

Dating Written Thai by the Diachronic Data of Comitatives /dûaj/ and /kàp/¹

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Abstract

This research proposes periodization of written Thai by comparing the evolution of two comitative prepositions, /dûaj/ and /kàp/. The methodology is to rearrange the diachronic data using the AntConc toolkit and to consider the usage in three dimensions: orthography, syntax, and meaning. The results show that written Thai should be separated into three periods: Old Written Thai (OWT, 13th to 16th century), Middle Written Thai (MWT, 17th to 19th century) and Modern Written Thai or Standardized Written Thai (SWT, 20th century to the present day). This result may differ from previous research, which periodizes by the dominant cities or the capital cities. In terms of orthography, the two words changed the position of the vowel and tone marker from the second to the first alphabet in the early 19th century. In OWT, /dûaj/ is the general preposition of comitative and other related meanings, while /kàp/ is common as a noun phrase conjunction and a goal marker. The two words, /dûaj/ and /kàp/, overlapped in MWT and eventually /kàp/ became dominant for comitative functions in the mid 19th century and tended to overcome more functions of /dûaj/ in the future.

Keywords: written Thai, language dating, comitatives, the word /dûaj/, the word /kàp/

Introduction

The study of language evolution offers valuable insights into cultural and historical development. Through research from 1970s to the 2010s, the periodization of Thai language evolution has been tied to historical eras based on capital cities or dominant cities. The language has been divided into four periods: Sukhothai (C13-C15), Ayutthaya (C15-C18), Thonburi (late C18), and Bangkok/Rattanakosin (late C18-present day). Some scholars have combined Thonburi with Ayutthaya, while others have combined Thonburi with Bangkok due to its relatively short duration of 15 years.

Jampathip (2014: 40-41) claimed that the main problem in studying historical Thai is that there are few old documents from SK and AY surviving to the present era—BK, and the remaining examples of their genre are not equally distributed.

Because of the unevenness in diachronic data, researchers have found difficulties in analyzing the gradual evolution of the language. Consequently, historical Thai linguists separated written Thai into three main periods that are long enough to find adequate linguistic evidence of change; they are SK, AY, and BK.

¹ Abbreviations used in this article: C = century; BdC = Buddhist century, SK = Sukhothai; AY = Ayutthaya; TB = Thonburi; BK = Bangkok; OWT = Old Written Thai; MWT = Middle Written Thai; SWT = Standardized Written Thai

For instance, Changkhwanyuen (1972: 2), Paholayut (1983: 8-9), and Jaratjarungkiat (2000: 3) intended to study characteristics of Thai in each period, but they had to combine the data from AY, TB, and the first hundred years of BK and considered the data from AY only. They explained that the people who lived in TB and the first hundred years of BK originated from AY—the same group of people, so the language remained in the same period. Moreover, SK and the rest of BK are distinct from AY. See **Table 1** below.

Periodizing the eras of the Thai language is an unsolved problem and more research is needed to generalize how the language should be periodized, since each researcher has their own way of explaining diachronic change according to their data. **Table 1** shows examples of periodization in previous research.

Table 1 The examples of periodization in previous research in the 1970s to 2010s

Previous Research	Sukhothai (SK)	SK&AY Overlapped	Ayutthaya (AY)	Thonburi (TB)	Bangkok (BK)								
					Rama 1	Rama 2	Rama 3	Rama 4	Rama 5	Rama 6	Rama 7	Rama 8	Rama 9-10
Changkhwanyuen (1972)			AY										
Paholayut (1983)	SK		AY						BK				
Bandhmedha (1986)					BK1		BK2		BK3				
Meesat (1995)	SK		AY	TB	BK1			BK2		BK3			
Jaratjarungkiat (2000)	SK		AY				BK						
Sriprasit (2003)	SK		AY		BK1			BK2		BK3			
Yaowapat (2008)	SK		AY		BK1			BK2			BK3		
Jampathip (2014)	SK-AY1		AY2			BK1		BK2		BK3			

By contrast, Tawichai (2020: 16-17) preferred the periodization of the Thai language evenly by the Buddhist Centuries (BdC) without political influence. Therefore, he separated Thai into eight centuries: BdC19 (1258-1357), BdC20 (1358-1457), BdC21 (1458-1557), BdC22 (1558-1657), BdC23 (1658-1757), BdC24 (1758-1857), BdC25 (1858-1957), and BdC26 (1958-2020).

The periodization of a language is not necessarily influenced by political factors, but historical context can provide valuable insights. When it comes to categorizing the eras of Thai language, linguistic elements offer a more accurate approach.

Thanyawong (2024) inspired my research on the topic of dating written Thai. His methodology was to focus on eight polyfunctional words—/thîi/, /thŭŋ/, /tê/, /ʔan/, /dâj/, /lææw/, /mûa/, and /câw/—of which he found that /thîi/, /thŭŋ/, and /tê/ showed potential features of periodization. His result also divided the distinct old Thai language into four periods: 1st period (1330-1557), 2nd period (1618-1693), 3rd period (1758-1807), 4th period (1808-1957), and after 1957 is present-day Thai.

There are more polyfunctional words or other characteristics that can be analyzed and the results can be adapted to periodization. This study also focuses on comitative function, the way of speech, to elaborate about accompaniment. In Thai, there are two comitative prepositions, /dûaj/ and /kàp/, which are used competitively throughout Thai diachronic data. This is to apply the evolution and competition between /dûaj/ and /kàp/ as a periodization indicator.

According to Lehmann (1992: 627-630) and Stolz et al. (2006: 17), comitative is a relationship of three elements. The relationship is one in which two participants are involved together; the primary participant or main doer is the ACCOMPANEE who carries out the action while the other is the

COMPANION who is the secondary participant or the follower. In linguistic expression, there will be a RELATOR which indicates that both participants connect in the way that the situation consists of one or more participants apart from the subject or the primary actor, such as one person doing the action and another person participating in the same action. The RELATOR relates directly to the COMPANION as an elaboration, giving more details about the situation.

