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Lexical and Semantic Dimensions of PL-SKT Loanwords: Their Values in King Ramkhamhaeng's Inscription No.1

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this research were: (1) to examine the word formation of Pali–Sanskrit (PL-SKT) loanwords in King Ramkhamhaeng's Inscription No.1; (2) to investigate the semantic changes of these loanwords; and (3) to explore their values across different dimensions in King Ramkhamhaeng's Inscription No.1. The study focused on a population of 89 PL-SKT loanwords identified in King Ramkhamhaeng's Inscription No.1, which were systematically selected based on the established word-counting criteria. A qualitative method was employed for analysis in the study. The findings revealed that the 89 PL-SKT loanwords were most commonly formed through primary derivative (Kitaka), followed by compound words (Samāsa), prefixation, (Upasagga) and secondary derivative (Taddhita). Regarding meaning and semantic change, 4 types were identified: narrowing (most frequent), widening, transferring of meaning, and retention of original meaning with the latter being the most prevalent overall. As for their values, the PL-SKT loanwords in the inscription reflect 5 major dimensions: art, language, Buddhism, tradition, and politics. Among these, Buddhism was found to be the most prominent, followed by language, history, politics, and tradition. Therefore, it can be concluded that PL-SKT loanwords are highly valuable and beneficial for illustrating a holistic view of the Sukhothai dynasty, both in its historical context and its lasting influence up to the present.

Keywords: Word Formation; Semantic Change; Values; Pali and Sanskrit; Inscription

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1. Introduction

Bloomfield^[1] stated that the borrowing of words from one language into another is a common feature of all languages, as communication between different communities necessitates such exchanges. Thai is no exception, as it has borrowed Pali and Sanskrit words from India, primarily through religion and culture, in accordance with linguistic theories of lexical borrowing. Southeast Asia has long been under the influence of India^[2]. With regard to the arrival of Brahmanism–Hinduism in Thailand, there are assumptions that this religion entered the region during the pre-Sukhothai period through these possible routes^[3]. In particular, Thailand absorbed Indian culture, especially Brahmanism–Hinduism and Buddhism, both of which played highly significant roles in the country. Pongpaiboon^[4] noted that one element that accompanied these religions was language, which served as a medium for transmitting religious teachings: Sanskrit for Brahmanism–Hinduism and Pali for Buddhism. Evidence of Sanskrit has been found at Wat Sema Muang in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, while Pali has been discovered at Wat Phra Pathom Chedi in Nakhon Pathom Province^[5]. However, it should be observed that Pali and Sanskrit were found separately, each belonging to a different historical period.

From the above discussion, it can be understood that Pali and Sanskrit entered Thailand, yet there had previously been no evidence of their mixed usage in the Thai language. However, both languages were found together for the first time in King Ramkhamhaeng's Inscription No.1, dating back to the Sukhothai period. For examples, Pali–Sanskrit words appear in the side 1 of Inscription No.1 such as Śrī, Indra^[6], in the side 2 of Inscription No.1 such as Trī, Pura, Dāna, Śīla, in the side 3 of Inscription No.1 such as Prāsād, Devatā, and in the side 4 of Inscription No.1, such as Jetiya, Garu^[7]. All of these are Pali and Sanskrit loanwords that were used in combination with Thai and other languages, such as Mon and Khmer.

When both Pali and Sanskrit words were found together in this important inscription, the researchers began to raise several questions: By what methods were these Pali–Sanskrit words formed when they first appeared in the Sukhothai Kingdom, the first Thai kingdom, which preceded the Ratanakosin period? What meanings did these words convey

in comparison with their meanings today? Most importantly, how do these Pali–Sanskrit words serve as significant indicators for understanding the various values embodied in King Ramkhamhaeng's Inscription No.1?

After identifying the Pali–Sanskrit words in King Ramkhamhaeng's Inscription No.1, the researchers proceeded to analyze their word formation based on the theories of Pali–Sanskrit word formation, namely Kitaka (Primary Derivative), Taddhita (Secondary Derivative), Samāsa (Compounding), and Upasagga (Prefixation). For example; King's name is Śrī Indrāditya (Inscription No.1). This phrase consists of three Sanskrit words, whose meanings are given in the Pali–Thai–English–Sanskrit Dictionary by Chandaburinarunath as follows: Śrī means glory, prosperity, beauty, or merit, Indra means Indra, the supreme ruler and Āditya means the sun^[8]. When these three words are combined, they form a compound (Samāsa). Furthermore, through Sandhi (Phonological Combination), Śrī Indra merges with Āditya to create Śrī Indrāditya, an auspicious name signifying lineage from Indra, the supreme ruler, comparable to the sun in the cosmic order.

When analyzing the meaning and value of Pali–Sanskrit words in Sukhothai Inscription No.1 from the above text, it can be observed that the name is formed using the Samāsa (Compound) method. The first word, “Indra”, in the Pali–Thai–English–Sanskrit Dictionary by Chandaburinarunath, has the original meaning of Indra, the supreme ruler, which is similar to its meaning in the Royal Institute Dictionary B.E. 2554 as deva-king in heaven and the supreme ruler^[9]. This is compounded with the word “Āditya”, which in the Pali–Thai–English–Sanskrit Dictionary by Chandaburinarunath means “the sun”, and has a corresponding meaning in the Royal Institute Dictionary B.E. 2554 as “the sun” and also the name of a deity.

