

Remarks on the Verb suru in Old Japanese -- A Corpus Based Study

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Remarks on the Verb *suru* in Old Japanese

— A Corpus Based Study

上代日本語の「スル」について—コーパスによる研究

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1. Introduction

The Modern Japanese (abbreviated 'NJ'¹) verb *suru* 'to do' is usually described as a 'light verb' and is also sometimes mentioned as a, or even *the*, prototypical transitive verb in Japanese. In this paper I will look at the functions and uses of the direct ancestor of this verb in Old Japanese ('OJ'), which is the earliest attested stage of the Japanese language, largely corresponding to the 8th century.² I will give a basic description of the main uses of *suru* in OJ, also pointing out some differences between the uses of *suru* in OJ and NJ, in particular showing that OJ *suru* was a purely functional element, with no lexical uses, as opposed to NJ *suru* which does have lexical uses. Finally, I will discuss whether *suru* should be termed a 'light verb' in Old Japanese and whether it may be thought to have been grammaticalized from a lexical 'heavy' verb, as is the case with 'do' verbs in Indo-European. The research and results presented in this paper are preliminary and represent work in progress.

1.1 The Oxford Corpus of Old Japanese

The research I report here is based on material from the *Oxford Corpus of Old Japanese* (OCOJ). The OCOJ is an annotated digital corpus of texts from the OJ peri-

¹ The following abbreviations are used in this paper:

ABL	ablative	ACC	accusative	ADN	adnominal	COMP	complementizer
CONJ	conjunctural	CONT	continuative	COP	copula	DAT	dative
EVID	evidential	FINP	final particle	FP	focus particle	GEN	genitive
HON	honorific	HUM	humble	IMP	imperative	INF	infinitive
MPST	modal past	NEG	negative	NMLZ	nominalizer	NMNL	nominal
NOM	nominative	PERF	perfective	PROV	provisional	PST	past
PURP	purposive	RESP	respect	STAT	stative	TOP	topic
VOL	volitional			cOJ	central Old Japanese		
EMJ	Early Middle Japanese			EOJ	Eastern Old Japanese		
KK	<i>Kojiki kayō</i>			MYS	<i>Man'yōshū</i>		
NJ	modern ('new') Japanese			NSK	<i>Nihon shoki kayō</i>		
OCOJ	<i>Oxford Corpus of Old Japanese</i>			OJ	Old Japanese		

² The majority of the material reflects the language of the then capital Nara in central Japan. Material from the OJ period also comprises poetry dated earlier than the 8th century, but included in texts written or compiled in the 8th century, and also some eastern dialect material. Later periods of the language are: Early Middle Japanese (EMJ) 800 – 1200; Late Middle Japanese (LMJ) 1200 – 1600; Modern Japanese (NJ) 1600 –

od, developed within a long term international collaborative research project based at the University of Oxford. The OCOJ is financially supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, UK, and by the British Academy. NINJAL is the main collaborating institution within the OCOJ.

The OCOJ comprises all poetic texts from the OJ period, a total of approximately 90,000 words.³ For all texts the OCOJ includes: the original text, a phonemic transcription, and XML mark-up following the standards of the Text Encoding Initiative. Mark-up represents orthography (distinguishing logographic from phonographic text portions), lexeme and morpheme UIDs, part-of-speech information, morphology, and syntactic constituency. See the OCOJ website at <http://vsarpj.orinst.ox.ac.uk/corpus/> for more information.

2. Modern Japanese *suru*

In NJ, *suru* has the following well-known main uses, each briefly exemplified with little or no comment:

- (1)
 - a. Intention/imminence; exemplified in (2)-(3)
 - b. Pro-verb; (4)-(5)
 - c. Resultative (raising) constructions; (6)
 - d. Verb focus; (7)
 - e. Verbal Noun + *suru*; (8)-(10)
 - f. Noun + *suru*; (11)-(15)

Intention/imminence

- (2) *osushi o tabeyoo to shita*
 sushi ACC eat.VOL COMP do.PST
 'I wanted to eat sushi'

- (3) *hana wa sakoo to shiteiru*
 flower TOP bloom.VOL COMP do.STAT.NONPAST
 'the flowers are about to bloom'

Pro-verb

- (4) *doo shiyoo*
 how do.VOL
 'What shall we/I do?'

- (5) *gohan o tabe-nasai. shi-nai to, okoru yo.*
 food ACC eat-IMP do-NEG if get.angry FINP
 'Eat your food. I'll get cross if you don't'

³ The texts currently in the OCOJ are: *Kojiki kayō* (古事記歌謡; 712) (112 poems; 2527 words); *Nihon shoki kayō* (日本書紀歌謡; 720) (133 poems; 2444 words); *Fudoki kayō* (風土記歌謡; 730s) (20 poems; 271 words); *Bussokuseki-ka* (仏足石歌; after 753) (21 poems; 337 words); *Man'yōshū* (万葉集; after 759); (4685 poems; 83706 words); *Shoku nihongi kayō* (続日本紀歌謡; 797) (8 poems; 134 words).

Resultatives

- (6) *kodomo o isha ni suru*
 child ACC physician COP.INF do
 'make a physician of one's son'

Verb focus

- (7) *osushi o tabe mo shi-nai*
 sushi ACC eat also do-NEG
 'I don't even eat sushi [but I do like making it]'

Verbal Noun (VN) + *suru*

- (8) *(nihongo o) benkyoo suru* *(nihongo no) benkyoo o suru*
 Japanese ACC studying do Japanese GEN studying ACC do
 'study (Japanese)'

- (9) *rikon suru* *rikon o suru*
 divorcing do divorcing ACC do
 'divorce'

- (10) *joo hatsu suru*
 evaporating do
 'evaporate'

Noun + *suru*

- (11) *henna kao o suru*
 strange face ACC do
 'look strange'
- (12) *henna nioi ga suru*
 strange smell NOM do
 'smell strange; there is a strange smell'
- (13) *tenisu o suru*
 tennis ACC do
 'play tennis'
- (14) *booshi o suru*
 hat ACC do
 'wear a hat'
- (15) *osushi o suru*
 sushi ACC do
 'make sushi'

Most of these uses of *suru* are clearly grammatical, conspicuously in the uses in (1) (a-f), but also among the last group, (1) (g), where the function of *suru* mostly is simply to predicate a noun, with no independent lexical, semantic contribution. However, it is important to point out that examples such as (15) show a clear lexical, transitive use of *suru* in NJ, with *suru* having the meaning of ‘make, produce’.

3. Old Japanese *suru*

In preparing this paper, I used the *Oxford Corpus of Old Japanese*, extracting all occurrences of the verb *suru* in the OCOJ and basing my analysis on that material.

