OLD MON[1] *s-*

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The Old Mon (OM) inflectional prefix *s-*, referred to by Shorto (1971: xxii) as the 'hypothetical', marking in particular 'futurity', has not received the attention it deserves. It has been extensively commented upon by Duroiselle in 1921, while translating the Ananda plaques and a number of Mon *nissaya*, and has again been mentioned in Jacob's comparative study of 1963, albeit briefly.

The analysis of OM *s-* is especially challenging for three reasons:

(i) tense, aspect and modality cannot clearly be separated;
(ii) cognates in other Mon-Khmer languages have so far not been identified;
(iii) given the fact that at later stages of Mon the prefix *s-* has become obsolescent, with no such prefix left in the spoken language today, it can only be analysed on the basis of the attested OM and Early or Epigraphic Middle Mon (EMM) corpus, and must thus be reconstructed internally.

The semantic complexity of OM *s-* would go unnoticed were it not for the fortunate circumstance that a number of *s-* inflected forms occur in glosses accompanying frescoes (the Myinkaba Kubyauk-gyi, for instance) or glazed plaques (at the Ananda). While occurrences of *s-* in the Shwezigon inscription (*EB* #I)* would strongly suggest the identification of a tense/modal prefix 'future/irrealis', the glosses, on the contrary, would imply the aspect 'ingressive'. This is especially clear in plaque #565 (Duroiselle #28) and plaque #721 (Duroiselle #189), where the action referred to in the verb (#565 *scis* 'to descend', *s-*, and #721 *slop* 'to enter', *s-*, from the bases *cis* and *lop* respectively) has not yet been accomplished, but has already been initiated. It would then appear that art-historical evidence such as frescoes, plaques, or illuminated manuscripts, can no longer be ignored by linguists.

The prefix *s-* was fully productive in OM. It was prefixed to bases with simple and complex initials. Because of this low selectivity of its host, characteristic for inflectional affixes, it had no allomorph. Whenever syllabic, the vowel in the minor syllable showed allophonic variation *a ~ i* in its orthographic form, *i* being confined to base-initials /s-, k-/, the

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1. *Sources for this study*: inscriptions have been quoted from transcriptions as published in *Epigraphia Birmanica* (*EB*), and, in the case of inscriptions from Thailand, from my own notes. Complete bibliographical references can be found in Shorto (1971), with addenda in 1990 in Bauer (in press) which also includes a glossary.

* # indicates the number of the inscription or gloss, as listed in the source. It also indicates the syntactic boundary noted in the inscriptions; see Fig. 4-A. (Ed.)

former conditioning, no doubt, the front-colouring of the vowel.

Base types and their inflected forms are given in Fig. 1; all but the last are canonical (native) forms in OM.

OM *s*- is found attached to Indo-Aryan (IA) loans. In these cases the loans are invariably nouns in the source language, except Pali (P) *nimanteti*, but are to be analysed in OM grammar as verbs; non-inflected forms are attested as verbs. *s*- inflected IA loans are given in Fig. 2. In one instance, OM *s*- inflection has led to re-analysis: *sthapəna* 'to erect, establish', Sanskrit (Skt.) *sthāpana* 'founding, storing', is re-analysed as a simple form OM *thapəna*.[2]

OM *s*- may be combined with other verbal affixes such as the causative *p*- and *-ə-*, and the frequentative *-N-*. It may, however, not be combined with the attributive infix *-m-*, yielding non-predicative forms. Typical OM paradigms are set out in Fig. 3.

OM *s*- inflected forms may occur in declarative sentences, commands, and questions. In serialised constructions only the head-verb is inflected, as in

ḍeh scis das	(III.C.9)	'he will come down and be born' pr*N*/*s*-, to descend/to be, exist
'ey s'or p'ār pun'ār duṁhic		(I.G.31) 'I will cause to behave well' pr*N*/*s*-, to cause to/to practise, *p*-/conduct, *p*-, *-N-*/ righteous
sdindu binton	(I.B.49)	'[the king] shall instruct [the people]' *s*-, to teach/to instruct, *-N-*

base		*s*- inflected form	gloss
CVC	*nom*	*snom*	'to be'
sVC	*səp*	*səsəp*	'to cover the surface of'
ʔVC	*ʔar*	*sʔar*	'to go'
CCVC	*tluŋ*	*stluŋ*	'to come'
CəCVC	*səgeh*	*səsəgeh*	'to enrich'
	jənok	*sjənok*	'to enlarge'
CəCCVC	*tərwil*	*stərwil*	'to attend on'
CCVCVC	*prakɔt*	*sprakɔt*	'to be clear', Skt. *prākaṭya*

Fig. 1. *Base-types and their inflected forms in OM*

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2. Skt. nouns are re-analysed in Khmer as verbs. See Jacob (1977, esp. para. 4.4.2: 163-4).

base	inflected form	gloss	IA form
prathəna	*sprathəna*	'to pray'	Skt. *prārthanā* 'prayer'
byapar	*sbyapar*	'to render service'	Skt. *vyāpāra* 'service'
prakɔt	*sprakɔt*	'to be clear'	Skt. *prākaṭya*
nirban	*snirban*	'to attain Nirvāṇa'	Skt. *nirvāṇa*
cutiʔ	*scutiʔ*	'to die'	P. *cuti* 'death'
nimɔn	*snimɔn*	'to invite'	P. *nimanteti*

