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The History of Jin Nikāya in Thailand: A Preliminary Study from a Socio-political Perspective

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Abstract

Jin Nikāya (hereafter JN), literally "Chinese School," refers to a Mahāyāna Buddhist school founded by a group of Chinese monks sojourning in Thailand (Siam at that time) during the 1870s. JN, as one of four Buddhist schools under the jurisdiction of the unified Thai Sangha, has been active within and beyond the Thai-Chinese community for almost one hundred and fifty years. Today this school hosts around one thousand monks and novices in its eighteen temples located in different districts of Thailand. Chinese literature exists on JN, but it is scanty and mainly consists of hagiographies of its leaders. Further, English scholarship on this school is lacking. Therefore, to rectify this dearth, besides chronicling the history of JN, this paper discusses how this school of Chinese and Mahāyāna origin survived and even became increasingly popular in Theravāda-dominated Thai society. In consideration of the important roles the internal leadership has usually played in forming and sustaining a religious institution, this paper also investigates how JN's seven generations of patriarchs, coming from various Chinese sub-ethnicities, Dharma affiliations, and political identities, coped with a dynamic sociopolitical context to secure the survival of their school in Thailand. Through studying the history of JN, this paper also attempts to situate JN in the present and speculate on its future.

Keywords:
History, Jin Nikāya, Thailand, Socio-political Perspective, Patriarchs

泰國佛教「華宗」之歷史初探
——從社會政治學視角

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摘要

「華宗」是公元 1870 年間由一群來自中國的比丘在泰國（時稱暹羅）成立的大乘佛教宗派，存續於泰華社會至今已 150 年之久。作為泰國僧伽管轄下的四個佛教傳承之一，「華宗」目前有 18 家寺院分佈在泰國各地，並大約有 1000 位常駐比丘和沙彌。現今，有關「華宗」的華文文獻雖然存在，但僅限於該宗高僧的傳記，而對於該宗的英文學術研究也相當缺乏。因此，為了改善這種情況，本文除了記述「華宗」的歷史之外，還特別探討「華宗」作為少數外來宗派是如何在泰國這個以小乘佛教為主流的國度生存。此外，考慮到內部領導者在維持一個宗教機構上所扮演的重要角色，本文也深入探討「華宗」迄今為止的七代祖師是如何應對不同歷史時期的社會政治環境。透過研究「華宗」的歷史，本文也試圖對「華宗」的現況定位，以及預測其未來。

關鍵詞：
歷史、華宗、泰國、社會政治學視角、祖師

Note on Romanization:
Pinyin is used as the primary Romanization for Chinese characters throughout this paper; however, some names and organizations in the Wade-Giles system remain unchanged, due to their continuing usage among Thais and various Westerners. For example, Kuomintang (Guomindang in Pinyin system), Sun Yat-sen (Sun Zhongshan), and Liu Khianhin (Liu Qianxin). For the Chinese characters sharing common Romanized version in Pinyin, the sound marks are added to make distinction. For example, 仁意 (Renyì) and 仁誼 (Renyí).

Introduction

Theravāda Buddhism has uninterruptedly served Thai monarchy as its ruling ideology, with the monarch himself at the center, since the late 13th century.[1] In the following centuries, Thai (or Siamese) monarchs ruling from Ayutthaya imported substantial Brahmanic elements from the Angkorian realm in Cambodia to elaborate the godly charisma of the monarchy as a combination of *cakravārtin* (wheel-turning universal ruler) and the god Rama (an avatar or earthly manifestation of the god Vishnu).[2] King Putthayotfa, also known as Rama I, who founded the reigning Ratanakosin, or "Bangkok court," by overthrowing the short-lived Thonburi court in 1782, reiterated this monarch-centered Buddhist ideology by decreeing:

> All beings rely on the king, who embodies *pāramī* (charisma), is by nature endowed with compassion, and who leads the *samana* (monks) and brahmana (citizens).[3]

This decree clearly highlights monarchical authority over the Buddhist Sangha and other religious fraternities.

In the name of purifying the Sangha, King Rama I tightened royal supervision of its affairs. He was also ambitious to standardize Buddhist doctrines by sponsoring a compilation of the well-known Golden Edition of the Tripitaka.[4] By the reign of King Chulalongkorn or Rama V (1868–1910), the first Sangha Act was enacted in 1902 to integrate Buddhist temples of every tradition into a single hierarchic institution, the Supreme Sangha Council

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1 Hoskin, *An Illustrated History of Thailand*, 14–5.
2 Skilling, "King, Sangha and Brahmans," 187.
3 Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer*, 89–93.
4 Ishii, *Sangha, State, and Society*, 64–5.

(hereafter SSC), headed by the *Sangharaja* or Supreme Patriarch.[5] As the primary defender of religion, the monarch often had the last word on appointing the *Sangharaja* and the abbots of important temples within and outside of Bangkok. Under this bill, four Buddhist schools were listed, comprising the mainstream Theravāda-oriented schools, Mahā Nikāya and Dhammayuttika Nikāya, the Mahayana-oriented JN, and Annam Nikāya, the Vietnamese school.[6] Annam Nikāya was founded by Vietnamese monks fleeing the *Tay Son Uprising* (1770–1802) and the suppression that followed it under the Nguyen court.[7] The Vietnamese monks had built temples in the market of Thonburi as early as the 1770s.[8] Their influence continued to grow and was recognized by the early kings of the Ratanakosin court.[9] Today, this school owns twenty-one temples in different districts of Thailand and hosts around three hundred monks.[10]

Some articles of the 1902 Sangha Act were amended in response to changing sociopolitical circumstances of 1941 and 1963, but the essential part that pertains to monarchical control of the Sangha has remained firmly in place up to the present.[11] In effect, the Sangha gradually merged with the interests of the state, hence ideologically and socially serving the ruling elites. Based on his careful observation, the Singapore-based Thai scholar Somboon Suksamran argued that Buddhism and its Sangha had been long served as one of the most important instruments of political legitimation for the ruling elites and one of the main unifying forces in Thai society.[12] In return, the ruling elites relied on Buddhist principles and often sought the advice of senior monks in matters of governance.[13] Under its aegis, the state granted the Sangha certain privileges and ecclesiastical honors for influential senior monks.[14] This deepened the

5 Ishii, 102.

6 Taiguo Huazong, *Taiguo Huazong Dazongzhang Pujing shangshi qishi shoudan tekan* [Special Volume on Celebration of Jin Nikāya Patriarch Pujing's 70th Birthday], 34.

7 Dinh, *The History of Buddhism in Vietnam*, 212, 224–25.

8 Buddhisaro and Thangto, "Annam Nikāya Buddhism on Vietnamese Style in Thailand," 5.

9 Nivat, *A History of Buddhism in Siam*, 24.

10 Buddhisaro, 7.

11 Tambiah, 235–61.

12 Suksamran, *Buddhism and Politics in Thailand: A Study of Socio-Political Change and Political Activism of the Thai Sangha*, 40.

13 Jackson, *Buddhadāsa*, 24.

14 Swearer, *The Buddhist World*, 134.

entangled relations between the Sangha and the ruling elites, forging a community of shared interests. As Peter A. Jackson has pointed out, this merging of interests has led to strong pressures to maintain the conservative role of religion, along with a social order in which senior monks and ruling elites symbiotically share power.[15]

In reality, though, state-patronized Buddhism is far from the only version of Thai religion. As Jackson, Thomas Kirsch, Pattana Kitiarsa, and others have observed, Thai society witnessed the emergence of all manner of spirit-medium cults, monks with magical powers, amulets, and veneration of vernacular Chinese deities during the economic boom of the 1980s and 1990s. These new popular elements added complexity to the Thai religious system.[16] Their overt promotion of this-worldly gains through devotion, and concomitantly the heavy commodification of Buddhism, earned this resulting religiosity the name of "prosperity religion."[17] One of the significant features of this multifarious religion of prosperity, as Kitiarsa pointed out, was that it had hybridized practices and deities of various backgrounds, thus undermining the paramount position of Theravāda Buddhism in Thai society.[18] In response to this novel religious phenomenon, scholarship on Thai Buddhism increasingly began to shift its attention from high-profile Buddhist individuals or movements to religious developments outside the state-patronized Sangha and related political structures.[19]

As one of the four state-listed Buddhist schools under the jurisdiction of the Thai Sangha in 1902, JN has long been unexceptionally integrated into the system of state patronage and control. Like its Theravāda counterparts, the JN school has been expected ideologically and socially to serve the Thai political establishment. The question remains, however, as to how JN, being of Chinese

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15 Jackson, *Buddhadāsa*, 30.

16 Kirsch, "Complexity in the Thai Religious System," 264.

17 Jackson, "Royal spirits, Chinese gods, and Magic monks," 246; Kitiarsa, "Buddha Phanit," 120–121.

18 Kitiarsa, "Beyond Syncretism," 475.

19 In his explanation of the value of studying individual Buddhist agents and their idiosyncratic religious repertoires, McDaniel states that they represent the growing regionalization and internationalization of Southeast Asian Buddhism. The international network and popularity that Wat Phra Dhammankāya, one of the new Buddhist movements, have substantiated McDaniel's argument. See McDaniel, "Buddhists in Modern Southeast Asia," 666; Mackenzie, *New Buddhist Movements in Thailand*, 18–98; and McDaniel, *The Lovelorn Ghost and the Magic Monk*, 222–230.

and Mahāyāna origin, attained Thai political recognition for its prerequisite loyalty and influence under the leadership of its seven generations of patriarchs to date, if not in a Theravāda-dominated Thai society then at least in the extended Thai-Chinese community. Moreover, JN has located most of its eighteen temples in commercial centers throughout the various regions of Thailand, making it less likely to be susceptible to Bangkok-centered prosperity religious practices. How, then, does this school manage to keep its monks and novices true to the faith while preventing them from indulging in worldly pursuits? It should always be remembered that Chinese sojourner monks founded JN for the Chinese community's religious needs in Thailand one hundred and fifty years ago. Thus, the Thai government's evolving Chinese policies have also much impacted its fate.

For a better understanding of JN's long history in the Thai sociopolitical context, this paper periodizes its one hundred and fifty years of development into four phases: *formation* (1871–1919), *decline* (1919–1954), *revival* (1954–1986), and *sustainable development* (1986–). This theoretical periodization is based on the ideas of the incumbent leader or patriarch of JN, along with those of several other senior Sangha members of the school who were born in the 1940s–1950s. Their personal participation in recent decades, and their memories of key developments in JN during the preceding years, enable us to draw a chronological map of this school. According to those individual, it was under Xuxing 續行 and Guow 果悟, the first two generations of patriarchs, that JN completed its formation. Under the leadership of Luqing 盧慶, Furen 複仁 and Yongbin 用賓, the school suffered a period of decline, if not in terms of spirituality then at least in worldly prosperity. After more than three decades of decline between 1919 and 1953, JN entered upon a much-anticipated revival under the leadership of Pujing 普淨, who succeeded Changyi 常義. And finally, with the ascent of the incumbent seventh-generation patriarch, Rende 仁德, JN while still facing certain internal and external challenges has actively sought to sustain the prosperity and royal patronage it had achieved under Pujing. In the following sections, which correspond to each of these four phases, we will consider how the seven generations of patriarchs mentioned above took advantage of the amenable sociopolitical climate of their times and coped with challenging circumstances encountered in certain historical periods, to secure the growth of JN in Thailand.