After the compound is formed, Sandhi (Phonological Combination) is applied to link the two words. The resulting meaning of “Śrī Indrāditya” signifies an auspicious name, denoting descent from Indra, the supreme ruler, and possessing power like the sun in the cosmic order. This name also reflects religious values, specifically the belief in the supremacy of deities. From this, one can understand that in Sukhothai's history, Khun Śrī Indrāditya was the first king and regarded as a deva-king, since the word “Indra” refers to a deity who holds the status of a divine ruler.

From the study of the above examples, it becomes clear how words are constructed, their meanings, and the value of Sukhothai Inscription No.1. Especially, this research is descriptive-analytical in nature. The researchers examined Pali-Sanskrit words that first appeared in the Thai language, which are already widely recognized. However, the novelty of this study lies in its application of theoretical frameworks to analyze these words in areas that have not been clearly studied before, namely word formation and semantic change, as well as reflections from the usage of Pali-Sanskrit vocabulary. Previous studies, by contrast, tended to analyze general social contexts without any direct reference to or origins in Pali-Sanskrit.

Therefore, to address the questions raised above, the researchers focus on studying “lexical and semantic dimensions of Pali–Sanskrit loanwords: their values in King Ramkhamhaeng’s inscription No.1.” This study is expected to benefit the field of Pali–Sanskrit research in Thai, highlight the significance of the Thai language, and foster a sense of appreciation and preservation of Thailand’s important cultural heritage among the Thai people.

2. Review of Literature

The researchers reviewed all documents and relevant information related to this study. After thoroughly examining these materials, the following summary can be drawn.

2.1. King Ramkhamhaeng’s Inscription No.1 and the Occurrence of Pali–Sanskrit Words

Na Nagara^[10] stated that Pho Khun Śrī Indrāditya established the Phra Ruang dynasty of Nakhon Si Satchanalai, Sukhothai, around 1749 C.E. (B.E. 1792). His son, Pho Khun Ramkhamhaeng, invented the Thai script in 1883 C.E. (B.E. 1826). King Ramkhamhaeng’s Inscription No.1 is an important historical and linguistic record, recounting the king’s biography, the prosperity and abundance of the Sukhothai Kingdom, the paternalistic style of governance described as “the father rules the children”^[11] in which the king was close to and just toward his subjects, the strict observance of Buddhism as the cultural centre, free trade and diplomatic relations with other cities, as well as the invention of the Thai script, which later became the foundation of Thai language and civilization.

Notably, King Ramkhamhaeng’s Inscription No.1 also marks the first known simultaneous use of Pali and Sanskrit loanwords. Ancient evidence shows that a number of Pali–Sanskrit words were used, mostly related to religion and governance, such as Rāja (King), and Śrī (Honor/glory)^[12]. These words were not only borrowed to elevate the language with dignity and sacredness but also reflected the influence of Buddhism and Brahmanical traditions that entered Sukhothai society. Consequently, the language of the inscription carries religious, political, and cultural significance, confirming the advancement of civilization and the intellectual development of people in that era.

2.2. The Word Formation of Pali–Sanskrit

Pali–Sanskrit words are composed of roots and suffixes to form lexemes and these lexemes must combine with Vibhatti or Vibhakti (Case Endings) to become complete words suitable for use. These lexemes can then be used to create various types of words^[13]. Especially, in Pali and Sanskrit there are four methods of word formation: Kitaka (Primary Derivative), Taddhita (Secondary Derivative), Samāsa (Compound Formation), and Upasagga (Prefixation). Each method has the following characteristics:

1. Kitaka (Primary Derivative): This is the earliest method of word formation, in which suffixes are added to roots. For example, the word “nīti” (law) is formed by combining the root “nī” with the suffix “ti” in Pali and Sanskrit, while the word “bhikkhu” (Monk), is formed similarly.
2. Taddhita (Secondary Derivative): This method builds on Kitaka by adding secondary suffixes to existing words. For instance, Medhāvī (wise person) is formed by combining Medhā with the suffix “vī” in Pali and Sanskrit. Similarly, the word “Heraññika” (Financial Officer) is formed through the same process.
3. Samāsa (Compound Formation): This method forms words by combining two or more lexemes. For example, Dhammadāna (Giving of Dhamma) is formed by combining “Dhamma” + “Dāna” while another example includes Buddhādamma (Buddha’s Dhamma).
4. Upasagga (Prefixation): This method forms words by adding prefixes to roots, lexemes, or stems. For example, Ānanda (Happiness) is formed by combining

the prefix “ā” with “Nanda”, while another example includes “Sumanā” (kind-hearted).

Thus, the word formation of Pali and Sanskrit is based on a complex system that uses roots as the core, adds suffixes to create primary derivatives (Kitaka), and then allows further formation of secondary derivatives (Taddhita), compounds (Samāsa), and prefixed words (Upasagga). This process produces words with diverse and nuanced meanings, capable of deeply reflecting religious, philosophical, and social concepts.

