its ecclesiastic hierarchy is incorporated in the uniformed Thai Sangha bureaucracy, patriarch's personal charisma and nepotism is applicable in its internal ecclesiastic mobility; 3) the major practices of Jin Nikāya, whether its popular folk religious practices, classic Buddhist rituals or well organized ceremonies are functional towards earning the sufficient material donations for daily operations, which are heavily commercialized; 4) the patron-client bonds between Jin Nikāya and Thai monarchy not just grants this foreign-born minority Buddhist school legitimacy to exist in Thailand, but also determines its relationship with the local Theravadin majority, Chinese lay Buddhist society and even Chinese missionaries who posed "challenges" to Jin Nikāya in recent years. Taking all this into account, a sustainable and prosperous Jin Nikāya could only be anticipated when it produces more qualified monks, whether they have Chinese ancestry or not, and regardless of whichever Chinese dialect they speak.

KEY WORDS: JIN NIKĀYA / DEVELOPMENT / ORGANIZATION / PRACTICES /  
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