In the examples below, 3SG or *he* is the ACCOMPANEE and *mom* is the COMPANION. For the RELATOR, English *with* as in (1), Thai /kàp/ as in (2a), and Southern Thai /dûaj/ as in (2b). Nowadays, /dûaj/ as a comitative is rarely found in standard Thai, so the sentence (2b) is from Southern Thai.

(1) He went to the market *with* mom.

(2a) khǎw paj talàat kàp mǎæ

(2b) khǎw paj làat dûaj mǎæ

3SG go market WITH mom

(Rampha Danprasertkul, an 86-year-old native speaker of Southern Thai, cited in Pothipath (2023: 14))

The usage between comitative and instrumental is a linguistic typological feature that is found in languages all over the world, and Stolz et al. (2013) categorized languages into three types. The language that uses the same way to indicate both comitative and instrumental functions is categorized as IDENTITY. The language that uses completely different ways to indicate comitative and instrumental functions is categorized as DIFFERENTIATION and the language that uses overlapped ways to indicate comitative and instrumental functions is categorized as MIXED.

Examples of the source comitative and the target of instrumental are normally found in languages around the world. Kouteva et al. (2019: 107-120, 465) proposed that comitative function is the source of eleven target functions: agent, noun phrase conjunction, sentence conjunction, causative, exit, instrument, manner, passive, possession, progressive, and temperal. Comitative becomes instrumental in Diachronic Thai, which has been studied by Pothipath (2023), who compared /dûaj/ and /kàp/ in the diachronic typological perspective from C13 to C21 and found that usage of /dûaj/ and /kàp/ went through all three stages of IDENTITY, DIFFERENTIATION, and MIXED in different eras, as explained below.

Stage 1: IDENTITY (C13-Mid C18)

During SK through TB, Thai was primarily an IDENTITY language. The preposition /dûaj/ served as the near-exclusive RELATOR for both comitative and instrumental.

(2) kuu tò cháaŋ dûaj khun sǎam chon

1SG fight elephant *with* King Samchon

(King Ram Khamhaeng Inscription, 1292 cited in Pothipath (2023: 8))

(2) chák maa dûaj lóo dûaj kwian

pull come *with* wheel *with* cart

(Wat Si Chum Inscription, 1341-1367 cited in Pothipath (2023: 8))

Stage 2: MIXED (Late C18-Early C19)

During the first hundred years of BK (the reign of King Rama I to King Rama III), the preposition /kàp/ (previously a noun phrase conjunction) began functioning as a comitative marker. However, /dûaj/ was still preserved for both comitative and instrumental roles. This stage featured two comitative relators,

/dûaj/ and /kàp/, competing for the same function. Evolutionarily, this is considered “uneconomical,” as languages rarely maintain multiple forms for a single function indefinitely.

Stage 3: DIFFERENTIATION (Mid C19- the present day)

From the reign of King Rama III to the present day, the functions of /dûaj/ and /kàp/ began the DIFFERENTIATION stage. The preposition /kàp/ became the exclusive comitative relator, while /dûaj/ was restricted to instrumental functions. King Rama IV (1804-1868) explicitly diagnosed the use of /kàp/ for people carrying out actions together (e.g., “husband sleeps with wife”), but in modern Thai, /kàp/ marks accompaniment (e.g., “go to the market with a friend”), while /dûaj/ marks tools (e.g., “warm up food with a microwave”).

Moreover, Pothipath (2023) also summarized that /dûaj/ as comitative decreased while /kàp/ increased to eventually displace /dûaj/, as shown in **Figure 1** below, since the time between C18-C19 is the significant turning point of overlapping use as comitative markers. The use of /dûaj/ as comitative decreased slightly, while the use of /kàp/ as comitative increased gradually after C16 until they intersected at the border between C18 and C19. It is noteworthy that in C15 the appearance of both /dûaj/ and /kàp/ was dropped because of the lack of evidence. However, it is hypothesized that the language spoken during C15 remained remarkably similar to the language spoken in C13 and C16, as the available evidence demonstrates no discernible differences between C13 and C16.

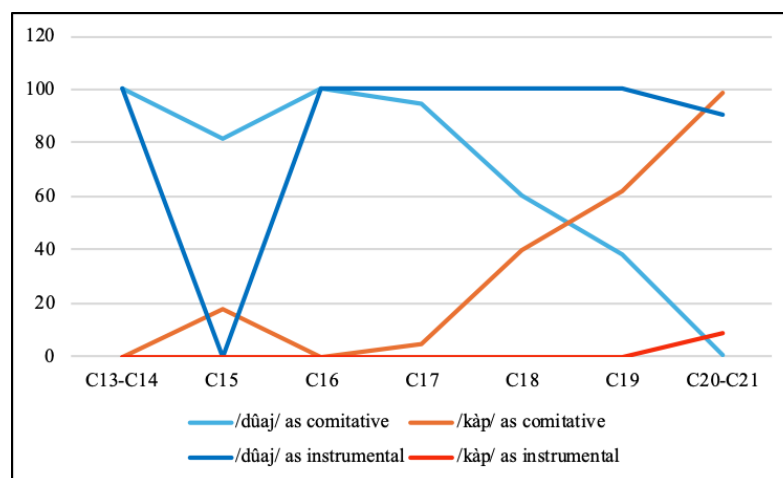


Figure 1 The usage proportion of /dûaj/ and /kàp/ as comitative and instrumental prepositions from 1292-2020, adapted from Pothipath (2023: 7)

It is intriguing to investigate more whether other functions of /dûaj/ and /kàp/ have engaged in competition over time and whether this competition data could be advantageous for periodization.

There are three more research papers that offer useful guidance in understanding how both words have changed over time. Paholayuth (1983) systematically documented the usage of every preposition in the Thai language, including the prepositions /dûaj/ and /kàp/. Sanah (2013) completed his study on the grammaticalization of /dûaj/ and Nuchpraharn (2022) accomplished an analysis of the development of /kàp/.

