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Jean Winand

The oblique expression of the object in Ancient Egyptian*

Abstract: This paper deals with Direct Object Marking (DOM), a well-known phenomenon cross-linguistically. DOM is fully implemented in Coptic, but remains scarce in pre-Coptic Egyptian. This paper deals the emergence of DOM, relying mainly on Middle Egyptian and Late Egyptian data. I first give a rapid overview of the rhematizing construction of the direct object and of the partitive construction(s) respectively. I then examine how the introduction of the preposition *m* with certain verbs can be explained as a detransitivizing, detelicising process before coming back to the issue of DOM in pre-Coptic Egyptian. In my conclusion, I suggest that the circumstances that favoured the appearance of DOM in Egyptian differ in some significative ways with what is generally assumed in general linguistics.

1 Introduction

As is well-known, there is in Coptic a difference in the durative tenses between the pattern

V + DirObj and V + **n**- + NP (litt. ‘in NP’) or **mm**o= suff.pr.

- (1) a. **εϕηεχ δαιμονιον εβολ ζ̄νβεεαζεβογα**
‘He casts out demons by Beelzebul.’ (Luke 11:15 = Layton 2000: 132)

b. **εϕχε ανοκ εινογχε εβολ νηδαιμονιον ζ̄νβεεαζεβογα**
‘If I cast out demons by Beelzebul.’ (Matt 12:27 = Layton 2000: 132)

The marked pattern (**n** + NP) is used when the object is high on the animacy scale or high on the scale of definiteness; in the other cases, the object is directly attached to the verb (Stern-Jernstedt rule).¹

* My sincere thanks to E. Grossman, St. Polis, and A. Stella for their remarks and comments on the draft of this article. The gathering of the data has been considerably facilitated by the use of

Typologically, this phenomenon, known as differential object marking (DOM) is very widespread.² Here is an example in Maltese:

(2) *spara* (*lil-*)*l-kelb*
 fire (PERF.3MSG) (ACC+)-DEFART-dog
 'He shot the dog.'

(3) *spara* *kelb*
 fire (PERF.3MSG) dog
 'He shot a dog.' (Bossong 1998: 253)

In this very minimal pair, the presence of an extramarker of accusative, the preposition *lil*, which is directly connected to Arabic *li-*, is triggered by the definition of the object. However, in this specific case, the preposition remains optional, for *kelb* 'dog', although an animate, is not human. For animals, some fluctuations can be observed in many languages that otherwise have a marked system for the object. In some cases, DOM seems to be used to convey a human emotion, so to speak, from the point of view of the speaker.

In Egyptian, DOM is also attested in Demotic, in circumstances that still await further investigation.³ When going further back in the past, examples become exceedingly scarce. In Late Egyptian (LEg), only two, maybe three, certain occurrences surface.⁴ The next three examples show how the DirObj of a very common Egyptian verb (*iri* 'do') is expressed. In the first example, the DirObj which is preceded by the possessive article, is introduced by the preposition *m* 'in', in a syntactic environment that has much in common with what can be observed in Coptic. In the second one, the DirObj is left undefined; and in the last one, the

the database *Ramses* (see Winand, Polis, Rosmorduc 2009).

1 See Depuydt (1993), Layton (2000: §171), Engsheden (2005). There are of course some fluctuations in the usage (see Layton 2000: 132). Engsheden recently proposed that thematicity can play a significant role in the use of *m* in narrative constructions (see below). The distribution of the two patterns can also be affected by stylistic reasons, *lato sensu* (see Shisha-Halevy 1986 for some insightful comments on Shenoutian Coptic).

2 E.g., Spanish, southern Italian dialects, Slavonic languages, Caucasian languages, Uralic languages, Bantu languages, and of course some Semitic languages, both ancient and modern (see Lazard 1997, 2001; Bossong 1997). The case of Hebrew, both Biblical and modern, has been extensively studied (Givón 1978; Elwolde 1994; Danon 2001).

3 See Parker (1961), Simpson (1996: 151–156). For some consideration on Demotic data, see below, [Seite 551](#).

4 For a brief sketch of the history of Egyptian, see Loprieno (1995: 1–10), Winand (2006b).

noun is preceded by the possessive definite article *t3y.sn*. As regards the last two examples, one can observe that there is no syntactic variation: the DirObj immediately follows the verb. Obviously enough, the marked pattern has not been grammaticalized in L_{Eg}. Of course, there is a difference between the two examples that have a definite object, thus between ex. 4 and 6, as the first sentence has a progressive aspect and the last one has what I have called elsewhere an *inaccompli général*.⁵ Although the special marking of the DirObj, at first glance, seems rather exceptional, the situation in L_{Eg} probably deserves a closer look.

(4) *sw ỉr m p3y.f sħn*
 3MSG do(PRI-INF.) m his job
 ‘He is doing his job.’ (LRL 32,13)

(5) *twn ỉr Ø-sħn.w*
 1PL do(PRI-INF.) jobs
 ‘We are working (litt. we are doing jobs).’ (P. BM 10375, v^o 11)⁶

(6) *st ħr ỉr.t t3y.sn ỉp.t <n> db.t*
 3PL ħr(PRI) do(PRI-INF.) their count <of> bricks
m-mn.t
 every day
 ‘They do their amount of bricks every day.’ (P. An. III, v^o 3,2)

Two questions immediately arise:

- how did DOM appear?
- why is it limited to the durative tenses?

In pre-Demotic Egyptian, there are a lot of patterns involving the preposition *m* ‘in’. With *n* ‘to’, *r* ‘towards’ and *ħr* ‘on’, *m* constitutes the basic stock of the Egyptian prepositions as shown, among many features, by their high degree of polysemy and, above all, by the fact that they quickly undergo a process of grammati-

⁵ See Winand (2006a: 271–286). In what follows, I stick strictly to my terminology, strongly distinguishing between the perfective/imperfective, for expressing semantic classes, and the accompli/inaccompli, for expressing a grammatical opposition in a tense system.