Suru is the seventh most frequent verb in the texts in the OCOJ. The ten most frequent verbs are shown in (16) which gives the number of textual occurrences for each. It seems very likely that these numbers are skewed to some extent for some of the verbs due to the genre represented in the texts, which comprise a lot of love poetry, but it is clear that *suru* is a frequent verb.⁴

(16) The 10 most frequent verbs in the OCOJ

1298	<i>mi-</i>	‘see, look, meet’
975	<i>ar-</i>	‘be, exist’
858	<i>omop-</i>	‘think (of)’
802	<i>ko-</i>	‘come’
689	<i>yuk-</i>	‘go’
637	<i>kwopwi-</i>	‘love’
619	<i>se- (= suru)</i>	‘do’
501	<i>nak-</i>	‘cry (out)’
498	<i>tat-</i>	‘stand (up), set out’
454	<i>ap-</i>	‘meet’

OJ *suru* has the following inflected forms, which are all attested phonographically. (17) gives the number of occurrences for each form, separated into central OJ (cOJ) and Eastern OJ (EOJ).⁵

⁴ This expectation is borne out by a cursory check against the data in NINJAL’s Diachronic Corpus for pre-modern Japanese (accessed 8 May 2012) which shows the following numbers for the ten verbs in (16): *mi-* ‘see, look, meet’ 7879; *ar-* ‘be, exist’ 17153; *omop-* ‘think (of)’ 8502; *ko-* ‘come’ 2743; *yuk-* ‘go’ 2802; *kwopwi-* ‘love’ 206; *se- (=suru)* ‘do’ 15423; *nak-* ‘cry (out)’ 1638; *tat-* ‘stand (up), set out’ 1284; *ap-* ‘meet’ 1157. NINJAL’s Diachronic Corpus does not include OJ, but extensive sampling of texts from Early Middle Japanese, 800-1200, and Late Middle Japanese, 1200-1600, and it therefore has not only a much larger volume of text (hence some of the very high numbers), but also a much greater variety of text genre.

⁵ EOJ is a group of non-central dialects reflected in some of the poems in volumes 14 and 20 in the *Manyōshū*.

(17) Inflected forms of OJ *suru* (cOJ / EOJ)

		occurrences in cOJ	occurrences in EOJ
Stems	<i>se-, si-, s-</i>	222	18
Conclusive	<i>su</i>	74	2
Adnominal	<i>suru</i>	128	3
Exclamatory	<i>sure</i>	11	2
Imperative	<i>seyo / se, sero, seyo</i>	14	5
Negative conjectural	<i>sezi</i>	2	
Optative	<i>sena</i>	4	
Prohibitive	<i>na se so</i>	2	
Infinitive	<i>si</i>	12	
Gerund	<i>site</i>	42	3
Continuative	<i>situtu / susu</i>	32	2
Conditional	<i>seba</i>	7	1
Provisional	<i>sureba</i>	15	
Concessive	<i>suredo</i>	16	
Nominal	<i>suraku</i>	2	

Preliminarily, the main uses of OJ *suru* can be summarized as follows.⁶

- (18) a. Intention/imminence; exemplified in (19)-(20)
 b. Pro-verb; (21)-(23)
 c. Raising constructions; (24)-(25)
 d. Verb Infinitive + *suru*; (26)
 e. Noun + *suru*; (27)

Intention/imminence⁷

This use parallels the use in NJ, and in fact the OJ construction is the direct ancestor of the NJ construction.

⁶ In addition there are adverbializing and/or copula-like uses of *suru*, e.g. *pitori site* 'alone', including adverb, e.g., *kaku* 'this way', + *site*, *situtu*, *sureba*, as well as *ni-site* copula-gerund, or *-zu-site* negative-gerund.

⁷ Grammatical terminology and glossing of OJ examples follow the conventions of Frellesvig 2010. Transcription uses the Frellesvig&Whitman system (cf. Frellesvig 2010: 31-33). Text portions which are written phonographically in the original script are transcribed using lower case letter, whereas logographically written text is transcribed in UPPER CASE letters, as in for example (27) below. For investigation of OJ phonology or morphology, logographically written text is useless, and for that reason many linguists working on OJ avoid using logographically written text altogether. However, I do believe that there is a place for the use of logographically written text in some aspects of syntactic investigation, if the material is used cautiously and judiciously. The material I used for this paper therefore contains both phonographically and logographically written material.

- (19) 許呂佐務 苔 須羅句 塢 志羅珥 比賣那素寐 殊
 korosa-**mu to** **suraku** wo sira-ni pimye-n-aswobi su
 kill-CONJ COMP do.NMNL ACC know-NEG girl-'s-play do
 'not knowing that somebody intends to kill you, you are flirting with girls'
 (NSK 18)
- (20) 加是 布加牟 登 須
 kaze puka-**mu to** **su**
 wind blow-CONJ COMP do
 'the wind is about to start blowing' (KK 20)

Pro-verb

Also the pro-verb use of OJ *suru* is more or less identical to the pro-verb use of NJ *suru*, with uses ranging from indefinite reference,⁸ as in (21) (or (4) above), over uses with fairly specific context recoverable reference, but with no explicit antecedent in the text, as in (22), to reference to an explicit antecedent in the text, as in (23) where the verb *mak-* 'roll up, use as pillow' is the explicit antecedent of *se* 'do!', (or (5) above).

- (21) 和我 許呂母亘乎 奴礼亘 伊可 爾 勢牟
 wa ga koromode wo nurete ika ni **se-mu**
 I GEN sleeve ACC being.wet how COP.INF do-CONJ
 'What shall I do about my sleeve, it being wet?' (MYS 15.3712)
- (22) 烏廐野始儻 倭例烏 比岐例底 制始 比騰能
 wo-bayasi ni ware wo pikirete **se-si** pito no
 small-wood DAT I ACC drag.into do-PST person GEN

 於謀提 母 始羅孺
 omote mo sira-zu
 looks even know-NEG

 'I don't even know the looks of the person who dragged me into the little wood and did it (/me)' (NSK 111)
- (23) 須我麻久良 安是加 麻可左武 許呂 勢 多麻久良
 suga-**makura** aze ka **maka-sa-mu** kworo **se ta-makura**
 sedge-pillow why FP roll darling do.IMP arm-pillow
 'Why are you lying with a pillow made of sedge? darling, lie with my arms as your pillow' (MYS 14.3369, EOJ)

Raising constructions

The use in (24) is completely parallel to and the ancestor of the use in NJ in for ex-

⁸ Indefinite pro-verbs are like indefinite pronouns, such as German *man* or French *on*, in terms of reference.

ample (6) above. The construction in (25) with the adjectival infinitive in *-mi* is not found on NJ, but it is, like the constructions with the copula infinitive in (24) or (6), a raising construction.

- (24) 烏梅能波奈 佐岐多流 曾能能 阿遠夜疑遠
 umenopana saki-taru sono no **awoyagwi wo**
 plum.blossom bloom-STAT garden GEN green.willow ACC
- 加豆良 爾 志都都
kadura **ni** **situtu**
 hair.decoration COP.INF do.CONT

'making the green (leafy) willow in the garden where the plumtrees are blooming into a hair-decoration' (MYS 5.825)

- (25) 安賀 於毛布 伎美乎 奈都可之美 勢余
 a ga omopu **kimi wo** **natukasi-mi** **seyo**
 I GEN think.fondly.of lord ACC affectionate-INF do.IMP
 'treat my lord, whom I am care for, affectionately' (MYS 17.4009)

It is clear from this short overview that there is a great deal of overlap in the uses of *suru* between NJ and OJ. In particular, the obviously grammatical uses of *suru* in (18) (a-c) have continued unchanged from OJ directly into NJ. In the following two sections 4 and 5, I will take a closer look at the last two uses of *suru*, namely with a verb infinitive (18) (d), and with a noun (18) (e), here briefly exemplified with an example each, which seem to correspond to some extent to the uses in NJ in (1) (d-f).