The grammatical meanings of /dûaj/ and /kàp/ in these three pieces of research show that /dûaj/ and /kàp/ have been sharing seven functions since SK to the present day. These functions are the following:

1. noun phrase conjunction, 2. goal marker, 3. comitative marker, 4. instrumental marker, 5. locative

marker, 6. manner marker, and 7. cause marker. However, the functions /dûaj/ and /kàp/ differ in each period as shown in **Table 2**, and this information will be analyzed as the key element to examine periodization by the semio-syntactic contexts of /dûaj/ and /kàp/.

In SK, the two prepositions can be noun phrase conjunctions, goal and comitative markers, but /kàp/ as comitative marker appeared only once.

In AY, the two prepositions can be comitative, instrumental, locative, and manner markers; in detail, only /kàp/ as comitative appeared all along the period, but the other three functions first appeared in the last 50 years of this period.

In BK, the two prepositions can be comitative, instrumental, manner, and cause markers, but /dûaj/ tended to lose the function of comitative marker because it appeared only in the first hundred years of this period.

Table 2 The functions of /dûaj/ and /kàp/ in Paholayuth (1983), Sanah (2013), and Nuchpraharn (2022); (the overlapping meanings are highlighted in different colors)

Comitative prepositions	Previous research	SK	AY	BK
/dûaj/	Paholayuth (1983)	Comitative NP Conjunction Instrumental Goal Cause	Comitative Instrumental Cause	? Comitative ² Instrumental Cause
	Sanah (2013)	Comitative Instrumental Locative Cause Manner	Comitative Instrumental Locative Cause Manner Elaborative	? Comitative ³ Instrumental Cause Manner Means Agent
/kàp/	Paholayuth (1983)	NP Conjunction Goal	NP Conjunction Goal Locative Source Comitative Genitive	NP Conjunction Goal Locative Source Comitative Instrumental
	Nuchpraharn (2022)	NP Conjunction Goal Comitative ⁴	NP Conjunction Goal Comitative Locative ? Contrastive ⁵ ? Source ? Dependence ? Recipient ? Addressee ? Benefactive ? Accusative ? Instrumental ? Manner	NP Conjunction Goal Comitative Locative Contrastive Source Dependence Recipient Addressee Benefactive Accusative Instrumental Manner Cause

² Paholayuth (1983) stated that /dûaj/ as comitative was last found in mid C19 (Early BK).

³ Sanah (2013) stated that /dûaj/ as comitative was last found in Early C20 (mid BK).

⁴ Nuchpraharn (2022) stated that /kàp/ as comitative was found only one sample in SK.

⁵ Nuchpraharn (2022) stated that /kàp/ as contrastive, source, dependence, recipient, addressee, benefactive, accusative, instrumental, and manner was first found in late C18 (late AY).

The function of words is the most suitable perspective from which to examine the usage of words in a specific period. However, the way people use words is closely related to how they position words in sentences. Syntax directly influences the grammatical meaning of words; therefore, an analysis of the syntax and meanings of /dûaj/ and /kàp/ should be conducted simultaneously. Furthermore, the way people write words could also reflect the cultural norms of writing technologies in each era, an aspect that has not been explored in previous research.

Overall, this research seeks to establish a refined timeline for the development of written Thai by examining the orthographic, syntactic, and semantic changes of the comitatives /dûaj/ and /kàp/ across centuries, offering a linguistically grounded perspective on Thai language history.

Research Methodology

Data

The data used in this research are initially from the AntConc diachronic corpus created by Nuchpraharn (2022) which has collected data from the four sources listed below.

1. The Database of Inscriptions in Thailand of the Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre published on <https://db.sac.or.th/inscriptions/>.
2. The Old Book Collections of the Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre published on <https://db.sac.or.th/siamrarebooks/books>.
3. The book collections of the National Library's Vajirayana Digital Library published on <https://vajirayana.org/>.
4. The Thai National Corpus (Third Edition) of the Department of Linguistics, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University published on <https://www.arts.chula.ac.th/ling/tnc3/>.

However, this set of data focuses on /kàp/, and it consists of 13,183 diachronic samples of /kàp/ and 2,651 present-day samples of /dûaj/. Consequently, this study needed more diachronic samples of /dûaj/ to analyze the two equally. These are additional historical texts.

1. The Manuscript Collections of the National Library published on <https://manuscript.nlt.go.th/>.
2. The Manuscripts of Thailand Database of the Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre published on <https://db.sac.or.th/manuscriptsofthailand/>.
3. The TU Digital Collections of Thammasat University's Library published on https://digital.library.tu.ac.th/tu_dc/frontend/.
4. The Notepad files of old texts provided by Thanyawong (2023), which are also sources for digitized samples.

After adding historical texts and deleting duplicated samples (one document may be digitized and published in different sources), there were 3,389 more of /kàp/ and 4,298 more of /dûaj/. In total, this research project used 23,521 samples, which are 16,572 samples of /kàp/ and 6,949 samples of /dûaj/.

Methodology

The methodology is separated into two procedures according to the objectives. The first method is for examining syntactic contexts and semantic perspectives, while the second method is for studying

orthographic dimensions.

1. Methodology for syntax and semantics

To systematically analyze the evolution of /dûaj/ and /kàp/ in terms of syntax and semantics, the study employed a combination of qualitative and computational methods. The key areas of focus include the syntactic environments in which /dûaj/ and /kàp/ appear as the same function, and identify shifts in the functions from their early roles to their modern use cases.

The AntConc software toolkit was mainly used to process and analyze textual data. This computational tool enabled the identification of patterns and trends aligned year by year. After importing Notepad files to the software, the data are categorized by grammatical meanings according to their syntactic contexts, including the verb/clause before the RELATOR and the noun phrase or clause after the RELATOR. Semio-syntactic contexts are the elements that help the researchers to determine the functions of each sample.