⁶ In this papyrus, the word *sħn* ‘order, mission’ is used 4 more times in various configurations: with a demonstrative (r^o 20, *m p3y sħn* ‘in this mission’), with the universal quantifier *nb* (r^o 28, *twn ʕr sħn nb n p3y.n nb* ‘we are accomplishing all the missions of our lord; cf. r^o 28–29), with the indefinite article *wʕ* (v^o 4, *ħn.n <r> ỉr.t n.ỉ wʕ sħn* ‘let’s go to do a job for you [litt. for me]’).

calization by entering some verbal (or non-verbal) predicative patterns (MEg. *iw.f n X* ‘it belongs to X’, *iw.f r sḏm* ‘he shall hear’, *iw.f ḥr sḏm* ‘he is hearing’).⁷

The preposition *m*, which is at the core of this paper, immediately caught the grammarians’ attention by its polysemy. According to the standard grammar of Gardiner, the preposition has 9 main uses.⁸ Recently, scholars have tried to understand the functioning of the preposition by using semantic maps.⁹

In Egyptian, two constructions display the surface structure V + *m* + NP: one for rhematizing the DirObj in the so-called emphatic constructions and another one for expressing the partitive.¹⁰ To these, one can add some valency patterns involving the preposition *m*.

In §§ 2 and 3, I give a rapid overview of the rhematizing construction of the direct object and of the partitive construction(s) respectively. In § 4, I examine how the introduction of the preposition *m* with certain verbs can be explained as a detransitivizing, detelicising process. In § 5, I come back to DOM in pre-Coptic Egyptian. In my conclusion, I will suggest that the circumstances that favoured the appearance of DOM in Egyptian seem at odds with what is generally assumed in general linguistics.

2 The emphatic construction V + *m* + NP

In the literature, some attention has been paid to a construction that puts emphasis on the DirObj (Silverman 1980): it mainly consists of using a restricted set of verbal forms, called emphatic, whatever this means at a morphological level (Winand 2007), and transforming the DirObj into a PrepP using the preposition *m*. The next two examples show such a contrast. In the second one, the verb *rdi* takes a particular form (signalled by gemination); what was a DirObj in the first example (*p3 it*) has become a PrepP headed by *m*:

⁷ See Vernus (1998), with anterior literature, to which one can add Shisha-Halevy (2003: 263–265) for a typological comparison between Egyptian and Celtic languages.

⁸ Gardiner (1953: 124–125).

⁹ See Werning (2011); and Grossman & Polis (2011).

¹⁰ See Winand (2006a: 137–149) for some typological considerations.

- (7) *ḥ3 di.tn p3 it n p3y.tn*
ḥ3(ENUNC.AUX.) give(SUBJ).2PL this barley to your
ḥry-ḳn
 porter
 ‘Please give this barley to your porter.’ (P. Westcar 11,7)

- (8) *dd.k n.f m it ḥq3.t 8 n ibd*
give(mrr.f).2MSG to.3MSG in barley heqat 8 per month
 ‘It’s 8 heqat of barley that you should give him each month.’ (P. Heqanakhte I, 17)

The pragmatic intention is particularly clear in textual variants, as for instance in this excerpt from *Ptahhotep*, where the tradition splits in emphatic (a) and non-emphatic forms (b). In this particular case, as the emphatic construction has been passivized, the subject has been demoted to a PrepP:

- (9) a. *iw in.tw ʕḳ.w wn 3ḳ*
iw(ENUNC.AUX.) bring(PAS.INACC.) friends be misfortune
 ‘One brings friends when there is misfortune.’ (Ptahhotep, 349 P)

- b. *inn.tw m ʕḳ.w wn 3hw*
bring(PAS. mrr.f) in friends be need
 ‘It is friends who are brought when there is need.’ (Ptahhotep, 349 L²)¹¹

The contrast is also very sharp in some balanced phraseological sentences, where a situation is alternatively presented in the affirmative and negative:

- (10) *dd.t(w) n(.i) bin, dd(.i) m nfrw nb(.i)*
say(PAS.) to.1SG bad, say(mrr.f).1SG in good to lord.1SG
 ‘Even if bad is said to me, I say only good to my lord.’ (Siut IV, 64–65)¹²

¹¹ The version of L² is undoubtedly the revised version; significant in this respect is the loss of the pun present in the P. Prisse (ʕḳ.w vs. 3ḳ). Other well known examples are *Ipwer* 12,13–14 (*ir šm z 3 ḥr w3.t, gmm.tw m z 2, in ʕš3.t sm3 ʕnd.t* ‘if three people walk on the road, only two are found, for it is the majority that kills the minority’); *The Dispute between a Man and his Ba*, 117–118 (*snw bin.w, inn.tw m ḳḳḳr.w r mtt n.t ib* ‘brethren have become evil, it is foreigners who are brought for the sake of affection’). See Winand (2006a: 141–142).

¹² Due to the relative opacity of the hieroglyphic spelling, *dd(.i)* could also be analysed as a prospective *sḳm(.w).f*.

The last example is of course a distant although not the exact precursor of the well-known LEg expression:

- (11) *i.dd.n* *m m3˘.t, bn dd.n* *˘d3*
 say(EMPH.SUBJ.).1PL in truth, NEG say(SUBJ).1PL lie
 ‘We’ll say only the truth, we won’t say a lie.’ (KRI II, 802,13)

To sum up, the emphatic construction of the DirObj

- is attested from very early on in our documentation, already in the Old Kingdom,
- is used in the first stage of Egyptian with all forms that can have an emphatic function (*mrr.f*, *sḏm.n.f*, *sḏm.w.f*). This notwithstanding, in the vast majority of the cases, the *mrr.f* form, that is a tense of the inaccompli, is found,¹³
- is used with count nouns (singular and plural) and mass nouns,
- can also be passivized as shown in the *Ptahhotep* example.

3 Partitive construction

The argument structure with preposition *m* is rather well documented for expressing the partitive, from Old Egyptian onwards. The second example nicely contrasts both constructions, the direct one and the oblique one, in a very rare minimal pair. The partitive construction is most probably the consequence of the polarity inversion, the second part of the sentence being negative (see below ex. 19 and 32):

- (12) *swr.w* *m irp*
 drink(PARTIC.PL) m wine
 ‘Those who drink wine.’ (Pyr. 440)

- (13) *ir p3 w3h nb dr.t.f hr dr.t.i im.w*
 ‘As for the one among them who laid his hand on mine,
iw.i *r di n.f 3h.t.i*
iw(FIII).1SG *r*(FIII) give(INF.) to.3MSG goods.1MSG
 I will give him my goods

¹³ It might not be a coincidence that the unique example of a perfective known to me involves the verb *rh* ‘to learn’, which takes on the meaning ‘to know’ in the perfective (cf. *gignoskō* vs. *egnōka* in Greek); see Winand (2006a: 242–244).