Verb infinitive + *suru*

- (26) 伊都礼乃 思麻爾 伊保里 世武 和礼
 idure no sima ni **ipori** **se-mu** ware
 which COP island DAT lodging.in.a.hut do-CONJ I
 'me, on which island shall I lodge in a hut' (MYS 15.3593)

Noun + *suru*

- (27) 夕 名寸 尔 梶 音 爲乍
 YUPU-nagi ni KADI NO **TO** **SITUTU**
 evening-calm DAT oar GEN sound doing
 'with the sound of the oars in the evening calm' (MYS 13.3333)

4. Noun + *suru*

As in NJ, *suru* is in OJ used together with nouns. However, on closer inspection it turns out that this use is surprisingly rare. Excluding pro-verb uses of *suru*, resultatives and other raising constructions and the formal nouns/nominalizers *koto* 'thing'

and *waza* ‘act, deed’, I have found only the following nouns acting as objects or intransitive subjects of *suru* (including head nouns modified by relative or adnominal clauses headed by *suru*), shown in (28).

- (28) **Noun + *suru*** (13 items)
Sound *oto / to* ‘sound’; *kowe* ‘voice, sound’

Headgear (hair decoration)

kadura ‘hair ornament/decoration’; *pana-kadura* ‘hair decoration of flower(s)’ (*pana* ‘flower’); *pane-kadura* ‘hair ornament/decoration worn by young girls who have just come of age (shape and material unknown)’.

Activity nouns⁹

asi-ura / a-ura ‘divining by stepping; foot-divining’; *sakasira* ‘trying to appear wise’; *tapakoto* ‘talking nonsense; nonsense; foolish-word/speech’ (*tapa-* ‘foolish’); *tapawaza* ‘acting foolishly’; *warapagoto* ‘speaking like a child; childish word/speech’ (*warapa* ‘child’); *mazimono* (EN) ‘casting a spell, curse’; *maziwaza* (SM) ‘casting a spell, curse’; *norigoto* (SM) ‘proclaiming (of the emperor/empress); proclaim-word/speech’.

It is first of all conspicuous that there are very few of these, a total of only 13 different items. They also do not occur frequently, with the exception of *oto* ‘sound’, which in the frame *N no oto suru* ‘N can be heard; the sound of N can be heard’, as in (27) above, is not infrequent. Thus, it appears that *suru* first of all has the function of simply predicating the activity expressed by the nouns, as in (30)-(32). This also holds for the use with *oto* ‘sound’. The use with (-)*kadura*, as in (29), may be thought to originate in pro-verb use, or it may be that (-)*kadura* has an activity meaning ‘*kadura*-wearing’.

- (29) 葉根 褱 今 為 妹
pane-KADURA IMA SURU IMO
 now do beloved
 ‘My beloved who is now wearing her *pane-kadura*’ (MYS 4.705)

- (30) 月 夜 尔波 門 尔 出立
 TUKU-YWO ni pa KADWO ni IDETATI
 moon-night DAT TOP gate DAT go-out

⁹ Note that the final three words (*mazimono*, *maziwaza* and *norigoto*), with one occurrence each, are from the (*Shoku Nihongi*) *Senmyō* (SM) and the (*Englishiki*) *Norito* (EN), and that they thus are not part of the OCOJ. However, in preparing this paper I checked both the *Senmyō* and *Norito*, and it is noteworthy that both of these texts have very few occurrences of *suru*. But these three nouns are found there with *suru*.

足卜 乎 曾 為之
A-URA wo so **SE-si**
 foot-diving ACC FP do-PST

'on the moonlit night I went out to the gate and divined by stepping'
 (MYS 4.736)

- (31) 挂 畏 天皇
KAKEMAKU MO **KASIKWOKI** **SUMYERA GA**
 speaking.of even awesome imperial.highness GEN
- 大御髮 乎 盜 給 波利弓
OPOMI-KAMI wo **NUSUMI-TAMA**parite
 HON-hair ACC steal-HUM
- 岐多奈伎 佐保川 乃 髑髏 尔 入弓
kitanaki **sapoGAPA** **NO** **PITOGASIRA** **ni** **IREte**
 dirty Saogawa GEN skull DAT put.into
- 大宮 内 尔 持 参入 来弓
OPOMIYA **NO** **UTI** **ni** **MOTI-MAWIRI-KIte**
 palace GEN inside DAT hold-enter. HUM-come.GER
- 厭魅 為流 己止 三度 世利
MAZIWAZA **S-Eru** **koto** **MI-TABI** **s-eri**
 spell/curse do-STAT NMLZ three-times do-STAT

'They [the evil conspirators] stole hair of the unspeakably awesome imperial highness [Empress Shōtoku (*r.* 764-770) who was the ruling empress at the time], put it inside a skull from the dirty Saogawa River, took it inside the palace, and cast spells three times' (from *Senmyō* 43, dating from 769)

- (32) 賢良乎 為 跡 酒 不飲 人 乎
SAKASIRA wo **SU** to **SAKE** **NOMA-NU** **PITO** wo
 ACC **do** PURP saké drink-NEG person ACC
- 熟 見者 猿 二 鴨 似
YOKU **MIREBA** **SARU** **ni** **kamo** **NI-MU**
 well look.PROV monkey DAT FP resemble-CONJ

'Looking closely at someone who doesn't drink in order to appear wise, they look like a monkey or something' (MYS 3.344)

What emerges from the few examples of *suru* used with a noun in OJ is that *suru* first of all is used to predicate activity nouns, but has no independent lexical contribution, and in particular no lexical uses in the meaning ‘make, produce’. This is an important difference between OJ and NJ where *suru* does have such uses, cf. (15) above.

5. Verb infinitive + *suru*

As opposed to the use with nouns, *suru* is used frequently with verb infinitives. I have found 106 items that I preliminarily identify as verb infinitives, as summarized and subclassified in (33). The categorical status of these ‘verb infinitives’ will be discussed in section 5.3 below.

(33) Verb infinitives used with *suru* (106 items)

Negative <i>suru</i> -support	1 item
<i>sabwi</i> -derivatives + <i>suru</i>	4 items
A-V.INF + <i>suru</i>	4 items
V-V.INF + <i>suru</i>	9 items
N-V.INF + <i>suru</i>	47 items
V.INF + <i>suru</i>	41 items

In the following I list the items in each group and give a few examples. Some are very infrequent, attested only once, while others are fairly frequent. Some of them are not listed as verbs in dictionaries, but they all transparently involve the infinitive of a verb (or derivation from the infinitive of a verb). In each of the following three groups there are few items and occurrences are also not many.

(34)

sabwi- derivatives + *suru* (4 items)

kamu-sabwi ‘being god-like’; *okina-sabwi* ‘being like an old man’;
wotokwo-sabwi ‘being manlike’; *wotomye-sabwi* ‘being womanlike’.