Methods

A variety of JN publications in the Chinese language have been consulted as the basis for this study. Those texts comprise temple chronicles, both printed and handwritten, commemorative magazines and volumes, and hagiographic sketches of patriarchs or important monks of the JN school. Ancillary reference has also been made to three commemorative magazines published by two surviving Thai-Chinese lay Buddhist societies based in Bangkok's Chinatown.

In addition to the aforementioned publications, a series of interviews with the incumbent JN patriarch and various senior monks of the school were conducted in the major temples serving the school. Most of these talks were conducted variously in both mandarin Chinese and regional Chinese dialects. The incumbent patriarch's mastery of several Chinese dialects, such as Teochew, Hakka, and Cantonese, helpfully expedited communication. The informal interviews offered valuable supplemental insights and breadth of perspective beyond the written sources utilized in this study. Research was also carried out on certain ceremonies and rituals performed in JN temples. Unfortunately, my insufficient knowledge of the Thai language limited broader access to Thai-speaking monks and lay followers.

Historical review of Chinese emigration to Thailand

The arrival of the Chinese in Southeast Asia can be traced back to the Three Kingdom Era (220–280), when the kingdom of Wu sought to trade with maritime polities in this region.[20] After Thailand was brought into the China-promoted tribute system in the late 13th century, the maritime trade between two countries became state-monopolized. That arrangement substantially existed until 1852, when Thailand one-sidedly suspended its tribute to China in response to the pressure posed by the European colonial powers, whose willingness to open the Thai market became stronger and more aggressive at that time.[21] Many entrepreneurs from the southern coast of China had hereditarily engaged in this long tradition of tribute trade between the countries. Chinese traders of particular talent were absorbed into the Thai royal court and granted titles, carrying out the operation of trading with China on behalf of the

20 Wang, *The Chinese Overseas*, 1–2.
21 Viraphol, *Tribute and Profit*, 1, 27.

Thai court.[22] By the 1730s, the Chinese population in the Thai capital of Ayutthaya already numbered over 20,000,[23] mainly consisting of *Minnan*-speaking (*Minnan hua* 閩南話) Hokkien people who originated from the current-day province of Fujian situated along the southeast coast of China.[24] However, Teochew immigrant population gradually overwhelmed the former in number to become the dominant Chinese sub-ethnic group in Thailand, especially after the short-lived Thonburi reign (1767–1782) founded by the half-Teochew King Taksin.[25]

Beset by famine and sociopolitical upheavals occurring in China during the second half of the 19th century, Chinese population along the southern coast started to migrate to Southeast Asia in large numbers in response to the high demand for cheap manpower on the part of European colonial powers in the region.[26] According to the census conducted by the Thai court toward the end of King Chulalongkorn in 1910, the Chinese population in Bangkok had reached 400,000, comprising five main sub-ethnic groups defined by the respective dialects they spoke: Teochew, Hokkien, Hakka, Hailam and Cantonese.[27] It estimated that Teochew speakers amounted to approximately 60% of the 400,000 Chinese, Hokkien 15%, Hakka 10%, Hailim 10% and Cantonese 5%.[28] These Chinese ethno-linguistic groups at that time did not subscribe to any sense of common or shared "Chinese" identity. In fact, prior to the early twentieth century, when anti-Chinese sentiment and a rising Thai ethno-nationalism took hold, they often treated each other harshly in conflicts of interest up.[29] Like their counterpart diaspora communities in other Southeast Asian countries, the Chinese in Thailand tended to self-organized in societies for their own protection, typically on the basis of shared folk traditions brought from their respective home districts in China.[30]

Notwithstanding the larger size of the Teochew group, the Hokkien community maintained a level of political influence for at least the first four reigns of the Ratanakosin court (1782 onwards) due to their strong connections

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22 Baker and Phongpaichit, *A History of Thailand*, 33–5.
23 Baker and Phongpaichit, *A History of Ayutthaya*, 217–18.
24 Roy, *Siamese Melting Pot*, 173.
25 Sng and Bisalputra, *A History of The Thai-Chinese*, 170, 174–75.
26 Suryadinata, "Ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia," 9–10.
27 Roy, 193.
28 Chanthawanit, "Tin kamnoet khong chao chin taechiu bai prathet chin," 1–18.
29 Sng, 258; Baker, 101–02.
30 Formoso, "Chinese Temples and Philanthropic Associations in Thailand," 248.

with powerful Thai aristocratic clans established originally in the Ayutthaya era.[31] From 1782 to 1932, as the power of the nobility waned following the abolition of the absolute monarchy in Thailand, some ten prominent Chinese tycoons were appointed by the Ministry of Trade and Foreign Affairs (*krom phra khlang*) to serve as the director of the Eastern Trade Department (*krom tha sai*), whose duties included the exercise of Thai authority over Chinese emigrants. Of those ten tycoons, fully nine were Hokkien.[32] The only exception was Liu Khianhin 劉乾興, the forbearer of the Chotikasthian family of Hakka origin. Khianhin was favored by King Chulalongkorn and saw appointment as the director of the Eastern Trade Department in 1879.[33] It was this Hakka tycoon who supported the establishment of JN politically and materially, as we will discuss later.

The Thai court's Chinese policies began to take a decidedly negative turn at the beginning of King Vajiravudh's reign (Rama VI, 1910–1925). That turn came in the wake of the 1910 Chinese general strike against the Thai court's attempt to increase the Chinese poll tax, the chaos of which had shut down Bangkok for three days.[34] The western-educated monarch, shocked by the organizational capacity of the Chinese community and its dominance over the economy, commerce, ports, transport, and urban services in his kingdom, publicly denounced the Chinese as "Oriental Jews" who had been sucking the Thai economy for a long time with no intention to assimilate.[35] A strong anti-Chinese sentiment was consequently ignited in Thai society. To advance Chinese political integration and social assimilation into the Thai national fold, both the Nationalization Act and the Family Name Act were enacted in 1913. Their objective was to ease the path to Thai citizenship, but under the precondition of adopting Thai surnames upon naturalization. The Private School Act of 1919 regulated Chinese schools in Thailand, with the requirement that they include Thai language and Thai history as compulsory courses, while the National Education Act of 1921 extended governmental control over Chinese schools.[36] Beginning in 1927–1928, a series of additional bills and legal revisions were issued in the interest of imposing more stringent controls on the

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31 Sng, 176–77.

32 Roy, 179, 186.

33 Sng, 206–207; Li, "Dapu Zhaokun Liu Khianhin shiji kao" [An exploration of the life and deeds of Chaokhun Liu Khianhin from Dapu], 62.

34 Sng, 237.

35 Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*, 216.

36 Skinner, "Chinese Assimilation and Thai Politics," 244.

establishment and activities of Chinese associations and institutions of all sorts.[37] JN, as one of the active religious institutions in the Chinese community, did not escape this period of stricter state-backed Chinese regulation.

The anti-Chinese policy continued over subsequent decades and reached its culmination during Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram's (hereafter Phibun) two terms of premiership in 1938–1944 and 1948–1957. During his first term, Phibun, in his nationalist political ambition, sought to make Thailand a regional hegemonic power allied with Japanese imperialism. To that end he promoted efforts to eradicate Chinese schools, newspapers, societies, and remittance agencies.[38] A number of Chinese community leaders and political activists were subsequently arrested and deported. Highly restrictive quotas were in turn set on Chinese immigration, while a variety of semi-skilled occupations were reserved only for Thai nationals. Several state-owned trading companies endowed with competitive advantages were additionally established to counter Chinese economic dominance in the domestic wholesale, food processing, and import-export trades.[39] In this oppressive sociopolitical climate, the only options left for Chinese who were unwilling to adopt Thai citizenship were to suffer increasing socio-economic marginalization or depart the country altogether. The Chinese who accepted naturalization continued to face arbitrary discrimination and were forced to abandon Chinese learning in order to assimilate fully into the Thai educational system. Over time their descendants lost their ethnic language.

The post-Phibun Thai governments softened the anti-Chinese policy to some extent, but Thailand, as a prominent ally and beneficiary of the America-led anti-Communist campaign in Southeast Asia, was cautioned against communist ideological propaganda in Southeast Asia.[40] The successive military leaders maintained that the anti-religious stance of communism threatened the Buddhist ideological foundations of Thailand's national integrity, along with its most hallowed institutions, particularly the monarchy.[41] They harshly prosecuted any suspected leftist individuals and activities. Indeed, it is believed that the 1962 Sangha Act was passed primarily to prevent communist

37 Roy, 194.
38 Sng, 344.
39 Chanthawanit, "From Siamese Chinese to Chinese-Thai," 240–43.
40 Stuart-Fox, *A Short History of China and Southeast Asia*, 162–64.
41 Jackson, *Buddhadāsa*, 29.

infiltration into and radicalization of the Sangha and its monasteries.[42] Under this bill, a large number of educated Thai monks were mobilized as "Dharma ambassadors" to propagate an anti-communist political agenda in rural areas of Thailand.[43]

This enduring anti-communist sociopolitical context contributed in varying degrees to an existential distrust in Thai-Sino relations that has continued even up to today, despite Thailand's growing economic reliance on China in the recent two decades. As the Bangkok-based Chinese scholar Zhang Xizhen stated, having closely observed Thai perceptions of China for years, both the Thai public and politicians seem far from confident of China's intentions and the transparency of its engagements with Thailand.[44] No Southeast Asian institute, according to Malaysia-based Ngeow Chowbin, would want to be labeled as pro-China.[45] Moreover, Chinese in Thailand were on the whole anxious about being perceived as having interactive relations with China, as they worried that they might be suspected of affiliating with the Chinese Communist Party (hereafter CCP). Hence, to demonstrate their integration into Thai politics and society, the Chinese who had emigrated to Thailand generations earlier, or even recently, have made a point of enthusiastically networking the Thai ruling elites and participating in Thai local traditions, such as materially supporting the Sangha for merit-making.

Chinese regimes have historically displayed minimal concern for their overseas subjects. Only with the late 19th century, upon noticing the wealth and technology that Chinese had accumulated in colonial-ruled Southeast Asia and other regions, did the government of China resolve that overseas Chinese could be useful for its program of domestic modernization.[46] Aiming to consolidate its political and economic authority over both domestic and international Chinese populations, in 1949 the CCP-ruled China established a ministerial-level Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission to attract the loyalty of the Chinese diaspora and rival the efforts of Kuomintang-ruled Taiwan.[47] By the late 1970s, the economic potential of the Chinese diaspora, particularly in Taiwan, Hong

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42 Suksamran, *Buddhism and Politics in Thailand: A Study of Socio-Political Change and Political Activism of the Thai Sangha*, 40.

43 Baker, 171.

44 Zhang, "Zhong-Tai guanxi de xin jinzhang" [A New Progress in the China-Thailand Relationship], 27–8.

45 Ngeow, "A Preliminary Study of Southeast Asian Foreign Policy Think Tank," 168.

46 Godley, *The Mandarin-capitalists from Nanyang*, 60–78.

47 Barabantseva, *Overseas Chinese, Ethnic Minorities and Nationalism*, 54–7.

Kong and Southeast Asia, had become even more compelling to China in its campaign for economic reform.[48] Interestingly, the first foreign investment that China attracted in 1981 was from Thailand's Charoen Pokphand Group or CP.

