

# OLD MON<sup>1</sup> *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: *sthapāna* ‘to erect, establish’, Sanskrit (Skt.) *sthāpana* ‘founding, storing’, is re-analysed as a simple form OM *thapāna*.<sup>2</sup>

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

|                                    |           |  |
|------------------------------------|-----------|--|
| <i>deḥ scis das</i>                | (III.C.9) | ‘he will come down and be born’<br>pr <i>N/s-</i> , to descend/to be, exist  |
| <i>‘ey s’or p’ār pun’ār dūmḥic</i> | (I.G.31)  | ‘I will cause to behave well’<br>pr <i>N/s-</i> , to cause to/to practise, <i>p-</i> /conduct,<br><i>p-</i> , <i>-N-</i> / righteous |
| <i>sḍindu binton</i>               | (I.B.49)  | ‘[the king] shall instruct [the people]’<br><i>s-</i> , to teach/to instruct, <i>-N-</i>   |

| base   |               | <i>s-</i> inflected form | gloss                               |
|--------|---------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| CVC    | <i>nom</i>    | <i>snom</i>              | ‘to be’                             |
| sVC    | <i>səp</i>    | <i>səsəp</i>             | ‘to cover the surface of’           |
| ʔVC    | <i>ʔar</i>    | <i>sʔar</i>              | ‘to go’                             |
| CCVC   | <i>tluŋ</i>   | <i>stluŋ</i>             | ‘to come’                           |
| CəCVC  | <i>səgeh</i>  | <i>səsəgeh</i>           | ‘to enrich’                         |
|        | <i>jənok</i>  | <i>sjənok</i>            | ‘to enlarge’                        |
| CəCCVC | <i>tərwil</i> | <i>stərwil</i>           | ‘to attend on’                      |
| CCVCVC | <i>prakət</i> | <i>sprakət</i>           | ‘to be clear’, Skt. <i>prākāṣya</i> |

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

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                        |
|-----------------|------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>prathāna</i> | <i>sprathāna</i> | ‘to pray’           | Skt. <i>prārthanā</i> ‘prayer’ |
| <i>byapar</i>   | <i>sbyapar</i>   | ‘to render service’ | Skt. <i>vyāpāra</i> ‘service’  |
| <i>prakət</i>   | <i>sprakət</i>   | ‘to be clear’       | Skt. <i>prākāṭya</i>           |
| <i>nirban</i>   | <i>snirban</i>   | ‘to attain Nirvāṇa’ | Skt. <i>nirvāṇa</i>            |
| <i>cuti?</i>    | <i>scuti?</i>    | ‘to die’            | P. <i>cuti</i> ‘death’         |
| <i>nimən</i>    | <i>snimən</i>    | ‘to invite’         | P. <i>nimanṭeti</i>            |

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

| base         | frequentative  | causative      | causative<br>frequentative | hypothetical<br>frequentative | hypothetical<br>causative<br>frequentative | gloss (base)         |
|--------------|----------------|----------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|--|----------------------|
|              | -N-            | p-, -ə-        | p-, -ə- / -N-              | s- / -N-                      | s- / p- / -N-                              |                      |
| <i>duuk</i>  | <i>rənduuk</i> | <i>*pəduuk</i> | <i>pənduuk</i>             |                               | <i>spənduuk</i>                            | ‘to be<br>completed’ |
| <i>yuk</i>   |                |                | <i>pənyuk</i>              |                               | <i>spənyuk</i>                             | ‘to raise’           |
| <i>*cləh</i> | <i>cənləh</i>  |                |                            | <i>scənləh</i>                |  | ‘to be apparent’     |
| <i>*rleh</i> | <i>rənləh</i>  | <i>rəleh</i>   |                            |                               |  | ‘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 *dnaḥ*; 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 deḥ scis das yo* # (III.C.9)
  - (2) # *brow ma p'ār pun'ār suṃur goḥ 'ey s'or p'ār pun'ār dūmḥic* # (I.G.30-31)
  - (3) # *ḍey rās tarley ci brey sgūr klām ḥār cwas leh tūn 'ut ras ti jnok wo' kuṃ stit* # (I.G.12-14)
  - (4) # *'or krāw mhājan guṃluṃ 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 # stlūn das ḍey ḍūn 'arimaddanapūr ci* # (I.A.33-35)
  - (7) # *'ut ṇāḥ ma tāw ḍey rās gna smiṃ śrī tribhuvanādityadharmmarāja goḥ skaḥ sak bhey skaḥ sak 'upadrow* # (I.E.25-27)
  - (8) # *sak het kyāk buddha tarley guṃloṃ sik'im ci kaḥ sak* # (I.A.27-28)
  - (9) # *ḍey sthān ma tarley kuta ci 'ut tinma satru guṃloṃ sak sḍas tutāw* # (I.G.5-6)
  - (10) ... *'or skuṃ das jāti smar* (Mg.2)
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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 Saṃgha 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 Arimaddanapūr
  - (7) all those who dwell in the realm of the King Śrī Tribhuvanādityadharmmarāja 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
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Fig. 4-B: Translation of samples given in Fig. 4-A

