

The change in meaning of Pali and Sanskrit words used in Thai

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Pali(Pl.) and Sanskrit(Sk.) are classified as Indo-European languages. They were disseminated from the Near East where the Aryan people lived to the Northern part of India. These two languages have been developed into the Ancient Indo-Aryan, the Middle and the Modern Indo-Aryan languages.

Sanskrit is considered to have evolved into the Ancient Indo-Aryan language. This is exhibited in The Veda Scriptures in Brahmanism or Hinduism. Pali, on the other hand, is viewed as the Middle Indo-Aryan. This is evidenced by the Tripitaka Scriptures of The Hinayana School in Buddhism. Sanskrit has served as a tool to write Brahmanism Scriptures and the scriptures belonging to the Mahayana School in Buddhism. Pali is used to write The scriptures of The Hinayana School in Buddhism.

The dissemination of Sanskrit occurred in Thailand prior to that of Pali. Pali was spread to Suvannabhumi (the present Thailand), having Nakhon Pathom as the capital after the Third Buddhist Council in 308 B.C. (B.E. 235). When King Sri-Indraditya declared Sukhothai as an independent country in 1257 A.D. (B.E.1800), Sanskrit already had an influence on that country. When The Ramkhamhaeng Inscription was created by King Ramkhamhaeng the Great in 1283 A.D. (B.E.1826), Pali and Sanskrit were already used in that Inscription.

Pali and Sanskrit words are derived from their roots. Each root has its own meaning, but it is not ready to be used. Each root must have inflection of nouns and verbs before it can be used for communication. Unlike Pali and Sanskrit, Thai(Th.) is categorised as an isolating language. Each morpheme has its own self-contained meaning and it can be used in that form. This attribute makes Thai

distinguishable from Pali and Sanskrit. The impact of Pali and Sanskrit words on Thai are the most significant, taking other foreign languages, namely, English, French, Chinese, etc. into account. You may ask why Thai is so significantly influenced by Pali and Sanskrit despite the fact that Pali and Sanskrit and Thai belong to different language families. This is because Brahmanism and Buddhism which utilized these languages are credited with having such a great impact on Thai people and Thai culture.

Pali and Sanskrit words are widely used in both spoken and written Thai. Thai people of all walks of life use Pali and Sanskrit in their own language. Pali and Sanskrit words used in Thai range from words used in daily life, words used on formal occasions, special terminology of certain disciplines, and royal language. Thais use Pali and Sanskrit words so much that there is a saying: "If one deletes Pali and Sanskrit words from Thai, a crisis will arise" The vocabulary of the Thai language may not be adequate on its own.

Pali and Sanskrit have been integrated into Thai in many ways. The two most obvious ways are the sound alteration and the change in meaning. This paper will mainly focus on the latter. Each morpheme of Pali and Sanskrit carries meaning. One morpheme may impart one or several meanings. When Pali and Sanskrit words are used in Thai, they are partially or fully adopted.

First, there is the restriction of meaning. That is, the meaning of words from Pali and Sanskrit have become more specific in Thai than in the original language. They impart either bad or good connotation. Second, there is the extension of meaning. This phenomenon has resulted in the fact that words with specific meanings have been extended to have general meanings. In some cases, new meanings have been attached.

Third, there is the complete change in meaning. That is, some Pali and Sanskrit words used in Thai carry meanings totally different from the ones they originally conveyed. Finally, there is the change of the original sound in Thai from that of Pali and Sanskrit words. This sound alteration thereby represents a change in meaning.

The following are the illustrations of these four categories and their sub-categories.

1. The restriction of meaning: This is evidenced by the fact that Pali and Sanskrit words originally conveyed a general meaning, but in Thai the meaning becomes specific. This aspect of change in meaning can be sub-categorized as follows:

1.1 Entailing good/bad connotation and specific meaning

1.1.1 Entailing good connotation: This means that some of Pali and Sanskrit words with general meaning have been replaced by the ones with only positive connotation.

