

The verb 'to do' (*suru*) in Old Japanese A corpus based study

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Either that wallpaper goes, or I do
Oscar Wilde on his deathbed (?)

(1) An overview over the linguistic periods of Japanese

Old Japanese (OJ) 700 - 800

- limited sources, but enough to get a relatively good idea of the language at the time;
- most sources reflect the language of the centre of political power, Nara, in the Kansai region where also Kyoto and Osaka are located, but some reflect some varieties spoken in Eastern Japan, usually collectively referred to under one as Eastern Old Japanese (**EOJ**)
- all sources were written in Chinese characters, used logographically or phonographically, so interpretation is not always simple;
- majority of sources are poetry;

Early Middle Japanese (EMJ) 800 - 1200

- the political capital moves to Kyoto (also in Kansai), which remained the seat of political power until the beginning of the early modern period;
- large body of prose texts from 900 - 1100, to a large extent reflecting the contemporary spoken language of the upper classes of the capital, written in the *kana script* which evolved at the beginning of the period;
- the written language starts fossilizing from around 1100, giving rise to the *Classical Japanese* written language which served as the basis for most writing in Japanese until the beginning of the 20th century;

Late Middle Japanese (LMJ) 1200 - 1600

- contemporary spoken language mainly reflected indirectly in most sources, especially in the first half of the period;
- valuable sources in Latin alphabet writing produced by Christian missionaries from the very end of the period (spanning the beginning of Modern Japanese), reflecting the contemporary spoken language;

Modern Japanese (NJ) 1600 -

- the capital moves to Edo, present-day Tokyo, at the beginning of the period;
- a variety of sources, but to a large extent only indirect reflection of the contemporary spoken language well into the period;
- sweeping reforms to the written language at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th, combining vernacularization of the written language with efforts to define a national *Standard Japanese* resulted in the establishment of a written norm, largely reflecting the language of the educated classes of Tokyo (who, however, spoke a language which was the continuation of the educated common language used by the upper classes in Kyoto), so no *significant* break in tradition between the language reflected in pre-modern sources and the current common/standard language.

(2) Main changes to affect Japanese

Internal ('evolutive') change

sound changes (late OJ through EMJ)

segmental changes and introduction of quantity sensitivity, e.g.;

OJ *kwo.pwi* 'love' > EMJ *kwo.pi* > *ko.pi* > *ko.wi* > *koi*

morpho-syntactic changes (mainly LMJ)

extensive changes to verbal morphological categories, nominalization and focus constructions;

Contact-induced ('adaptive') change

sinification (pre-OJ through EMJ; contact with Chinese)

loanwords;

phonological and some grammatical influence;

westernization (especially 20th century; contact with European languages)

loanwords;

phonological and some grammatical influence.

(3) Collaborative research project based at Oxford:

Verb semantics and argument realization in pre-modern Japanese:

A comprehensive study of the basic syntax of pre-modern Japanese

funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, UK

Project website: <http://vsarpj.orinst.ox.ac.uk>

(4) The Oxford Corpus of pre-modern Japanese

Website: <http://vsarpj.orinst.ox.ac.uk/corpus/>

- Approximately 90,000 words
- Comprises all poetic texts from the Old Japanese period
- Phonemic transcription, also retaining original script
- XML mark-up following the standards of the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI)

Annotation

- Writing: Logographic versus phonographic

- Part of speech
- Morphology

- Lexeme and morpheme ID, linked to a Lexicon

- Syntactic constituency:
 - o Noun phrases
 - o clauses
 - o topics
 - o right dislocated elements
- (Almost) no empty elements
- Argumenthood

Main uses of *suru* in Modern Japanese

(5) Pro-verb

doo shiyoo

how do.VOL

‘what shall we/I do?’

gohan o tabe-nasai. shi-nai to, okoru yo.

food ACC eat-IMP do-NEG if get.angry FinalP

‘Eat your food. I’ll get cross if you don’t’

taiyoo wa mainichi noboru. shi-nakattara komaru.