2.3. Meaning and Semantic Change of Pali-Sanskrit Words

Khanithanan^[14] discussed the semantic change of words, noting that word meanings can shift due to various factors, such as social and cultural changes, which may result in some words acquiring new meanings or being used in contexts different from their original ones. Similarly, Pali-Sanskrit words undergo changes in meaning from their original sense. Makchaeng^[15] stated that when these words are adopted as loanwords in Thai, various semantic changes occur. The theories regarding these semantic changes can be summarized as follows:

1. **Original or Preserved Meaning:** This refers to Pali-Sanskrit words whose meanings remain unchanged over time or across usage. In other words, the word retains its original meaning, and speakers continue to understand it in the same way, without any broadening, narrowing, or symbolic/figurative change.
2. **Widening of Meaning:** This refers to Pali and Sanskrit words that originally had a specific or limited meaning but are used in an expanded sense, with additional meanings added. This increase in meaning can be either implied or metaphorical, allowing the word to convey more than its original sense.
3. **Narrowing of Meaning:** This occurs when Pali or Sanskrit words with general or multiple meanings are adopted into Thai to convey a more specific meaning for a particular object or context. In this case, the word’s originally broad or neutral meaning is reduced to a single, more limited meaning.
4. **Transferring of Meaning:** This refers to words whose original meaning is no longer used, and a new meaning

is created for them. For some words undergoing a shift of meaning, the original sense may still be partially recognizable, while for others it may be entirely obscured. This can result from factors such as context, time, word compounding, or word truncation.

2.4. The Value of Pali-Sanskrit Words in King Ramkhamhaeng’s Inscription No.1

Pali-Sanskrit has had a profound influence on the Thai language since ancient times. Loanwords from these languages entered Thai through Buddhism and Brahmanical traditions, enriching Thai vocabulary with refined and elevated meanings. Examples include words such as Dhamma (Righteousness/Virtue), Rāja (King) and Śrī (Honor/glory). These words allow Thais to clearly communicate abstract concepts related to religion, philosophy, and governance. Moreover, the use of Pali-Sanskrit words enhances the elegance and sacredness of the Thai language in royal terminology, literature, and religious teachings, reflecting both linguistic beauty and the social dignity of historical Thai society.

In contemporary Thai society, Pali-Sanskrit words continue to be used in daily life and are evident in many important domains, including religious rituals, Buddhist teachings, place names, personal names, and official documents. These words still convey moral values, sacredness, and the distinctiveness of Thai culture. Furthermore, Thai language influenced by Pali-Sanskrit serves as a medium for transmitting knowledge of religion, philosophy, and traditions, helping Thai society preserve its cultural identity and spiritual heritage connected to the past. Therefore, the value of Pali-Sanskrit for the Thai language and society spans language, religion, governance, and culture from the past to the present, contributing to linguistic beauty, moral cultivation, and the enduring preservation of Thai cultural identity.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Population of the Study

In this study, the primary population consists of the book “Sukhothai Inscription No.1” written by Cham Thongkamwan and published in 1971 by Ramkhamhaeng University, and the book “Sukhothai Era Inscriptions” published in 1983 by the Fine Arts Department, Ministry of

Education. The inscription comprises four sides: Side 1, Side 2, Side 3, and Side 4, each containing a substantial number of Pali–Sanskrit words.

The study and collection of Pali-Sanskrit words in King Ramkhamhaeng Inscription No.1 involved gathering all instances of such words and then categorizing them for analysis according to the theoretical framework previously outlined. The total of 89 Pali-Sanskrit words was obtained systematically, based on the established word-counting criteria. Specifically, if the same Pali-Sanskrit word appeared more than once, it was counted as a single item.

3.2. Data Collection

The researchers examined the data from King Ramkhamhaeng’s Inscription No.1 and collected all the specific Pali–Sanskrit words found in the inscription. After completing the data collection, the researchers organized and classified these words into various categories, including word formation, meaning, and the value of Pali–Sanskrit words in different aspects, in order to analyze them according to the prepared conceptual framework and theories: Pali–Sanskrit word formation, semantic change, and theory of reflecting values.

3.3. Data Analysis

The researchers analyzed the Pali–Sanskrit words found in King Ramkhamhaeng’s Inscription No.1 by applying the three theoretical frameworks as follows:

1. After classifying the Pali–Sanskrit words into categories, including word formation, the researchers analyzed the words in the inscription according to Pali–Sanskrit word formation theories, namely the Kitaka, Taddhita, Samāsa, and Upasagga methods.
2. After analyzing the aforementioned word formation theories, the researchers then examined the meanings of all the Pali–Sanskrit words by using Pali–Thai Diction collected by Longsomboon, published by Khurusapha Press^[16], along with the Pali–Thai–English–Sanskrit Dictionary written by Chandaburinarunath, and published by Mahamakuta Rajavidyalaya, as tools for semantic analysis. The meanings were also compared with their contemporary Thai

equivalents using the Dictionary of the Royal Institute B.E. 2554. Subsequently, the analysis was conducted according to the theory of semantic change, including widening of meaning, narrowing of meaning, and transferring of meaning, while also presenting the original, unchanged meanings of these Pali–Sanskrit words.

3. Finally, after analyzing the word formation and meanings of Pali–Sanskrit words in King Ramkhamhaeng’s Inscription No.1, the researchers proceeded to examine the value of these words by reflecting on their significance to Thai society in various aspects. This analysis demonstrates the extent of the Pali–Sanskrit words’ value within King Ramkhamhaeng’s Inscription No.1.

3.4. Presentation of Research Results

After analyzing the data and obtaining the results, the researchers will present the findings in line with the study objectives through a detailed descriptive-analytical approach. To enhance clarity and conciseness, summary tables and figures will be used to consolidate the information described and analyzed. In addition, a quantitative presentation will illustrate the distribution of Pali-Sanskrit word types, showing which categories were used more or less frequently, as well as the extent of semantic change. Furthermore, the study will highlight the reflections of values in Thai society. These findings will be summarized in clear and straightforward figures, enabling readers to better understand the borrowing of Pali-Sanskrit words during the Sukhothai period and to compare it with patterns of semantic change in the present day.

