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**Nominalizations as a source for verbal morphology.  
Grammaticalization paths of modality and information  
structure in Earlier Egyptian**

Elsa Oréal

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# Nominalizations as a Source for Verbal Morphology

## Grammaticalization Paths of Modality and Information Structure in Earlier Egyptian

Elsa Oréal<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

In Earlier Egyptian, verb forms whose translation involve some sort of modality include the *sdm(w)-f*, often called “Prospective,” and the “Emphatic” *mrr-f* form. Both have been recognized to have nominal features, although their syntactic and discursive function remains a much discussed topic. This contribution proposes to reconstruct paths of change that explain the emergence of these forms out of former participant/event nominalizations marked for definiteness vs. indefiniteness. Exploring this hypothesis sheds light not only on what is inherently marked by the forms themselves, but also on the role of particular uses within distinct source constructions in elaborating their respective semantics.

### 1 From nominalizations to verbs

There is nothing new to the idea that Earlier Egyptian verb forms emerged from former nominalizations<sup>2</sup>. Still, some space is left for a diachronic analysis aiming at reconstructing concrete paths that may have led constructions involving nominalized forms of the verb to grammaticalize as verb forms. More specifically, as more than one Earlier Egyptian verb form appears to have had a nominalized source, an explanation of their respective TAM function and the way it relates to their (visible) morphology is needed. In this contribution, I will focus on two forms that share some syntactic positions and are also sometimes deemed to have some semantic uses in common:

- the  $\langle w \rangle$  form or *sdm-w-f*,
- the geminated form or *mrr-f*.

---

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Many thanks are due to Orly Goldwasser, Eitan Grossman, Frank Kammerzell and Stéphane Polis for discussing various questions related to my research on Egyptian nominalizations in a diachronic perspective. Daniel Werning and an anonymous reviewer did a lot to improve this paper in many regards. All remaining mistakes are mine.

2 It is not the place here to resume again the long history of this question. For a summary, see Schenkel (1990: 115–121). An essential moment in this history is of course Schenkel 1975. I hope to present in due detail the relationship of the proposed diachronic hypothesis and earlier approaches in a forthcoming study with a larger scope.



After showing how their respective morphology can be related to the same morphological features in participial forms, I will analyze their uses in apparently identical syntactic position in order to assess the historical source construction for these uses, which may or may not be identical, and to reconstruct a likely grammaticalization path leading from this original construction to their specific function as verb forms marked for aspect, mode and/or information structure.

### 1.1 Typological background

Typological parallels of course prove nothing. However, they are extremely useful in suggesting which working hypothesis might be relevant to propose a better understanding of diachronic processes in the evolution of verbal systems. Historical linguistics has begun to explore changes that affect constructions involving action nominals in various linguistic areas. Grammaticalization paths going from nominalizers to verbal morphemes have been analyzed in more than one language.<sup>3</sup>

Before presenting the Earlier Egyptian case, there is a point to be made about action/event nominalizations, participant nominalizations and the relationship between these two categories. Action nominalization can be roughly defined in the following way:

“deverbal nouns that refer to actions/events as a whole rather than to individual event participants.”<sup>4</sup>

Participant nominalization on the other hand represent:

“derived nominal constituents that function as arguments with referential status within a clause ... participant nominalizations refer to first order ontological entities and they assume semantic roles such as agents, patients, locations or instruments”<sup>5</sup>

At first sight, these definitions may seem to draw a clear-cut distinction between action and participant nominalization. However, in various languages of the world, it is a well-known fact that these *a priori* categories are not always represented by distinct forms<sup>6</sup>. It is not uncommon to observe some common morphological features. The following utterance thus has two possible translations, one involving an action nominalization, the other a participant nominalization:

- (1) Numhpuk Singpho (Tibeto-Burman/Bodo-Konyak-Jinghpaw, see Morey 2011: 297)
- |      |       |      |     |      |          |
|------|-------|------|-----|------|----------|
| maam | thuu  | phaa | waa | muu  | n-ɲaa    |
| rice | pound | NMLZ | DEF | also | NEG-have |
- a) ‘There is no event of rice pounding.’  
 b) ‘The rice pounding machine is also not here.’

3 See e.g. Gildea et al. (2000) on Carib languages; and DeLancey (2011); Gerner (2012) on the Tibeto-birman family and other Asian languages; Horie (2008) on Japanese and Korean data. On nominalizations as a source for passive forms from a typological point of view, see especially Sansò (2016).

