

# Nouns, imperative and irrealis in Old Javanese

Old Javanese has, besides the indicative, non-indicative verb forms of the imperative (urging) and the irrealis (non-factua). Nouns used as the imperative are specific to Old Javanese, while the use of the irrealis for urging is not. Specific historical changes in Javanese are nouns becoming verbs and the non-indicative becoming the indicative.

Alexander K. Ogloblin

## Forms and meanings

Many languages have grammatical forms that are synonymous (outwardly different, but the same or similar in their meanings) and homonymous (the same in form but different in meaning). In every language the relationships between such forms vary considerably. For instance, in English the suffix *-s* serves for the plural of nouns: *cat-s* and the homonymous *-s* for third person singular verbs: *chat-s*. In German the suffix *-en* serves for verbal plural forms: *sie leb-en* 'they live' and

another suffix *-en* for the infinitive: *muss leb-en* 'must live'. The latter form may be transposed to a noun: *das Leben* 'life', and such nouns have synonymous formations with the suffix *-ung*: *bild-en* 'to build, shape' > *Bild-ung* 'formation; education'. The specificity of Old Javanese grammar lies in the homonymous relationship existing between nouns (or, more precisely, nominal words and forms) and some imperative forms of verbs, and the synonymous relationship between verbal forms of the imperative and the irrealis. To explain the basis for such relationships and their change over time, we have to bear in mind some features of Old Javanese grammar and a bit of linguistic theory.

## Nouns

Before producing an utterance we have in mind a certain 'frame' or 'scenario' that includes not only word meanings, but their connections as well. For instance, in the sentences *The hunter kills the tiger* and *The tiger kills the hunter* word meanings are the same, only their connections differ; compare this to the *student's brother* and the *brother's student*. The basic functions in a meaningful frame are predicates (predicational meanings) and arguments, and their connections are hierarchical: arguments depend on predicates (Hudson 1984, Mel'cuk 1988). In the outward form of the utterance, predicates are generally expressed by verbs, as *kills* above does, and arguments by nouns, as *hunter* and *tiger* do. Indeed, the main function (the grammatical meaning) of nouns is to be arguments.

However, an argument can also be predicational, in which case deverbal nouns of nominal forms are used: *Mary likes swimming*, *Swimming is pleasant*. In these English examples the nominal word is derived from the root verb *swim* with the aid of the suffix *-ing*. In Old Javanese a similar derivation is also present, and the prefixes *pa-* and *paN-* are used (*N* is a symbol for the nasal consonants *m*, *n* and others, sometimes replacing the first consonant of the root): *weh* 'give, giving' > *paweh* 'giving, gift', *sĕmbah* 'worship; respectful gesture' > *panĕmbah* 'respectful appellation/ request' (*anĕmbah* 'to apply with reverence/respect'). However, a reverse direction of derivation is very productive, that is, a lot of Old Javanese verbs are produced from root nouns with predicational meanings: *linggih* 'sitting' > *a-linggih* 'sit', *inum* 'drinking' > *um-inum* 'to drink', *pangan* 'eating' (also: 'food') > *amangan*, *umangan* 'eat'. Old Javanese likes predicational arguments where English uses adverbs. For instance, to say 'He went far away' Old Javanese prefers something like 'His going was far away'.

## The imperative

The imperative forms of verbs denote various urgings (command, request, advice, etc.). In many languages the imperative form is the shortest among other verbal forms (Xrakovskij and Volodin 1986). Similarly, some Old Javanese imperative forms are homonymous to root predicational nouns, *linggih* 'sit down!' *inum* 'drink (it)!' being shorter forms compared to verbs used in non-imperative sentences. Now, the basis for such homonymy is not purely formal. We have stated that arguments are dependent upon predicates. But the imperative is generally also a dependent form. Indeed, in saying, for example, *Drink it!* we have in mind something like 'I say that I wish (prescript/ allow/ propose, etc.) that you drink (it)'. The dependence of the predicational meaning 'drink' upon another predicate has no outward expression, yet it does exist. So there is a common basis for nouns and the imperative: both are arguments.