4. Results

After completing the study, the researchers present the findings regarding word formation, semantic change, and the value of Pali–Sanskrit words in Thai society as observed in King Ramkhamhaeng’s Inscription No.1, organized according to the objectives of the study as follows:

4.1. Word Formation of Pali-Sanskrit in Ramkhamhaeng’s Inscription No.1

Pimpuang^[17] stated that from a holistic perspective on the categories of Pali–Sanskrit word formation, they can be clearly summarized as follows: there are four main cate-

gories of PL–SKT word formation, namely, primary derivative (Kitaka), secondary derivative (Taddhita), compounding (Samāsa), and prefixation (Upasagga). These categories have exerted a major influence on Thai word formation.

In King Ramkhamhaeng’s Inscription No.1, a total of 89 Pali–Sanskrit loanwords were identified. It was also found that all four methods of Pali–Sanskrit word formation were

used, namely: primary derivative (Kitaka), secondary derivative (Taddhita), compounding (Samāsa), and prefixation (Upasagga). Upon analyzing all the Pali–Sanskrit words, it was observed that the Kitaka method was used most frequently, with 57 words, followed by Samāsa with 20 words, Upasagga with 7 words, and Taddhita with 5 words, as shown in the **Figure 1** below.

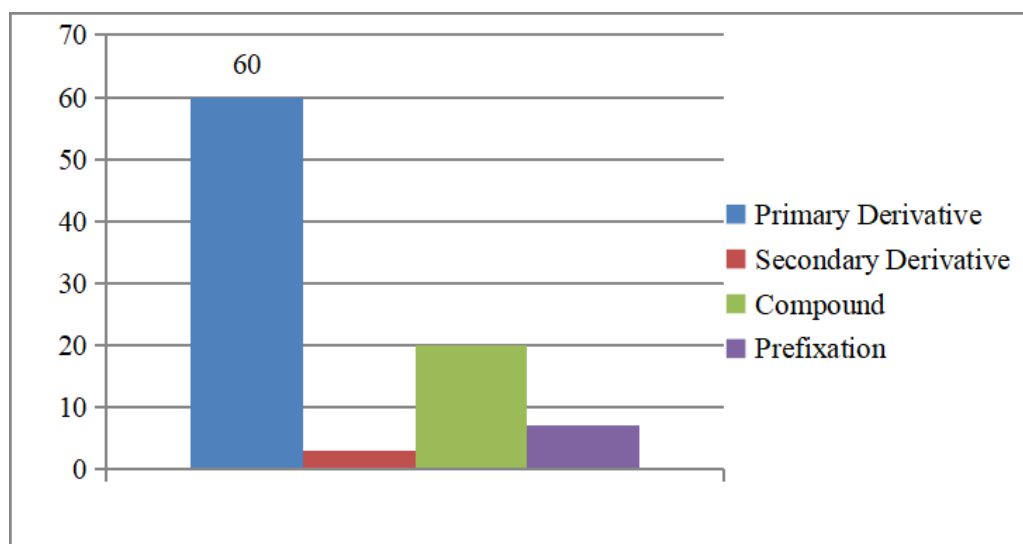


Figure 1. Word Formation of Pali-Sanskrit in Ramkhamhaeng’s Inscription No.1.

From the observation of Pali–Sanskrit word formation using the four methods mentioned above, the reason why Kitka-derived words appear most frequently is likely because this method represents the initial stage of Pali–Sanskrit word formation. At that early stage in Sukhothai, it was convenient to borrow already complete words for use. When creating new words to convey other intended meanings, these Kitka-derived words could be compounded to form new words as needed, which was a simple method that avoided the complex process of adding other suffixes. Similarly, the formation of words using Upasagga was relatively convenient, much like compounding, because one only needed to take a kitka-derived word and add an Upasagga prefix to create the desired word.

As for Taddhita-derived word formation, although it follows the Kitka method, it involves the process of combining a Kitka-derived word with Taddhita suffixes, making it considerably more complex compared to compounding or adding Upasagga. Therefore, it is found least frequently in King Ramkhamhaeng’s inscription No.1.

4.2. Meaning and Semantic Change of Pali-Sanskrit Words in King Ramkhamhaeng’s Inscription No.1

Meaning refers to the content or substance that a word, sentence, or linguistic symbol conveys—whether it is an object, event, thought, or feeling. It is what the sender of the message intends to communicate and what the receiver can interpret accurately. Meaning thus functions as a link between language, thought, and the real world, enabling effective communication.

Kingkham^[18] stated that the meanings of Pali and Sanskrit words can either remain unchanged or undergo modification. Regarding semantic changes of Pali and Sanskrit words adopted into modern Thai, when examined according to the characteristics of commonly observed words, these changes can be classified into three types: widening of meaning, narrowing of meaning, and transferring of meaning. As for words whose meanings remain unchanged, studies have found instances of both semantic constancy and semantic

change, as follows:

1. Widening of Meaning

Pengphala^[19] stated that widening of meaning refers to Pali and Sanskrit words that originally had a specific or limited meaning, which are then used in a broader sense or with an expanded meaning. This

process often introduces additional nuances, thereby increasing the word's overall semantic range. In King Ramkhamhaeng's inscription No.1, 4 words exhibiting this type of semantic widening were identified, which is the fewest compared to other types of semantic change in **Table 1**. For example:

Table 1. Widening of Meaning of Pali-Sanskrit Words in King Ramkhamhaeng's Inscription No.1.