4 Nikitina (2009: 17).

5 Yap, Grunow-Hårsta & Wrona (2011: 4).

6 Yap, Grunow-Hårsta & Wrona (2011: 3–5).

This typological fact appears to be particularly relevant for the understanding of Earlier Egyptian data, for it makes all the more plausible that the explanation for the common morphological features of participles (participant nominalizations) and so-called “nominal verb forms” (former event/action nominalizations) be one and only.

## 1.2 Earlier Egyptian nominalizations and their morphology

It is a well-known phenomenon that Earlier Egyptian participles commonly described as “imperfective” in grammars and the so-called geminated form of the conjugation (*mrr-f*) share a crucial morphological feature. However, most explanations of their respective TAM function fail to give a unified account of this common morphology. As for the *sdm-w-f* form, there has been no effort to explain its morphology in accordance with any feature of the participle, since the very extension and function of the participial <w> ending has remained misunderstood. Before proposing a reconstruction of possible paths of change leading from nominalizations to well-known uses of both verbal forms in synchrony, a brief summary concerning morphology and functions of participant nominalizations is in order:<sup>7</sup>

Table 1 | Nominalizations and morphologically related verb forms<sup>8</sup>

	<i>Participant nominalization<sup>a</sup></i> (=participle)	<i>Event/action nominalization</i>	<i>Verb form with subject pronoun</i>
<i>Unmarked</i>	<i>jri</i> who does/did	* <i>jri</i> doing	<i>jri-f</i> unmarked/“circumstantial” <i>sdm-f</i>
<-w> ending [+INDEF]	<i>jri-w</i> one who does	<i>jri-w</i> a doing	<i>jri-w-f</i> modal <i>sdm-w-f</i>
“Gemination” [+DEF]	<i>jrr</i> the one who does	* <i>jrr</i> the doing	<i>jrr-f</i> presupposed/“Second Tense” <i>sdm-f</i>

a Also named “participle.” The use of the label “participant nominalization” puts some emphasis on the fact that both kinds of nominalizations may be more closely connected in some languages than others. Other endings marking gender and/or number are left out of scope here.

A crucial point in this new analysis is to establish a relationship between nominal functions such as definiteness and indefiniteness and aspectual readings that have been proposed and largely accepted, but remain more or less incompatible with part of their uses. According to this perspective, the generic/iterative reading of the geminated nominalization is easy to explain as a contextual reading of definiteness, while definiteness only can explain those examples where the form clearly has identifying semantics (with the participant nominalization) or a presupposed informational content (with the morphologically identi-

7 For a more detailed account of the new analysis concerning the different forms of the participle and their function, see Oréal (2014) and Oréal *fc.*(a).

8 “\*” is meant to indicate that a form is not historically attested as such but reconstructed as a step in a proposed diachronic process.

cal event nominalization serving as a source for the geminated *mrr-f* form).<sup>9</sup> As for indefiniteness, it explains the hitherto unnoticed principled distribution of the participial <*w*> ending in attributive as well as predicative (often categorized as Pseudoparticiple) uses of the participant nominalization. Its classifying semantics also allows to propose a likely source construction for the modal form both in its use as a main form and as a completive form, as will be seen in sections 2.2 and 3.1.<sup>10</sup> The main aim of this contribution is thus to put into light:

- The semantic link between indefiniteness and the <*w*> form.
- The semantic link between definiteness and the geminated form *mrr-f*.

However, in trying to connect known uses of the forms to these basic nominal features through possible grammaticalization pathways, one has to keep in mind that whole constructions grammaticalize, and not nominalizations *in abstracto*.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, hypothesis of historical reconstruction should be proposed concerning particular constructions considered one by one before any attempt to assess the general validity of the proposal. This shall be made in the next sections.

## 2 Grammaticalization paths from nominalizations to main modal forms

The main point of this section is that both the <*w*> form and the geminated form do not need to share a common source construction that would explain historically their respective marked uses as main predicate with a modal or information structure function. Thus, the proposed analysis challenges the view that the “prospective” *sdm-w-f* fused as main predicate should be “emphatic,” or more precisely should trigger focalization of an adjunct as is the case with the geminated form.<sup>12</sup> In line with observations recently expressed in Stauder (2016: 198–199), our analysis does not take for granted that there should be an “emphatic” form for every aspect or tense. However, beyond this precaution, reconstructing specific grammaticalization paths for the geminated form, the modal <*w*>-form<sup>13</sup> and the passive

9 For an account of the grammaticalization of English definite *the* that shows how some semantic features such as shared knowledge and presupposition (known as “familiarity” approach to definiteness) are relevant to describe it, even if a quantifier account might better explain its emergence, see Gisborne (2014).