A-V.INF + *suru* (4 items)

kata-kwopwi ‘unrequited love’; *kata-mopi* ‘unrequited affection’; *maro-ne/maru-ne* ‘sleeping with one’s clothes on’; *naga-kwopwi* ‘loving for a long time; long-love’.

V-V.INF + *suru* (9 items)

kapyeri-mi ‘looking back; (re)turn-look/see’; *kwopwi-musubi* ‘praying for continued love by tying ribbons; love-tie’; *midare-kwopwi* ‘being in love; be.confused/chaotic-love’; *miti-kake* ‘waxing and waning’; *piki-de* ‘pulling out; pull-go.out’; *tati-basiri* ‘running out; set.out-run’; *uki-ne* ‘sleeping floating on water, sleeping restlessly; float-sleep’; *wabwi-naki* ‘crying in disappointment’; *wepi-naki* ‘getting drunk and crying’.

The two main groups are N-V.INF + *suru* and V.INF + *suru*, with 47 and 41 items, respectively, see (35) and (38). (36) and (37) are two examples of N-V + *suru*.

(35) N-V.INF + *suru* (47 items)

a(-)biki ‘casting a net’; *ama-tutumi* ‘being held up by the rain’; *asa-biraki* ‘setting sail early in the morning; morning-open’; *asa-dati* ‘setting out in the morning’; *asa-nagi* ‘being calm in the morning; morning-calm’; *asi-yosopi* ‘wearing a string on the leg as an auspicious decoration; leg-adorn’; *asi-zuri* ‘stamping your feet in frustration; foot-rub’; *ippy-de*¹⁰ ‘leaving home to become a monk; house-go.out’; *iswo-mwi* ‘going round along a rocky shore; rock(y shore)-turn’; *kadwo-de* ‘leaving the house; gate-go.out’; *kamu-toke* ‘thundering; spirit-come loose’; *kaza-mamori* ‘waiting for good wind to set sail; wind-watch’; *kaza-maturi* ‘praying to avoid bad winds (for farming); wind-offer’; *koto-age* ‘speaking out; word-raise’; *koto-dopi* ‘talking together; word-talk.at’; *koto-pakari* ‘planning, arranging; thing-plan’; *koto-togame* ‘reproaching, rebuking; word-censure’; *kuni-magi* ‘looking for a country to live; country-seek’; *kuni-mi* ‘surveying the land; land-see’; *miwo-biki* ‘piloting (a boat); waterway-pull’; *miya-de* ‘leaving the court; palace-go.out’; *miya-dukape* ‘serving at court; palace-serve’; *mono-gatari* ‘story-telling; thing-tell’; *omo-gapari* ‘changing facial appearance; face-change’ [also EOJ *ome-kapari*]; *omo-kakusi* ‘hiding one’s face (in shame); face-hiding’; *omo-wasure* ‘forgetting somebody’s face; face-forget’; *pimye-n-aswobi* ‘flirting with girls; maid-GEN-play’; *puna-de* ‘setting sail, sailing out’; *puna-kazari* ‘decorating a boat; boat-decorate’; *puna-nori* ‘riding a boat; boat-ride’; *puna-pate* ‘lying at anchor; boat-end’; *sima-mwi* ‘sailing around an island; island-circle’; *simo-gumori* ‘being foggy with frost; frost-get.cloudy’; *tabi-ne* ‘sleeping away from home; travel-sleep’; *to-gari* ‘hunting for birds (with a falcon)’; *tono-wi* ‘staying overnight in the palace; palace-sit/live’; *tuma-dopi* ‘seeking a wife, mate; spouse-seek’; *tuma-dwori* ‘taking hold of the hem; hem-take’; *tuma-gwopwi* ‘loving one’s spouse; spouse-love’; *ura-gare* ‘withering; end-wither’; *ura-gwopwi* ‘loving secretly; inside/heart-love’; *ura-mwi* ‘sailing inside a bay; inside-circle’; *ura-nake* ‘crying to oneself; inside/heart-cry’; *wo-daye* ‘cord of a necklace breaking; cord-break (intr.)’; *ya-dori* ‘lodging; house-take’; *ywo-naki* ‘crying at night; night-cry’; *yuki-ge* ‘snow melting; snow-melt’.

- (36) 安米能 布流 日 乎 等我理 須
 ame no puru PI wo to-gari su
 rain GEN fall day ACC bird-hunting do
 ‘you are hunting with falcons on a rainy day’ (MYS 17.4011)

¹⁰ This word seems to have originated in translation (or, *kundoku* rendition) of Chinese 出家, which is also the origin of the NJ Sino-Japanese verbal noun *shukke-suru* ‘become a (Buddhist) priest, renounce the world’.

- (37) 國 見 乎 為者
KUNI-MI wo SUREBA
 land-seeing ACC do.PROV
 'as I survey the land' (MYS 1.2)

There are almost as many single verb infinitives that are used with *suru*, see (38) (see footnote 13 below about the numbers in the list). (39) is an example.

(38) **V.INF + *suru*** (41 items)

arasi 'let grow over' (0/1); *asari* 'getting food' (14/0); *ayamati* 'being mistaken' (1/0); *ipori* 'lodging in hut' (12/0); *itupari* 'lying' (0/3); *izari* 'fishing' (10/0); *kaduki* 'diving' (7/1); *kare* 'withering' (1/0); *kari* 'hunting' (2/0); *katarapi* 'talking' (1/0); *ki* 'wearing' (1/0); *kogi* 'rowing' (1/0); *kwopwi* 'loving' (10/18); *mapi* 'dancing' (2/7); *midare* 'being in disarray' (0/1); *misogi* 'purifying oneself' (3/0); *mi-tata-si* 'setting out; HON-set.out-RESP' (2/0); *momiti* '(leaves) turning red' (2/0); *nageki* 'sighing, lamenting' (3/2); *naki* 'crying' (0/1); *nare* 'getting used to' (0/2); *nari* 'working' (0/1); *nipe* 'making offering (of)' (1/0); *nipopi* 'being beautifully red, colourful, fragrant' (0/1); *oi* 'growing old' (0/1); *omopi* 'thinking of' (0/7); *padi* 'feeling shameful about, embarrassed by' (1/0); *paye* 'growing' (1/0); *pori* 'wanting, desiring' (15/4); *sini* 'dying' (9/1); *tamukapi* 'turning against' (0/1); *tamuke* 'making offerings' (6/1); *taye* 'ending' (4/0); *turi* 'fishing, angling' (8/3); *utusi* 'dyeing, colouring' (0/1); *wabwi* 'becoming desolate, sad' (0/1); *wakare* 'parting, leaving' (2/0); *wasure* 'forgetting' (4/1); *wosimi* 'being sad about' (1/0); *yumapi* 'being ill' (0/1); *ywobapi* 'proposing marriage' (2/0).

- (39) 伊射里 須流 安麻 能 都里船
izari suru ama no turi-BUNE
 fishing do diver GEN fishing-boat
 'the fishing boats of the divers who are fishing' (MYS 15.3609)

This frequency of use of (X-)V.INF + *suru* is in contrast with the use of *suru* together with simple nouns and suggests that the use of *suru* with a verb infinitive is an important basic use of *suru* in OJ.