The nine following prototypical structures in **Table 3** show the seven overlapping key functions and nine examples found on AntConc that suggest the meanings of /dûaj/ and /kàp/. In terms of syntactic contexts, /dûaj/ and /kàp/ are usually found in the position of preposition where the left context is a verb phrase with an action verb and the right context is a noun phrase. Interestingly, the semantic feature of the noun phrase is essential to interpret the meaning of the RELATOR. Being after an action verb, RELATOR is a comitative with a person, an instrumental with a tool, a locative with a place, a cause with a thing that leads to the action, and a manner with an abstract noun that describes the situation. While the RELATOR appears before a person in giving or communicating contexts, the RELATOR indicates that the person is the recipient, listener, or reader. If the RELATOR stays between noun phrases that are pragmatically related to each other, it is a noun phrase conjunction. Finally, the RELATOR can also be a subordinating conjunction when it is found before a subordinate clause that explains the reason for the main clause, and the RELATOR with the subordinate clause can be arranged before or after the main clause.

Table 3 The structures of the key semio-syntactic contexts that suggest the overlapping meanings of /dûaj/ and /kàp/

Structures	Meanings	Context on the Left	Relators	Context on the Right
1.	Noun Phrase Conjunction	Noun Phrase 1		Noun Phrase 2
		<i>săa mii</i>	<i>dûaj</i> <i>kàp</i>	<i>phan ra jaa</i>
		husband	and	wife
2.	Goal	Giving/ Communicating Verb		Person
		<i>phûut</i>	<i>dûaj</i> <i>kàp</i>	<i>khăw</i>
		speak	to	3SG
3.	Comitative	Action Verb		Person
		<i>paj</i>	<i>dûaj</i> <i>kàp</i>	<i>khăw</i>
		go	with	3SG

Table 3 The structures of the key semio-syntactic contexts that suggest the overlapping meanings of /dûaj/ and /kàp/ (cont.)

Structures	Meanings	Context on the Left	Relators	Context on the Right
4.	Instrumental	Action Verb		Tool/Thing
		thúp	dûaj kàp	khóon
		hit	with	hammer
5.	Locative	Action Verb		Place
		kèp nən wáj	dûaj kàp	bâan
		save money keep	at/in	home
6.		Action Verb		Cause of the Action
		khăw taaj	dûaj kàp	ma reŋ
		3SG die	because of	cancer
7.	Cause	-	Subordinate Clause (The Cause) before Main Clause (The Result)	
			dûaj	khăw pùaj khăw mâj dâj maa
			because	3SG sick 3SG NEG PAST come
8.		Subordinate Clause (The Cause) after Main Clause (The Result)		
		khăw mâj dâj maa	dûaj kàp	khăw pùaj
		3SG NEG PAST come	because	3SG sick
9.	Manner	Action Verb		Abstract Noun Phrase
		tham njan	dûaj kàp	kwaam thaa thaaj
		work	with	challenge

The next step is to find the oldest and the most recent piece of evidence of each meaning and consider which part of the time that indicates enough changes to be considered as the boundary of different periods.

This approach will help to establish a refined timeline for the development of written Thai by examining the orthographic, syntactic, and semantic changes of the comitatives /dûaj/ and /kàp/ across centuries.

2. Methodology for orthography

The approach entails comprehending the evolution of orthographic conventions. The photographs on the webpage of databases are analyzed in order to identify writing styles, materials of writing, positions, and characteristics of the alphabet in each period.

However, it is a time consuming task to examine every photograph of the original texts with 23,521 samples, and the images from the source may be blurry. Therefore, I selected 20 per cent of the samples by retrieving one image in every 20 samples, for a total of 1,176 images—348 of /dûaj/ and 828 of /kàp/—to be thoroughly examined.

Findings

Orthographic Evolution

The orthographic representations of /dûaj/ and /kàp/ have undergone significant change over time. The diachronic data of each word are illustrated in stages. The images shown below are captured from the Database of Inscriptions in Thailand.

1. /dûaj/

Stage 1 (C13-C14):  clarified as 

The oldest evidence of /dûaj/ is found in the King Ram Khamhaeng⁶ Inscription (1292). The orthography consists of four characters: the letter on the left is the initial consonant /d/, the letter in the middle is the vowel /ua/, the letter on the right is the final consonant /j/, and the letter † above the initial consonant is tone 3 (in Thai called *thoo*) marker /[˥]/. This square-like shape of alphabet is called Pho Khun Ram Khamhaeng Script according to Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre (n.d.). This type of script was the first Thai script, but it was not popular and was in use for only one century (from C13 to C14).

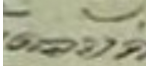
Stage 2 (C14-C16):  and  clarified as 

The first image is found in the Wat Bang Sanuk⁷ Inscription (1339) and the second is found in the Wat Phra Yuen⁸ Inscription (1370). The orthography of /dûaj/ in stage 2 is more rounded and the tone marker can be omitted. Moreover, the tails of the vowel and final consonants are also shortened and straighter. In my view, the omitting of tone markers was affected by Khmer influence because people were more familiar with writing in the Khmer or Khom Script, which has no tones. This kind of alphabet is called Thai Sukhothai Script⁹ according to the Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre (n.d.). The writing style in stage 2 started in C14 and ended in C16.

Not only the Thai Sukhothai Script, but the Khom Sukhothai Script¹⁰ is also used in the writing tradition. The use of the Khom Script¹¹ is still found today, but exclusively for religious purposes.

 clarified as 

The Khom Sukhothai Script is used in both Thailand and Laos. It is a type of Khmer or Khom Script and resembles the Khmer or Khom Script from Cambodia. At that time, Thai and Lao people considered Khom Script to be more prestigious and used it to write religious texts in various languages: Pali, Sanskrit, Khmer, Thai, and Lao. The image above is found in the Wat Paa Daeng¹² Inscription (1406).