| Ananda<br>plaque<br>No. | Duroiselle EB II |                           | Jātaka  |                  | OM gloss        |
|-------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|---------|------------------|-----------------|
|                         | No.              | page reference<br>EB II.1 | EB II.2 | plate<br>EB II.2 |                 |
| 565                     | 28               | 9                         | 14      | vii.b            | Mūgapakkha      |
| 601                     | 64               | 21-23                     | 30      | xv.b             | Janaka          |
| 621                     | 90               | 32                        | 40      | xx.c             | Syāma           |
| 721                     | 189              | 67                        | 88      | xliv.c           | Mahā-Ummaga     |
| 756                     | 224              | 81-82                     | 106     | liii.a           | Bhūridatta      |
| 816                     | 285              | 108-109                   | 136     | lxviii.b         | Vessantara      |
| 715                     | 183              | 64-65                     | 86      | xlili.a          | Mahā-Ummaga     |
| 780                     | 249              | 93                        | 118     | lix.b            | Vidhura paṇḍita |
| 798                     | 267              | 100-101                   | 126     | lxiii.d          | Vessantara      |

Fig.5: OM s- inflected forms in the Ananda glosses

565. (Temiya) descending on to the ground  
... Temiya doubts whether he has still the control of his limbs and gets down from the chariot to ascertain
601. They (the two attendants) bring the alms-bowl (and) give it (to the Mahājanaka)  
... bids the two servants bring him yellow robes and an alms bowl. In the casket held by the first servant are the robes. The other is holding the bowl.
621. Śyāma informs (his parents) that he is going to enter the forest  
he informs his parents that he intends going to the forest
721. Mahosadha enters the king's house  
He is asking from his father permission to observe the *sīlas*. The king and the queen are seated, he is standing in front of them.
756. (Bhuridatta) asks his father for leave to go and observe the *sīlas*  
When everything is over, Vessantara, accompanied by his wife and children, goes to visit his father. Vessantara, then Jāli, his son, and near the boy, Maddi carrying Kaṇḍhinā on her hip
816. Vessantara goes to his father  
in front of the king, Mahosadha with, being who he is, three attendants
715. Mahosadha tells (the king) that he is going (to Uttarapancāla)  
announces to the Yakkha he is now ready to proceed with him wither he desires
780. Vidhura tells (Puṇṇa the Yakkha) he is ready to go (with him)
798. (Vessantara) asks for gold to give alms

Fig. 6. Duroiselle's translations, comments, and annotations to the Ananda glosses; text presented in Fig. 5.

Kubyauk-gyi Luce/Ba OM gloss  
(Myinkaba) Shin  
page ref.

|     |         |   |
|-----|---------|---|
| 28  | 365     | tarley taw dey 'anupiya 'amba XXXXXX barbeñ<br>slop duñ rājagrih  |
| 131 | 380     | kyek buddha tarley spluh das kyek #   |
| 164 | 386     | # smiñ 'asur # wepacit # sucit # pahārata #<br>'asurinda rāhu # taw dirse' na s'ār dwān tāwattiñ #  |
| 185 | 395     | # dey sthān nāgawanuyyān # 'ut kindok ma taw<br>dey lañka smic cinleñ kyek buddha tarley tutaw 'antul<br>'ākās ptiit kyāl damlu buhic deñ t-eñ 'ac bhey # # |
| 189 | 395     | # dey samanākūṭa samānadewa ma taw deñ 'ac<br>ma deñ spa spujaw han kyāk buddha tarley tarley<br>sāmpot kḍip go' sok moy kil ku deñ                         |
| 190 | 396     | # dey nāgadip smiñ nāga bār kmun ku kañwa smic<br>cinleñ kyek buddha tarleñy luñ ret kuta smiñ nāga<br>bār buk khas tun ku rañ sko'                         |
| 195 | 397     | # kāl smiñ dewānaṃpiyatis ku trey mahāmahin<br>stil mhābot wel chu mahābodha goñ tin taw han<br>dlañ mat brey duñmpohh they...                              |
| 196 | 397-398 | # wo' kāl smiñ dhammāsok mic pindoñ chu<br>mahādhāt ku saṅghamittatherī sclo' tko' siñghal...   |
| 197 | 398     | # wo' kāl smiñ duṭhagāmaṇi kṣap na skindañ<br>rathacetī #   |