10 It is interesting to note that the relationship between the verbal form and the nominalization that serves as its base appears to preserve a difference in orientation. While the <*w*> form is capable of both passive and active readings, as is the corresponding participle, there is no passive reading of *jrr-f*, as with the geminated participle.

11 On the importance of the fact that grammaticalization takes place within particular constructions and that grammaticalization creates new constructions, see e.g. Traugott (2003).

12 I am most grateful to Orly Goldwasser whose comments at the Berlin conference made clear to me that Polotsky himself did not consider the modal construction involving the <*w*> form as a focal construction. For an analysis assuming the contrary, see Vernus (1990).

13 Contrary to most previous accounts, I propose to see the future/posterior/prospective uses of the *sdm-w-f* form as diachronically derived from an older modal use, according to the well-known path modal > future, see e.g. Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca (1994). The rare modal “subjunctive” *sdm.w* NP that is sometimes mentioned in the literature, on which see Werning, *Das Höhlenbuch* I, 94

*sdm(-j)-f*<sup>14</sup> both confirms the predominant role of event nominalizations in the renewal of Earlier Egyptian verbal system and explains the correlation between marked information structure and the geminated form, as discovered by Polotsky (1944), as will be seen in the next section.

2.1 From definite to presupposed: the *jrr-f* form as a main verbal form marked for information structure

Summarizing previous research on the use of the geminated form as a main form in utterances that are marked for information structure would be of little interest, since the data are well-known. Interrogative utterances are indeed prototypical for the use of the geminated form as main predicate in sentences where the rhematic load bears on an adjunct rather than on the verbal syntagm:

- (2) Qaw bowl (outside K5) (Gardiner & Sethe 1928: pl. 2–3 [late Old Kingdom to First Intermediate Period])

*jrr-f*                      *r*                      *z3-t*                      *jm*                      *hr*                      *jšst*  
do\NMLZ.DEF-3SG.M    against    son-2SG.F    here    on    thing

‘Why does he act against your son here (while I did not do or say wrong).’

Since Polotsky’s seminal work on second tenses throughout the history of Egyptian, the source construction for the “emphatic,” more precisely thematic use of the geminated form has been generally considered to be an adverbial predication, as can be illustrated with the following schema:<sup>15</sup>

Table 2 | The Second Tense construction seen as an adverbial predication

	<i>Nominal verb form</i>	<i>Adverbial adjunct</i>
<i>Syntax</i>	Subject	Predicate
<i>Discourse</i>	Theme	Rheme (focus)

I will first briefly consider old objections to the analysis of the geminated form as a nominal form, then combine my own explanation of the form as a nominalization marked for definiteness with another recent proposal allowing a better understanding of the functional profile characterizing the construction.

fn. 31; Westendorf, *GMT*, §§248–253; Graefe, *Mittelägyptische Grammatik*, (1997: 116); Malaise & Winand (1999, ex.1037, and §679) may well be related to the same source, although its rather late attestation, especially in medical texts, makes this semantically likely relationship more elusive from an historical point of view.

14 Passive form without <-t> showing sometimes an ending <j> and often used with a suffix pronoun, generally designated as V-passive, which I propose to distinguish from the perfective passive used with only full noun patient belonging, according to my analysis, to the same paradigm as the Old Perfective.

15 But see already Allen (1979) for doubts concerning this source construction.

### 2.1.1 The aspectual analysis of the geminated form in the Emphatic construction

As is well-known, Gardiner tried to interpret Polotsky's innovative findings in terms of aspect in order to save his own analysis of the geminated form<sup>16</sup>. Stauder (2016) represents a recent move back to this line of interpretation, with an explicit reference to the Gardinerian explanation of the postulated link between the semantics of the emphatic construction and imperfective aspect:

“this avoidance of direct assertion may be effected by giving the verb form a general or non-committal character.”<sup>17</sup>

However, no concrete path is really proposed in order to explain the emergence of the construction marked at the level of information structure. While recognizing that the characterization of the form as “imperfective *sdm-f*” cannot account for many of its uses, he suggests that:

“The unaccomplished “emphatic” construction developed out of an aspectual contrast, with the originally imperfective semantics of the *mrr-f* developing specialized functions in this construction, like they developed specialized functions – different ones – in the other constructional environments in which the *mrr-f* is used.”<sup>18</sup>