Pali/Sanskrit and Thai transcription	Meaning in Pali and Sanskrit	Meaning in Thai
Th. kīriyaa Pl. kīriyā Sk. kīriyā	act, deed, performance	good manner, good behavior
Th. wāatsānāa Pl. vāsanā Sk. vāsanā	former impression, recollection of the past	good fortune, fame and wealth
Th. lāap Pl. lābh Sk. lābh	gain, receiving, acquisition	godsend, windfall
Th. khāṭi Pl. gati Sk. gati	going, career, course, passing onto another existence, destiny, behavior	a proverb, a saying for practice
Th. sākun Pl. kula cultivated Sk. kula	family; clan; caste	good, noble, or family

1.1.2 Entailing bad connotation: As opposed to 1.1.1 the meanings of some Pali and Sanskrit words with

general meaning have been restricted to convey negative connotation.

Pali/Sanskrit and Thai transcription	Meaning in Pali and Sanskrit	Meaning in Thai
Th. kam Pl. kamma Sk. karma	a volitional action, action, deed, good and bad volition	bad fortune, bad destiny
Th. wibâak Pl. vipāka Sk. vipāka	result, fruition, consequence of one's actions	misery, misfortune, suffering
Th. khró Pl. gaha Sk. graha	carrying, holding, catching, taking, seizing, a planet, a house	bad luck, misfortune
Th. càrit Pl. carita pretentious Sk. carita	behavior, character, life	being affected and (showing disapproval)
Th. sãndaan Pl. santāna Sk. santāna	1 continuity, succession, 2 offspring, 3 a cobweb	bad habits inherited from one's past continuity. (showing disapproval)

1.1.3 Entailing specific meaning: In this case, the general meanings of some Pali and Sanskrit words have been specific without showing good or bad connotation as in 1.1.1 and 1.1.2 above. For example:

Th. nímon Pl. nimanta Sk. nimantra	invitation	invitation for a monk
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Pl. ārāḍhanā	winning of favor.	a monk, to
Pali/Sanskrit transcription	Meaning in Pali and Sanskrit	Meaning in Thai
Sk. ārāḍhanā		give sermon or precepts
Th. Ṭaatsàná	a seat, sitting down,	monks' seat, dais or
Pl. āsana		raised platform for
Sk. āsana		monks
Th. Ṭaaphâat	disease	being ill, illness
Pl. ābādha		(used with a
Sk. ābādha		Buddhist monk)
Th. līkhīt	writing, cutting,	books, letter
Pl. līkhita	scratching	(monk's letter)
Sk. līkhita		

1.2 Singling out meanings from Pali and Sanskrit words: Some words in Pali and Sanskrit carry many meanings. However, when they are used in Thai one of their meanings has been singled out. That is, one meaning remains to be widely used in Thai. For example:

Th. sǎṅhāan	destruction, devastation,	destruction
Pl. saṅhāra	outline, summary, stopping	
Sk. saṃhāra		
Th. khawróp	heaviness, depth, greatness,	respect
Pl. gārva	prosperity, respect	
Sk. gaurava		
Th. phūut	become, born, produced, an	a kind of ghost
Pl. bhūta	element, a ghost, living	
Sk. bhūta	being, truth	
	what has happened	

Th. phâatcháná division, classification, vessels, containers

Pali/Sanskrit and Thai transcription Meaning in Pali and Sanskrit Meaning in Thai

Pl. bhājana a bowl, dish, vessel, a
Sk. bhājana container

2. The extension of meaning:

2.1 Some words in Pali and Sanskrit are used in a narrow sense. They, however, are extended to have general meanings. For example:

Th. khonkhaa The Ganges River rivers(in general),
Pl. gaṅga water
Sk. gaṅga

Th. dontrii string instruments music (in general)
Pl. tanti
Sk. tanti, tantri

Th. booríween a separated residence of a restricted area
Pl. pariveṇa monks, a place for religious
Sk. pariveṇa learning

2.2 Adding a new meaning to the original one: This means that a new meaning is added to the original meaning.

Th. phrommácaarii one who leads a holy or a virgin
Pl. brahmacārī chaste life
Sk. brahmacarin

Th. thêetsànáa to preach scold
Pl. desanā to give a sermon to rebuke,
Sk. desanā to castigate