ir p3 nty bwpw.f di.t Ø n.i
 as for he who did not give to me
bn iw.i r di n.f m 3h.t.i
 NEG iw(FIII).1SG r(FIII) give(INF.) to.3MSG m goods.1MSG
 I will not give him of my goods.’ (KRI VI, 238,1–2)¹⁴

At this stage, some observations can be made: As is only to be expected, this partitive construction is exceedingly common with consumption verbs (*wnm* ‘eat’, *swr* ‘drink’) and mass nouns (this term being understood *sensu lato*):

(14) *iw swr.f mmw šnš*
iw(CIRC.) drink(PERF.).3MSG mwater putrid
 ‘After having drunken putrid water (LEM 26,12)

(15) *imy tw wnm.i m t3 mis.t n p3y ih*
give(IMP.) 2MSG eat.1SG m ART.DEF. liver of this ox
 Let me eat from the liver of this ox.’ (LES 26,3–4)

The construction with *m* never became the only way for expressing partitivity, even in Coptic¹⁵. Actually, the DirObj remains the most widely used construction, as shown by the next two examples (from the New Kingdom and Early Demotic respectively).¹⁶ In the third one, the tradition splits into a DirObj and an oblique object. In this case, it is difficult to ascertain whether the direct expression implies the total consumption of the bread:

(16) *r3 n swr mw m hr.t-ntr*
 Formula of drink(INF.) water in Necropolis
 ‘Formula for drinking water in the Necropolis.’ (LdM 61)

(17) *hpr rmt nb nty m t3y.w-d3y iw.w swr hnk.t*
iw(CIRC.).3P drink(PRI-INF) beer
 ‘It happened that everyone who was in Teudjoi was drinking beer.’ (P. Rylands IX, 2,9–10)¹⁷

¹⁴ Cf. *inn bn iw.k di.t n.i im.w* ‘if you do not give (any) of them to me’ (KRI VI, 515,10–11).

¹⁵ Partitive can be expressed by a DirObj, a PreP headed by *n-/mmo=* or (*εβολ*) *2n-*, the latter being quite common (E. Grossman, p.c.).

¹⁶ Examples from the CT are numerous: *iw.f wnm.f t m s.t nb.t rww.t.f r.s* ‘he eats bread in every places he goes’ (CT VI,273f).

¹⁷ For the absence of DOM in this example, see below, [Seite 551](#).

(18) a. *wmm.k* *t.k*
 eat(SUBJ.).2MS bread.2MS
 ‘You shall eat (from?) your bread.’ (CT I,11e B2Bo)

b. *wmm* *Npn* *m* *t.f* *pn*
 eat(SUBJ.) N this m bread.3MS this
 ‘This N shall eat of this bread of his.’ (CT I,11e T9C)

When found, the partitive construction is most widely used with the tenses of the *inaccompli*, or with a negative. The correlation of partitive and negative is typologically well attested:

(19) *bn* *st* *hr* *ḍi.t* *m* *nkt*
 NEG 3PL *hr*(PrI) give(PrI-INF.) m something
 ‘They are not giving anything.’ (KRI III, 557,13)

As was to be expected, even with a negation, the partitive marking was never felt to be obligatory. The next example shows an accumulation of features (verb of consumption, mass object and negation) that normally would safely predict the use of a marked partitive expression. Nevertheless, a DirObj was here preferred:

(20) *r3* *n* *tm* *wmm* *hs* *swr* *wṣ.t*
 formula of NEG eat(INF.) excrement drink(INF.) urine
m *hr.t-n̄tr*
 in Necropolis
 ‘Formula for not eating excrement nor drinking urine in the Necropolis.’
 (LdM 53,1)

The partitive *m* cannot be easily passivized. Instead, Egyptian has a strategy for avoiding DOM in a passive context. In the first example, the adopted solution is a dummy object, the noun *nkt* ‘something’:¹⁸

(21) *ir* *ḍi.k* *in.tw* *nkt* *im.sn*
 if give(SUBJ.).2MSG bring(SUBJ.PASS.) something in.3PL
 ‘If you let something of them be brought.’ (O. Berlin 11239, 8–9)

¹⁸ Those examples nicely contrast with ex. 19, where *nkt*, used in an active construction, is introduced by *m*.

In the second example, the noun used in the partitive phrase (*ḥd* ‘silver’) has been extracted to play the role of a DirObj:

- (22) *ī.dd* *n.i* *rmṯ* *nb dy* *n.w* *ḥd*
 say(IMP.) to.1SG people all give(PARTIC.PAS.) to.3PL silver
m *pzy* *ḥd*
 from this silver
 ‘Tell me all the people which were given some silver from this silver.’ (P. BM 10052, r° 5,18)

The marked pattern is only attested with mass nouns, indefinite nouns. Exceptions are rare and they can be explained for semantic reasons. In the next example, the definite article is easily explained by the fact that the liver is no longer an a-morphic substance, but a well defined piece of meat belonging to an identified animal:

- (23) *īmy* *tw* *wnm.ī* *m* *t3* *mīs.t*
 give(IMP) 2MSG eat(SUBJ).1SG m DEFART liver
n *pzy* *k3*
 of this bull
 ‘Let me eat from the liver of this bull.’ (LES 26,3–4)

4 *m* as a detransitivizing, detelicizing process

The constructions of the type V + *m* + NP once more raise the crucial issue of what transitivity (or intransitivity) actually means. In the literature, there is now a general agreement for not considering transitivity and intransitivity as clear-cut, discrete categories.¹⁹ They are better viewed as the two ranges of a continuum. Egyptian is of course no exception. There are Egyptian verbs that always construct their object intransitively. The prepositions can be *m* ‘in’ (*mḥ m* ‘to grasp’) or *r* ‘towards’ (*nw r* ‘to look at’).²⁰ Another category allows different valency pat-

¹⁹ Cf. Hopper & Thomson (1980).