In recent years, under the leadership of President Xi Jinping, the CCP has made even more extensive efforts to utilize multiple types of cultural, educational and economic activity in order to mobilize the Chinese diaspora as a reliable instrument of foreign policy operating beyond Chinese sovereign territory.[49] Be that as it may, the majority of the Chinese diaspora have still upheld their political loyalty to their host nations. As Singapore-based Indonesian scholar Leo Suryadinata has pointed out, the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia, especially those who are locally born, has preferred to be regarded as Southeast Asian rather than Chinese.[50] The Chinese economic and cultural "carrots" offered by the CCP have also not been received with great appreciation in the overseas Chinese communities. JN has even turned down China's offer to install a Confucius Institute and classrooms in its temples, as will be discussed later. Some Chinese community leaders queried in this study who requested to remain anonymous have also raised doubts about Xi's signature Belt and Road Initiative, due to perceptions that it is not sufficiently transparent in its aims and does not offer obvious benefits.

1. Formation, 1871–1920

When Chinese émigrés came to Southeast Asian ports in the 19th century looking for better trade and employment opportunities, they brought with them a mélange of religious beliefs and practices comprising Buddhist, Confucian, and Daoist elements.[51] In the interest of religious blessings and to provide venues for community gatherings, they built temples or shrines to the buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Confucius, various Daoist deities, and a range of spirits adopted from local animist beliefs. They also invited Chinese Buddhist monks, as well as Daoist priests, to cater to their growing religious needs.[52] The date of the earliest arrival of expatriate Chinese Buddhist monks in Thailand is uncertain, although a Guanyin shrine located in Ayutthaya is known to trace its founding

48 Thuno, "China's New Global Position," 184–86.
49 Thuno, 188, 201.
50 Suryadinata, 13.
51 Chia, "Teaching Dharma, Grooming Sangha," 125–126.
52 Chia, "Rebranding the Buddhist Faith," 2.

back to a Hokkien Chinese group active in Ayutthaya during the 1750s.[53] The JN tradition regards Xuxing as its founding patriarch; it was he, with the support of the diaspora Chinese community, who led the construction of the first Chinese Buddhist temple—Longlian si 龍蓮寺, also known as Wat Leng Noei Yi or Wat Mangkon Kamalawa—in Bangkok's Chinatown in 1871–1879. Xuxing went on to found JN based on this new temple. However, we cannot say that Xuxing was the earliest Chinese Buddhist monk to arrive in Thailand.

Xuxing's stupa inscription (Fig. 1) at the Longlian si tells us that this monk was born in a humble Hakka family with the surname Hou 侯 in what is now Meizhou county of eastern Guangdong. He arrived in Thailand around 1862, bringing with him the Dharma of the Linji Chan lineage 臨濟法脈.[54] Xuxing initially took up residence at the Yongfu an 永福庵, or the Hermitage of Everlasting Fortune—a Guanyin shrine built by the Chinese community on Yaowarat Road in Bangkok's Chinatown. According to temple chronicles this shrine was expanded into a Buddhist temple in 1879, which Xuxing renamed Yongfu si, or Temple of Everlasting Fortune.

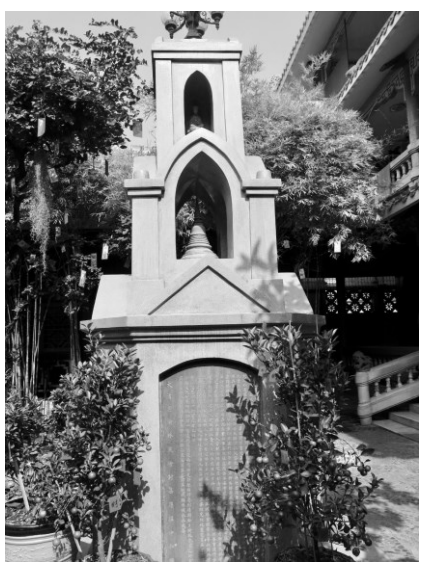

Fig. 1: Xuxing's stupa inscription at Longlian si

53 Duan, *Taiguo de zhongshi zimiao* [Chinese Temples in Thailand], 15.

54 Linji is the name of the temple located in Zhengding, Hebei, where Chan master Yixuan (d. 866) had resided and preached at his mature age of awakening. Linji is used to refer to the Chan school founded by Yixuan. See Linji, *The Record of Linji*, 87.

The stupa inscription also suggests that Xuxing, through his expertise in Chinese traditions of geomancy, divination, and herbal healing, earned a sizable following among the Chinese community during the years after his arrival, particularly among the Hakka Chinese. These new followers included Khianhin, the powerful Hakka merchant appointed by King Chulalongkorn in 1879 to serve as Director of the Eastern Trade Department. As a proud Hakka, Khianhin piously sponsored the construction and renovation of several Hakka temples and fully supported Xuxing's endeavor to build the Longlian si.[55]

Under Khianhin's political influence, King Chulalongkorn ordered that some 6,500 square meters of land along the north side of Charoen Krung Road be vacated to make way for the construction of the Longlian si.[56] And in 1879, the king accorded Longlian si the Thai royal name of Wat Mangkorn Kalayawat, meaning "the Dragon and Lotus Temple." Xuxing was appointed by royal decree to serve as the first abbot and head of the Chinese Sangha. JN was thus officially formed under Thai state patronage. It was said that Khianhin also encouraged other prominent Hakka merchants to support Xuxing, including such figures as Chi Yigun, the father-in-law of Chin Lamsam (Ng Miaongian 伍淼源), the forbearer of the Lamsam family who own the largest private Kasikorn Bank in Thailand.[57] It would thus not be an exaggeration to say that Longlian si served as a magnificent display of Hakka success in that time. Even today this temple is regarded as a prominent marker of Chinese heritage in Thailand, attracting crowds of domestic and international visitors each day. The new Bangkok subway line station passing through Bangkok's Chinatown is named after it.

In return for Khianhin's patronage, Xuxing was said to have loyally helped him moderate internal conflicts within the Chinese community, especially among the Hakka Chinese.[58] Competition among different Chinese groups for

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55 Sng, 206.

56 Based on the interview with Mr. Surachai Saenchalerm, the Taiwan-educated secretary-general of Hakka Association of Thailand at the head office of this association located at No. 26 Phadsai Road, Samphantawong, Bankok on 13 October 2019. Mr. Surachai is a high-regarded expert in the history of Hakka group of Chinese community in Thailand. The interview with him was conducted in mandarin Chinese.

57 Mr. Banthoon Lamsam, the 5th generation grandson of Chin Lamsam or Ng Miaongian, recalled that his ancestor was very close to Khinhin and donated to build Longlian si at our interview carried out at Kasikornbank headquarter in Bangkok on 26 August 2019.

58 Sng, 20

economic and political advantages had long existed in Thailand, sometimes provoking violence between the sides that necessitated government intervention.[59] In helping to mitigate some of those internal conflicts, Xuxing ensured ongoing state-patronage for JN through Khianhin's political influence at the Thai court. On the other hand, that cooperation also tells us that JN had become well-integrated into Thai politics, even though its Sangha at that time was composed entirely of monks from China. It is perhaps due to this connection that JN was subsequently listed in the 1902 Sangha Act as one of the four legally recognized Buddhist schools in Thailand, as noted previously. Xuxing's intimate relationship with Khianhin is indicated in an antiquated metal box enshrined in Longlian si (Fig. 2). This box is said to contain the remains of Khianhin's wife Khunying Sun, a favored lady-in-waiting of Queen Debsirindra and wet-nurse to the Crown Prince Chulalongkorn. It also speaks to the Hakka community's historical influence over JN, at least during Xuxing's time.

Fig. 2: Khunying Sun's remains in a gold leaf-covered box at Longlian si

A hagiographical account of Xuxing hints that he might have had a direct connection to the Thai court. It was said that, when he came from China, Xuxing brought a tiny image of the Medicine Buddha reputed to be endowed with magic

59 Roy, 187–90; Sng, 191–200.

powers to heal, and that this powerful image purportedly later turned up in royal hands.[60] Even if this event never actually occurred, the story reveals a high level of interest at that time in indigenous medical care in the Chinese community, where Xuxing's practice of herbal healing was a key aspect of his personal charisma. The human-sized image of the Medicine Buddha (Fig. 3) sculpted by Xuxing and still enshrined in the Great Shrine Hall of the Longlian si exemplifies the high demand for medical blessings among the Chinese of that time. Xuxing and JN fulfilled precisely this worldly need. Even today, a specific ritual to pray for good health is performed annually in the Longlian si on the 30th day of the 9th lunar month, the birthday of the Medicine Buddha.

Fig. 3: The Medicine Buddha sculpture enshrined at Longlian si (figure on the right side, with a stupa in his left palm)

Xuging's success would never have been possible in the absence of King Chulalongkorn's Chinese-friendly policies. As his predecessors had done, this open-minded monarch welcomed the Chinese to Thailand, where they met the high demand for cheap laborers needed to realize the king's infrastructural modernization.[61] That influx of Chinese migrants in this period contributed in turn to the growing social complexity of Thailand. Thus it became necessary

60 Taiguo Huazong, *Renchao da shangzuo: yidai zongshi jinian kan* [A Memorial of the Late Elderly Master Renchao], 47.

61 Sng, 215.

for the Thai court to meet the material and religious needs of the huge number of Chinese emigrants in order to ensure social stability. By granting certain freedoms for Chinese entrepreneurship, the court not only allowed the Chinese to generate their own income but also brought substantial state revenue to the royal coffers.[62] Additionally allowing for the propagation and persistence of Chinese beliefs and practices arguably strengthened social solidarity in Thailand as well, as long as the Chinese communities could be incorporated successfully into local politics and society. Given this amenable political climate, JN was formed without much difficulty.

With the support of the Chinese community, Xuxing initiated the construction of another two new temples in addition to the Longlian si: the Longfu si 龍福寺, the Temple of the Dragon Blessing, in Chacheongsao, and the Longhua si 龍華寺, the Temple of the Dragon Ornament, in Chanthaburi.[63] The Longfu si was completed during Xuxing's lifetime, while the Longhua si did not see final completion until Xuxing's successor. Xuxing passed away in 1888 and was succeeded by Guowu, his trusted and able disciple of Hakka origin. Xuxing's stupa inscription records with due hagiographical style this transfer of leadership:

> Xuxing was aware that his time had come and called the assembly of disciples to his deathbed. He passed a bowl and robe to Guowu as a sacred token of the Dharma-transmission from him to his heir.[64]

Xuxing and Guowu thus conducted a classic Dharma-transmission symbolically reminiscent of the famous transmission of the Dharma enacted between the fifth and sixth patriarchs of the Chinese Chan school.[65] As the heir to Xuxing's Linji Dharma, Guowu was installed as the second-generation abbot of the Longlian si, replete with the legitimate ecclesiastical credentials to lead JN. As the American scholar Holmes Welch observed of traditional, large-scale Chinese Buddhist public monasteries, formal receipt the Dharma from a common lineage of preceding abbots was necessary to establish the successor's legitimacy and

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62 Baker, 47.

63 Xu, "Taiguo Hanchuan Fojiao zhi yanjiu" [Research on Chinese Buddhism in Thailand], 175.

64 The passage cited here, transcribed from Xuxing's stupa inscription by the author and translated here, is the last line of inscription: 續行自知時至，召眾徒至榻前，授果悟以衣缽，以為傳法之聖物.

65 McRae, *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, 23.

spiritual authority to lead.[66] Royal endorsement of Guowu's leadership over JN was bestowed in 1891, when he legally became the second-generation patriarch of this school. That royal endorsement functioned in turn as a token of political recognition of his new leadership, symbolizing the Thai state's direct jurisdiction over JN both secularly and ecclesiastically. Any absence or delay in that endorsement would have brought into question the legitimacy of the leaders and the school itself.