Another Old Javanese form of the imperative is homonymous to nouns with the prefixes *pa-*, *paN-*: *pa-weh* 'give (it)!', *pa-stri*: 'take as a wife!', *pang-rĕngĕ*: 'hear!' (*ma-weh*, *ma-stri*;; *mang-rĕngĕ*: in non-imperative sentences). Here language use proceeds by force of analogy: derived nouns follow the example of root nouns in accepting the imperative as a secondary function. This secondary function disappeared in New Javanese, thus restricting these *pa(N)-*forms (now mostly pronounced *pĕ(N)-* with a short and murmured vowel) by their basic or pri-

mary meaning of a verbal noun: *palaki* 'wedding', *pangestu* 'blessing', *panggalih* 'feeling, thinking'.

## The irrealis

Old Javanese irrealis forms mostly have the suffix *-a*: *maweh* 'give' > *maweh-a*, *wruh* 'know' > *wruh-a*. They denote a very broad scope of meanings about something not (yet) existing, as the future, or a possible, hypothesized or proposed action or state (Zoetmulder 1950: 150 sqq; Ogloblin 2005: 618-9). Distinct from the imperative, the irrealis may also be formed from nouns. Thus from the root noun *ling* 'speech, words': *rikana ling-a ni nghulun* 'Such shall be words of mine'. The irrealis may also denote an urging, more polite than in the imperative: *Mangkana ling-a-nya* 'Let them say (lit.: such let-be words-their)'. Urging sentences with a transitive meaning are passive: *satĕngah ni hurip-ta ya ta pa-weh-a-nta* 'A half of your life should be given by you' (*-nta* 'by you'). The form *pa-weh-a* here may be interpreted as an irrealis form of a noun or as a hybrid form between the imperative and the irrealis. Otherwise the same *pa-weh-a* means 'a future/ possible gift'. The difference between such meanings is revealed by the syntactic context.

The use of irrealis as a synonym for the imperative is natural. Isn't it common to say in English 'You should close/ Would you close the window' instead of 'Close the window'? Both oblique moods denote something that has not yet really occurred, and they are synonymous.

However, in language history there is often a devaluation of etiquette language forms. Thus the irrealis became the plain imperative, without any politeness: *kandhak-n-a* 'Tell (me it)!' (Ogloblin 2001). The permanent processes in Javanese language history are changes of verbal nouns into verbs and non-indicative (imperative and irrealis) forms into indicative ones. Old Javanese root verbal nouns and their imperative homonyms merged into New Javanese plain verbs, particularly the transitive ones became passive forms for first and second persons of the agent: *linggih* 'sit', *pangan* '(be) eaten' (by me, us, you), *kandhakake* '(be) told, narrated' (by me, us, you). ◀

## References

- Mel' (uk, Igor' A. 1988. *Dependency syntax: theory and practice*. N.Y.: State University of New York Press.
- Alexander K. Ogloblin. 2001. 'Imperative constructions in Javanese'. Victor S. Xrakovskij, ed. *Typology of imperative constructions*, pp. 221-42. Munich: Lincom Europa.
- Alexander K. Ogloblin. 2005. 'Javanese'. A. Adelaar, N.P. Himmelmann, eds. *Austronesian languages of Asia and Madagascar*, pp. 590-642. London: Routledge.
- Victor S. Xrakovskij and Alexander P. Volodin, 1986. *Semantika i tipologija imperativa: Russkij imperativ* [Semantics and typology of the imperative: the Russian imperative]. Leningrad: 'Nauka'.
- P. J. Zoetmulder. 1950. *De taal van het Adiparwa: een grammaticale studie van het Oudjavaans*. Bandung (reprinted Leiden: Foris, 1983).

Alexander K. Ogloblin is professor of Malay-Indonesian Literature at the Department of Chinese, Korean and South-East Asian Literature, Faculty of Oriental Studies, at the University of Saint Petersburg and was a fellow at IIAS in 2004. He teaches Indonesian, Malaysian, Javanese and Malay-Indonesian literature.