Th. prānaam paying respect blame

Pl. paṇama

Sk. praṇama

Pali/Sanskrit and
Thai transcription

Meaning in Pali and Sanskrit

Meaning in Thai

Th. sāṅwâat

communion

sexual intercourse

Pl. sanvāsa

Sk. sanvāsa

Th. maalaā

discipline, flowers

a hat

Pl. mālā

Sk. mālā

Th. kàmon

a lotus

heart

Pl. kamala

Sk. kamala

3. The total change of meaning: This phenomenon indicates the complete change of meaning from the original one.

Th. ?āpprii

not dear, not beloved,

vulgar, malicious,

Pl. appiya

not pleasant

spiteful, wanton

Sk. apriya

Th. ?ānàat

miserable, helpless

pitiable, pathetic

Pl. anātha

agitation

Sk. anātha

Th. ?itchāa

wish, desire

envy

Pl. iccā

Th. ?aacom

cleaning, something that
should be cleaned

human excrement,
the faeces, the
stool

Pl. ācama

Sk. ācama

Th. sàwâat

taste, flavor, savor

love

Pl. sāda

Sk. svāda

Pali/Sanskrit and Thai transcription	Meaning in Pali and Sanskrit	Meaning in Thai
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Th. ?aakhom	1 coming, approach,	magic
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Pl. āgama	2 religion, scripture	
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Sk. āgama	3 an inserted consonant	
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Th. ?ànèt?ànàat	unstable, not lasting,	grief-stricken,
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Pl. anicca anāth	helpless	wretched
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Sk. anitya anāth		
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4. Sound alteration leading to a change in meaning:

For example Pali words may be pronounced differently from those of Sanskrit but they convey the same meanings. The opposite is true: if a Pali word and Sanskrit word are pronounced similarly, they impart different meanings. When it comes to their use in Thai, their sounds are slightly changed. Hence, their meanings are also altered. For example:

Th. ?ànàat	feel sorry, to pit, to be sympathetic with, to be
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dismissed

Th. ?ànaathāa	without someone to lean on, without parents, destitute
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Pl. anātha	helpless
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Sk. anātha	
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Th. sāmphaarā	supplies, belongings, supporting, up- bringing
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Th. sōmphaan	an abbot, virtue, or merits accumulated
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Pl. sambhāra	collection, compilation,
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Sk. sambhāra	collection, compilation
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Th. pràweenii		having a sexual intercourse
Th. pràpheenii		a tradition, a custom
Pali/Sanskrit and Thai transcription	Meaning in Pali and Sanskrit	Meaning in Thai
Pl. pavēṇi	a custom, a pattern,	
Sk. pravēṇi	a wig	sexual intercourse,
Th. wíthii		a proverb, a way, a means, a tradition, a custom
Th. phíthii		a rite, a ritual, a ceremony
Pl. vidhi	method, way, luck, destiny;	
Sk. vidhi	form	
Th. kháṭi		role model, ways, principles, departure
Th. khádii		a lawsuit, a case
Pl. gati	going; career; course;	
Sk. gati	destiny; behaviour; passing onto another existence	
Th. phaawá		condition, state, circumstances
Th. phâap		a picture, drawing, a sketch, a painting, a photograph, a sight, scenery, an image
Pl. bhāva	condition, nature, becoming	
Sk. bhāva		

Pali/Sanskrit and Thai transcription	Meaning in Pali and Sanskrit	Meaning in Thai
Th. rāatsàdōon		people in a state or a country
Th. rát		a region, a domain, a state, a country
Pl. raṭṭha	a state, people in a state,	
Sk. raṣṭra	a region, a domain	
Th. thrítsàdii		a theory
Th. thiṭṭhi		opinion, conviction, pride, stubbornness
Pl. diṭṭhi	idea, opinion, theory, view,	
Sk. drṣṭi	belief, speculation, dogma	

To sum up, the change in meaning of Pali and Sanskrit words used in Thai is four-dimensional: (1) the restriction of meaning, (2) the extension of meaning, (3) the total change of meaning from the original word, and (4) the change of meaning caused by sound alteration.

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