²⁰ Interesting variations in the lexicon undoubtedly deserve some scrutiny; for instance, in LEg: *mḥ m* ‘to grasp, to seize’ vs. *t3i* ‘to take’, or *nw r* ‘to look at’ vs. *pṯr* ‘to see’.

terns. Statistically transitive verbs sometimes take an oblique object using the prepositions *m*, *r*, or *n* ‘to’. This usually entails a shift in meaning:

(24) *îw mdw.k n.î nn wî hr sdm st*
îw(AUX.) speak(INACC.).2MS to.1S, NEG 1S hr(PROGR.) hear 3FS
 ‘You speak to me, but I am not listening to it.’ (Shipwrecked Sailor, 73–75)

(25) *sdm r.k n.î*
hear(IMP.) to.2MS for.1S
 ‘Listen to me, you!’ (The Dispute between a Man and his Ba, 67)

In what follows, I shall of course focus on verbs that allow both a DirObj and an oblique object introduced by the preposition *m*. I would like to build my case by studying more closely a very common verb in LEg, namely *b3k* ‘work’. I will then examine the verb *thî* ‘transgress’, which seems to display a nice case of split transitivity.

The mediate construction of the object can also be viewed as a strategy of detransitivizing, detelicizing transitive telic verbs. After many scholars, I would like to suggest that there is no clear boundary between transitivity and intransitivity by taking some striking examples in Egyptian. I’d like here to consider with some detail three lexemes : *b3k* ‘work’, *îî/îzi* ‘take’ and *thî* ‘transgress’.

4.1 The case of *b3k* ‘work’

The constructions in which *b3k* appears can be arranged according to an increasing degree of transitivity. In the first example, *b3k* is used intransitively as an activity verb:

(26) *îw h3m hr b3k n h3y*
îw(CIRC.) Kham hr(PRI-INF.) work for PN
 ‘As Kham is working for Hay.’ (O. CGC 25517, r° 8)

The place where the activity takes place can be specified by a PrepP introduced by *m* ‘in’:

(27) *îw rm̄<-is.>t PN hr b3k m t3y.f m̄h̄.t*
îw(CIRC.) workman PN hr(PRI-INF.) work in his room
 ‘As the workman PN is working in his room.’ (O. BM 5624, r° 1–2)

The same PrepP can be used for expressing an object one is working at:

- (28) *nty hr b3k m n3 bnš.w*
 PR.REL. *hr*(PRI-INF.) work in DEF.ART.PL. door-jambs
m hw.t-ntr n PN
 in temple of PN
 ‘Those who are working at the door-jambs in the temple of PN.’ (P. Turin B v° 3,10)

Now, *b3k* can also be used transitively. In ex. 29, the DirObj is a mass noun, *it* ‘barley’. As usual in LEg, mass nouns are zero-defined (Groll 1967; Winand 2009). In ex. 30 and 31, the DirObj is a count noun: in the first one, *mrkbt* ‘chariot’ is preceded by a plural definite article (*n3*), in the second one *wt* ‘coffin’ is preceded by a singular definite article (*p3*):

- (29) *sw hr b3k n.f it m pr nb.t-htp.t*
 3MSG *hr*(PRI-INF.) work to.3MSG barley in house Nebet-Hotep
 ‘He is working barley for him in the domain of Nebet-Hotep.’ (P. Anastasi VI, 29–30)²¹

- (30) *n3 hmw.w hr b3k n3 mrkbt*
 DEF.ART craftsmen *hr*(PRI-INF.) work DEF.ART. chariot
 ‘The craftsmen are working on the chariots.’ (P. Anastasi III, v° 1,2)

- (31) *iw.f dy hms hr b3k*
iw(CIRC.).3MSG here sit(PSP.3MSG) *hr*(PROGR.) work
p3 wt
 DEF.ART. coffin
 ‘As he is now working on the coffin.’ (O. CGC 25504, v° II,7)²²

In ex. 29, it is difficult to decide whether the intended expression has something to do with the transformation of the grain (cf. French ‘travailler le bois’) or if it simply means an activity related to barley. But in the next example, the DirObj

²¹ One can also work the land (*b3k p3 t3*: P. Brooklyn 47.218.35, 6,7), work the gold (*b3k p3 nbw*: P. BM 10053, 2,6). One also has a very interesting example with an internal object: *twn hr b3k p3 r3-‘b3k ‘3 n pr-‘3* ‘we are working on the great work in progress of Pharaoh’ (O. Gardiner 59, 2–3).

²² On the use of a verb of position, like *hmsi* ‘sit’, as an aspectual auxiliary to mark the progressive, see Winand (2006a: 311–313).

is clearly treated like a patient: the *mrkbt* ‘chariot’ is undoubtedly the intended result of the working in progress. The same can be said of the next example, where the DirObj *wt* ‘coffin’ is countable, definite and singular.

When used transitively, *b3k* can be in the so-called pseudo-participle, a stative-resultative form, which entails a shift of diathesis; in this case, the DirObj becomes the subject of the stative construction.²³ The PrepP introduced by *m* here has an instrumental meaning:

(32) *iw n3y.sn ibrd b3k m nbw*
iw(CIRC) their ibrd work(PSP.3PL) with gold
 ‘And their *ibrd* are worked out with gold.’ (P. Koller, 4,4)

Now I would like to come back to ex. 28, which could be interpreted as a possible instance of a DOM. When considering the material available for *b3k*, I am more inclined to analyse *b3k* as an intransitive in this specific case. If so, the very *raison d’être* of the PrepPhrase *m n3 bnš.w* is clearly to restrict the scope of the process *b3k* is applied to. In this respect, there is a semantic difference between a DirObj, which implies that the object is totally affected by the process, and a PrepP, which rather suggests that the object is partially affected, in which case *m* is used.

As already stated above, the presence of a negation can trigger an oblique construction as shown in the following example with the verb *kd* ‘build’, which is closely semantically related to *b3k* in the texts. The intended meaning of the second part of the sentence is probably that the man who is criticized did not even take a part in the building:

²³ The form here called pseudo-participle is known in Egyptology under different names (pseudo-participle, stative, qualitative, old perfective); stative is now widely used, but it does not come without problems of its own, for it puts too much emphasis on one, albeit important, meaning of the form. I stick to the very old appellation pseudo-participle, because it clearly identifies the form at the morphological level while being now completely void of any semantic or syntactic meaning, which has its advantages too. For the meaning of this stative form in Egyptian, see Kruchten (1984), Winand (2006a: 337–338). See also Reintges (this volume).