Stage 3 (C17-C19):  and  clarified as 

The first image is from Bantuek Rai Wan Ok Phra Wisutsunthon (Kosa Pan) [The Daily Memoir of Ok Phra Wisutsunthon (Kosa Pan)¹³] (1618) and the second is from Sanya Thai-Farangset Khrang

⁶ Ram Khamhaeng is literally translated as “the middle son who is strong.”

⁷ Bang Sanuk is literally translated as “a place near a river where people are having fun.”

⁸ Phra Yuen is literally translated as ‘a standing Buddha statue’.

⁹ The image in Stage 1 and the first two images in Stage 2 are written with the Thai Sukhothai Script which King Ram Khamhaeng developed from Khmer or Khom and Mon Scripts.

¹⁰ The third image in Stage 2 is written with the Khom Sukhothai Script.

¹¹ Khom script is the hyponym of all the Khmer-like scripts, it can be differentiated by the style of writing in each capital period: Khom Sukhothai Script, Khom Ayutthaya Script, and Khom Thonburi-Bangkok Script.

¹² Paa Daeng is literally translated as “the red forest.”

¹³ Ok Phra Wisutsunthon (Kosa Pan) was a Siamese ambassador to France in 1686.

Somdet Phra Narai Letter [Letter of Treaty between Siam and France in the reign of King Narai] (1687). Both images are written in the Thai Ayutthaya Script.¹⁴ The characters found in this stage are significantly different from stages 1 and 2 because writing on leaf and paper (rather than carving in stone) became common; the reason why the scripts are mostly italic is that they must cross the fiber. Moreover, the orthography of /dûaj/ in stage 3 resembles the characteristics of the Khom Sukhothai Script, especially the curly tail of each letter. Moreover, the tone marker is developed from a cross + to , which is the vertical stroke connected with the horizontal stroke, and the horizontal stroke lengthened and rising curved. The writing style in stage 3 is called the Thai Ayutthaya Script, according to Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre (n.d.) and is found from C17 to early C19. In this stage, /dûaj/ was also written in the Khom Ayutthaya Script, but it looked the same as the Khom Sukhothai Script of stage 2.

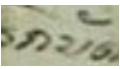
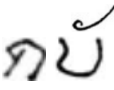
Stage 4 (C19-C21):  and  clarified as 

The first image is from the Nirayakatha Inscription 4, about sinners suffering in hell (1838), and the second is from Raman Hung Khao Thip Inscription 4, a Tale of Mon People Cooking Holy Rice (C19). The characters found in this stage are similar to those in stage 3, but the curly tail of each letter is gone. Moreover, the tone marker was moved to be above the initial consonant and it was developed to look like the number 2 with a rising curved tail. The writing style in stage 4 is called Thai Thonburi-Bangkok Script, according to Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre (n.d.). The orthography of /dûaj/ in stage 4 inspired the printing script, like , until the present day.

2. /kàp/
Stage 1 (C14-C16):  clarified as 

There is no data of /kàp/ found in C13 using the Pho Khun Ram Khamhaeng Script; therefore, the orthographic data start at C14, found in the Thai Sukhothai Script. This image is from the Wat Chang Lom¹⁵ Inscription (1384), but it is not the oldest sample of /kàp/. The oldest inscription with /kàp/ is found in the Wat Si Chum¹⁶ Inscription (≈1341-1367), but the file image is unclear.

However, there is enough evidence to see that the orthography is formed by two characters: the first letter is the initial consonant /k/, and the other two letters are the final consonant /p/. The way to indicate the vowel /a/ is to write the final consonant twice. In Thai, it is called /ʔák sǎn hǎn/ which means “double letters.” The writing form of stage 1 is still in use until now, but after C16 the use was limited and is found only in religious purposes of writing with Khom scripts as  in Khom Sukhothai Script or  in Khom Ayutthaya Script.

Stage 2 (C15-C19):  and  clarified as 

The first image is from the Wat Sorasak¹⁷ Inscription (1417) and the second is from Bantuek Rai Wan Ok Phra Wisutsunthon (Kosa Pan) [The Daily Memoir of Ok Phra Wisutsunthon (Kosa Pan)] (1618). The shape of characters remains similar to those in stage 1; but stage 2, which is called Thai Ayutthaya Script, resembles italics and is sharper than stage 1 because of the differences in writing tools and in the surfaces of palm leaf and paper. The vowel /a/ was also created as , appearing above the final consonant

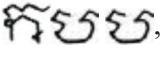
¹⁴ The Thai Ayutthaya Script is directly developed from the Thai Sukhothai Script.

¹⁵ Chang Lom is literally translated as “surrounded by elephants.”

¹⁶ Si Chum is literally translated as “glorious assembly.”

¹⁷ Sorasak is the name of a man who requested a piece of land and permission from the king to build the temple.

to substitute for doubled final consonants; this form has become widely used. It had been used for a long time from C15, yet eventually people considered it as an outdated style after C19.

The adaptation shows influence from the Khom Sukhothai Script with a curly tail and more italics, such as  and , which was considered aesthetically suitable for religious scripts. And the Khom Ayutthaya Script is still in use until now, as , or sometimes found in reduced form¹⁸  /kà?/.

Stage 3 (C19-C21):



clarified as



The image above is from the Raman Hung Khao Thip Inscription 5, a Tale of Mon People Cooking Holy Rice (C19) written in the Thai Thonburi-Bangkok Script. The characters found in this stage are similar to the aesthetic stage 2, but the vowel marker has been moved to be above the initial consonant and the curly tail of each letter is gone. The orthography of /kàp/ in stage 3 also inspired the printing script as  until the present day. The reduced form in the present day is written as  /kà?/.

The result of orthographic stages is useful for understanding culture, tools, and technology of writing through time. Most importantly, it can be the criteria to determine eras in the language. At this point, the studies of orthographic stages showed that the position, writing tools, and Khmer influence are the key to consider periodization.