sun TOP everyday rise do-NEG.COND be.troublesome

‘The sun rises every day. It would be a problem if it didn’t’

(6) Noun + *suru*

osushi o suru

sushi ACC do

‘make sushi’

tenisu o suru

tennis ACC do

‘play tennis’

booshi o suru

hat ACC do

‘wear a hat’

henna kao o suru

strange face ACC do

‘look strange’

henna nioi ga suru

strange smell NOM do

‘smell strange; there is a strange smell’

(7) Verbal Noun (VN) + *suru*

VN-*suru*

nihongo o benkyoo-suru

Japanese ACC study-do

‘study Japanese’

riikon-suru ‘divorce’

joo hatsu-suru ‘evaporate’

VN *o suru*

nihongo no benkyoo o suru

Japanese GEN study ACC do

‘study Japanese’

riikon o suru ‘divorce’

**joo hatsu o suru* ‘evaporate’

(8) **Verb (de)focus**

osushi o tabe mo shi-nai
sushi ACC eat FOC do-NEG
'I don't even eat sushi [but I do like making it]'

osushi o tabe wa suru
sushi ACC eat TOP do
'I do eat sushi'

(9) **Resultatives**

kodomo o isha ni suru
child ACC physician COP.INF do
'make a physician of one's son'

koohii o atsu-ku suru
coffee ACC hot-INF do
'make the coffee hot; heat up the coffee'

(10) **Intention/imminence**

osushi o tabeyoo to shita
sushi ACC eat.VOL TO do.PAST
'I wanted to eat sushi'

hana wa sakoo to shi-teiru
flower TOP bloom.VOL TO do-STAT
'the flowers are about to bloom'

Old Japanese *suru*

(11) **The 10 most frequent verbs in OJ**

1298 *mi-* 'see, look'
975 *ar-* 'be, exist'
858 *omop-* 'think (of)'
802 *ko-* 'come'
689 *yuk-* 'go'
637 *kwopwi-* 'love'

608 *se-* 'do' = ***suru***

501 *nak-* 'cry (out)'
498 *tat-* 'stand (up), set out'
454 *ap-* 'meet'

(12) **Occurrences of *suru***

Number of occurrences in COJ: 574
Written phonographically: 189
Written logographically: 385
Number of occurrences in EOJ: 34
Written phonographically: 34

(13) **Paradigm and forms**

COJ / EOJ

basic stem	<i>se-</i>
stems (213 / 17)	<i>se-, si-, s-</i>
conclusive (74 / 1)	<i>su</i>
adnominal (128 / 3)	<i>suru</i>
exclamatory (11 / 2)	<i>sure</i>
imperative (14 / 5)	<i>seyo / se, sero, seyo</i>
negative conjectural (2)	<i>sezi</i>
optative (4)	<i>sena</i>
prohibitive (2)	<i>na se so</i>
infinitive (12)	<i>si</i>
gerund (42 / 3)	<i>site</i>
continuative (32 / 2)	<i>situtu / susu</i>
conditional (7 / 1)	<i>seba</i>
provisional (15)	<i>sureba</i>
concessive (16)	<i>suredo</i>
nominal (2)	<i>suraku</i>

Main uses of *suru* in Old Japanese

Pro-verb

- (14) 和我 許呂母弓乎 奴礼弓 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)
- (15) 伊波牟須弊 世武須弊 斯良爾
 ipa-mu subye **se-mu** subye sira-ni
 say-CONJ way do-CONJ way know-NEG
 ‘I don’t know what to say or what to do’ (MYS 5.794)
- (16) 烏麼野始爾 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 lure.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)
- (17) 人 目乎 為乍 戀 繁 口
 PITO-ME wo **SITUTU** KWOPWI SIGEKYeku
 person-eye ACC do.CONT love be.much
 ‘While worrying about being seen by others, I am full of love’ (MYS.12.2876)

- (18) 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-RESP-CONJ darling do arm-pillow
 ‘why are you lying with a pillow made of sedge? darling, lie with my arms as your pillow’ (MYS 14.3369, EOJ)