This somewhat impressionistic intuition about a general affinity between imperfectivity and lesser assertivity remains too vague to convince in absence of any more detailed explanation about what kind of contrast would trigger the non assertive use of the form in main clause.<sup>19</sup> Stauder in fact extends to the geminated form arguments concerning the subjunctive or past constructions that need to be considered apart.<sup>20</sup>

Another point interesting for our understanding of the structure at play in the Emphatic Construction is the use of the geminated form as indicating a circumstance considered as a state of affairs with generic or iterative properties known as “second scheme.” There has been some discussion in Egyptology around the syntactic function of the geminated form

16 See Gardiner (1947).

17 Gardiner (1947: 100).

18 Stauder (2014: 195).

19 The refusal of any analysis that would imply a nominal nature of the form, even put into a diachronic perspective, seems a bit of a *partis-pris*, in line with a somewhat outdated stand taken against the Polotskyan school by Vernus (1997). Notice that the parallel drawn in Stauder (2016: 172) between “nominality” and “adverbiality” rather misses the point: the two categories are not of the same nature and above all not equally problematic for a distributional analysis.

20 See in particular Stauder (2016: 172–174) where the non-nominality of perfective or subjunctive forms is invoked to cast doubt on the nominality of the geminated form. Stauder is better inspired in stating that the case of the past form in emphatic construction has to be considered on its own and shows little in favor of a nominal analysis. Oréal *fc.*(b) include a distinct proposal as to how the use of the initial *sdm-n-f* in emphatic construction may have emerged out of the evolution of perfect and perfective constructions after the grammaticalization of auxiliaries such as *jw*. A functional convergence with the construction involving the geminated/definite form is not to be excluded.

in this construction.<sup>21</sup> Based on a rigorous analysis of tense and aspect interplay between verb forms occurring in successive clauses, Werning's (2014) study of constructions involving "emphatic forms" clearly shows that the geminated form may be used in what he calls "Detached Relative Form Construction":

"the initial Uninflected Relative Verb Form, i.e. an adjectival verb form that is deprived of its gender/number inflection, functionally serves as an initial adverbial clause and conveys backgrounded information. I.E. it is appropriate to categorize it, linguistically, as a converb."<sup>22</sup>

I fully subscribe to this analysis. From a diachronic viewpoint, the proposed origin of the geminated form as a definite nominalization is semantically coherent with it, genericity and iterativity representing likely semantic readings of definiteness.<sup>23</sup> Stauder (2016: 194) considers this use (termed "setting" construction) as illustrating particularly well the hypothetical relationship between imperfective aspect and lesser assertivity, but these examples should be categorized as showing a generic aspectual viewpoint rather than as an imperfective, especially when one considers the well-known difficulty raised by the imperfective uses of the non geminated form. The latter form is in fact the one, uses in Earlier Egyptian, that can be labeled imperfective as a label covering both progressive and generic, while the generic reading of the geminated form results from its origin as a definite nominalization in specific contexts of use.

### 2.1.2 The grammaticalization path of the geminated form as marked for information structure

In addition to this illuminating clarification, Werning (2014) offers a convincing argumentation in favor of a new analysis concerning the source construction for this kind of utterance. His study shows that the construction focalizing a circumstance is based on a former balanced sentence after deletion of one nominal term rather than on an "adverbial predication." This construction he calls the "Truncated Balance Sentence construction" and analyzes it as follows:

"the second Relative Form was eventually omitted since it was an exact copy of the first and its information was therefore semantically redundant. The construction with elision finally stabilized as a new construction. What came out of it was exactly the semantic layout of the Emphatic Construction: the absolute tense interpretation of the Uninflected Relative Form and the foregrounding of the Circumstantial."<sup>24</sup>

21 See a summary of questions and previous analysis in Werning (2014: 316–322).

22 Werning (2014: 332).

23 On the link in some languages between definiteness and genericity, see e.g. Kleiber (1990). In languages with indefinite and definite articles, both are often apt to form generic readings, in different contexts and with different semantic and referential properties. See e.g. Carlson (2011: 1175–1178). The crucial point here is that both the information structure reading as shared knowledge and the reading as generic are well-known possible functions of a definite marker.