Guowu was regarded as a pious guardian of Xuxing's legacy by Cizong 慈宗 and two other Hakka monks who jointly composed his stupa inscription.[67] He had loyally helped his master build the temples, entertain the faithful, and manage the daily operations of JN. While Longlian si was still under construction, Guowu was handpicked by Xuxing as the successor-in-waiting, Cizong recalled.

Guowu himself constructed no additional new temples, although he did "annex" Ganlu si 甘露寺, the Temple of Ambrosia, in 1909. Temple chronicles report that, until Guowu sent monks to take over that temple, the Ganlu si had been long controlled by the Vietnamese-based Annam Nikāya.[68] Yet despite that prior history, and the aggressive nature of Guowu's move, a royal endorsement of JN's annexation of Ganlu si was quickly decreed in 1910. It also tells us that competition between Vietnamese and Chinese monks to some degree existed even at that time.

Guowu passed away from natural causes at Longlian si in 1920. He was succeeded by Luqing, a Jiangxi monk of uncertain Hakka origin who was residing in Ganlu si at that time. Luqing was affiliated with the Caodong Dharma lineage 曹洞法脈 of the Chan school which, as we will discuss in the following section, raised questions concerning the legitimacy of his ascent.

In sum, JN under Xuxing and Guowu took shape as a legal state-patronized Buddhist school in Thailand, with these two masters regarded accordingly as the first and second patriarchs of the school. Under their leadership the JN school successfully accumulated enough support from the Chinese community at large to build the Longlian si and the other two "Long" (dragon) temples. By using its religious influence to bolster politically the Thai court's regulation of the Chinese community, JN under Xuxing and Guowu acquireed the necessary political capital and legitimacy to exist in Thailand. By also serving the growing

66 Welch, *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism*, 143–78.

67 Guowu's tomb inscription is adjacent to Xuxing's in Longlian si.

68 Taiguo Huazong, *Renwen dashi shengping shiji* [Chronology of Great Master Renwen], 15.

religious needs of the Chinese diaspora community, this school assembled sufficient numbers of Chinese monks to form a Buddhist Sangha that fully complied with the monastic codes and ritual practices of Chinese tradition. Compliance with those norms included Xuxing's and Guowu's establishment of a formal Dharma-transmission of the Linji Chan lineage between the preceding patriarchs and their successors in the JN leadership.

Whether Chinese sub-ethnicity weighed significantly in the selection of patriarchal successors is still open for further academic debate. However, the common heritage of Hakka sub-ethnicity between Xuxing and Guowu suggests that patriarchs, at least in the case of Xuxing, would feel more comfortable passing their power to a disciple of common sub-ethnic origin in order to ensure that their legacy would be upheld. For JN's powerful Hakka supporters at that time, such as Khianhin, a successor of Hakka origin would be welcomed. We can impute this likelihood from Welch's belief that major sponsors often had a voice in the selection of new leaders of Buddhist institutions.[69]

2. Decline, 1920–1954

The major causes traditionally attributed to the decline of a Buddhist school are the Sangha members' moral degeneration, declining interest in both doctoral learning and meditation, and indulgence in worldly gains.[70] However, the senior monks of the present-day JN believe that their school's decline in the 1920–1954 was caused by the incompetence of Luqing and his two immediate successors Furen and Yongbin, under whom royal patronage of their school was suspended, leading to disunity within the Sangha.[71] In the following paragraphs, we will consider both internal and external causes of JN's decline during this more than three-decade-long period.

Yang Wenyin, a Chinese intellectual sojourning in Thailand between 1921 and 1937, observed growing disputes among Chinese monks in Bangkok and recorded the following:

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69 Welch, 154.

70 Ch'en, *Buddhism in China*, 390.

71 In the interview with the incumbent patriarch of JN and two senior monks of his generation from JN at Pumen Bao'en si on 07 July 2019, they repeatedly said that their school fell in mess under Luqing, Furen, particularly Yongbin who failed to unified the Sangha, while the monks were lured into ritual performances for material gains out of JN. As the contemporary of Furen, particularly Yongbin, the patriarch added that the king showed no favor to them, the patriarch during the interview.

> Many monks did not join the Chinese Sangha based at Longlian si, but scattered widely to make a living by performing rituals for various Chinese temples; they disputed with each other over the best opportunities to benefit from Chinese generosity. The presiding abbot of the Longlian si petitioned for royal intervention to ban those ritualistic monks from wearing the same "yellow" robes (as the JN monks did). The Court refused to intervene, and the opponent monks laughed.[72]

Yang's accounts reveal that the Chinese monks were indulging in pursuit of worldly gains through ritual performance. Some of them did not belong to the Chinese Sangha of the Longlian si, whose number and influence remain unknown but seemed strong enough to challenge JN's interest by Yang's time. The leadership of JN seemingly had lost the royal favor by that point.

Buddhist lay societies that were active at that time also reported that the JN monks were competing for ritual authority in the Chinese community with both local Theravāda monks and Chinese monks who did not belong to their order.[73] The societies either invited them together, or in turn, to perform certain intricate rituals such as worshiping and releasing the dead from hellish suffering. These rituals were held annually at cemeteries on 15th day of the 7th lunar month.[74] On the occasion of more routine gatherings geared to self-cultivation, the lay societies usually organized and led the proceedings themselves, without the monks' participation. They particularly admired the monks who showed a deep understanding of, and could expound on, Chinese Buddhist doctrine.[75] Very few of the monks from JN had the capacity to teach seminars on the Buddha's teachings, which were highly desirable to educated Chinese lay believers. However, they did have sufficient expertise in ritual performance.[76]

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72 Yang, *Xianluo zaiji* [A Miscellanea of Siam], 25.

73 Taiguo Zhonghua Foxue yanjiu she, *Taiguo Zhonghua Fojiao yanjiu she chengli 11 zhounian jinian kan* [Commemorative Magazine on the 11th Anniversary], 17.

74 Taiguo Zonghua Foxue yanjiu she, *Taiguo Zhonghua Fojiao yanjiu she chengli 21 zhounian jinian kan* [Commemorative Magazine on the 21st Anniversary], 36.

75 Xianluo Longhua Fojiao she, *Taixu dashi sheli anta jinian kan* [Commemorative Magazine on the Installation of Master Taixue's Relics Stupa], 11–23.

76 According to Gao Huishan 高慧珊, the current deputy president of Chinese Buddhist Research Society of Thailand, whose father had led this society from 1945 to 1949. The interview with her was conducted at the Society Office built in 1951 on 04 August 2019 and in mandarin Chinese.

The existence of non-JN groups of Chinese monks could not have been uncommon. In composing Guowu's stupa inscription, Cizong and his two fellow Hakka monks addressed themselves as the friends and admirers of Guowu. Had they joined the Sangha of JN led by Guowu, they would have been expected to humble themselves as his disciples—at least in tongue, according to the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Chinese tradition. As noted previously, it was a normal practice for Chinese of means to invite Buddhist monks from China to take care of their religious needs. These monks were mainly concerned with performing rituals and were not interested in preaching the Dharma.[77] It was not necessary for them to join JN, where they would be expected to adhere to certain precepts if they were to enjoy a stable living in Thailand as a recognized member of the JN Sangha. Thus, the presence of alternative groups of monks able to make their existence through ritual service could inevitably challenge JN's ritual interests and divert the latter's support from the Chinese community. Their independent and free style of monastic livelihood might also prove attractive to Sangha members of JN, thereby eroding the integrity of the less faithful ones and causing further disunity in the school.

The disputes that Yang mentions were between the JN Sangha and the aforementioned freelance ritual monks. Luqing, who succeeded Guowu in 1919, one year before his master's death in 1920, was himself the Longlian abbot whose petition the Thai court turned down. The records of Luqing are too fragmentary to track his rise in JN, which leave two main questions unanswered with respect to this historical transmission in leadership. One question is how Luqing, as a carrier of Caodong Dharma, had infiltrated the Linji Dharma stronghold of JN to become its leader. The other is why Guowu selected Luqing while skipping over his own disciples, such as Daxi 達喜, who was of Hakka origin and was presiding over Longfu si at that time. One possibility is that Luqing might have converted to the Linji Dharma and its lineage before he became the abbot of Longlian si. The other is that his affiliation with the Caodong Dharma lineage might have been overlooked as incidental due to his other charms, such as the favor he enjoyed with JN's major sponsors at that time. It was not uncommon for masters to take over the temples of other lineages in Chinese Chan tradition, since the essential teachings of Chan Buddhism were the same throughout, though the methods of preaching that masters applied could vary. Despite all the doubts, the royal endorsement recognizing Luqing as the third-generation patriarch of JN arrived in 1921, further suggesting that this monk's legitimacy to lead was politically recognized. In other words,

77 Chia, "Teaching Dharma, Grooming Sangha," 126.

Luqing was a leader with sufficient support, if not for the full span of his career, at least in the early years.

Luqing's incompetence as a leader of JN began to show by the late 1920s. The temple chronicle indicates that, under his tenure, JN was removed from the list of participants in state ceremonies, a privilege cherished by religious institutions in Thailand.[78] His authority was further undermined by the royal rejection of his petition for state curtailment of the ritual monks' intrusive engagements in the Chinese community. In 1932 Luqing went bak to China, the very same year when dissatisfied civil and military bureaucrats united to overthrow the absolute monarchy and replace it with a constitutional system.[79] He never returned, but left Furen, his disciple of Hakka origin, to take charge of JN as the acting abbot of Longlian si. Senior monks of present-day JN have speculated that Luqing chose to defrock and return to a secular life of pleasure, regarding his unexplained flight as evidence of his irresponsibility as a leader who undermined the stability of the Sangha.[80] It is also said that material donations from the Chinese community were substantially reduced at this time, which might be a reflection of Chinese believers' deteriorating faith in JN during this period of disunity.[81]

Furen, who had led JN for ten years, from 1932 to 1942, was never royally endorsed. Temple chronicles published in later periods nevertheless treat him retrospectively with high regard for the close connections he maintained with several famous Chinese monks, such as the noted Chan master Xuyun 虛雲 (1840?–1959). Highly revered by Chinese Buddhists in both China and Southeast Asia at that time, Xuyun, is said to have visited Thailand for a fund-raising trip around 1907.[82] It is thus possible that Xuyun's great fame in Southeast Asia lent a certain amount of sanctity to those connected to him,

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78 JN had not been invited to state-sponsored religious ceremonies since 1925 till 1958, four years after Pujing became its leader according to the incumbent patriarch. See also Taiguo Huazong, *Taiguo Huazong dazongzhang Pujing shangshi qishi shoudan tekan* [Special Volume on Celebration of Jin Nikāya Patriarch Pujing's 70th Birthday], 45.

79 Wyatt, 228–230.

80 This statement was made based on the interview with the incumbent patriarch of JN, Rende and two senior monks of his generation both in their late seventies at Pumen Bao'en si on 27 September 2019. They spoke Teochew dialect and basic mandarin Chinese in the interview.

81 Rende added in the interview cited above.

82 Huimin, "An Inquiry into Master Xuyun's Experiences of Long-dwelling in Samādhi," 48.

thereby sparing Furen in the eyes of Luqing's detractors. Yet as Luqing's disciple and successor, Furen's authority in JN, whether spiritually or administratively, could never have been particularly high, not to mention the fact that he also lacked royal recognition. He left JN for Hong Kong in 1942, where he passed away by 1972, according to the temple chronicles.