5.1 Single verb infinitive + *suru*

A conspicuous feature of OJ *suru* is that it can be used together with single verb infinitives. This is not possible in NJ, where for example (40) is fine, with either a mimetic-verb infinitive compound (*poi-sute*) or a simple finite verb form (*suteru*), whereas (41), with a single verb infinitive (*sute*), is ungrammatical, regardless of the presence of a direct object.¹¹

¹¹ Forms such as *poi-sute* or *sute* are for NJ usually classified as Verbal Nouns derived from verb infinitives. See further 5.3 below.

(40) (*tabako o*) *poi-sute* *suru*
 cigarette ACC chuck.away-throwing do
 ‘throw (cigarettes) on the ground’

(*tabako o*) *suteru*
 cigarette ACC throw
 ‘throw (cigarettes)’

(41) **tabako o sute suru*
 cigarette ACC throwing do

**sute suru*
 throwing do

For NJ this restriction has been explained in various ways, for example with reference to ‘economy’ of expression (Kageyama 1982), or to some extent prosodic restrictions (Tsuji-mura 1992), both implying that verb infinitive + *suru* is a simple periphrastic construction with no independent meaning in NJ. Apparently OJ did not have this restriction. There are 41 items occurring in this construction in a total of 185 examples. It is of course difficult to determine whether this construction had any independent meaning in OJ (and was not simply a periphrastic construction as is assumed for NJ), but it is worth considering the following facts about the verb *tur-* ‘to fish, angle’, which is used just over 20 times in the OJ corpus (at present count 23 instances). Around half of these (11) are infinitive *turi* with *suru*, as in (42), and the other half (12) have the verb in the conclusive or adnominal form, *туру*,¹² as in (43).

(42) 奈呉 能 安麻 能 都里 須流 布祢波
 nagwo no ama no **turi** **suru** pune pa
 Nago GEN diver GEN fishing do boat TOP
 ‘the boat where the divers of Nago are fishing’ (MYS 17.3956)

(43) 藤江 能 宇良爾 須受吉 都流 安
 PUZIYE no ura ni **suzuki** **туру** ama
 Fujie GEN bay DAT sea.bass fish diver
 ‘The divers fishing sea-bass in the Fujie bay’ (MYS 15.3607)

Of these, none of the examples with *turi suru* take a direct object, but express the simple activity of fishing, whereas all of the examples with *туру* take a direct object, some kind of seafood. This suggests the possibility that verb infinitive + *suru* was no simple periphrastic construction, but expresses a generic activity (and thus ultimately forms part of the aspectual system of OJ).

¹² This includes a single instance of *tura-su* which is augmented by the respect auxiliary *-(a)s-* in the conclusive form.

Whilst facts and patterns of occurrence such as these may ultimately contribute to elucidating the function of the (X)V.INF + *suru* construction in OJ, it should also be recalled that in NJ *suru* may function to express verb focus, as in (7) above, in which case *suru* is used with single verb infinitives in NJ. We should therefore consider whether the examples where a single verb infinitive is used with *suru* in OJ actually express focus. Certainly, there are focus constructions among the examples, such as the following.

- (44) 念 曾 吾 為類
 OMOPI **so** **WA** **GA** SUru
 thinking FP I GEN do
 'it is sad, I am' (MYS 4.788)

This example displays two features which are typical of focus constructions, namely the presence of a focus particle (*so*) after the verb infinitive and preposing of the infinitive, as shown by the presence of the subject (*wa ga*) after the verb infinitive. However, it is difficult to imagine that there is any focus in examples like (39) or (42) above, and certainly there are no positive grounds for positing focus in such examples. Using the presence of any kind of material between the verb infinitive and *suru* as a diagnostic of focus, we can count the examples which have some kind of material between the verb infinitive and *suru* on the one hand, and examples where the verb infinitive and *suru* are adjacent on the other. Out of the 185 instances of single verb infinitive + *suru* in our material, more than two-thirds (126) are adjacent and only just under one-third (59) have material between the verb infinitive and *suru*, see (45).¹³ These proportions seem to show that a focus interpretation is unlikely in most cases.

- | | | |
|------|---------------|---------------------------|
| (45) | V <i>suru</i> | V X <i>suru</i> |
| | Adjacent | Separated, possible focus |
| | 126 | 59 |

5.2 Properties the verb infinitives used with *suru*

Looking more closely at the syntax of the verb infinitives used together with *suru* shows that they in some respects and in some cases behave like the so-called Verbal Nouns of NJ in that they display both verbal and nominal features, see (46).

- (46) Verbal features
 Verbal argument structure (section 5.2.1)
 Auxiliary selection (section 5.2.2)

¹³ These numbers are specified in (38) above, in the shape (x/y) after each item, x showing the number of occurrences where the verb infinitive and *suru* are adjacent, and y showing the number of occurrences where they are separated. Thus, for example, *kaduki* 'diving' (7/1) is attested seven times adjacent to *suru* and once with material intervening between *kaduki* and *suru*.

Nominal features

Adnominal modification (section 5.2.3)

Nominal argument structure (section 5.2.4)

Accusative marking (section 5.2.5)

5.2.1 Verbal argument structure

First of all, verb infinitives used with *suru* can have verbal argument structure. That is to say, they seem to be able to assign accusative, dative and ablative case to their arguments and to take complement clauses, the same way verbs can.¹⁴ We give a few examples, (47)-(48) showing accusative (*wo*) marked direct objects for the verb infinitive, (49)-(50) showing dative (*ni*) case on an indirect object or goal for the verb infinitive, (51)-(52) ablative (*yu* and *ywori*) with source or path, and (53) has a purposive clause marked by *ni* in a purpose-of-motion construction.

- (47) 佐保治 乎婆 安良之 也 之弓牟
sapo-di woba arasi ya si-te-mu
 Sao-way ACC.TOP let.grow.over FP do-PERF-CONJ
 ‘should I let the road to Sao grow over [by not using it]?’ (MYS 20.4477)
- (48) 可豆思加和世 乎 爾倍 須 登毛
kadusika-wase wo nipe su tomo
 Kazushika-early.rice ACC offering do although
 ‘although I/we offer the early rice from Kazushika’ (MYS 14.3386)
- (49) 葦原 笑 水穂 之 國 丹 手向 爲 跡
 ASI-PARA no MIDUPO NO **KUNI ni tamuke** su to
 Ashihara GEN Mizuho GEN land DAT offering do PURP
 ‘In order to make offerings to the land of Ashihara no Mizuho’
 (MYS 13.3227)
- (50) 恐 海 尔 船出 為利 所見
KASIKWO-KI UMI ni PUNADE S-Eri MIYU
 awesome-ADN sea DAT sailing.out do-STAT seem
 ‘the diver girls seem to be setting out to the awesome sea’ (MYS 6.1003)
- (51) 神 嶋 乃 伊素未 乃 宇良 由 船出 須
KAMWISIMA no iswomwi no ura yu PUNADE su
 Kamishima GEN rocky COP bay ABL set.sail do
 ‘I will sail out from the rocky bay on Kamishima’ (MYS 15.3599)

¹⁴ When investigating use of case particles or other morphological material we have to use only text where the morphemes in question are written phonographically.