The characters in **Stage 1** of /dûaj/ were in square-like shapes in C13, called the Pho Khun Ram Khamhaeng Script. **Stage 2** of /dûaj/ and **Stage 1** of /kàp/ became more rounded as the Thai Sukhothai Script in C14-C16, but they did not change much because the letters engraved onto the facets of stone remained the same. It is suggested that these stages (C13-C16) should be the same period.

The characters in **Stage 3** of /dûaj/ and **Stage 2** of /kàp/ are in Thai Ayutthaya Script, in which the vowel and tone markers are located above the second letters of the word. This is true even though /kàp/ in C15-16 is found written overlapped in both stage 1 and 2 because most documents were still written on stone. However, the creation of the vowel marker as  gradually changed the way Thai people write words with the /a/ sound, and **Stage 2** of /dûaj/ and **Stage 1** of /kàp/ usage was outdated at the end of C16. The writing tools also changed for the use of palm leaf and paper which made the alphabet look italic, sharpened, and having Khmer influence. Therefore, I proposed the boundary with the previous period at the end of C16 because the usage completely turned into **Stage 3** of /dûaj/ and **Stage 2** of /kàp/ after C16.

The **Stage 4** of /dûaj/ and **Stage 3** of /kàp/ started at the end of C18 when Khmer influence had faded. People were no longer making the tails of the alphabets curl. The orthographic characters in these stages are standardized and used as the prototype for the printing industry and mass communication until today.

Overall, the end of C16 and C18 are the turning points when /dûaj/ and /kàp/ were represented with various vowel and tone placements influenced by Khmer orthographic traditions. These variations were particularly prominent in religious texts, where the vowel was often rearranged or fused with consonants. But in normal use, people tended to place vowels and tone markers above the initial consonant. After the end of C18, the orthography became more consistent. Khmer influence diminished, and the representation of vowels and consonants stabilized above the initial consonant. **Figure 2** below shows the range of time that each stage was in use and the turning point at the end of both C16 and C18, when both /dûaj/ and /kàp/ coincidentally had at least one major shift.

¹⁸ The reduced form from /kàp/ to /kà?/ is widely found even today, such as *săa mii kà? phan ra jaa* [husband and wife].

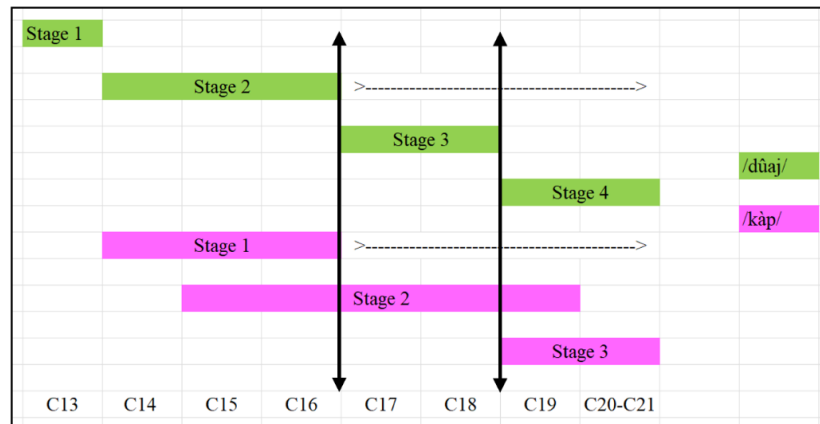


Figure 2 The range of time according to changes in orthography of /dûaj/ and /kàp/

Syntax and Semantic Evolution

The syntax and semantic evolution of /dûaj/ and /kàp/ involve the structures of RELATOR and the environment within the sentence. As presented in **Table 2**, the grammatical meanings of /dûaj/ and /kàp/ are diverse and have some overlapping grammatical meanings. This study analyzes the seven overlapping meanings seen in **Table 3**, which are noun phrase conjunction, goal, comitative, instrumental, locative, cause, and manner. This study also identifies the point of time when the use of each function begins and ends according to AntConc. The analysis focusing on the functions that differ between eras will be presented.

1. /dûaj/

- /dûaj/ as a noun phrase conjunction is first found in 1361 and last found in 1864.
- /dûaj/ as a goal marker is first found in 1292 and last found in 1883.
- /dûaj/ as a comitative marker is first found in 1292 and last found in 1938.
- /dûaj/ as an instrumental marker is first found in 1292 and still used to the present day.
- /dûaj/ as a locative marker is first found in 1292 and last found in 1896.
- /dûaj/ as a cause marker is first found in 1292 and still used to the present day.
- /dûaj/ as a manner marker is first found in 1292 and still used to the present day.

2. /kàp/

- /kàp/ as a noun phrase conjunction is first found in 1341-1367 and still used to the present day.
- /kàp/ as a goal marker is first found in 1384 and still used to the present day.
- /kàp/ as a comitative marker is first found in 1399 and still used to the present day.
- /kàp/ as an instrumental marker is first found in 1771 and still used to the present day.
- /kàp/ as a locative marker is first found in 1417 and still used to the present day.
- /kàp/ as a cause marker is first found in 2014.
- /kàp/ as a manner marker is first found in 2016.

The findings of the first and the last appearance for each meaning provide the range of usage across centuries, as indicated in **Figure 3**. In the case of range, it shows three significant points for /dûaj/, which are at mid C14, at the end of C19, and at mid C20; while the significant points for /kàp/ are at mid C14, at the end of C14, at mid C18, and at the end of C20.