PL-SKT	Original Meaning	Meaning in Inscription	Meaning in Present
ศก /sòk/	Shaka Dynasty, Year according to the Shaka Era or Year of the Shaka Dynasty	Year, according to the Shaka Era, a system of time keeping used for a full year during the Sukhothai period	Year: A system of sequentially counting time in units of years, taking a particular event as the starting point, as in Rattanakosin Era, which begins from the year the city of Rattanakosin was established. Sometimes, it is used as an abbreviation for an era, such as Buddhist Era, or to refer to a single year in the Chula Sakarat calendar.
ราม /ra:m/	The main character in the Ramayana	Rama, king, moderate, just right, beauty	Rama, the main character in the Ramakien, beautiful, moderate, and gracefully just right
ภูมิ /pʰu:m/	Land	Land, plot of land, region, background, status	Land, plot of land, background, class, knowledge, dignity

2. Narrowing of Meaning

Narrowing of Meaning refers to the use of Pali and Sanskrit words that originally had general or broad meanings, which are then applied in Thai with a specific, restricted sense for a particular object or concept. In other words, a word with a narrowed meaning origi-

nally carried a wide, neutral, or multiple range of meanings, but only one meaning is adopted or restricted to a particular sense, which could be either positive or negative. In King Ramkhamhaeng's inscription No.1, 19 words were found to exhibit narrowed meanings in **Table 2**. For example:

Table 2. Narrowing of Meaning of Pali-Sanskrit Words in King Ramkhamhaeng's Inscription No.1.

PL-SKT	Original Meaning	Meaning in Inscription	Meaning in Present
พุทธ /pʰút/	Know, awake, joy, wise person, the Buddha	The Buddha, the Teacher of Religion	The Buddha
ทาน /tʰa:n/	Giving, Stretching, Holding, Cutting, Reaping	Giving, Selfless Offering	Giving
ศีล /sĩ:n/	Steadfast, secure, Support, self-discipline, Normal, condition, Conduct	Self-discipline, Maintaining proper conduct of body, speech, and mind	Rules for regulating body, speech, and mind or more fully

3. Transferring of Meaning

Transferring of Meaning refers to Pali-Sanskrit words whose meanings have been applied differently from their original sense. For some of these words, traces of the original meaning can still be recognized, while for others,

the original meaning may be completely obscured. Such shifts may result from the environment and the passage of time in which each society used the words. In King Ramkhamhaeng's inscription No.1, 4 words were found to exhibit shifted meanings in **Table 3**. For example:

Table 3. Transferring of Meaning of Pali-Sanskrit Words in Ramkhamhaeng's Inscription No.1.

PL-SKT	Original Meaning	Meaning in Inscription	Meaning in Present
เพชร /pʰét/	Thunderbolts	Precious jewel	The name of the jewel that is the hardest and more brilliant than other gems
เพชรบุรี /pʰét.bu.ri:/ or /pʰét.tʰa.bu.ri:/	City of Thunderbolts	The precious jewel city	The city of the hardest jewel and the city of sparkling water
สุวรรณภูมิ /su.pʰan.na.pʰu:m/	A land of shining beauty and goodness	The Golden Land	A prosperous land or city

4. Original or Preserved Meaning

Original Meaning refers to words whose meanings have remained unchanged over time. In King Ramkhamhaeng's inscription No.1, the largest num-

bers of words fall into this category. There are 62 Pali-Sanskrit words whose meanings have remained intact, without any alteration, as illustrated in the following examples in **Table 4**:

Table 4. Original Meaning of Pali-Sanskrit Words in King Ramkhamhaeng's Inscription No.1.

PL-SKT	Original Meaning	Meaning in Inscription	Meaning in Present
เทพดา /tʰɛːp.pʰa.daː/	Deity	Deity	Deity, the deity who resides in heaven
อุบาสก /ʉ.ʉaː.sòk/	A man with steadfast faith in the Triple Gem of Buddhism	A layman who firmly adheres to Buddhism	A layman who firmly adheres to Buddhism
ศัณามก /sa.tʰãː.bòk/	Builder, Founder	Builder, Founder	Builder, Founder

From the study of semantic changes in all Pali-Sanskrit words, it was found that the most frequent type of change was narrowing of meaning, occurring in 19 words. This was fol-

lowed by meaning shift in 4 words and meaning broadening in another 4 words. Additionally, 62 words retained their original meanings. The summary is illustrated in the **Figure 2** below.