- (52) 保里江 欲里 水乎妣吉 之都追
pori-YE ywori MIwobiki situtu
 canal ABL piloting do.CONT
 'while piloting along the canal' (MYS 18.4061)
- (53) 海 末通女 奥藻 苺 尔 舟 出 為 等思
AMAwotoMYE OKITUMO KARI ni PUNADE SU rasi
 diver.girl seaweed cut PURP set.sail do seem
 'the diver girls seem to be sailing out to cut seaweed' (MYS 7.1152)

Examples of case marking unambiguously assigned by the verb infinitive, or clauses governed by the verb infinitive, are not many, but they do exist, showing that at least in some cases a verb infinitive used with *suru* had unambiguous verbal argument structure.

5.2.2 Auxiliary selection

OJ had two perfective auxiliaries which were lost from the language in later periods and which are not reflected in NJ. The two OJ perfective auxiliaries are *-(i)te-* and *-(i)n-* and they are generally distributed according to the transitivity of the verb they attach to, as follows:

- (54) Transitives/Unergatives Unaccusatives
 -(i)te- *-(i)n-*

There are not many examples where verb infinitive + *suru* is used with a perfective auxiliary, but what we do find in those examples is that verb infinitive + *suru* displays variable auxiliary selection, showing that the choice of auxiliary does not depend on *suru*, but on the verb infinitive. (55)-(56) are examples where *suru* shows up with the perfective usually used with unaccusative verbs, *-(i)n-*. Other verb infinitives used with *suru* + *-(i)n-* are *naki* 'crying', *midare* 'being in disarray', *punade* 'setting sail', which are all unaccusative verbs.

- (55) 吾 羽 和備 曾 四二結類
WA pa wabwi so si-ni-kyeru
 I TOP being.sad FP do-PERF-MPST
 'I was sad' (MYS 4.644)
- (56) 眞珠 者 緒絶 爲尔伎
SIRA-TAMA PA WO-DAYE SI-ni-ki
 white-pearl TOP string-break do-PERF-PST
 'As for the white pearl necklace, the string broke' (MYS 16.3814)

There are also two examples of verb infinitive + *suru* used with the perfective *-(i)te-* which is usually used with transitives and unergatives. One is (57) and the

other is (47) above. Both *padi-* and *aras-* are transitive, again consistent with that auxiliary selection being determined by the verb infinitive and not by *suru*.

- (57) 結 之 辱 為都
 YUPI NO PADI SI-tu
 liaison GEN being.embarrassed do-PERF
 'I became embarrassed by the liaison' (MYS 3.401)

5.2.3 Adnominal modification

Turning to the nominal features of verb infinitives used with *suru*, the first is that in some cases they can receive adnominal modification, as in (58). There are in fact not many of these examples, but they do exist, showing that at least in some cases the verb infinitive used with *suru* was used as a noun.

- (58) 之保 能 可良吉 恋 乎 母 安礼 波 須流 香物
 sipo no kara-ki KWOPWI wo mo are pa suru kamo
 salt like bitter/sad-ADN love ACC even I TOP do FP
 'I hold a love which is sad/bitter like salt' (MYS 17.3932)

5.2.4 Nominal argument structure

There is only a single example where the verb infinitive with *suru* seems to have nominal argument structure, in the sense of marking a direct object with genitive *no*,¹⁵ namely (57) above where *yupi* is the object of *padi*. Note, however, that genitive *no* here is written logographically, so the evidential value of this example is not great.¹⁶

5.2.5 Accusative marking

Clauses with *suru* show limited use of accusative case marking. In fact, there are only 40 *suru* clauses in the entire text corpus which contain phonographically written instances of the accusative case particle *wo*. Excluding examples with pro-verb use of *suru*, resultative and other raising constructions, and *wo* marking of locative and temporal adjuncts (4 examples) and causee (1 example), we are left with the following 12 *wo* marked words, in a total of 22 occurrences, see (59). The following examples already cited above show accusative case marking together with *suru*: (30), (32), (37) and (58).

¹⁵ As in NJ *nihongo no benkyoo o suru* where *benkyoo* has nominal argument structure, as opposed to *nihongo o benkyoo suru* where *benkyoo* has verbal argument structure.

¹⁶ However, in this case the logographic writing is fairly well established: 之 was used logographically both for genitive *ga* and genitive *no*, but in this case *ga* would have been ungrammatical, so it is relatively safe to assume *no*. But we cannot be certain.

(59)

Verb infinitive (10 items, 20 occurrences):

itupari 'lying' (1 occurrence); *kadwo-de* 'leaving the house' (2); *kata-kwopwi* 'unrequited love' (1); *kata-mopi* 'unrequited affection' (1); *kuni-mi* 'surveying the land' (3); *kwopwi* 'love' (4); *maro-ne* 'sleeping dressed' (2); *nari* 'working' (1); *uki-ne* 'sleeping floating' (3); *ywo-naki* 'crying at night' (2)

Activity nouns (2 items, one occurrence each)

sakasira 'trying to appear wise'; *a-ura* 'divining by stepping'

The OJ accusative case particle, *wo*, which is the direct ancestor of the NJ accusative case particle *o*, was used, like NJ *o* and like accusatives in many other languages, to mark direct objects, causees and some locational and temporal adjuncts. However, unlike NJ, overt accusative case marking of direct objects was less frequent and many direct objects were not case marked in OJ. There is still no consensus about the exact circumstances determining when direct objects were accusative case marked or bare,¹⁷ but one general observation is that unmodified objects adjacent to the verb tend not to be accusative case marked. The use of the accusative with *suru* casts no light on this. Without attempting an explanation or interpretation, I will simply mention two facts about accusative case marking in *suru* clauses: First, only five examples have adnominal modification of the accusative marked verb infinitive. These are all of the examples of *kata-kwopwi* and *kwopwi*. Neither of the accusative marked activity nouns have adnominal modification. Second, only four examples (three of which are *kwopwi*) do not have the verb infinitive or activity noun adjacent to the verb. Thus, most of the examples of accusative marking in *suru* clauses have no adnominal modification on the *wo* marked constituent and they have the *wo* marked constituent next to the verb, as opposed to the general pattern of accusative marking of direct objects mentioned above. The most likely explanation may be that *wo* marking with *suru* expresses some kind of focus, and in any case there is no transitive force involved in the relationship between the *wo* marked constituent and *suru*. Thus also in the examples of *wo* marking together with *suru*, the function of *suru* is simply to predicate the *wo* marked word.

5.3 Discussion of the 'verb infinitives' used with OJ *suru*

Summarizing, the instances of 'verb infinitives' used with OJ *suru* seem to fall into at least two distinct groups: (a) those expressing focus and (b) those not expressing focus, cf. 5.1 above. The former group corresponds well to similar uses of verb infinitive with *suru* in NJ, and in such cases the 'verb infinitives' should simply be regarded as just that, verb infinitives. A diagnostic for identifying these constructions is the occurrence of a focus or topic particle or other material between the verb infinitive and *suru*.

¹⁷ Within the past few years, several quite different proposals have been made, including Kuroda 2008, Yanagida and Whitman 2009, Wrona and Frellesvig 2010.