Fig. 7-A: OM s- inflected forms in the Kubyauk-gyi glosses

- 28 'The Lord stays in the Anupiya mango (grove)... alms-bowl, is about to enter the city of Rājagaha'
- 131 'The Lord Buddha is about and become a Buddha'
- 164 'Kings of the Asuras, Vepacitti, Succitti, Pahārāda, and Rāhu Lord of Asuras, stay plotting (?) to go and climb up to attack Tāvatiṃsa'
- 185 'At the site of Nāgavana garden, all the spirit Yakkhas who dwelt in Lañkā were about to fight. The Lord Buddha stations himself in the sky above, produces a hurricane, creates darkness, and frightens them (till) they beg release from terror'
- 189 'At Samanakūṭa Deva Samaṇa who dwelt there, begged the Lord Buddha for something which might make an object of worship. The Lord stroked his head, got one hair, and gave it to him'
- 190 'In Nāgadipa two Nāga kings, nephew and uncle, were about to fight. The Lord Buddha came and confronted (?) the two Nāga kings, and warned and reconciled them again to one another'
- 195 'When the king Devanaṃpiyatis and the reverend Mahāmahin were about to plant finally the great Relic, the great Bodhi tree ascended and abode in a chamber of clouds for 7 days'
- 196 'This is when king Dhammāsok wishes to send the great relic of the Tree, with the therī Saṅghamitta, to the island of Siñghal.'
- 197 'This is when king Duṭhagāmaṇi plans to build the Ratnaceti'

Fig. 7-B: Translation of the Kubyauk-gyi glosses presented in Fig. 7-A.

| clause-head |             | clause-linkage |     |      |      |      | main<br>verb |
|-------------|-------------|----------------|-----|------|------|------|--------------|
|             |             | mə-            | nə- | s-   | AUX* | JCT* |              |
| OM          | <i>tnɔs</i> |                |     |      |      |      | V            |
| OM          | <i>dɣah</i> |                | nə- | s-   |      |      | V            |
| OM          |             |                | nə- | s-   |      |      | V            |
| MM          | <i>tnɔh</i> |                | nə- | s-   |      |      | V            |
| MM          | <i>tnɔh</i> | mə-            |     | s-   |      |      | V            |
| MM          | <i>tnɔh</i> |                |     | s-   |      | mik  | V            |
| MM          | <i>tnɔh</i> |                | nə  | s-   |      | mik  | V            |
| MM          | <i>hət</i>  | mə-            |     | (s-) |      |      | V            |
| MM          | <i>swak</i> | mə-            |     | (s-) |      |      | V            |
| MM          |             | mə-            |     | (s-) |      |      | V            |
| LM**        | <i>tnɔh</i> |                | nə- |      |      | swak | V            |
| LM          |             |                |     | s-   | kuʔ  |      | V            |
| SM**        |             |                |     |      | kɜʔ  |      | V            |

Fig. 8: Rules for clause-linkage and inflection in Mon

\*AUX = auxiliary complex; JCT = junctural complex. (Ed.)  
 \*\*LM = Modern Literary Mon; SM = Modern Spoken Mon. (Ed.)

| OM          | EMM         | LM          | SM | nə- s-V | mə (s-)V | AUX   | JCT |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|----|---------|----------|-------|-----|
| <i>tnɔs</i> | <i>tnɔh</i> | <i>tnɔh</i> | –  | EMM     |          |       | LM  |
| <i>dɣah</i> | –           | –           | –  | OM      |          |       |     |
| –           |             |             |    |         | EMM      | LM/SM |     |
| <i>nə</i>   | ( )         | –           | –  | OM      |          |       |     |
| –           | <i>hət</i>  | –           | –  |         | EMM      |       |     |
| –           | <i>swak</i> | <i>swak</i> | –  |         | EMM      | MM/LM |     |

Fig. 9: Mon clause-heads ('in order to, so as to') and linkage-types



| Fig 4-A                            | Ananda plaques<br>(Fig.5) | Kubyauk-gyi (Myin-<br>kaba) glosses to<br>frescoes (Fig.7-A) |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| <i>scis</i>                        | 565. <i>scis</i>          | 28. <i>slop</i>  |
| <i>s'or</i>                        | 601. <i>sikil</i>         | 131. <i>spluh</i>  |
| <i>sgūr</i>                        | 621. <i>slop</i>          | 164. <i>s'ār</i> (na + )                                     |
| <i>sgo'</i>                        | 721. <i>slop</i>          | 185. <i>smic</i>   |
| <i>spadot</i>                      | 756. <i>s'ār</i>          | 189. <i>spa</i>  |
| <i>scuti, stin, scuti, stlūn</i>   | 816. <i>s'ār</i>          | 190. <i>smic</i>   |
| <i>skah sak, skah sak</i><br>(NEG) | 715. <i>s'ār</i> (na + )  | 195. <i>stil</i>   |
| <i>sik'im</i> (NEG)                | 780. <i>s'ār</i> (na + )  | 196. <i>sclō'</i>  |
| <i>sdas</i> (NEG)                  | 798. <i>skil</i> (na + )  | 197. <i>skindam</i>  |
| <i>skun</i> (NEG)                  |                           |  |

Fig. 10: List of *s*- inflected forms presented in their syntactic contexts in Figs. 4-A, 5, and 7-A.

In the process of collecting, sifting and analysing data for an historical grammar of Mon, I cannot yet offer definite grammatical statements in certain areas, OM *s*- included. It is, however, my hope that this ordered set of data presented here (the lists with *s*- inflected forms from the Kubyauk-gyi glosses and the Ananda plaques are exhaustive; with the exception of Mg. 2, no *s*- inflected forms have been found on votive tablets from Thailand and Burma) will be of use to other linguists.

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