- (33) *ĩnk ĩ.ḳd p3 ḥnw n X*
 1SG build(PARTIC.ACC.) DEF.ART. abode for X,
ĩw bwpw.f ḳd ĩm.f ĩm.ĩ
ĩw(CIRC) NEG.VERB.3MSG build in.3MSG with.1SG
 ‘I built the abode for X, and he did not build in it with me.’ (KRI VI,252,9)

4.2 The case of *thĩ*

In LEg, *thĩ* ‘violate, transgress, harm’ displays two main argument structures as regards the second argument: DirObj and PrepP. In the latter case, the preposition *r* ‘to’ is the most frequent one; *m* ‘in’ is comparatively much less common. Here are some examples:

- (34) *thĩ sw n3 ĩt3w*
 harm(ACC.) 3MSG ART.DEF.PL. thieves
 ‘The thieves did him some harm.’ (P. Abbott r° 2,6–7)
- (35) *m-ḥt gm.tw.w ĩw thĩ.w*
 after find(PAS.).3PL ĩw(CIRC.) violate(PERF).3PL
t3y s.t-nfrw
 DEMS place-of-perfection
 ‘After they were found to have violated this place of perfection.’ (P. BM 10068, r° 1,4)
- (36) *ĩw bw ĩr p3 wr n ḥt3*
ĩw(circ) NEG AUX.INACC. DEF.ART. lord of Khatti
thĩ r p3 t3 n km.t r nḥ
 violate to DEF.ART land of Egypt to eternity
 ‘As the lord of Khatti won’t ever attempt to violate the land of Egypt.’ (KRI II, 227,15)
- (37) *sḳm.ĩ r-ddtw.tn ḥr thĩ r*
 hear(PERF).1SG that2PL ḥr(PRI) violate(INF) *r*
n3 rmḥ n p3 nḥr
 DEF.ART people of DEF.ART god
 ‘I have heard that you are molesting the people of the god.’ (KRI I, 322,5–6)

- (38) *mtw.tn tm iy r thî m ts n km.t*
 CONJ.2PL NEG come(INF.) to violate(INF.) in land of Egypt
 ‘And you should not come to do harm in the land of Egypt.’ (KRI VI, 521,7–8)

Some observations ought to be made:

- First, *thî* does not seem to use a PrepP before New Kingdom LEg. In Old and Middle Egyptian, *thî* always takes a DirObj. In LEg, both constructions, the direct and the indirect one, are used in parallel. This suggests that the two constructions cannot be viewed in a diachronic relation, as is the case, for instance, with *ph* ‘to reach’.²⁴
- From a semantic viewpoint, the term under the scope of the verb is totally affected when construed as a DirObj. When the PrepP with *r* ‘to’ is preferred, the object is not totally affected. It is more or less a question of contact. In many cases, a conative effect can be observed. As regards the actionality, the PrepP can be analyzed as a kind of detelicizing process.
- Now, and this is more striking, there is a correlation between the choice of an argument structure and the grammatical tenses (fig. 1). The immediate object has a statistically demonstrable connection with the tenses associated with the accompli, whereas the oblique construction, with *m* or *r*, tends to be used exclusively with the tenses of the inaccompli.²⁵ There is thus a case of split accusativity according to an aspectual distribution. Typologically, complementary distributions of this kind can be observed elsewhere. A well-known case is Hindi which knows a similar split along aspectual lines as regards the way the second argument is construed.²⁶
- According to the available data, *r* seems to be the preferred preposition when the SN is definite, while *m* tends to be used with non-definite substantives, which is of course the mark of a partitive construction.

²⁴ This verb always has a DirObj as its second argument in Egyptian I; from LEg onwards, the DirObj is replaced by the PrepP *r* + NP ‘to NP’, most probably by analogy with the verbs of movement (Winand 2003).

²⁵ For an exhaustive overview of the aspectual system in Egyptian, see Winand 2006a (with a complete bibliography).

²⁶ Lazard 1994: 179. For a possible case of split transitivity in Egyptian involving the verb *ꜥtp* ‘to load’, see Winand (2011).

Egyptian I ²⁷	DirObj			
Egyptian II	<i>Accompli</i>		<i>Inaccompli</i>	
	DirObj	<i>r</i> NP	DirObj	<i>r</i> NP
	x	rare	rare	x

Figure 1: Distribution of the grammatical tenses used with *thi* ‘transgress’ according to the argument structure

5 The V + *m* + NP patterns in Egyptian

In LEg, three distinctive patterns exhibit the same external configuration V + *m* + NP: the emphatic construction, the partitive, and the differential marking of the DirObj (DOM). The purpose of this section is to examine whether those constructions are in some way interrelated.

The emphatic and the partitive postulate two very different kinds of operation at the cognitive level. The partitive is an operation of extraction, where an entity *x*, devoid of any clearly defined shape, is a sub-part of X, whose referent is the global entity. When an element is given emphasis, there is an operation of identification / specification / selection of an X among many possible X’s.²⁸ In this case, the X’s referent is an entity in a set.

The two operations can be conveniently contrasted in the two figures below:

²⁷ Egyptian is traditionally subdivided into five phases: Old Egyptian, Middle Egyptian, Late Egyptian, Demotic and Coptic. From a typological viewpoint, Old and Middle Egyptian are parts of one main stage (Egyptian I), while Late Egyptian, Demotic and Coptic constitute the second stage (Egyptian II). Egyptian I and Egyptian II are deliberately very neutral labels that correspond to what Loprieno (1995: 5–7) call Earlier Egyptian and Later Egyptian respectively.

²⁸ Cf. Depuydt’s (1991) notion of isolating emphasis.