Fig. 2: *s- inflected IA loans in OM*

base	frequentative	causative	causative frequentative	hypothetical frequentative	hypothetical causative frequentative	gloss (base)
	-N-	p-, -ə-	p-, -ə- / -N-	s- / -N-	s- / p- / -N-	
ɗuk	*rənɗuk*	**pɗuk*	*pənɗuk*		*spənɗuk*	'to be completed'
yuk			*pənyuk*		*spənyuk*	'to raise'
*clɔh	*cənlɔh*			*scənlɔh*		'to be apparent'
*rleh	*rənleh*	*rəleh*				'to dance'

Fig. 3: *OM non-attributive verbal paradigms*

Noteworthy is the absence of suppletive forms in negated contexts, a common feature in modern Mon. The OM verbal negative *kaḥ* may be inflected for the 'hypothetical', OM *skaḥ* (as in #7, Fig. 4), or the verbal negative *kum* (< Khmer), OM *skum* (as in #10, Fig. 4). If the verbal negative is inflected for the 'hypothetical', the following verb is not.

Problematic are, however, cases where it is not the verbal negative which is inflected but the following verb (as in #9, although there it is *sak* which is never attested as an inflected form) or the preceding clause or sentence (as in #8).

Purposive clauses ('in order to, so as to') are introduced by the clause-head OM *tnas* or OM *ḋnaḥ*; in the latter case, the head is linked to the clause by *na*, which in some instances is attested without the clause-head (Ananda plaques #715, #780, #798; Kubyauk-gyi gloss #164; see Figs. 5, 7).

Whenever the clause is linked by *na* the following verb must be inflected for the 'hypothetical'. In Middle Mon (MM) clause-linkage also occurs with *ma*, but, except for *tnaḥ* as clause-head, *s-* inflection is not obligatory. However, as in OM, *na* clause-linkage requires *s-* inflection. Rules of linkage and inflection are listed in Figs. 8, 9. The exact details of clause-subordination in Mon need not concern us here; suffice it to say that *s-* inflection is obligatory when *na* linkage occurs in OM and MM.

To conclude: An examination of OM glosses supports the interpreta-

tion of *s*- being an aspectual prefix. Without adducing the evidence presented here, Shorto must have had such an interpretation in mind when stating:

> ... the OM preparative function is in effect a 'causative of the hypothetical'. 'To put ready at hand' [OM *surap ~ rap*] might then be paraphrased 'to cause (someone) to be about to hold'. (Cited in Jacob 1963: p.70, n.1.)

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(1) # *mu kāl ḍeḥ scis das yo* # (III.C.9)
(2) # *brow ma p'ār pun'ār sumur goḥ 'ey s'or p'ār pun'ār dumhic* # (I.G.30-31)
(3) # *ḍey rās tarley ci brey sgūr klam ḅār cwas leh tūn 'ut ras ti jnok wo' kum stit* # (I.G.12-14)
(4) # *'or krāw mhājan gumluṅ sgo' sirsuk ḍey lok paralok* ... (VIII.8.1)
(5) ... *tirley saṅgha ma spaḍot parit ta goḥ* ... (IX.G.35)
(6) # *blaḥ goḥ risi bisnū goḥ* # *scuti nor goḥ* # *stin 'ār brahmalok* # *scuti nor brahmalok goḥ* # *stlūṅ das ḍey ḍūṅ 'arimaddanapūr ci* # (I.A.33-35)
(7) #*'ut ñaḥ ma tāw ḍey rās gna smiṅ śrī tribhuwanādityadharmmarāja goḥ skaḥ sak bhey skaḥ sak 'upadrow* # (I.E.25-27)
(8) # *sak het kyāk buddha tarley gumloṅ sik'im ci kaḥ sak* # (I.A.27-28)
(9) # *ḍey sthān ma tarley kuta ci 'ut tinma satru gumloṅ sak sdas tutāw* # (I.G.5-6)
(10) ... *'or skum das jāti smar* (Mg.2)

Fig. 4-A: *s- inflected verbs in OM (monumental inscriptions, EB #I, III, VIII, IX)*

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(1) when will he come down and be born?
(2) women whose conduct is immoral I will cause to behave well
(3) in your kingdom, Sir, rain shall fall 120 times, and all the sap of the earth shall come forth
(4) that hereafter all mankind might obtain happiness in this world and the worlds beyond
(5) members of the Saṁgha who were to recite the *paritta*
(6) after that, the sage Bisnū, departing from thence, shall go up to Brahmalok; and departing from Brahmalok shall come to be in the city of Arimadda-napūr
(7) all those who dwell in the realm of the King Śrī Tribhuvanādityadharmma-rāja shall be exempt from calamity, exempt from misfortune
(8) it does not happen that Buddhas smile without cause
(9) in the place which my lord shall face, all foes shall fail to make a stand
(10) that I may not be born into a mean existence

Fig. 4-B: *Translation of samples given in Fig. 4-A*