In their accusations regarding Luqing's incompetence and irresponsibility, the current JN monks seemingly avoid considering the impact of anti-Chinese nationalism at that time. As mentioned previously, King Rama VI initially denounced the Chinese as the "Jews of the Orient," after which Phibun's government of 1938–1944 economically and socially marginalized them.[83] Being of Chinese origin, JN could not have escaped the anti-Chinese movement. It should not be surprising, then, that the state's patronage of JN had been retracted, and royal endorsement of Furen's leadership denied, when Furen assumed leadership of JN and the Longlian si. Without it, his legitimacy to lead JN could be questioned, if not by monks of his time, then at least by current-day monks in JN.[84] Meanwhile, the declining Chinese participation in the Thai economy by that time could no longer facilitate sufficient donations to the temples, leaving Chinese monks residing in Thailand with no other option for maintaining their existence than to resort to unprecedented competition with each other. These difficulties implied a need for stronger leadership in order for JN to cope with the many unfavorable developments it was facing. Although Luqing's decision to leave in 1932 seemed irresponsible and blameworthy at that hard time, it also opened up JN for new leadership. So did Furen's departure in 1942.

Furen was succeeded by Yongbin, also of Hakka origin, who once ordained into the Thai Theravada Sangha, as many Chinese of his time did. When he became the abbot of Longlian si in 1942, it was said that although he had only been ordained in the Chinese Mahāyāna tradition for four years, his appointment was nonetheless supported by several influential Hakka business families.[85] Despite his young monastic age, this monk received royal endorsement of his

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83 Baker, 129.

84 Furen's lack of royal endorsement was raised by Rende and other two senior monks many times during my interview with them on 27 September 2019. See also Note 79.

85 According to the incumbent patriarch of JN, who was the contemporary of Yongbin and knew him in personal, Yongbin's family had good connections with the rich Hakka families and lobbied them to support the latter's candidacy. The patriarch noted this at our interview conducted at Pumen Bao'en si on 23 July 2019.

leadership over JN as its fourth-generation patriarch in 1946.[86] As noted above, such stature had never been granted to Furen, whose ten-year leadership of JN was therefore never considered fully legitimate.

Phibun's government was overthrown in 1944 due to its coalition with the Japanese imperialists, and Phibun himself was forced into exile. The succeeding pro-democratic civil government thereupon softened the anti-Chinese policies. The closed Chinese schools and paper media were reopened, while the Chinese passion to participate in the Thai economy and politics was rekindled.[87] To defuse post-war tensions lingering between the Chinese and Thai people in Bangkok, King Ananda (1935–1946) paid an official visit to Sampeng Street in Bangkok's Chinatown in early 1946.[88] To commemorate this well-remembered event presided over by its young king, the Thai government even included a picture of his Chinatown visit on the 20 Baht banknote issued in the same year (as seen in Fig. 4).

Fig. 4: The 20-Baht banknote issued in 1946 to commemorate King Ananda's Visit to Bangkok's Chinatown (Source: official website of Bank of Thailand)

This period of friendly Chinese policy though later shortened by Phibun's return to power in 1948, released JN from the more than two decades of political and socio-economic marginalization that had been imposed on the Chinese in

86 Xu, 188.

87 Ang, *Taiguo Huawen xuexiao shi* [History of Chinese Schools in Thailand], 163.

88 Lverson, "Why Did People in Thailand Love King Bhumibol Adulyadej So Much?".

Thailand. Consequently, political recognition of its new leader Yongbin was quickly granted, as noted above. Revived Chinese economic strength in Thailand further facilitated JN's building of the Huaqiao gongde tang 華僑功德堂, the Meritorious Hall of Chinese Sojourners, in the front yard of Longlin si in 1947, and the dedication of this structure for the king's merit.

Yongbin died in 1948, the same year that anti-Chinese Phibun again seized power through a coup. Yongbin was succeeded by Changyi, a monk of Teochew origin. Surprisingly, it only took Changyi two years to receive royal endorsement in 1950 as the leader and fifth patriarch of JN. This ascendancy brought various transformations to JN leadership. The temple chronicles say that Changyi was the disciple of Daxi, and that he had attended to his grand master Guowu at the Longlian si in the latter's last years. This connection made him a natural heir to the Linji Dharma lineage that had been upheld at Longlian since Xuxing, the founding JN patriarch. Changyi's ascension to JN leadership in 1948 thus worked as a symbolic restoration of this school's Linji Dharma lineage, a succession that had technically been in hiatus for the twenty-eight years of 1920 till 1948 under Luqing, Furen, and Yongbin, whose disqualifying affiliation with the Caodong Dharma lineage was well documented in the temple chronicles. Meanwhile, Changyi's Teochew origin ended nearly seventy-years of Hakka dominance in JN. Since Changyi, monks of Teochew origin have dominated this school.

Like Yongbin, Changyi's leadership over JN lasted only six years. He died in 1954 and was succeeded by Pujing, another monk of Teochew origin who shared common descent in the Linji Dharma lineage with Changyi through another of Daxi's disciples, Changji 常機. Pujing is highly regarded as the patriarch who presided over JN's revival. The collected memoirs report that royal endorsement came in 1954, the same year that Pujing became the abbot of Longlian si. By that time, CCP-ruled China had become less accessible from outside, due to its isolationist foreign policy and America-led sanctions that remained in place until the early 1970s.[89] As a result, JN's once frequent communication with Buddhists in China was cut off. The temple chronicles record that this school did not send any monks back to China for full ordination after 1950. Before that, receiving full ordination in China had been a normal step for the novice monks that JN recruited from the Chinese community in Thailand. How to grant full ordination in the Chinese tradition under such difficult circumstances had thus become one of the foremost problems for Pujing to solve as the sixth patriarch of JN.

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89 Fairbank and Goldman, *China*, 343–406.

Thus, prior to Changyi's accession in 1950, JN had experienced a more than two decade-long decline under Luqing and his two immediate successors, Furen and Yongbin. While JN has singled out Luqing's alleged incompetency and irresponsibility to account for the school's decline during this period, its present-day monks have seemingly ignored the impact that the anti-Chinese sociopolitical context was having on their school, especially in Phibun's first term of premiership from 1938 to 1944. The suspension of state patronage of JN during this period jeopardized its legitimacy in Thailand, which also hastened Luqing and Furen's leaving.

The political loyalty that JN had displayed from Yongbin onwards helped it to maintain state patronage even during Phibun's second term of premiership from 1948 to 1957, when anti-Chinese measures were re-imposed in an attempt to compel full Chinese assimilation into Thai society. It should be noted that, as an attempt to counteract his deteriorating political charisma at that time, Phibun often characterized himself as a champion of Buddhism by sponsoring the construction of a large number of Buddhist temples.[90] He even planned to construct a "Buddhist City," a sort of Buddhist center for world Buddhism near Saraburi.[91] As an influential Buddhist establishment in Thailand, JN could at least be tacitly accepted by Phibun, if not favored.

Changyi and Pujing's rise in JN had the impact of restoring this school's Linji Dharma lineage after an almost thirty-year interruption from 1920 to 1948, a transition that also ended more than seventy years of Hakka dominance in its leadership. Since that time, the monks of Teochew origin have dominated JN. For present-day JN, whose senior monks are mainly of Teochew origin, promoting the Teochew leadership also seems necessary to dislodge the historical Hakka leadership. As discussed above, it was under Yongbin, of Hakka origin, that JN originally regained royal patronage.

3. Revival, 1954–1986

Pujing's biographical memoir, which was published by JN to celebrate the former master's 70th Sui 歲 birthday in 1971, states that he was born in a humble Teochew family in Jieyang in 1902.[92] He had been conscripted into the

90 Chaloemtiarana, *Thailand*, 66.

91 Wyatt, 249.

92 Taiguo Huazong, *Taiguo Huazong dazongzhang Pujing shangshi qishi shoudan tekan* [Special Volume on Celebration of Jin Nikāya Patriarch Pujing's 70th Birthday], 3.

Kuomintang Nationalist army for a short period before his emigration to Thailand in his early 20s. He became a monk under Changji at Qingshui chansi 清水禪寺, the Temple of Pure Water, a minor temple founded by his grand master Daxi in Kanchanaburi. According to temple chronicles, as early as the late 1940s Pujing had emerged as a charismatic master who attracted a growing number of followers from the Chinese community. He sent several of his early disciples to China for full ordination in 1944 and 1946, while in 1942 he himself received full ordination at Huiju si 慧居寺, the Temple of Wise Residence, a famous Chinese heritage temple of Vinaya learning in Jiangsu province.[93] Later, in 1948, during his last visit to China, Pujing was ceremonially installed as the nineteenth inheritor of Huiju si's Vinaya Dharma lineage. By that time JN had assembled a sufficient number of monks to constitute the full quorum of Sangha members needed for conducting ordination ceremonies in the Chinese Vinaya tradition. Thus, in 1949 Pujing, as head preceptor, ordained the first group of monks under the Chinese tradition in the ordination hall at Puren si 普仁寺, the Temple of Universal Benevolence, in Chachoengsao, that he had built two-years earlier in 1947. Several in this group of new ordination later became Pujing's reliable assistants in running JN.

It is interesting to note that Pujing made a point of requesting a royal grant of boundary stones (or *sima jai* in Thai-styled Pāli) for the foundation of the ordination hall under construction at Furen si, an action that he likely took in order to secure recognition for the Chinese ordination tradition in Thailand. According to Clause 7 of the 1902 Sangha Act, which was amended in 1932, the Thai royal court would only grant boundary stones to state-recognized temples as a token of their legal status.[94] Pujing also invited influential senior Theravāda monks to consecrate the ordination hall upon its completion. This skillful adoption of Thai conventions granted his new ordination hall legitimacy in the eyes of the Thai Sangha, though the ordinations were carried out in the Chinese Buddhist tradition.

Pujing also ordered JN monks to wear bright yellow robes similar to those of the Thai Mahā Nikāya monastics in their daily activities, although the JN monks also retained their ceremonial robes of Chinese tradition. As a result, it is impossible for an outsider to distinguish JN monks from their Mahā Nikāya counterparts on the streets without further and careful comparison. These two deliberate moves convey the strong intention of JN under Pujing's leadership to

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93 Renwen, *Qingshui chansi chuandeng lu* [Records of Lamp-transmission at Chan Temple of Pure Water], 12–3.

94 Na-rangsi, "Administration of the Thai Sangha," 62.

integrate fully into the Thai Sangha, thereby consolidating JN's legitimacy. Pujing's close relationship and respectful collaborations with the Thai Sangha, especially with senior monks of high influence, helped him to attain seven prestigious royal ecclesiastical titles, such as "*Phrakru*" (or teacher), with "*Phrapalad*" and "*Rongpalad*" allocated to his six assistants.[95] By 1958, JN under Pujing's leadership was also restored to the list of participants in state religious ceremonies. As seen in the diagram below (Chart I), according to the jurisdictional hierarchy laid out in the Sangha Act of 1962, the patriarch of JN stood second and subordinate in status to only the Sangharaja, the Supreme Patriarch of Thai Sangha as a whole.