24 Werning (2014: 330).

This explanation is conclusive, and I would only like to add an example from a medical text that corresponds almost exactly to the scheme reconstructed by Werning as the source construction before deletion of the common part in the two members of the balanced sentence happens:

- (3) pEbers 88, 19 (Grapow 1958 [XVIII<sup>th</sup> Dyn.]  
*dd-k*                      *hr-s*      *st*    *nt*    *ds*      *dd-k*                      *st*  
 give\NMLZ.DEF-2SG.M    on-3SG.F    edge    of    blade    give\NMLZ.DEF-2SG.M    3SG.F  
*r*    *h<sup>3</sup>-w*                      *snf*  
 on    go\_down-MOD    blood  
 ‘The way you put to it the blade edge (?) is you putting it until the blood may drip.’

Is this new explanation compatible with our analysis of the geminated form appears as a former nominalization marked for definiteness? I believe so. As shown by Werning himself with reference to Allen (1979), the emergence of the Emphatic Construction as he reconstructs it is in accordance with the fact that this construction shares common features with a Nominal Sentence Construction. However, to be a little more precise, the proposed source construction is a nominal sentence with identifying semantics, as against classifying nominal sentence. In such a predication, both terms that are equated need to be equally definite in status. Thus, the proposed definite marking of the geminated form fits perfectly well within this schema. I would even go further and make the hypothesis that the focalizing semantics of the construction could only emerge out of the construction involving such definite nominalization (= Werning’s “Uninflected Relative Form”) as opposed to other balanced sentence involving unmarked action nominals.<sup>25</sup> A crucial point in our new analysis lies in the fact that not nominality only results in backgrounding the information expressed by the geminated form, as was the case in the traditional “adverbial predication as a source construction” hypothesis. It is in fact the interaction between definiteness and the construction as modelled in Werning’s paper that triggers the interpretation of the State of Affairs as presupposed or shared knowledge:

- jrr-f*                      *st*      *jrr-f*                      *st*      *ds-f*  
 do\NMLZ.DEF-3SG.M    3SG.F    do\NMLZ.DEF-3SG.M    3SG.F    self-3SG.M  
 ‘His doing it is his doing it himself.’  
 > *jrr-f*                      *st*      *ds-f*  
       do\IPFV.PRESUPP-3SG.M    3SG.F    self-3SG.M  
 > ‘He does it *himself*.’

Functionally, this schema also helps understanding the whole spectrum of semantic readings that are found with the geminated form both within the Emphatic construction and in other uses. Information structure marking thus appears to emerge out of a former nominal

<sup>25</sup> These constructions also deserve further study, as I hope to show elsewhere.

construction with identifying semantics.<sup>26</sup> As for modality, the deontic use of the geminated form as it occurs in the following example is well-known<sup>27</sup>:

- (4) *Heqanakhte* I vso 7  
*zbb-k*                    *n-j*    *sw*    *r-sʹ*    *skʹ*  
 send\NMLZ.DEF-2SG.M    to-1SG    3M.SG    after    plough  
 ‘Only after the plough **should** you **send** him to me.’

This semantic effect is contextually produced by a combination of features: the state of affairs being marked as presupposed information not open to discussion and the address to an interlocutor. Thus, this modal dimension is not an inherent feature of the construction, contrary to what happens with the *sdm-w-f* used as main predicate, as we shall see in the next section.

## 2.2 From indefinite to modal: the <w> form as predicate unmarked for information structure<sup>28</sup>

In his study on “future” forms and constructions, Vernus (1990) suggested the following path of grammaticalization for the use of the initial *sdm-w-f*:

“The construction arises from the grammaticalization of a predication of situation in which the prospective *sdmw-f* functions as a subject, being a nominal form, and the emphasized adverbial adjunct as the predicate.”<sup>29</sup>

Two problems arise from this analysis:

- At an empirical level, many occurrences of the form do not seem to comply easily to an “emphatic” analysis.
- From a systemic point of view, the <w> form would share the same function and presumably the same diachronic evolution as the geminated form.<sup>30</sup>

I shall address these two points successively and propose an alternative source construction that accounts for the fact that the <w> form and the geminated form in fact appear in utterances having different features at the level of information structure.

26 For the deep semantic link between identification and focalization across languages, see most notably Robert (1993).

27 On the extension of this phenomena in the documentary corpus that is prone to present intersubjective uses of forms, see Brose (2014: §200, 234–235).

28 From a methodological point of view, I will only consider occurrences where forms do show a written <w>. The role of defective writing in Egyptian documentation is not to be denied. However, in an approach that seeks to explain prototypical uses of forms along diachronic lines, it seems better to avoid discussion about the possible presence of unmarked forms whose concurrent uses are not within the scope of this contribution.