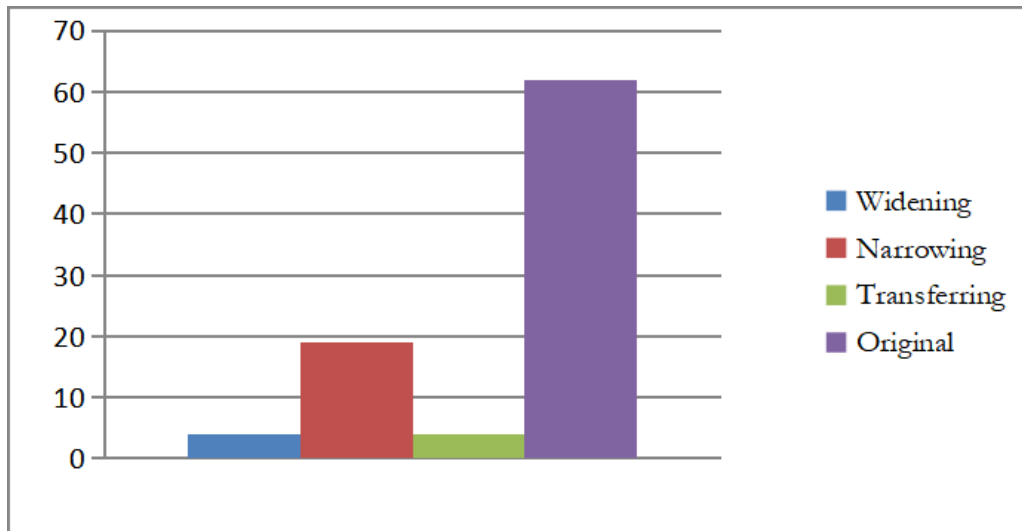


Figure 2. Semantic Dimensions of Pali-Sanskrit Loanwords in King Ramkhamhaeng's Inscription No.1.

4.3. The Value of Pali-Sanskrit Words in King Ramkhamhaeng's Inscription No.1

After analyzing the Pali-Sanskrit words and their meanings as they appear in King Ramkhamhaeng's inscription No.1, and considering the contextual usage of all such words, it can gain a clear understanding of Sukhothai society at that time. The inscription not only allows readers to appreciate the content and the artistry of Pali-Sanskrit language use, but also serves as a reflection of the society of that era. This highlights the values of the Pali-Sanskrit words in the inscription across five dimensions: language, history, Buddhism, tradition and politics. Each of these aspects can be analyzed

as follows:

1. Language

The content of King Ramkhamhaeng's inscription No.1 through the Pali-Sanskrit words reveals the traces of Pali-Sanskrit usage in Thai dating back to the Sukhothai period, where these words were first combined in the language. Therefore, the linguistic value of Pali-Sanskrit in the first stone inscription lies in its role as the foundation for key vocabulary in Thai, encompassing religion, governance, and culture. Moreover, it imparts a sense of sacredness and elevated status to the language, underscoring the significance of Pali-Sanskrit in the development of both the Thai language and society since

the Sukhothai era.

The inscription reveals a large number of Pali–Sanskrit loanwords. For example, the word “Tri” from Sanskrit, meaning “three,” was adapted through Khmer influence into the form “Trai” for use in Thai. Another example is the word “Śaka”, which illustrates semantic expansion. Originally, the word “Śaka” was the name of a royal dynasty that ruled northern India from the 7th to the 9th Buddhist centuries. One of its kings, named Śālivāhana initiated the use of the dynasty’s name to mark years. The first year of the Śālivāhana era corresponded to 621 B.E. Over time, the Sanskrit term “Śaka” came to have an expanded meaning, referring to a system for counting the annual cycle. Thai adopted the word “Śaka” or “ศก” /sòk/ with this meaning, signifying a year according to the Śālivāhana dynasty, also known as Mahāsakarāja or Mahāsakkarat (The Great Era). This is recorded in King Ramkhamhaeng’s inscription No.1: “Pho Khun Ramkhamhaeng inscribed this Thai script with his mind; this Thai script was thus created for that Pho Khun to record.” Here, 1205 Śaka corresponds to Mahāsakarāja (Mahāsakkarat) 1205, which is equivalent to 1826 B.E.

Furthermore, the Pali word “Sara” or the Sanskrit “Saras”, meaning “a large body of water,” is also found in King Ramkhamhaeng’s inscription No.1, and these words continue to be used in modern Thai. In addition, the inscription contributed to the creation of new formal vocabulary, such as “Śrī” (auspiciousness), “Rāja” (King), and “Dhamma” (Righteousness), elevating the language to a higher register suitable for recording important events.

2. History

The content of King Ramkhamhaeng’s inscription No.1 through the Pali–Sanskrit words provides a comprehensive record of the historical context of that era. When this information is compiled and compared with other major inscriptions, as well as ancient northern texts such as the Chinnakanmali Pokorn (Buddhist Scripture), historians can gain a sufficient understanding of Sukhothai’s history. It is clear, for instance, that Pho Khun Sri Indraditya was the first king of the Sukhothai dynasty, as stated in the first side of the inscription No.1: “My father’s name is Śrī Indrāditya ...” In the

Chinnakanmali Pokorn, he is referred to as Rojarāja (King Phra Ruang). The content of this inscription corresponds closely with other inscriptions and historical documents of the period, making it one of the most complete primary sources for Thai history.

3. Buddhism

Pimpuang^[20] stated that Thai kings of the Sukhothai dynasty derived their sense of morality from Buddhist principles and incorporated these principles as an integral part of their governance. From this perspective, it can be asserted that the kings of the Sukhothai dynasty employed religion as a crucial tool to establish their legitimacy. To illustrate the influence of Indian religious culture on Thai kings, one effective approach is to conduct a study of Pali–Sanskrit loanwords associated with the monarchy, which reflect various dimensions of royal authority.

The content of King Ramkhamhaeng’s inscription No.1 through the Pali–Sanskrit words on the side 2 clearly describes the flourishing of Buddhism in both material and spiritual aspects. For example, it mentions several Buddha images enshrined in various “Vihāras” (Monasteries or Dwelling Places). As stated in the side 2 of the inscription: “In the centre of Sukhothai, there are Vihāras, golden Buddha images...” This passage specifically refers to golden Buddha images and Buddha images of large and medium sizes, enshrined in the centre of Sukhothai. At the end of the side 2, the inscription also mentions that the monks of that era were highly knowledgeable in the “Tipiṭaka” (Three Baskets, Canonical Scripture of Theravāda Buddhism) and travelled to study in Nakhon Si Thammarat. This indicates that Buddhism first entered Thailand via Nakhon Si Thammarat.