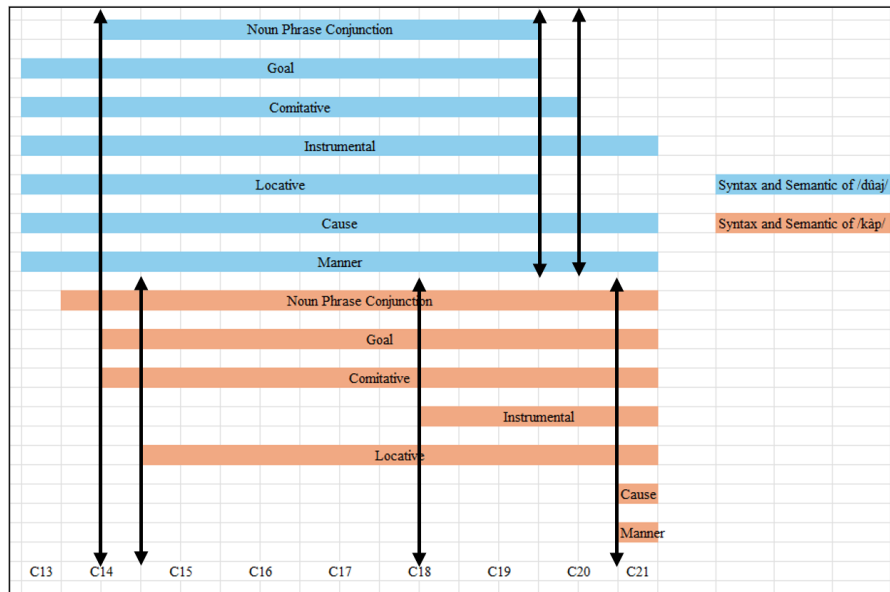


Figure 3 The range of time according to changes in syntax and semantics of /dûaj/ and /kàp/

However, finding only the first and the last appearances of both words is not sufficient to make the conclusion of periodization. Therefore, I also used AntConc and Excel to distinguish the proportions of each meaning in each century to generate the timeline (see **Figure 4** below) and use it to thoroughly examine the key time of changes. The timeline demonstrates that there are four major changes where intersections occur at C15, at early C16, at C18, and at C20.

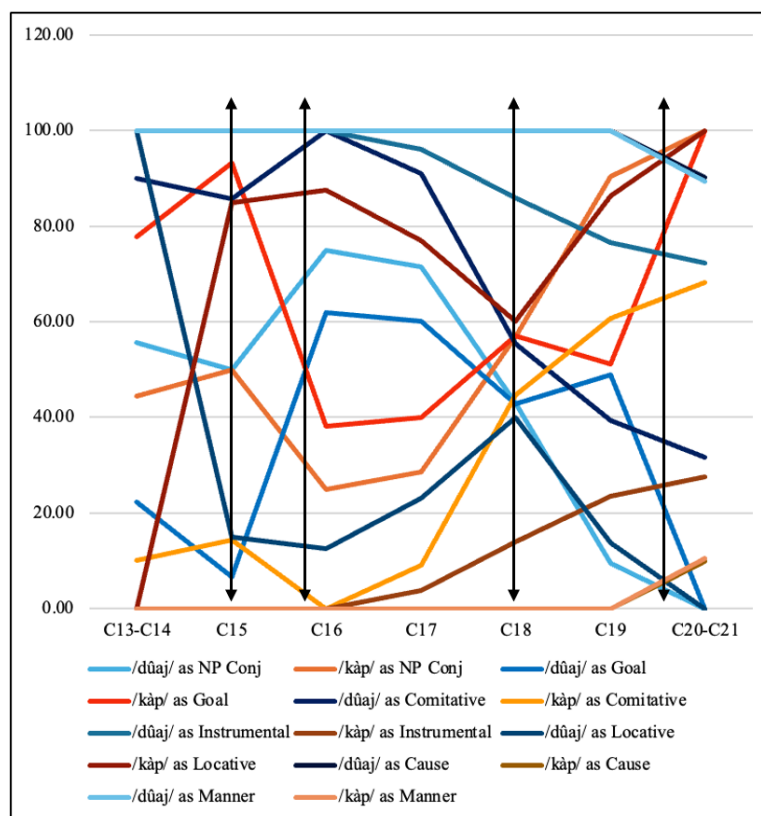


Figure 4 The timeline of /dûaj/ and /kàp/ showing proportions of the seven meanings in each century

To summarize, /dùaj/ and /kàp/ were used primarily for basic comitative functions, indicating accompaniment or association at the beginning and /dùaj/ played an important role for comitative and related categories. Eventually, the time at C18 shows that the semantic range of /kàp/ grew to broader scopes of usage and intersected with /dùaj/. In the future, /kàp/ may take on more functions of /dùaj/ by looking at the trend of cause and manner.

Periodization of Written Thai

The study has endeavored to identify periods of written Thai based on the evolution of /dùaj/ and /kàp/, as can be seen in the combined information from **Figure 2**, **Figure 3**, and **Figure 4**. The next step is to combine the three perspectives together, from which I selected only the /dùaj/ and /kàp/ comitative lines of to compare in **Figure 5** below.