The second group, however, seems not to involve focus; these are the instances where the ‘verb infinitive’ is adjacent to *suru* (approximately two thirds of all instances of single ‘verb infinitives’ used with *suru*). I hypothesized above that this construction was not a simple periphrastic predication; this is in part supported by the observation that this construction in OJ, as opposed to NJ, could be used with single ‘verb infinitives’, cf. (40) above. It is for future research to determine the exact use and meaning of these predications, but as a working hypothesis I suggested that it may have formed some part of the aspectual system of OJ, for example expressing (generic) activity. This suggestion is related to the nature and categorial status of the ‘verb infinitives’ involved in this construction. We saw that they seem to display at least some of the same properties as the ‘verbal nouns’ of NJ, having both verbal and nominal features (cf. 5.2), although in the majority of cases they occurred without identifiable external verbal or nominal features, but simply together with *suru* made up a predicate. In a wider cross-linguistic perspective, it seems that the category of verbal noun posited for Japanese, and sometimes thought to be less common or even particular to Japanese and Korean, in fact corresponds closely to the category called ‘gerund’ found in many other languages. An informal, tentative description of ‘gerund’, in this use of the term, could be as follows:

(60) **Gerund**: a (de)verbal noun which

- (a) expresses generalized or uncompleted activity
- (b) has the function of a substantive and at the same time shows verbal features, such as the capacity to govern objects.

It is for obvious reasons not practical to use the term ‘gerund’ about these forms,¹⁸ but it seems clear that those OJ ‘verb infinitives’ used with *suru* which did not take part in expressing focus fit the description in (60) well. For now I propose that these ‘verb infinitives’ used with *suru* are deverbal activity nouns with both verbal and nominal features, and further that they constitute the systemic OJ ancestor of the part-of-speech category of verbal noun.¹⁹ On this proposal, one important function of OJ *suru* was used to predicate activity nouns, both deverbal activity nouns and lexical activity nouns (e.g. *sakasira*). Both of these are cases of nominal predication.

6. Summary and discussion

In summary, OJ *suru* is in general similar to NJ *suru* and overall has the same grammatical functions as NJ *suru*. The uses of OJ *suru* may be summarized as in (61).

¹⁸ As the well established English language grammatical terminology for Japanese follows the ‘Altaicist’ tradition of referring to adverbial verb forms such as NJ *kaite* ‘writing’ or *yonde* ‘reading’ as ‘gerunds’, whereas ‘gerund’ in the sense of (60) is part of the classical Latinist tradition of grammatical terminology.

¹⁹ This suggestion has implications for an understanding of the history of verbal nouns in Japanese, as they often are presented as having entered the Japanese language in the process of borrowing from Chinese. On the proposal here, the category has been present in Japanese since OJ, in the shape of deverbal activity nouns.

(61) **Summary of OJ *suru***

Constructions:

- Intention/imminence
- Raising constructions

Pro-verb

Focus: Verb Infinitive + *suru*

Nominal predication:

- Deverbal activity noun + *suru*
- Lexical activity noun + *suru*

Thus, the core descriptive conclusion of this paper is that OJ *suru* has no uses as a lexical verb, but is a purely functional element. This is a significant difference between OJ *suru* and NJ *suru*.

In the remainder of this paper I shall briefly discuss two questions which follow on from this basic observation about OJ *suru*, namely whether OJ *suru* is a 'light verb' (section 6.1) and whether it is plausible to suggest that OJ *suru* was grammaticalized from a lexical verb (6.2).

6.1 Is Old Japanese *suru* a 'light verb'?

The term 'light verb' is often used about NJ *suru* when used together with 'verbal nouns', such as the following, repeated from (8)-(10) above. Such constructions are usually referred to as 'light verb constructions'.

(62) **Verbal Noun + *suru***a. VN *suru*

(*nihongo o*) *benkyoo suru* 'study (Japanese)'
rikon suru 'divorce'
joo hatsu suru 'evaporate'

b. VN *o suru*

(*nihongo no*) *benkyoo o suru*
 Japanese GEN studying ACC do
 'study (Japanese)'

Unergative intransitive

rikon o suru

Unaccusative intransitive

**joo hatsu o suru*

Since the late 1980s there has been a growing — and by now very large — literature on this topic, with a variety of formal analyses, including Grimshaw and Mester 1988, Miyagawa 1989, Kageyama 1991, and Poser 1991. Other publications include Tsujimura 1992, Takahashi 1993, Sode 1995, Matsumoto 1996 and Miyamoto 1999. On light verbs in general, Butt 2010 is very useful.

As proposed above the OJ deverbal activity nouns used with *suru* are the systemic ancestors of the verbal nouns of NJ and it therefore would seem to follow that OJ *suru* should be thought of and referred to as a ‘light verb’, if that applies to NJ *suru* in these constructions. However, it is interesting to note that although everybody seems to agree that NJ *suru* is a light verb, there are differences of opinion about *when* it is a light verb. Thus, some scholars would characterize both the (a) and (b) in (62) as light verb constructions. However, others (e.g. Matsumoto 1996) would exclude (a), characterizing those instead as incorporated verbs, whereas yet others (e.g. Miyamoto 1999) would exclude instead (b), saying they are ‘heavy’ *suru*. These differences seem to reflect differences in formal analysis as well as differences in the understanding of the meaning of the term ‘light verb’.

I would like here briefly to consider whether the term ‘light verb’ is appropriate when applied to OJ *suru*, from a terminological point of view. As is often mentioned in literature on ‘light verb constructions’, the term ‘light verb’ seems to have originated with the Danish linguist Otto Jespersen, more specifically from chapter VII, on ‘Substantives from Verbs without Change’, of volume VI of Jespersen’s *A Modern English Grammar on Historical Principles* (1942: 112-134), which Jespersen begins by talking about ‘[t]he peculiar freedom with which substantives are made from verbs in English’ (1942:112), giving examples such as *approach, beat, climb, dip, dress, flutter, wish, worry* etc.

- (63) The most usual meaning of s[u]b[stantive]s derived from and identical in form with a v[er]b is the action or an isolated instance of the action. This is particularly frequent in such everyday combinations as those illustrated in the following paragraphs after *have* and similar ‘**light**’ verbs. They are in accordance with the general tendency of Mod[ern]E[nglish] to place an insignificant verb, to which the marks of person and tense are attached, before the really important idea ... Such constructions also offer an easy means of adding some descriptive trait in the form of an adjunct: we had *a delightful bathe, a quiet smoke*, etc.
(Jespersen 1942:117; my bold emphasis, BF)

Other examples given by Jespersen include *do a bunk, take a drive, make a bolt, give a sigh*, and in English, *make* and *take* are among the most frequently used light verbs.

One important feature of ‘light verbs’ is expressed well by Butt (2010), namely that light verbs are form identical with full, lexical verbs. That is one reason for recognizing ‘light verb’ as a useful category, different from purely functional ele-

ments.²⁰

A central characteristic of light verbs is that they are always **form identical** to a main verb of the language. [...] Even though the light verbs clearly do not have the same predicational content as their full/main verb counterparts, they are always exactly form identical to a full verb and inflect exactly like that full verb.