Noun + *suru*

- (19) 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 being heard in the evening calm’ (MYS 13.3333)
- (20) 月 夜 尔波 門 尔 出立 足卜 乎 曾 為之
 TUKU-YWO ni pa KADWO ni IDETATI A-URA wo so **SE-si**
 moon-night DAT TOP gate DAT go-out foot-divination ACC FP do-PST
 ‘on the moonlit night I went out to the gate and divined by stepping’ (MYS 4.736)

Verb Infinitive + *suru*

- (21) 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 live in a hut’ (MYS 15.3593)
- (22) 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)
- (23) 安米能 布流日乎 等我理 須
 ame no puru PI wo togari **su**
 rain GEN fall day ACC hunting.with.falcons do
 ‘you are hunting with falcons on a rainy day’ (MYS 17.4011)
- (24) 國 見乎 為 者
 KUNI-MI wo **SUREBA**
 land-seeing ACC do.PROV
 ‘as I survey the land’ (MYS 1.2)

Resultative

- (25) 烏梅能波奈 佐岐多流 曾能能 阿遠夜疑遠
 ume no pana saki-taru sono no **awo-yagwi wo**
 plum GEN 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 plumbtrees have blossomed into a hair-decoration’ (MYS 5.825)

NP (wo) ADJ-mi suru

- (26) 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 thinking of, affectionately’ (MYS 17.4009)

Intention/imminence

- (27) 加是布加牟登須
kaze puka-**mu to su**
wind blow-**CONJ TO do**
‘the wind is about to start blowing’ (KK 20)
- (28) 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 TO do.NOM ACC know-NEG girl-‘s-play do**
‘not knowing that somebody intends to kill you, you are flirting with girls’ (NSK 18)

Nouns used with suru

- (29) *subye* ‘means, way of’, cf. (15); *koto* ‘thing; nominalizer’, cf. (30); *waza* ‘act, deed’; *tapa-waza* ‘foolishness, nonsense’ (*tapa-* ‘foolish’); *mazi-waza* (SM) ‘spell, curse’; *mazi-mono* (EN) ‘spell, curse’; *nori-goto* ‘(imperial) command, proclamation; proclaim-word/speech’; *tapa-koto* ‘nonsense; foolish-word/speech’; *warapa-goto* ‘childish word/speech’ (*warapa* ‘child’).
asi-ura / a-ura ‘divination by stepping; foot-divination’, cf. (20).
sakasira ‘trying to appear wise’, cf. (31).
oto ‘sound’; *kowe* ‘voice, sound’.
koromo ‘clothes, garment’; *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)’ (*pane* meaning unclear).
ta-makura ‘using arm as pillow; arm-pillow’, cf. (18) above; *pito-me* ‘being noticed by others; person + eye’; cf. (17) above.

(30) *Maziwaza*

挂 畏 天皇 大御髮 乎
KAKEMAKU MO KASIKWOKI SUMYERA GA OPOMI-KAMI wo
speaking.of even awesome imperial.highness GEN HON-hair ACC

盜 給 波利豆
NUSUMI-TAMApurite
steal-HUM

岐多奈伎 佐保川 乃 髑髏 尔 入 豆
kitanaki sapoGAPA NO PITOGASIRA ni IREte
dirty Saogawa GEN skull DAT put.into

大宮 内 尔 持 参入 来 豆
OPOMIYA NO UTI ni MOTI-MAWIRI-KIte
palace GEN inside DAT hold-enter.HUM-come.GER

厭魅	為	流	己止	三度	利世
MAZIWAZA	S-Eru		koto	MI-TABI	s-eri
	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 Saogawa River, took it inside the palace, and cast spells three times’ (from *Senmyō* 43, dating from 769)

(31) *Sakasira*

賢良	乎	為跡	酒	不飲
SAKASIRA	wo	SU to	SAKE	NOMA-NU
	ACC	do PURP	saké	drink-NEG

人	乎	熟	見者	猿	二鴨	似
PITO	wo	YOKU	MIREBA	SARU	ni kamo	NI-MU
person	ACC	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)