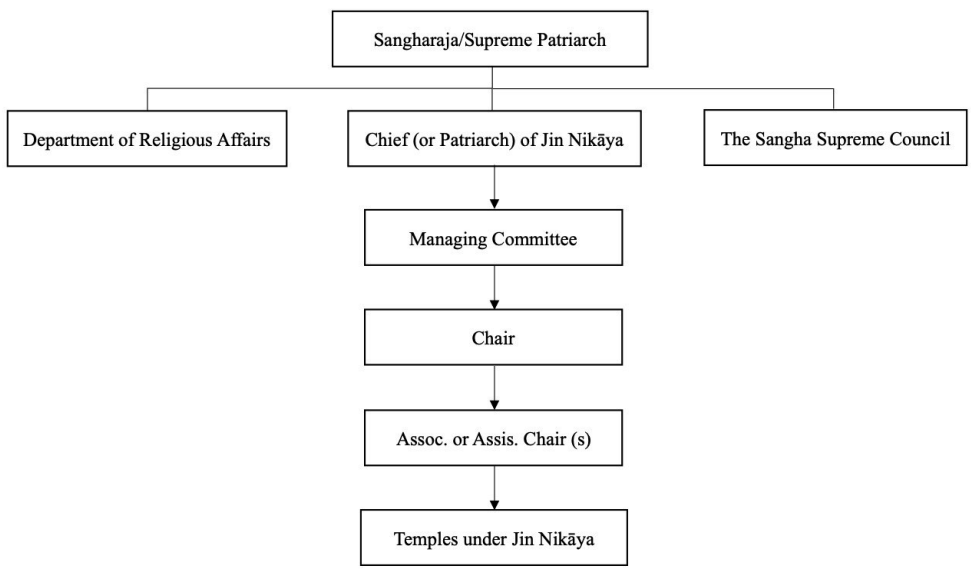

Chart I: The jurisdictional structure of JN within the Thai Sangha, according to the 1962 Sangha Act

In 1962 Pujing began construction on the Pumen Bao'en si 普門報恩寺, the Temple of Universal Gate to Repay Graces. At that time, General Sarit Thanarat was the prime minister of Thailand. During their combined premiership from 1959 to 1973, he and his close political ally, another powerful general, Thanom Kittikachorn, led Thailand into a long and fruitful period of

95 Taiguo Huazong, *Taiguo Huazong dazongzhang Pujing shangshi qishi shoudan tekan* [Special Volume on Celebration of Jin Nikāya Patriarch Pujing's 70th Birthday], 27.

economic growth.[96] Unlike Phibun, they cherished Chinese entrepreneurial participation in the Thai national economy.[97] Also unlike Phibun, Sarit turned to the monarch for political legitimacy by bringing King Bhumibol, or Rama IX (1946–2016), out in public with the aim of bolstering the traditional Thai political trinity of Nation, Religion, and Monarchy.[98] The monarch was therefore seen at all kinds of occasions greeting people of various classes with his heartfelt concern for their welfare. King Bhumibol became much beloved; his authority in Thai politics was growing to the extent that his royal endorsements were equated with the highest legitimacy when it came to matters of governance or leadership. In 1970, King Rama IX was invited to preside over the consecration of the Pumen Bao'en si; he accorded the new temple the Thai name Wat Bhoman Khunaram and officially installed it as the new headquarters of JN in place of Longlian si.[99]

According to the senior monks of current-day JN, Pujing rarely stayed at Longlian si, though he had been appointed as its abbot in 1954.[100] Nevertheless, he used the monastery to receive the fourteenth Dalai Lama during the latter's official visit to Thailand in 1967.[101] Perhaps in the interest of demonstrating his authority Pujing preferred to build his own headquarters rather than use the one that he had inherited. As for the Thai monarch, he was very gratified to see the new JN headquarters built in his name and its activities dedicated to his merit.

Pujing's former Kuomintang soldier status was also a precious asset for the Thai government, useful for promoting its relations with Taiwan, one of Thailand's economic and political allies of growing importance at that time. In 1970 Pujing was assigned to lead a Chinese Buddhist delegation to visit Taiwan as a follow-up to the official visit made by Taiwanese Buddhist envoys to

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96 Wyatt, 293–98.

97 Baker, 146.

98 Ishii, 113–14.

99 Taiguo Huazong, *Taiguo Huazong dazongzhang Pujing shangshi qishi shoudan tekan* [Special Volume on Celebration of Jin Nikāya Patriarch Pujing's 70th Birthday], 15–9.

100 The incumbent JN patriarch Rende who had been the attendant and assistant of Pujing since 1956 till 1986 gave out this information at my interview with him at Pumen Bao'en si on 09 August 2019.

101 Shakyavongsvisuddhi and Ploychum, *The Sangharaja, Man, Monk & Monarch*, 41.

Thailand in 1963.[102] King Rama IX granted a farewell audience to Pujing and his delegates in the royal palace, according to temple chronicles. In Taiwan, both political and Buddhist leaders hosted Pujing and his delegation with tremendous hospitality. All this gave Pujing's Taiwan visit a highly politicalized edge. Pujing himself had not returned to the CCP-ruled Mainland China since 1948, even after the latter's opening up during economic reform in the late 1970s.

These kinds of state-sponsored Buddhist exchanges between Thailand and Taiwan effectively ended after 1975, when Thailand and China resumed their diplomatic relations. But monks and nuns from a number of Taiwan-backed Buddhist institutions such as Foguang Shan have continued to come to Thailand, as they had since the 1960s. Some of them even started to challenge JN's interests as their popularity grew among the Chinese community, as we will discuss later.

To promote unity within the Sangha, Pujing in the Ancestry or Patriarchs—Hall of the Pumen Bao'en si reemphasized JN's Linji Dharma lineage, as established by Xuxing and Guowu, at the same time installing his grand master Daxi as the third-generation master of transmission and successor to Gaowu. This revised system of patriarchal descent thereby accommodated Pujing's master Changji and himself as its fourth and fifth-generation heirs, respectively (Chart II). As it happened, Changyi had upheld the same Dharma lineage but he was excluded from the list of inscribed ancestral soul tablets installed in the Patriarchs or Ancestry Hall. The names of Luqing, Furen and Yongbin are also mostly absent from the temple chronicles published during Pujing's time and thereafter. This move indicates an obvious intent to downplay the historical roles that the above-mentioned four monks had played in JN; on the other hand, it promoted Pujing's contribution to JN's Dharma ideology, though it was Changyi who had actually reaffirmed the Linji Dharma line of the JN school.

102 Chinghsin, *Haiwai Fojiao fangwen ji* [Records of Overseas Buddhist Visits], 34–6.

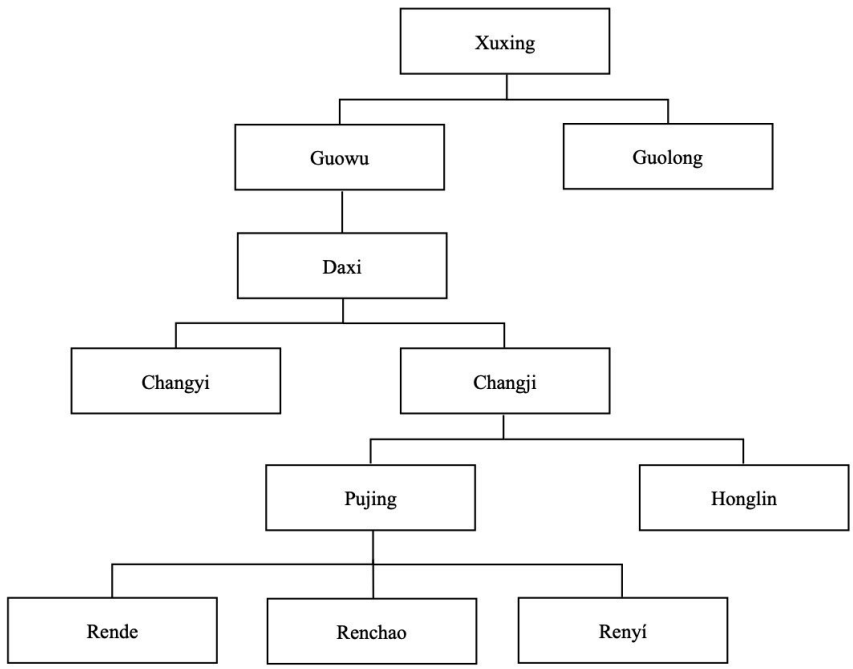


Chart II: The genealogical tree of the JN Linji Dharma Lineage written by Pujing

Before his passing in 1986, Pujing made a point of designating and promoting his trusted disciples of Teochew origin to preside as future abbots over the major JN temples. Rende, having been his attendant for more than two decades, was designated as successor-in-waiting to lead JN in 1982, rather than Renyì 仁意, who at that time held the highest monastic seniority. Renyì was of Hakka origin and had been appointed as abbot of Puren si in Chachoengsao, far less important than Longlian si, Pumen Bao'en si, and even Ganlu si. It might be that this practice was undertaken simply out of Pujing's deep desire to maintain Sangha unity, but his preference for disciples of Teochew origin was obvious. However, nothing could lessen the great posthumous respect that this eminent monk received from JN, many of whose monks and novices had ordained under Pujing or his senior disciples. His body was interred for veneration at Pumen Bao'en si after being mummified and gilded with gold leaf; several memorial halls were built to commemorate him in different JN temples (Fig. 5).

Fig. 5: The seven-storied memorial hall named after Pujing in the front yard of Pumen Bao'en si

Pujing's success in reviving the fortunes of the JN school can be summarily ascribed to his reinstatement and his strengthening of royal patronage on behalf of JN. Through his various moves to assimilate JN into the Thai Sangha, Pujing garnered high visibility and recognition for this school within the Thai Sangha, though its distinctive Chinese identity was deliberately maintained. Through Pujing's full engagement in Thai political mobilization and inter-state diplomacy, he deepened Thai political recognition of JN's loyalty and appreciation of its capacity for collaborative support. Meanwhile, his practice of co-opting loyalty to the Thai monarchy for his own political influence proved to be very rewarding, to the extent that he could choose his favored successor under royal endorsement, just as Xuxing had done nearly one hundred years earlier. Pujing's construction of Pumen Bao'en si visibly exemplified the growing material prosperity the school acquired under his leadership. What is more, the royal installation of this temple as the new JN headquarters ensconced Pujing as a self-made leader much favored by the Thai monarch. Pujing's successful revitalization of JN thereby serves as a fitting confirmation of the Israeli religious scholar Jonathan Fox's thesis that the popularity of a religious leader is crucial to sustaining social and political support for the institution he or she leads.[103]

103 Fox, *An Introduction to Religion and Politics*, 73–82.

The internal unity of JN was further solidified during Pujing's tenure by his effort to tailor the Linji line of Dharma-succession in a manner that served to promote himself as the principal Dharma-holder and authoritative source of transmission for the future generations of JN monks who came after him. However, that unparalleled authority would inevitably overshadow his successors, to the point of paving the way for factionalism among his able disciples, who upon occasion sought competitively to undermine each other's authority as Pujing's successors. Meanwhile, it should not be forgotten that the economic prosperity and political influence the Chinese had accumulated during Pujing's time in Thailand had been there all along, serving as a supportive base for JN.

4. Sustainable Development, 1986–

Pujing's successor, Rende, the seventh and current patriarch, was born to a sugar cane farming family of Teochew origin in Kanchanaburi. As the first locally born monk to become a JN patriarch, Rende's identification with Thai politics has been more pronounced. In our interviews we learned that this monk prefers being classified as a Thai of Chinese ancestry rather than as a Chinese, notwithstanding his good mastery of Mandarin Chinese and several other Chinese dialects. He is also an enthusiastic practitioner of Chinese brush calligraphy.

Benefiting from the solid foundation Pujing had established in Thai politics and in the local Chinese community, Rende initiated two new temples as early as in 1987, only one year after his ascension. One of them was Wanfo Ci'en si 萬佛慈恩寺, the Temple of Ten Thousand Buddhas, constructed in Chiang Rai in recognition of the Princess Mother's graciousness. At the heart of this temple complex stands a giant bronze image of Maitreya Buddha. The other was Fo'en chansi 佛恩禪寺, the Chan Temple of Buddha's Grace, in Korat. These two temples were dedicated for the sake of royal merit, but with the obvious ambition of strengthening the patriarch's authority in JN.