(Butt 2010: [5]; emphasis in original)

I pointed out above that NJ *suru* in addition to its grammatical uses also can have lexical uses, meaning ‘make, produce’, as in (64), but also that there are no such uses of *suru* in OJ. An early example of what might be thought to be such a lexical use of *suru* is (65), from *Tosa nikki*, written in the 10th century, where *su* is interpretable as a lexical verb, meaning ‘make’; alternatively it could be interpreted as a pro-verb, and in fact it is likely that the lexical use of *suru* in post-OJ is the result of lexicalization of pro-verb uses of *suru*.

(64) (from (15) above) Modern Japanese *suru* ‘make’

osushi o suru
sushi ACC do
‘make sushi’

(65) *wotoko mo su naru nikki to ipu mono*
man also do EVID diary COMP call.ADN thing
‘The thing called diary which men are said to make’ (*Tosa nikki*, c. 935)

Now, if there is no lexical use of *suru* in Old Japanese; or, put differently, if OJ *suru* is a purely functional element, it follows that the term ‘light verb’ is not applicable to OJ *suru*. So the answer to the question of whether OJ *suru* is a ‘light verb’ is, at least on purely terminological grounds, negative: No, OJ *suru* is not a light verb.

Before moving on to the second question of whether *suru* is grammaticalized from a heavy lexical verb, I would like briefly to note that the quote above from Jespersen gives occasion to consider what I find an important difference between Japanese and English. It is not directly related to the verb *suru*, but to deverbal nominalization in the two languages. Repeating from (63) above, Jespersen says

(66) The most usual meaning of substantives derived from and identical in form with a verb is **the action** or **an isolated instance of the action**.
[My emphasis, BF]

²⁰ In traditional Japanese grammar there is in fact a term that refers to verbs that can both have grammatical function and lexical, main verb use, namely 補助動詞 (*hojodōshi* ‘auxiliary verb’). However, that term refers to a different class of word, namely verbs that can attach to and form compounds with other verbs to add some grammatical meaning.

That is very different from Japanese. The Japanese *morphophonological* equivalent of ‘Substantives from Verbs without Change’ (i.e. zero derived deverbal nouns), are nouns derived from the infinitive of verbs (or perhaps more precisely, from the stem underlying the infinitive).²¹ However, in Japanese the usual meaning of such zero (or minimally) derived deverbal nouns are **not** the *action* or *an isolated instance of the action*, but instead the *activity* expressed by the verb. It is of course possible to derive action and activity (or agent, patient, instrument, place, etc.) nouns in both Japanese and English, but the default zero derivation is a noun expressing the action or an isolated instance of it in English (“kiss”), but the activity noun in Japanese (“kissing”). This may primarily be seen as an aspectual difference (perfective versus imperfective), although there are other attendant differences, such as the “isolated instance of the action” of the English deverbal noun being easily quantified (and adnominally modified), whereas the “activity” of the Japanese deverbal noun generally does not easily lend itself to quantification, unless further derivation and/or lexicalization has taken place.

6.2 Is Old Japanese *suru* grammaticalized from a lexical, transitive verb? The prehistory of OJ *suru*.

Turning to the second question, of whether OJ *suru* can be thought to be grammaticalized from a lexical transitive verb, I would first of all like to draw attention to the work of the Japanese linguist Yoshioka Gen-Ichiro (吉岡源一郎 (1870-1942)). He was, if not the very first, then one of the earliest Japanese Indo-Europeanists. He went to the US at the beginning of the 20th century and studied Indo-European comparative linguistics at the University of Chicago under the supervision of Carl Darling Buck, obtaining his PhD in 1908.²² Yoshioka’s dissertation was *A semantic study of doing and making in the Indo-European languages*. The opening paragraph of the dissertation says the following:

That such a vague, general notion as that of ‘do’ or ‘make’ is secondary and rests upon some more specific force, is an assumption demanded by all psychological probability and fully confirmed by linguistic evidence. The purpose of this dissertation is to show what are the various specific forces from which come the verbs of doing and making in the Indo-European languages.

...

Verbs of doing and making are treated together for the simple reason that it is impossible to keep them apart. It is true that the distinction which exists in English, where *do* refers to an action *per se*, while *make* contains the no-

²¹ Morphophonologically, the stem underlying the infinitive (formally identical with and functionally partially overlapping, though not identical with what in Japanese school grammar is called the *ren’yōkei* 連用形 “adverbial form/stem”) is the closest equivalent Japanese has to a pronounceable neutral verb stem, although it for the largest class of verb, consonant base verbs, is different from the underlying basic stem, e.g. *kak-* ‘write’, *yom-* ‘read’.

²² After returning to Japan, Yoshioka taught first at Waseda and from 1911 at Tokyo Gaigodai where he taught English. In Japan his name seems to be associated first of all with English teaching.

tion of result, is common to many languages; but the line of demarcation is a vague one, and never quite the same even in languages which have precisely the same pair of words as German and English. Compare *Was macht er ? = What is he doing ?*
(Yoshioka 1908: 7)

In the dissertation Yoshioka meticulously describes the etymologies of ‘do’ and ‘make’ verbs in Indo-European languages. He shows that they originate in a variety of words denoting ‘specific actions’, ‘activity (exertion and motion)’, etc., that is, full lexical verbs of various sorts, all of which are highly transitive.

That, however, is different from Japanese *suru*. There are no positive indications of any kind that OJ *suru* has been grammaticalized from a lexical verb. And no plausible lexical source for *suru* can be proposed. Contrary to the situation with *do* and *make* verbs in the Indo-European languages, *suru* seems to have become lexical over time. OJ *suru* does not seem to have been grammaticalized, within any observable or reconstructable time span, from a transitive, lexical verb. Rather, it seems to have been a purely functional element which has grown heavier over time, acquiring lexical uses after the OJ period.

What, then, is the pre-OJ history of *suru*? Considering that a main function, in addition to other grammatical functions, of OJ *suru* was to predicate activity nouns, it seems very likely that OJ *suru* reflects a pre-OJ **copula**, which in the OJ period had acquired additional uses, from which lexical uses developed after the OJ period.

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Abstract: This paper provides a basic description of the main uses of the Old Japanese verb *suru*, on the basis of the material in the *Oxford Corpus of Old Japanese*. In particular, the paper shows that OJ *suru* was a purely functional element, with no lexical uses, as opposed to NJ *suru* which does have lexical uses. The paper also briefly discusses whether *suru* should be termed a ‘light verb’ in Old Japanese and whether it may be thought to have been grammaticalized from a lexical ‘heavy’ verb, as is the case with ‘do’ verbs in Indo-European.

《要旨》 本論文は「オックスフォード上代日本語コーパス」の用例に依拠して、上代日本語における動詞「する」の主要な用法を記述しようとするものである。主要な論点は、上代語の「する」は語彙的な用法をもたない純粋に機能的な要素であって、語彙的な用法をもつ現代語の「する」とは相違していることを示すことにある。あわせて上代語の「する」を軽動詞 (light verb) とよぶことの適否と、印欧語における do 動詞がそうであったように、

上代語の「する」もまた語彙的な用法をもつ「重たい」動詞が文法化されることによって生じたとみなすことの適否についても簡潔に論じる。

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