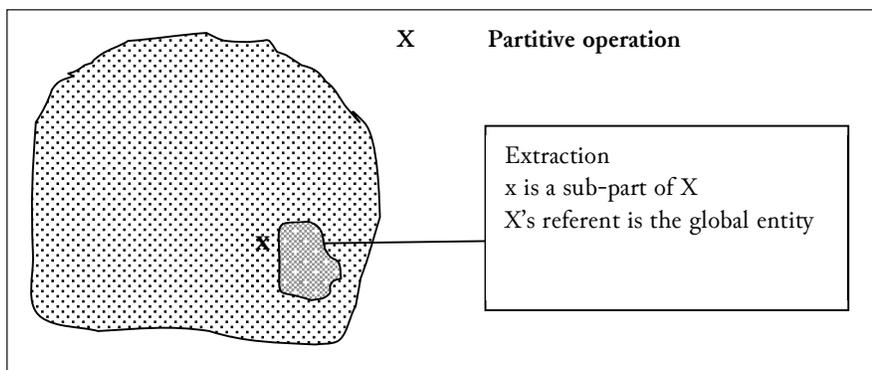


Figure 2: The partitive extraction

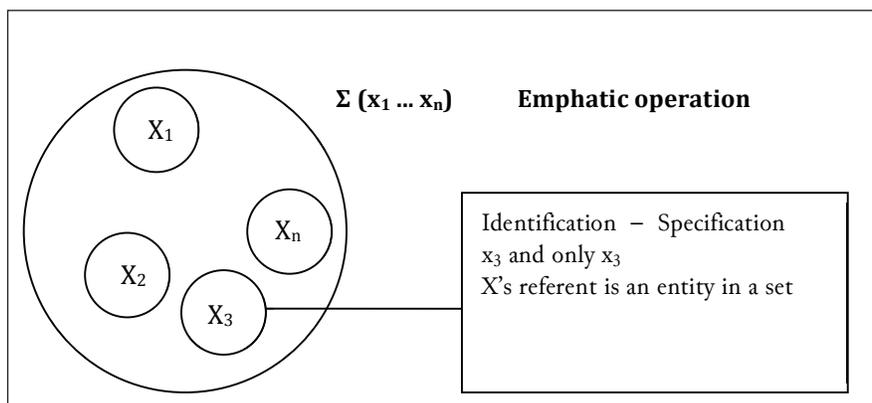


Figure 3: The emphatic selection

Elaborating on previous research in this field,²⁹ I'd like here to suggest some strong connections between partitivity and the progressive aspect. There is now a wide consensus for considering that the progressive should be conceived as a sub-part of something else; as is well known, its limits are vague – or rather, they lack any cognitive salience – which puts the progressive on the mass side, so to say.³⁰

In Egyptian, it is probably not a coincidence that the preposition *m*, which is closely associated with DOM, is first of all used to express a localisation: *x m Y* “x (is) in Y”

²⁹ Carlson (1981: 47–48).

³⁰ Cf. Winand (forthcoming).

- (39) *nn sj m ib.i*
 NEG. it in heart.1SG
 ‘It was not in my heart.’ (Sinuhe, B 223–224)

The preposition *m* is also found in the progressive, in alternation with the preposition *hr* ‘on’:³¹ in both cases, the progressive is thus conveyed in Egyptian, as in other languages³², by means of prepositions specialized in expressing the localisation:

- (40) (and I saw eleven ships) *iw.w m iw m p3 ym*
iw(circ.).3PL m come(INF.) from the sea
 ‘As they were coming from the sea.’ (LES 73,10–11)

- (41) *iw hr(j)-hb(.t) hr ir(i).t ht*
iw(ENUNC.AUX.) lector priest hr(PROGR.) do(INF.) things

‘The lector priest is performing the ritual.’ (Mereruka, II, pl. 109, l. 1) As shown figure 4, the progressive is cognitively very close to the partitive; it can be conceived as a segment out of a dense process, with underspecified boundaries that cannot be co-extensive with the limits of the process. In the progressive, the limits of the process lack any cognitive salience, which is somewhat reminiscent of the undefined shape of a mass noun.



Figure 4. The selection of the progressive

³¹ Cf. Winand (2006a: 311, n. 44), with some bibliography on the formation of the progressive in Old English, Irish, Finnish and Creoles.

³² In Old English, the progressive is expressed by a locative (Comrie, 1976: 99). This is also the case in some Celtic languages (Bybee & Dahl 1989: 78; Macaulay 1992: 46, 217–220, 279–281, 408). One can also mention the progressive in Creoles using the auxiliary *stay*, which is very close to what can be observed in LEg and in several African languages (Givón 1982: 124). Generally speaking, African languages show a predilection using locative constructions (Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca 1994: 129–131). Cf. also Cohen (1989: 125–127), who cites numerous examples from different Semitic languages.

6 Conclusion

The preposition *m* ‘in’ is found in several constructions in Egyptian: partitive, emphatic, DOM, and also in some valency patterns. In the partitive, *m* is never obligatory; it is mostly associated with the tenses of the *inaccompli*. For rhematizing the direct object, Egyptian can use the so-called emphatic constructions, which trigger a recategorization of the DirObj in a PrepP introduced by *m*. It is also possible to use a cleft sentence (Neveu 1994: 203–205). Interestingly enough, the emphatic construction seems to be preferred with the tenses of the *inaccompli*, whereas the cleft sentence is usually found with the tenses of the *accompli*:

(42) a. *ỉrr.k m Ỉr.t-ỉb.k*
 do(*mrr.f*).2MS *m* desire.2MS
 ‘It is only your desire that you do.’ (Shipwrecked Sailor, 20)

b. *bt3 Ỉ3 p3w ỉ.ỉr.f*
 crime big that do(ACC.REL.).3MS
 ‘It is a big crime that he did.’ (RAD 52,2–3)

This apparent restriction on the use of the emphatic constructions does not apply for rhematizing an adverbial adjunct, for which they remain the most widely used constructions. In LEg, for instance, the emphatic form *ỉ.ỉr.f sdm* is predominantly found with past tenses.

The first undisputable cases of DOM are found in LEg. In this stage, it clearly remains exceptional. Its use does not seem to be conditioned by a scale of animacy or by the degree of definiteness. As shown in the example below, DOM can be found with inanimate, undefined nouns:

(43) *ỉw.ỉ Ỉr m*
ỉw(CIRC.).1S Ỉr(PROGR.) do(INF.) m
ỉ3w.t nb Ỉ3 n pr-Ỉ3
 task all big of Pharaoh
 ‘As I was engaged in doing all kinds of important work of Pharaoh.’ (P. Leyde I 371, r^o 10)

It is also striking that the LEg examples are linked to the progressive aspect. In Demotic, the rules governing the use of DOM seem to be very close to what can be

observed in Coptic. In the P. Rylands IX, an early Demotic document, DOM is only found with durative tenses in the following circumstances:³³

- personal pronoun, both animate (5) and inanimate (5)
- def. art. + substantive, both animate (1) and inanimate (3), both singular (2) and plural (2)
- demstr. + inanimate sing. substantive (1)
- poss. art. + inanimate sing. substantive (1)
- Ø + geographic name (2)

The contrast with the non-durative tenses is very clear, as shown in the next pair of examples:

(44)a. Ahmose stayed in Hnes, *iw.f* *mnḳ* *m tʒy.f md.t*
iw(CIRC.).3MS finish(INF.) *m* his affair
 ‘finishing his business’ (P. Rylands IX, 2,4–5 =
 Parker, 1961: 181, ex. 7)

b. *mnḳ.f* *n3* *md.t*
 finish(PERF.).3MS DEF.ART.PL. affairs
 ‘He finished the affairs.’ (P. Rylands IX, 19,4 = Parker, 1961: 181)

In Coptic, DOM is obligatory with durative tenses when the object is definite, and high on the scale of animacy. It later becomes optional with narrative tenses. Referentiality seems to play a role in the use of DOM, but also thematicity in the sense used by Engsheden (2005). DOM can also be correlated with the transitivity scale as defined in Hopper & Thomson (1980): the higher an element is on this scale, the more it can be expected to have a differential marking.³⁴

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that DOM is a means, among many others, for distinguishing the two basic meanings of the *inaccompli*: the progressive and the non-progressive ones. This can explain why DOM appeared in LEg. In Middle Egyptian, there are two distinct constructions for expressing the progressive and the non-progressive *inaccompli*, as shown in the following table:

³³ See Parker (1961). On the use of DOM in Demotic, see also Simpson (1996: 151–156).