Taking the giant Maitreya statute as his flagship work, Rende named it Fugui Meile 富貴彌勒, Maitrya of Wealth and Nobility (Fig. 6). It is interesting that the Maitreya cult had once been popularly followed among economically pressed commoners across northern Thailand.[104] Perhaps, Rende was attempting to attract more local followers by including the Maitreya belief in his new temple. However, the name of this temple, Ten-thousand Buddhas

104 Keyes, "Millennialism, Theravāda Buddhism, and Thai Society," 288–89.

for His Princess Mother's Grace, strongly suggests that it was otherwise built to provide for royal merit, specifically for the late King Bhumibol's loving and beloved mother, Somdet Yah. Obviously, Rende is following in his master's practice of appeasing the monarch to secure royal patronage for JN. He even named one of the buildings in Wanfo Ci'en si after Her Royal Princess Sirindhorn and invited her to inaugurate this building upon its completion in 2012.[105] All of his efforts to win royal affection were rewarded. At the end of Buddhist lent in 1994, King Rama IX even went to Pumen Bao'en si to ceremonially offer royal robes to Rende and his Sangha. Moreover, in 2016, JN monks were invited to the royal place to perform an elaborate ritual in the Chinese tradition to dedicate merit for the late King. These privileges had rarely been granted to JN's counterpart, Annam Nikāya.

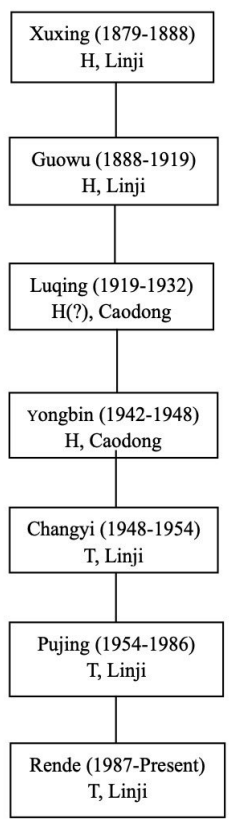
Fig. 6: The giant bronze statue of Maitreya Buddha at Wanfo Ci'en si in Chiang Rai

While Rende was presiding as the seventh-generation patriarch of JN (Chart III), Thailand was enjoying a decade-long period of rapid economic growth that lasted down to the onset of the financial crisis in 1997. In response to this

105 Taiguo Huazong, *Chiangrai fu Wanfo Ci'en si dian shizhu li jiebei dadian* [A Memorial on the Ceremony of Installing the Boundary Stone balls of the Ordination Hall at the Temple of Ten Thousand Buddhas for Her Princess Mother's Graces, Chiang Rai], 45.

economic boom, a diverse range of prosperity religious practices emerged in Thai society that placed an overwhelming emphasis on worldly wealth acquisition fully equivalent to that of salvation.[106] Religious services were thus commodified. Even nirvāṇna was for sale in this new religious environment.[107] Monks were struggling to balance aspiration for material gain with their Buddhist faith. Inasmuch as its temples were mostly located in commercial centers across Thailand, JN could hardly avoid commodifying its religious services to keep up with this rising culture of material gain. For instance, consultation of the Chinese Zodiac, Tai Sui 太歲, which had long been practiced in Longlian si, became one of the popular religious objectives among Chinese tourists in Thailand, along with other ritual services tagged with a range of prices. So, how to prevent the Sangha from indulging in material ambition while remaining true to Buddhist norms and teachings is one of the most pressing challenges facing Rende's JN.

Chart III: Seven Generations of JN Patriarchs (H-Hakka; T-Teochew; Linji: Linji Dharma Lineage; Caodong: Caodong Dharma Lineage; Year: Timespan of their leadership over JN).



106 See also note no. 16.

107 Scott, *Nirvana for Sale*, 34–39.

Another internal challenge Rende faces, unseen by the public, is the factionalism emerging from Longlian si. It is believed that this factionalism began with Renchao 仁晁, a brilliant disciple of Pujing. Like Rende, Renchao was of Teochew origin, but he was junior to Rende in seniority, based on the date of his entry to the monastic order. They had worked together in serving their master's efforts to revitalize JN, and were highly appreciated by the latter for their loyalty and ability, according to the temple chronicles. Renchao was accordingly appointed as the abbot of Longlian si in 1982, while Rende was promoted as the successor-in-waiting to lead JN from the Pumen Bao'en si, the new headquarters of the school.[108] By the early 1990s, Renchao had earned enormous popularity in the Thai-Chinese community, where he had generated a larger number of monks than any of his Dharma peers. No doubt his recruitment efforts benefitted from Longlian si's advantageous location in the heart of Chinatown and its prestigious status as an emblem of Chinese Buddhist heritage. Part of that history centers on Pusong Huang'en si 普頌皇恩寺, The Temple of Universal Praise for His Majesty's Grace, in Nonthaburi. This temple, in the style of a Chinese imperial place, is far more magnificent than Rende's Wanfo Ci'en si in Chiang Rai. The successful construction of Pusong Huang'en si solidified Renchao's popularity and authority in JN. From the name of this temple, "Universal Praise for His Majesty's Grace," we can see clearly that Renchao had inherited Pujing's practice of deferring to the monarch for the sake of patronage. Indeed, he went further than others in paying such a direct complement to the king himself.

These moves made Renchao's disciples based in Longlian si proud, creating the conviction that their master was far greater than any of the other senior monks in JN. At Renchao's demise in 2015, they published a memoir acclaiming him as the most outstanding master of his generation, a posthumous accolade that normally would be given only to the JN school's patriarchs.[109] They also celebrated the royal audiences that the king himself and other senior royal members had granted to their late master. All of these actions suggest that the monks based at Longlian si had consciously or unconsciously tried to promote Renchao's authority to the extent that even Rende was outshined, if not outright undermined. Insiders at the Longlian si inadvertantly are reported to have leaked that several of Renchao's senior disciples even planned to unite together to prevent anyone outside of their temple from being appointed as the new

108 Taiguo Huazong, *Renchao da shangzuo: yidai zongshi jinian kan* [A Memorial of the Late Elderly Master Renchao], 14.

109 Ibid., 2.

abbot.[110] If that plan were true, this was precisely the sort of factionalism of which we speak.

In response to these factional efforts, Rende appointed Renyí 仁誼, his closet Dharma peer of Teochew origin, as the acting abbot of Longlian si, while Renchao's ambitious disciples were relegated to be assistant abbots in queue. Renyí was the presiding abbot of Ganlu si at that time, and still remains in control of this Vietnamese-originated temple today. In our interviews, Rende explained that he had initially invited Renyì 仁意 to preside over Longlian si due to his high seniority in JN, but that Renyì politely declined. So, Rende handpicked Renyí, the third highest of monastic seniority in consideration of the long-term internal stability and unity. On 18 July 2019, the current monarch's birthday, Renyí was royally appointed as the deputy patriarch of JN, equivalent to becoming the successor patriarch in-waiting to Rende. It was said that in this formal reshuffling by royal decree, one of the humblest disciples of Renchao was promoted as one of three assistant abbots of Longlian si. At the same time, Renyí was royally appointed as the abbot of Pusong Huang'en si, which Renchao had painstakingly built to please the late king. At the time this paper was submitted for publication, no disagreements had been heard from Longlian si.

We believe the factionalism that emerged in JN during Renchao's time has been silenced at least temporarily, if not permanently silenced, and that the internal unity of the school was once again been strengthened. Nevertheless, there is no evidence to suggest that the monks who have long been affiliated with Renyí, the patriarch-in-waiting from Ganlu si, do not have ambition to consolidate their influnce within JN. The possible occurrence of Gulu si-based factionalism should not be neglected here. As for Renchao's disciples, the lesson that they should have learned is that the Thai government is only interested in seeing a unified JN that functionis for the benefit of Thai social and political order. Rende still remains important because of his ability to politically mobilize JN, not to mention the fact that he is the sitting senior patriarch.

JN under Rende's leadership has of late been facing some unprecedented external challenges. One of those challenges has been coming from Taiwan-

110 The information was drawn from interviews with two senior teachers who, up to 2018, had worked at the Buddhist high school attached to Longlian si for more than one decade. The interviews were held at their individual houses on 23 July 2019. Due to their request for anonymity, I have chosen not to identify their names here.

backed Buddhist institutions. During its peak time of building temples globally in the 1990s, Foguan Shan 佛光山, Buddha's Light Mountain, set up a Bangkok branch in the name of education and culture on the thirty-second floor of Vongvanji Complex.[111] In the last two decades, other major Taiwanese Buddhist institutions, such as the Tzu Chi Foundation 慈濟基金會 and Chung Tai Chan Monastery 中台禪寺, have all built branches in Bangkok, going so far as to convert apartments and villas located in different commercial centers into household temples. They have performed elaborate Chinese rituals, taught Buddhist seminars, offered free training in Chinese arts, hosted Chinese meditation retreats, and organized charity activities to help the poor. Meanwhile, they have established contacts and sought donations from wealthy Chinese in Thailand in order to meet the expenses of their daily operations. In effect, increasing numbers of the Thai Chinese faithful have been drawn to this Dharma "charm offensive," significantly diverting JN's sources of material support.

Some of the Taiwanese institutes in Thailand have strategically reoriented themselves to winning over the Chinese from the mainland, given that the latter's religious needs were growing visibly in response to the economic transformation there. Nowadays, the increasing numbers of converts coming from Mainland China have become major donors of certain Taiwan-linked temples in Thailand. This being said, the internationality of Taiwanese Buddhism has been driven by its institutional expansionism, with the dual purpose to rejuvenate the cultural identity of overseas Chinese and, on the other hand, seek material resources overseas.[112] To some extent, the latter purpose is more apparent.

Recognizing the threat posed by the Taiwanese Buddhist institutes at their doorstep, JN has started to protest against the practices of these institutes. On many occasions Rende has publicly questioned their legitimacy in Thailand, insofar as they function as Buddhist temples that are registered as non-profit foundations with the Ministry of the Interior, rather than with the Department of Religious Affairs under the Ministry of Culture.[113] But nothing has changed, nor will it, due to the strong connections that Taiwanese have generated with Thai elites, both politically and ecclesiastically. For Rende, then, the rapid growth of Taiwanese Buddhist influence will remain a challenge to JN's material interests and spiritual authority in Thailand.

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111 Broy, et al., "Migrating Buddhas and Global Confucianism," 18.

112 Chandler, "Spreading Buddha's Light," 183–84.

113 Kataoka, "Religion as Non-Religion," 465.

Interestingly, Rende does not regard the Chinese monks or nuns from Mainland China as a threat. The mainlander monks and nuns reached a significant number only in the latter 1990s, as China's cultural diplomatic envoys or individual students became more interested in Thai Buddhist teachings. The primary purpose of their engagements in Thailand has centered on their relations with Thai Buddhist elites, whom they aim to befriend. They have no interest in drawing material donations from the local Chinese community. In light of this fact, their activities in Thailand seem more political than cultural, and limited mostly to the state-sponsored Sino-Thai religious exchanges. Nevertheless, Rende was annoyed upon seeing that Yinshun 印順, the current abbot of Hongfa si 弘法寺 in Shenzhen and Zhonghua si 中華寺, China's missionary temple in Nepal, gained the ecclesiastic title of "Chief of the Chinese Sangha" in 2011 through his generous donation to the Supreme Sangha Council, notwithstanding the honorable nature of the title itself.[114] He demonstrated his disgust for such fame-seeking behavior by declining to receive an annual award for outstanding Buddhist masters in Thailand—simply because one Mainland Chinese monk was also listed as one of the award recipients.[115] In his view, that monk had contributed nothing to Thai society except a one-time large donation to the organizer of the award ceremony. Rende also refused to provide temporary lodging for Chinese monk-students who were studying in the local Buddhist colleges, proclaiming it to be unsafe to house someone whose background is unknown, particularly foreigners. In contrast to JN, Annam Nikāya has been hosting a number of monk-students from Vietnam for free, much to the appreciation of its Vietnamese root monastery.