(32) *Panekadura*

葉根 纒	今	為	妹
pane-KADURA	IMA	SURU	IMO
	now	do	beloved

‘My beloved who is now wearing her *pane-kadura*’ (MYS 4.705)

Infinitives used with *suru*

- (33) *arasi* ‘let grow over’; *asari* ‘getting food’; *ata-yumapi* ‘sudden illness’; *ayamati* ‘being mistaken’; *ipori* ‘lodging in hut’; *itupari* ‘lying’; *izari* ‘fishing’; *kaduki* ‘diving’; *kapyeri-mi* ‘looking back; (re)turn-look/see’; *kare* ‘withering’; *kari* ‘hunting’ (also with honorific prefix *mi-*: *mi-kari*); *katarapi* ‘talking’; *kogi* ‘rowing’; *kwopwi* ‘loving’; *kwopwi-musubi* ‘continuing loving; love-be.connected’; *mapi* ‘dancing’; *maro-ne* ‘sleeping with one’s clothes on; wrap-sleep’; *midare* ‘being in disarray’; *mi-tata-si* ‘setting out; HON-set.out-RESP’; *misogi* ‘purifying oneself’; *miti-kake* ‘waxing and waning’; *momiti* ‘(leaves) turning red’; *mwi* ‘turning’; *naga-kwopwi* ‘loving for a long time; long-love’; *nageki* ‘sighing’; *naki* ‘crying’; *nare* ‘getting used to’; *nari* ‘working’; *-ni* NEGATIVE; *nipopi* ‘being colourful, fragrant’; *oi* ‘growing old’; *okina-sabwi* ‘being like an old man’; *omopi* ‘thinking of (with sadness)’; *padi* ‘being shameful’; *paye* ‘growing’; *piki-de* ‘pulling out; pull-go.out’; *pori* ‘wanting, desiring’; *sini* ‘dying’; *tamukapi* ‘turning against’; *tamuke* ‘making offerings’; *tati-basiri* ‘running out; set.out-run’; *taye* ‘breaking (intr.), ending’; *turi* ‘fishing’; *utusi* ‘dyeing, colouring’; *wabwi* ‘being desolate, sad’; *wabwi-naki* ‘being sad and crying’; *wakare* ‘being apart’; *wasure* ‘forgetting’; *wepi-naki* ‘getting drunk and crying’; *wosimi* ‘being sad’; *wotokwo-sabwi* ‘being manlike’; *wotomye-sabwi* ‘being womanlike’; *ywobapi* ‘proposing marriage’ (also with reciprocal prefix *api-*: *ywobapi* ‘proposing marriage to each other’).

- (34) 奈吳 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)
- (35) 藤江 能 宇良爾 須受吉 都流 安麻
PUZIYE no *ura ni* **suzuki** **туру** ama
Fujie GEN bay DAT sea.bass fish diver
'The divers fishing sea-bass in the ' (MYS 15.3607)
- (36) *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'; *ipye-de* 'leaving home to become a monk; house-go.out [translation of Ch. 出家]; *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'; *kata-kwopwi* 'unrequited love'; *kata-mopi* 'unrequited affection'; *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'; *midare-kwopwi* 'being in love; be.confused/chaotic-love'; *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)' [also *patu-to-gari*, i.e. with nominal prefix]; *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'; *uki-ne* 'sleeping floating on water, sleeping restlessly; float-sleep'; *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'.

Focus or simple predication?