³⁴ See most recently Aissen (2003), Kamper (2006), de Swart (2007).

Table 1: The opposition of non-progressive vs. progressive inside the inaccompli (Middle Egyptian)

	non-progressive	progressive
positive	<i>iw.f sdm.f</i>	<i>iw.f hr sdm</i>
negative	<i>n sdm.n.f</i>	<i>nn sw hr sdm</i>

In later Middle Egyptian, *iw.f sdm.f* became obsolete; as a result, *jw.f hr sdm* took over the whole domain of the inaccompli, at least in the positive. In negative constructions, Egyptian maintained an aspectually founded opposition. This remains so in LEg, at least as long as one considers only the constructions that are part of a regular and grammaticalized system of oppositions (table 2).

Table 2: The opposition of non-progressive vs. progressive inside the inaccompli³⁵

	non-progressive	progressive
positive		<i>iw.f hr sdm ></i> <i>sw hr sdm</i>
negative	<i>n sdm.n.f ></i> <i>bw sdm.n.f ></i> <i>bw sdm.f ></i> <i>bw ir.f sdm</i>	<i>nn sw hr sdm ></i> <i>bn sw hr sdm</i>

The loss of a dedicated pattern for expressing the progressive undoubtedly prompted LEg to use other means when ambiguity had to be avoided. The most widely used expression was a combination of one of the posture verbs (*ḥr* ‘stand’, *ḥmsi* ‘sit’ and *sḏr* ‘lie’) conjugated in a resultative form, usually the pseudo-participle (a resultative form), followed by the auxiliated verb in the infinitive:³⁶

³⁵ The broken brackets suggest the evolutionary steps from Middle Egyptian to Late Egyptian. They do not necessarily correspond to a morphological evolution from one form to another. For the diachronic process, see Winand (2006a: 313, n. 48, with anterior bibliography).

³⁶ See references given in [footnotes 22 and 32](#).

- (45) *iw.i sdm m-di.w iw.w h^c*
iw(SEQ).1S hear(INF.) from.3PL *iw*(CIRC.).3PL stand(PsP)
ttt hr w^c hd
 quarrel(INF.) on one silver
 ‘I heard it from them as they were quarrelling about one (quantity of) silver.’ (KRI VI, 821,13–14)

The following figure shows how LEg can positively mark the progressive resp. the non-progressive, when needed³⁷. The default pattern is the so-called Present I, *sw hr ir.t*, which may equally mean ‘he does’ or ‘he is doing’. The progressive can be positively marked by using special devices (table 3):

- a posture verb conjugated in a resultative tense (cf. ex. 45),
- the preposition *m*, in place of *hr*: this occurs only with verbs of movement,³⁸
- the adverb *dy* ‘here’ to anchor the process in the moment of speaking, which, as a side effect, generally entails a progressive meaning,³⁹
- DOM
- in the negative, as already said, LEg has two specialized constructions, one for the non-progressive, the other one for the progressive; this opposition is fully grammaticalized,
- in the participial and the so-called relative forms, LEg uses a periphrastic form with the verbs of up to three radicals for expressing the non-progressive. This contrasts with the simple form of the participle (or the relative), which has a perfective meaning, and the converted form of the present I (introduced by the relative *nty*), which has a progressive meaning.⁴⁰

³⁷ It should be stressed that the marked forms stay outside the regular system of morphological oppositions. They are only used when the speaker feels the need to do, for whatever pragmatic reasons.

³⁸ Cf. Winand (2006a: 303–311).

³⁹ Cf. Winand (2006a: 313; 400–402), Grossman (2008: 26, and n. 52).

⁴⁰ See Winand (1992: §567–574).

Table 3. The marked patterns of the progressive resp. non-progressive in LEg

	non-progressive	progressive
unmarked pattern	<i>sw ḥr ṛ.t</i> he does / he is doing	
marked patterns	<i>sw ḥr ṛ.t</i> he does	<i>sw ḥ^c.w ḥr ṛ.t</i> he is doing (litt. he is standing on doing)
	<i>sw ḥr ṛ.t</i> he comes	<i>sw m ṛ.t</i> he is coming
	<i>sw ḥr ṛ.t</i> he does	<i>sw dy ḥr ṛ.t</i> he is doing (litt. he is here on doing)
	<i>sw ḥr ṛ.t</i> he does it	<i>sw ḥr ṛ.t im.f</i> he is doing it (DOM)
	<i>bw ṛ.f ṛ.t</i> he does not do	<i>bn sw ḥr ṛ.t</i> he is not doing
	<i>ṛ ṛ.t</i> (one) who does	<i>nty ḥr ṛ.t</i> (one) who is doing
	<i>ṛ.f ṛ.t.f</i> (that) which he does	<i>nty sw ḥr ṛ.t.f</i> (that) which he is doing

One must insist that those complementary constructions never fully grammaticalized. The oblique expression most probably was originally a way, among many others, to force the progressive reading. In the course of time, it progressively grammaticalized.

When considering the pre-Demotic data, constructions with preposition *m* are found with the partitive and the emphatic construction. With the partitive, in the majority of the cases, the object is directly attached to the verb; the oblique construction with the preposition *m* remains an exception. Now, when this latter one is used, there is a strong tendency to do so when the tense is an *inaccompli*, or when the object is under the scope of a negation. With the emphatic construction, in the vast majority of the cases, tenses of the *inaccompli* are found. As already noted, the object seems to be insensitive to the opposition ± definite, ± animate. When other tenses are used, LEg tends to favour another construction, a variety of cleft sentences. In the examples gathered by Neveu (1994), there is only one example of a progressive tense; it might be no coincidence that the verb is *wḥ3* 'seek', a verb known to avoid the oblique construction in Coptic (Depuydt 1993).