Rende's distrust of China has also manifested in his polite rejection of the Chinese government's offer to establish a Confucius Institute at JN in the early 2000s. In our interviews, Rende said that he did understand that the Confucius Institute would help his monks in Chinese language learning, but he preferred distancing JN from any politically related collaboration with China. Growing protests against the political motives of this Institute suggest that Rende's decision not to let it in was correct.[116]

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114 Zhou, "Yinshun cheng Taiguo Huaseng da zunzhang" [Yinshun Becomes the Chief of the Chinese Sangha in Thailand].

115 Miaoshuang, *Fujian Benxing daheshang huo Shifolian Di'erjie Shijie Fojiao Jiechu Lingxiu Jiang* [Fujian-based Most Venerable Benxing Wins the 2nd WBF Award for Outstanding World Buddhist Leaders].

116 Beyer, "Are the Confucius Institutes a Trojan Horse?".

Rende is now in his late 80s. His more than thirty years of leadership over JN has been less innovative than that of his predecessor Pujing, but successful enough to have sustained the royal patronage that the JN school desperately needs for its legitimate existence in Thailand. The three mega-temples JN built under Rende's leadership tell us that the prominence and popularity of JN among the Thai-Chinese community have been firmly maintained under Rende, even though the challenges posed by the Taiwanese Buddhist institutions have been growing stronger. Rende's recent endeavor should be highly praised; he has worked to maintain internal unity and stability, whether by tackling the emerging factionalism in its early stage or preparing an able successor-in-waiting. We believe that it is unlikely that there will be disputes to do with the internal succession from him to Renyí at his demise.

Outlook

By this point it should be clear that JN has been struggling to sustain Thai political recognition of its legitimacy as an order within the Thai Sangha that has existed in Thailand for the past one hundred and fifty years. To succeed, this school has demonstrated a willingness to integrate itself deeply into local politics and society through both political mobilization and assimilation into the Theravāda-dominated Thai Sangha. Xuxing's moderation of Chinese internal conflicts and Pujing's participation in Thai diplomacy with Taiwan tells us that JN has adapted itself exceptionally well to the Thai context, compared to other religious institutions in Thailand. Pujing's incorporation of Thai elements into his ordination hall and his adoption of local Thai monastic dress codes by the JN Sangha might also be seen as a deliberate move to further this social assimilation. It should be further noted that JN, as a minor Buddhist school of foreign origin, lacked the doctrinal authority of its Therāvada counterparts in Thailand to provide the religious legitimacy needed by the ruling elites. Rather, JN has always required the latter's recognition to survive in Thailand. This fact explains why the leaders of this school have so enthusiastically courted state patronage by seeking favor with the Thai monarchy. Meanwhile, in JN's interactions with the Thai Sangha it has characterized itself as a humble Buddhist entity of lesser influence, so as to pose no challenge to the latter's interests. All of these measures have enabled JN to be widely accepted by both political and ecclesiastic authorities in Thailand. Owing to these policies, JN's existence in Thailand can be expected to endure for the foreseeable future.

In studying JN's history, we can clearly see the strong imprint of the local sociopolitical context on this school. Whether it be the anti-Chinese sentiments that circulated in Thai politics and society during the first half of the twentieth century, which posed a threat to JN's existential legitimacy, or the distrust in contemporary Thai-Sino relations, which has contributed to JN's hesitance to collaborate with China-backed Buddhist initiatives in Thailand, local society and politics have determined the fortunes of this school. Indeed, it is circumstances such as these, we would submit, that have instigated JN's series of attempts to assimilate itself so thoroughly to the local Thai social and political climate, even though it has retained certain discrete elements of its Chinese identity have been retained, to the extent that vegetarianism and Chinese rituals remain a core aspect of the school.

This history also tells us that JN's fate has historically been closely linked to the Thai-Chinese community. For instance, the economic depression that the Chinese community suffered under Phibun's first term of premiership from 1938 to 1944 led to disunity not only within JN, but sparked disputes with Chinese ritual monks freelancing for their living in Thailand as well. Moreover, when economic prosperity returned to the Chinese community in the 1960s-1980s, that rise in financial fortunes facilitated Pujing's revitalization of JN. These correlations suggest that the school's prosperity was deeply entwined with the Chinese community's successes. Given that premise, it seems unthinkable for JN to lose the support of the Chinese community. This is why Taiwan-backed Buddhist ventures in the local Chinese religious setting should be taken as an overwhelming threat to the wellbeing of JN.

Of late, anxieties have also arisen over the growing number of ethnic Thais who are being ordained into JN today. They have already become a majority in the JN monastic community, and they will gradually replace the ethnic-Chinese leadership in the near future. Their mastery of the Chinese language is insufficient for them to know and preach the intricate doctrinal teachings of Chinese Buddhism. When that time comes, can JN remain the same JN that it has been up to now, even just in cultural terms? How would JN monks in coming generations be capable of faithfully upholding the JN Dharma lineage when they are so unfamiliar with it? With most of its monks lacking knowledge of the Chinese language,[117] JN has failed to produce charismatic monks like Hsing

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117 In this study, I find that most of the current JN monks speak zero Chinese language and pronounce the Chinese sutras by referring to the phonic marks in Thai language, but knowing nothing of the meaning. In my last interview with him at Punmen Bao'en si on 28 September 2019, the incumbent patriarch also

Yun, the founding master of Foguang Shan, who understood and was able to preach the Dharma in global Chinese communities.[118] This could be a significant loss in the current globalizing era, when the Thai Sangha has been obsessed with building temples in foreign lands.

These current developments suggest that the incumbent JN patriarch's choice of an heir and patriarchal successor from among his Dharma peers will need to be made with a profound consideration of JN's future internal unity and stability in mind. In doing so, he may be compelled to skip over his own disciples, some of whom are becoming quite competent, albeit still young. This makes the impending leadership transmission the first to happen from among monks of the same Dharma generation instead of JN's prevailing master-to-disciple succession. It should be noted that JN's ever-nepotistic practice of selecting successors from monks of common sub-ethnicity became negligible by Rende's time, since the majority of monks identify with the Thai language rather than any ethnic Chinese dialects. This perhaps decreases the likelihood of internal disputes, so long as selected successors continue to lead JN in fulfillment of Chinese religious needs in Thailand.

admits that the vast majority of monks and novices in today's JN are ethnic Thais or other minorities from the mountainous areas in northern part of Thailand, taking Thai language as mother tongue and having no interest to learn Chinese language due to its uselessness in their daily practice.

118 Chia, "Toward a Modern Buddhist Hagiography," 143–44.

Appendix: Location of JN Temples

1. **Pumen Bao'en si 普門報恩寺** known as Wat Bhoman Khunaram, 323 Sathu Pradit 19, Khwaeng Chong Nonsi, Khet Yan Nawa, Krung Thep Maha Nakhon, 10120.

2. **Longlian si 龍蓮寺** known as Wat Mangkon Kamalawat or Wat Leng Noei, 423 Aroen Krung Rd, Khwaeng Pom Prap, Khet Pom Prap Sattru Phai, Krung Thep Maha Nakhon, 10100.

3. **Puren si 普仁寺** known as Wat Pho Yen, 106 เทศบาลตำบลลูกแก 6 Tambon Don Khamin, Amphoe Tha Maka, Chang Wat Kanchanaburi, 71120.

4. **Cishan si 慈善寺** known as Wat Chue Chang, 55 Supasarnrangsan Rd, Tambon Hat Yai, Amphoe Hat Yai, Chang Wat Songkhla, 90110.

5. **Pude si 普德寺** known as Wat Chin Pho Thattaram, ตำบลศรีราชา อำเภอศรีราชา จังหวัดชลบุรี, 20110 Amphoe Si Racha, Chang Wat Chon Buri, 20110.

6. **Wanfo Ci'en si 萬佛慈恩寺** known as Wat Muen Buddha Mettakhunaram, 80 หมู่ 9 ท่าข้าวเปลือก Mae Chan District, Chiang Rai, 57111.

7. **Fo'en chansi 佛恩禪寺** known as วัดพุทธคุณ, หมู่ 1, ตำบลสีคิ้ว อำเภอสีคิ้ว จังหวัดนครราชสีมา, 30140 Tambon Sikhio, Amphoe Sikhio, Chang Wat Nakhon Ratchasima, 30170.

8. **Pusong Huang'en si 普頌皇恩寺** known as Wat Borom Racha Kanjanapisek Anusorn, 959 หมู่ 4 Thetsaban 9 Rd, Sano Loi, Bang Bua Thong District, Nonthaburi, 11110.

9. **Ganlu si 甘露寺** known as Wat Dibaya Vari Vihara,119 Thip Wari Alley, Khwaeng Wang Burapha Phirom, Khet Phra Nakhon, Krung Thep Maha Nakhon, 10200.

10. **Yongfu si 永福寺** knowns as Wat Bamphen Chin Phrot or Wat Yong Hok Yi, 324 ซอย Yaowarat 8, Khwaeng Samphanthawong, Khet Samphanthawong, Krung Thep Maha Nakhon, 10100

11. **Xianfo si 仙佛寺** known as Wat The Phuttharam, 686 Sukhumvit Rd, Bang Pla Soi, Amphoe Mueang Chon Buri, Chang Wat Chon Buri, 20000.

12. **Cibeishan Puti si 慈悲山菩提寺** known as Wat Metthadharmabodhiyan, Nong Ya, Mueang Kanchanaburi District, Kanchanaburi, 71000.

13. **Longfu si 龍福寺** known as Wat Chin Pracha Samosorn, 291 ศุภกิจ Suphakit Rd, Na Mueang, Amphoe Mueang Chachoengsao, Chang Wat Chachoengsao, 24000.

14. **Longhua si 龍華寺** known as Wat Mangkon Buppharam, Phliu, Laem Sing District, Chanthaburi, 22190.

15. **Lingjiu jingshe 靈鷲精舍** known as Leng Jiu Jeng Sia, 40 ซอย สมปรารถนา ถนน ประชาสงเคราะห์ 14 แขวง ดินแดง Khwaeng Din Daeng, Khet Din Daeng, Krung Thep Maha Nakhon, 10400.

16. **Xuanzong jingshe 玄宗精舍** known as Sutham Jeng Sia, Setthakit 10 Alley, Khwaeng Bang Khae Nuea, Khet Bang Khae, Khrung Thep Maha Nakhon, 10160.

17. **Guangming jingshe 光明精舍** known as Kuang Meng Jeng Sia, 149 Worachak Road, Thepsirin sub-District, Pom Prap Sattru Phai District, Bangkok 10100.

18. **Jueyuan Nianfo lin 覺園念佛林** known as Kak Hang Niam Huk House, 92 Soi Soi Man Sri 1, Bamrung Muang Road, Mahanak canal (Klong Mahanak), Pom Prap Sattru Phai District, Bangkok, 10100.

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