4. Tradition

The content of King Ramkhamhaeng’s inscription No.1 through the Pali–Sanskrit words on the side 2, also mentions the “Kathina” (robe-offering) tradition. It states that the “Kathina” robes were carried to the forest-dwelling monks outside the city, and upon returning to the city, the robes were celebrated once again. As recorded in the side 2 of the inscription No.1: “After the end of the rainy season, in the first month... they went to chant the “Kathina” offering in the forest-dwelling ar-

neas, and when returning to the city, arranged themselves as forest-dwelling monks, beating drums ...”

5. Politics

In King Ramkhamhaeng’s inscription No.1, loanwords from Pali–Sanskrit are found in the domain of governance. For example, the word “Rājā” refers to a great king and is used in the general sense of a monarch, while “Śrī” is employed as a special word to convey auspiciousness and to honor the status of rulers . Thus, the value of Pali–Sanskrit words in the sphere of governance, as reflected in King Ramkhamhaeng’s Inscription No.1, lies in its role as a symbolic language of power. It serves to exalt the prestige of the king, express ideals of governance grounded in Indian traditions,

and endow the Sukhothai administrative system with sanctity and legitimacy. This is clearly illustrated in the side 4 of Inscription No.1 which states that “... He nurtured and cared for the people of the city in accordance with righteousness.”

Therefore, the value of Pali–Sanskrit words in King Ramkhamhaeng’s Inscription No.1, when considered in terms of meaning and contextual usage, is reflected in five key dimensions of values in Thai society as outlined above. Among these, the Buddhist dimension is the most prominent, with a total of 44 words, followed by language (18 words), history (13 words), politics (11 words), and tradition (3 words). The following **Figure 3** illustrates these findings.

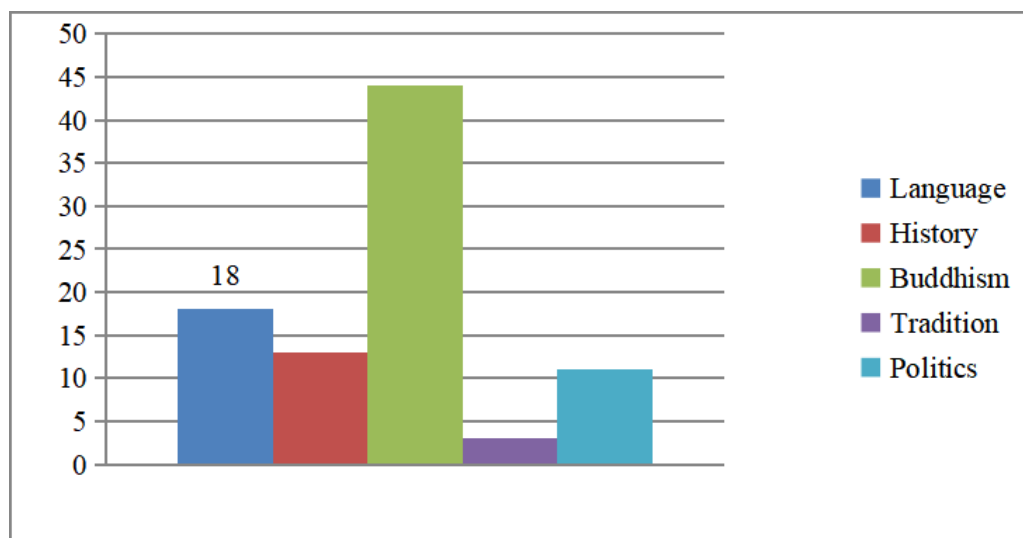


Figure 3. Values of Pali-Sanskrit Loanwords in King Ramkhamhaeng’s Inscription No.1.

5. Conclusions and Discussion

From the study of Pali–Sanskrit loanwords in King Ramkhamhaeng’s Inscription No.1, it can be concluded that there are as many as 89 occurrences of Pali–Sanskrit words. These can be classified into 16 Pali words, 41 Sanskrit words, and 32 words that may be identified as either Pali or Sanskrit.

Regarding word formation, the most frequent process is “Kitaka” (Primary Derivative), accounting for 57 words, followed by “Samāsa” (Compounding) with 20 words, “Upasagga” (Prefixation) with 7 words, and “Taddhita” (Secondary Derivative), which is the least common, with only 5 words.

With respect to the structure of Pali–Sanskrit word

groups found in the inscription, two types can be identified: (1) genuine compounds (Samāsa), which are the most numerous, with 14 groups; and (2) non-compound groups, in which Pali–Sanskrit words are arranged following Thai word order rather than the rules of Pali–Sanskrit compounding. Only 4 such groups were identified.

The semantic changes of words found in the inscription can be classified into three types: widening of meaning, narrowing of meaning, and transferring of meaning. Among these, narrowing of meaning occurs most frequently, with 19 words, followed by semantic transfer with 4 words, and widening of meaning with 4 words. However, it is noteworthy that the majority of Pali–Sanskrit words retained their original meanings. A total of 62 words were found to

preserve their original meaning.