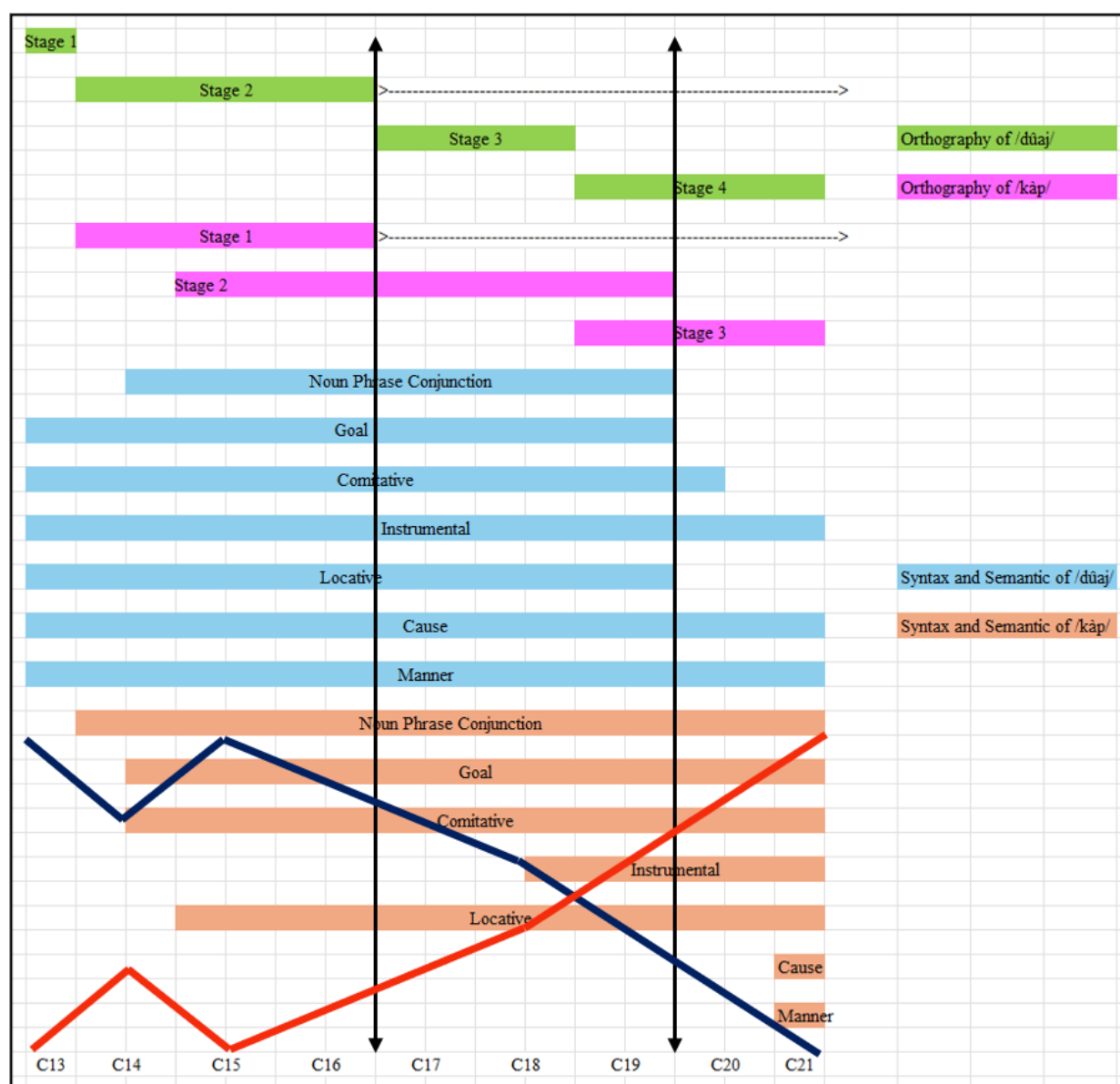


Figure 5 The combined range of evolution of /dùaj/ and /kàp/ in the dimensions of orthography, syntax, and semantics

According to the dimensions of orthography, syntax, and semantics, there are uneven sets of evolution in the process of deciding which time should be the shift point between orthographic and semio-syntactic views. However, the final thought on periodizing the Thai language is that most of the data from C13 to C16 are inscriptions and this is the era when /dûaj/ was dominant in all comitative functions, while the usage of /kàp/ was still at the beginning point. I name this period Old Written Thai (OWT) because of the way of writing and semio-syntactic contexts. For the orthographic view, OWT represents the early forms which were **Stage 1-Stage 2** for /dûaj/ and **Stage 1** for /kàp/.

The next period was one of great transition because it was the time when the two words were competing, leading to a shift point at the end of C18. Both words underwent significant shifts in the orthography of **Stage 3** for /dûaj/ and **Stage 2** for /kàp/. Moreover, the use of /dûaj/ began to decline, while the use of /kàp/ increased and exceeded the comitative functions from /dûaj/. This period would be called Middle Written Thai (MWT: C17 to C19).

Finally, the remainder of the timeline would be Standardized Written Thai (SWT: C20-C21), which is the time after /kàp/ became the dominant comitative marker, while /dûaj/ retreated into more specific roles. Historically, this is the time after the education system was settled down in Thailand¹⁹ and the characteristics of language at the beginning of SWT became the nation's standard. At the beginning of C20, /dûaj/ completely lost three major functions: noun phrase conjunction, goal, and locative. It survived only in specialized roles (instrumental, cause, manner) while /kàp/ held the functions of noun phrase conjunction, goal, and comitative. By C21, it even began acquiring cause and manner. In addition, both words settled into their modern forms in **Stage 4** for /dûaj/ and **Stage 3** for /kàp/ in orthography, and evolved to the era of printing, computers, smartphone, and the internet.

Conclusion and Implications

This research refines the periodization of written Thai, demonstrating that linguistic elements like /dûaj/ and /kàp/ can provide a more insightful view of the language itself than can political influences. The results in this research are similar to the those of Thanyawong (2024), in which his 1st period (1330-1557) is equivalent to my OWT (C13-C16). His 2nd period (1618-1693) and 3rd period (1758-1807) are correlated with my MWT (C17-C19). Finally, his 4th period (1808-1957) and the present-day Thai after 1957 overlap slightly with my SWT (C20-C21). Future research could explore other linguistic markers to develop better consensus on periodization as could comparative studies with neighboring languages such as Lao, Khmer, and Vietnamese.

This research contributes to the study of Thai language history by offering a linguistically grounded framework for periodization. By tracing the evolution of /dûaj/ and /kàp/ across orthographic, syntactic, and semantic dimensions, the study refines traditional divisions of written Thai and highlights the importance of linguistic evidence in historical analysis.

The findings also have practical implications for dating historical documents. Changes in the usage of /dûaj/ and /kàp/ can serve as markers for identifying time periods of written texts. Future research could extend this approach by analyzing other linguistic markers or conducting comparative studies.

¹⁹ Siamese Ministry of Education was founded in 1892.

This linguistically driven approach enriches our understanding of the history of the Thai language, demonstrating how even small linguistic elements like comitative prepositions can reveal broader cultural and historical trends.

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