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

Case-marked arguments of infinitives used with *suru*

Wo-marked object (1 example)

- (38) 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 FOC do-PERF-CONJ
 ‘should I let the road to Sao grow over [by not using it]?’ (MYS 20.4477)

Ni-marked indirect object (‘to’) (4 examples, all with *tamuke suru* ‘make offering’)

- (39) 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)

Yu/ywori-marked direction (‘from, along’) (5 examples)

- (40) 神 嶋 乃 伊素未 乃 宇良由 船出 須 和礼波
 KAMWISIMA no iswomwi no **ura yu PUNADE** su ware pa
 Kamishima GEN rocky COP bay ABL set.sail do I TOP
 ‘me, I will sail out from the rocky bay on Kamishima’ (MYS 15.3599)

- (41) 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)

Purpose-of-motion (1 example)

- (42) 海未通女 奥藻 荇 尔 舟出 爲 等思
 AMAwotoMYE OKITUMO **KARI ni PUNADE** SU rasi
 ‘diver.girl seaweed cut PURP set.sail do PRSMP
 ‘the diver girls seem to be sailing out in order to cut seaweed’ (MYS 7.1152)

Perfective auxiliary selection with *suru*

(43) Distribution of OJ perfective auxiliaries

Transitives	Unergatives	Unaccusatives
-(i)te-	-(i)te-	-(i)n-

-(i)te- (3 examples)

- (44) 加射之 爾 斯弓奈
 kazasi ni **si-tena**
 hair-decoration COP do-PERF.OPT
 ‘I want to make them [plum flowers] into a hair decoration’ (MYS 5.820)

- (45) *padi* ‘being ashamed, *arasi* (cf. (38) above).

-(i)n- (5 examples)

- (46) 吾羽 和備 曾 四二結類
WA pa **wabwi so** si-ni-kyeru
I TOP being.sad FOC do-PERF-MPST
'I, it is sad I am' (MYS 4.644)
- (47) 眞珠 者 緒絶 爲尔伎登
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)
- (48) *naki* 'crying', *midare* 'being in disarray', *punade* 'setting sail'

Accusative marking in clauses with *suru*

- (49) Resultatives (8 examples, including (25) and (14))

Other raising constructions (4 examples, including (26))

Nouns (8 examples)

Activity 'nouns' (3 examples: *sakasira*, *a-ura*, *pitome*, cf.(29) above)

Locative and temporal adjuncts (4 examples)

Causee (1 example)

V.INF (19 examples):

itupari 'lying' (1); *kadwo-de* 'leaving the house' (2); *kata-kwopwi* 'unrequited love' (1); *kata-mopi* 'unrequited affection' (1); *kuni-mi* 'surveying the land' (2), cf. (24); *kwopwi* 'love' (4); *maro-ne* 'sleeping dressed' (2); *nari* 'working' (1); *uki-ne* 'sleeping floating' (3); *ywo-naki* 'crying at night' (2)

- (50) 可良伎 孤悲 乎 母 安レ波 須流 香母
kara-ki kwopwi wo mo are pa suru kamo
sad-ADN love ACC also I TOP do EMPH
'I hold a very sad love' (MYS 15.3652)
- (51) 為便 毛 無 片 戀 乎 為
subye mo NA-KI KATAKWOPWI wo SU
use even not.exist-ADN unrequited.love ACC do
'I harbour a useless unrequited love' (MYS 12.3111)

戀 乎 吾 為
KWOPWI wo **WA GA SURU**
love ACC I GEN do
'I love' (MYS 10.2311)

Is OJ *suru* a light verb?

- (52) 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. They thus in some way form a parallel to those with ‘cognate object’: *fight the good fight*, etc.
Jespersen 1942:117 (my bold emphasis, BF)
- (53) *do a bunk, take a drive, make a bolt, give a sigh*
- (54) 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)
- (55 (repeated from (6))
osushi o suru
sushi ACC do
‘make sushi’
- (56) *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 keep’ (*Tosa nikki*, c. 935)

Is OJ *suru* grammaticalized from a lexical verb?

- (57) 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 notion 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)

OLD JAPANESE TEXTS

MYS = *Man'yōshū*, cited from *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*

NSK = *Nihon shoki kayō* (songs from the *Nihon shoki*), cited from *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*

KK = *Kojiki kayō* (songs from the *Kojiki*), cited from *Nihon koten bungaku taikei*

Senmyō = *Shoku Nihongi Senmyō*, cited from Kitagawa, Kazuhide. 1982. *Shoku nihongi senmyō: Kōhon, sōsakuin*. Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan.

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