Regarding the value of Pali–Sanskrit loanwords in King Ramkhamhaeng’s Inscription No.1 in relation to Thai society, five domains can be identified: language, history, Buddhism, tradition and politics. Among these, the Buddhist domain contains the largest number of Pali–Sanskrit words, with 44 words, followed by language (18 words), history (13 words), politics (11 words), and tradition (3 words) respectively.

The findings can be discussed that the borrowing of Pali–Sanskrit words in King Ramkhamhaeng’s Inscription No.1 is more extensive than that of any other language. Some words appear to be shared between Pali and Sanskrit, reflecting a mixture of both. This observation is consistent with Prapandvidya who noted that the inscription contains a predominance of words drawn from both Pali and Sanskrit used interchangeably^[21].

In terms of borrowing methods, most words were adopted as ready-made forms, particularly from the categories of “Kitaka” (Primary Derivative) and “Taddhita” (Secondary Derivative). This study corresponds with Boonma^[12], who studied an analysis of the structure of Pali–Sanskrit vocabulary integrated into Thai during the Sukhothai period. However, this study provides a clearer understanding of the patterns of Pali–Sanskrit word formation. In addition to the predominance of Kitaka (Primary Derivative), the analysis also identifies Samāsa (Compounding), Upasagga (Prefixation), and Taddhita (Secondary Derivative) in descending order of frequency. The findings regarding Kitaka are similar to those of Boonma, whereas the other results represent novel discoveries. Moreover, the study also uncovers new and interesting patterns of semantic change, which contribute additional insights to the field.

In addition, the influence of Pali–Sanskrit word formation on Thai can also be seen in the creation of compounds (Samāsa), particularly through the placement of modifiers before the headword and the use of prefixes, both of which are commonly attested. In the case of compounds, the structure resembles Thai compound words. Thus, both Pali–Sanskrit style compounds and Thai-style compounds which deviate from Pali–Sanskrit norms can be observed.

This view is consistent with Pimpuang^[22], who noted that among the Pali–Sanskrit word-formation processes adopted into Thai, compounding—particularly the use of modifiers placed before the headword, as in Pali–Sanskrit

has become the most widespread in contemporary Thai, as it closely resembles Thai compounding, with the difference being that in Thai, modifiers are placed after the headword. Another productive process is the use of prefixes, both those borrowed from Pali–Sanskrit and those native to Thai.

An additional observation regarding Pali–Sanskrit words in King Ramkhamhaeng’s inscription No.1 is that, apart from the use of genuine compounds (Samāsa), there are also instances where several Pali–Sanskrit words appear in succession. However, these word groups do not conform to the proper structure of Pali–Sanskrit compounds, since the order of elements is reversed. Instead of placing the headword at the end, as in Pali–Sanskrit grammar, they are arranged with the headword first and the modifiers following—similar to Thai compound formation. Nevertheless, all the elements in these groups are entirely Pali–Sanskrit words.

When discussing semantic change, it is natural that the adoption of any foreign language into one’s own inevitably leads to shifts in meaning. Such changes largely depend on the society of the language users. This observation is consistent with Bloomfield^[1] who explained that word meanings are never fixed but may change over time and through actual use in society, noting that semantic change is a normal phenomenon when words are employed in different social contexts.

From the study of this inscription, however, it is evident that semantic change occurred only to a very limited extent. This finding aligns with Mounghoon^[23] who remarked that in general borrowed Pali–Sanskrit words tended to retain their original meanings, while only a small number underwent semantic shifts. This may be attributed to the assumption that people of that period still used Pali words with meanings closely corresponding to their original sense, and that society had not yet experienced the complexity and transformations characteristic of the modern era.

As for the reflection of the value of Pali–Sanskrit in Thai society, it is regarded as a profound recognition and honor of these languages. This is evident from the fact that, in coining new terminology, Pali–Sanskrit is prioritized immediately after Thai itself. Moreover, Thai dictionaries contain a considerable number of such words. This corresponds to Thongprasert^[24] who observed that when one opens the Royal Institute Dictionary nearly half of its entries are Pali–Sanskrit in origin. It also aligns with the study of Cha, J.,

Chaimano, K., Chaimano, B., et al.^[25], which examined foreign languages and found that Pali–Sanskrit vocabulary still remains abundantly present in modern Thai.

Therefore, from King Ramkhamhaeng’s Sukhothai Inscription No.1 up to the present day, Pali–Sanskrit words have evidently retained their significance for Thai society in various aspects. In King Ramkhamhaeng’s Sukhothai Inscription No.1, their values can be identified in five main areas namely, language, history, Buddhism, tradition and politics. This finding is consistent with the study conducted by the Students in the Special Program for Thai Language Ability^[26] and the perspective of Meetem^[27] who noted that the benefits of King Ramkhamhaeng’s inscription No.1 encompass multiple dimensions. These include knowledge of the king’s biography, governance, traditions, Buddhism, philology, law, the construction of Buddhist monuments, geography, and territorial boundaries. Hence, it can be regarded as a highly valuable source for Thai society.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, K.P.; methodology, K.P. and M.Y.; informal analysis, K.P.; data curation, K.P., M.Y. and N.S.; writing—original draft preparation, K.P.; writing—review and editing, K.P., M.Y. and N.S.; inserting phonetic symbols and ensuring the accuracy of the phonetic transcription, M.Y. and N.S.; research project administration, K.P. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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The data supporting the findings of this study consist of reflective Thai books and journals related to King

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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