The construction with *m* probably has its origin in the partitive construction.⁴¹ The choice of the preposition *m* ‘in’ is obvious enough. The first examples of it go back to the Old Kingdom. As already noted (see footnote 11), it never fully grammaticalized (the normal way of expressing partitivity in Coptic is to use a direct object). Therefrom, it was used in the so-called emphatic construction to convey a rhematic force to the direct object. This is attested in Egyptian I, probably as early as the Old Kingdom. Later on, in the New Kingdom, the use of *m* was extended to what will eventually become the DOM in Demotic. In LEg, examples are exceedingly rare. The objects are inanimate, and either definite or indefinite. In Demotic, DOM became fully grammaticalized. It is tempting to say that DOM was a means of distinguishing between the two possible meanings of the Present I, which does not distinguish in the positive between a progressive and a non-progressive meaning. Clearly enough, the *m*-Phrase is also a detransitivizing, detelicizing process, as is shown by the continuum in the argument structure of verbs like *b3k* ‘work’.

The demarcating line between partitive meaning and DOM can sometimes be extremely fuzzy as is only to be expected if the derivational process suggested here is correct. A nice case is offered by this excerpt from the Battle of Qadesh:

(46) *iw.i hr hdb im.sn r mr.n.i*
iw(CIRC.).1s hr(PROGR.) kill(INF.) m.3P to wish(PERF.).1s
 ‘As I was killing among them as much as I wished.’ (KRI II, 140,7)

In the general literature, one often pushes forward the argument that DOM is used to clearly mark the object when it displays so-to-say subjecthood properties (e.g. definiteness, animacy)⁴². This argument clearly does not stand as regards the LEg data, however scarce they are. More generally speaking, it should also probably be relativized when one comes to languages where the relative places of subject and object are not a matter of dispute, as is the case in Egyptian II.⁴³

The restriction of DOM to the progressive aspect in Egyptian has prompted some Egyptologists to advocate a parallel with Finnish.⁴⁴ The understanding of how the progressive works in Finnish is notoriously a tricky matter, even for

⁴¹ This link was already suggested by Spiegelberg one century ago (1904), and never really challenged, with the notable exception of Engsheden (2006).

⁴² See Aissen (2003).

⁴³ I use such a periphrasis to avoid tags like S–V–O, which are a bit arbitrary and reductionist.

⁴⁴ E.g., Polotsky (1990: 221), as I did myself (Winand 2006a: 266, 312). Another possible candidate is Palau (Western Malayo-Polynesian, cf. Hagège 1986).

Finns, as it seems. Since such a comparison has been vigorously challenged in a recent contribution by Engsheden (2006: 215–216), it is perhaps appropriate to dwell on this topic here with some details. The following lines mainly reflect the presentation that S. Uljas kindly offered to give me.⁴⁵

In Finnish, there are four possible cases for object marking: nominative, genitive, accusative and partitive. The first three cases form a group with which the partitive contrasts. The partitive is chosen if the effect of the verb on the object is somehow unlimited. Basically this is the case if

- the clause has a negative implication,
- the clause is ‘aspectually unlimited’,⁴⁶
- the object is a mass noun or somehow quantitatively imprecise.

Otherwise one uses some of the other cases, all of which potentially imply ‘total effect’ on the object. The variation is extremely complex. In principle, the nominative is used (or in some instances, can be used) in instances where there is no real or implicit willing actor involved. This is the case in the 1st and 2nd person imperative, single person passives and neccessive constructions. The genitive is used when the object is a singular noun and the verb has (or could have) a willing actor.⁴⁷

Now, the progressive is formally a so-called third infinitive with an inessive case-suffix after a conjugated auxiliary ‘be’.⁴⁸ It is rarer than simple ‘present’ in the expression of progressive. Its object is typically partitive. However, the genitive (or accusative with personal pronouns) is also possible with punctual verbs, but then the idea is that of anticipation of completion. In the progressive, the partitive is the default case for the object.⁴⁹

45 It is my pleasure here to thank Dr. Sami Uljas very warmly for what appeared to me as a clear and convincing picture. For the sake of brevity, the examples given by him have been dropped.

46 According to Bossong (1998: 243–244), it is probably more correct to give a progressive meaning to the sentence as a side effect of the use of the partitive, than the other way around.

47 In some grammars the genitive is called “accusative”, but this is misleading because the form is identical to genitive case. The accusative is better reserved for the case used to mark “totally affected” personal pronouns.

48 See Heinämäki (1995), Tommola (2000). This construction is morphologically derived from the locative expression, which is fairly common typologically.

49 With the genitive there is potential for confusion, because this case is in some grammars called “accusative”. It is also possible with the progressive, but only with punctual verbs, and then the sense is future. For personal pronouns there is a special case called “accusative”. This is functionally the same as the genitive with nouns, and can be used in the progressive with the same (future) sense. In short, partitive, genitive and the pers. pron. accusative can all be used with the progressive, but the last two do not have a strictly progressive sense but rather a future,

It must be noted that the use of the progressive is never obligatory. For expressing something like the English “be doing X”, one most commonly uses just the simple “present” with adverbs such as “now”, “at this moment”, etc. This is also the commonest strategy with intransitives. The progressive is quite marked and less common overall than the simple present even in case genuine progressive sense is intended in spite of its unambiguous sense.

As already noted, Egyptian sometimes shifts to a partitive expression when the sentence is negated. The preposition *m* is also used in this case. The use of a partitive expression in a negative context is typologically well attested, and has sometimes been fully grammaticalized. Finnish, once again, is a case in point. One can also recall the use of the genitive in Russian, and, to a lesser extent, the use of the preposition “de” in French (“je lis un livre” vs. “je ne lis pas de livre”).⁵⁰

Finally, it would be interesting to study if Egyptian has a differential subject marking (DSM). Typologically, DSM is much less widespread than DOM. For the lack of space, it is impossible even to allude to this here. Let’s say that Egyptian has a vast array of features that point to a DSM system (types of personal pronoun in the non-verbal predicative system, strategies to avoid a non-definite subject in initial position, etc.).

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and they cannot be used with durative verbs with which only the partitive is possible.

50 See Christol (1998: 476).

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