29 Vernus (1990: 35).

30 A point not explicitly stated by Vernus (1990), but which raises a difficulty.



## 2.2.1 Is the main &lt;w&gt; form a second tense?

Many examples of the <w> form in its use as a main form show no emphasized adjunct, as e.g. the following:

(5) *PT* §794a–bP

*jri-w*    *n-k*    *dp*<sup>31</sup> 3    *w*<sup>c</sup>[*b-k*    *n*] *psdntw*  
 do-MOD    to-2SG.M    first 3    be\_pure-2SG.M    to    new\_moon\_feast

*h3i-w-k*    *n*    *dp*    *3bd*  
 appear-MOD-2SG.M    to    first    month

‘One will do for you the First-of-three feast, you will purify yourself for the New moon-feast, you will appear for the First-of-the-month.’<sup>32</sup>

Vernus (1990: 32–34) elaborates the notion of a “non initial main clause” use (in apodosis and after imperative) to account for examples showing a <w> form without emphasized adjunct functioning as a marked rheme. However, this seems rather a desperate move, as Vernus himself states that “initial constructions can be used in an apodosis.”<sup>33</sup> Other analysis often classify the <w> form as a form capable of use both in utterances with a marked information structure and in utterances with a neutral one.<sup>34</sup>

One argument in favor of the second tense analysis of the <w> form is its use in WH-question. As the geminated form is used in interrogative utterances, it is tempting to consider that the <w> form in the same context is “emphatic” too, the focus being on the interrogative part of the sentence while the verbal form has presupposed informational content. Thus, according to Allen (1984), the following interrogative example is the only one of an “evident” emphatic use of the passive *sdm-w-f* in the *Pyramid Texts*:<sup>35</sup>

(6) *PT* §1970

*sp*<sup>3</sup>-*w*    *r-f*    *NN*    *m*    *jšst*  
 make\_to\_fly-MOD    PTCL    NN    in    thing

‘With what then should NN be made to fly?’

One could even add the following example:

31 For the reading of the sign Gardiner D1, see Werning 2004.

32 It looks very unlikely that the focus in this utterance might lie successively on the beneficiary and on the name of the holy days.

33 Moreover, examples given as an illustration for the emphatic use of the *sdm-w-f* are often not compelling, or show a form that has no <w> and could be analyzed as a geminated form (ex. 76). It is also only fair to note that the analysis of the independent <w> form as emphatic counterpart of other constructions with “future” semantics, as advocated in Vernus (1990), is at least partly based on an outdated conception of the allative future in Earlier Egyptian. See now Grossman & Polis (2014) on the emergence and grammaticalization of the construction.

34 See e.g. Borghouts (2010: §47, §111.b.1), Werning (2015: §40–41). Polotsky himself appears to have considered the form a non emphatic. I am indebted to Orly Goldwasser for her precious indications at the Berlin 2016 workshop relative to Polotsky’s late understanding of this construction.

35 See Allen (1984: §518, 350).

- (7) Aba/F/Se IV = 601 (Jéquier 1935: pl. 11)

<i>jni-w</i>	<i>jrf</i>	<i>md3m-s</i>	<b><i>tn</i></b>
bring-MOD	PTCL	lashing-3SG.F	<b>where</b>

**'From where then should one bring its lashing?'**

However, it is not clear why a presupposed status of the informational content of the verb should necessarily be associated with the interrogative construction. It should be borne in mind that the presence of a rhematic or focalized adjunct in general does not imply by itself that the informational content of the predicate is marked as presupposed. Many constructions of various TAM readings show a rhematic adjunct without any marking of the verb as carrying thematic information. In the following example, the contrast between the geminated form *dd-k* in the answer and the unmarked *wd-j* that appears in a WH-question indicates that a marked information structure is not strictly correlated to the interrogative function of the utterance:

- (8) CTV 93c-d TIC

<i>wd-j</i>	<i>sw</i>	<i>jrf</i>	<i>tn</i>	<i>dd-k</i>	<i>sw</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>wZšwt-s</i>
put\SUBJ-1SG	3SG.M	PTCL	where	put\NMLZ.DEF-2SG.M	3SG.M	in	bilgewater-3SG.F

**'Where should I put it then? It is in its bilgewater that you shall put it.'**

If it is acknowledged that the *sdm-w-f* form is used as a main modal predicate in utterances with a neutral information structure, does this mean that the form has to be something else than a nominalization in origin? This question will be explored in the next section.

### 2.2.2 The grammaticalization path of the main modal <w> form

Having a nominal source does not imply that the form functions as a subject in the source construction. The alternative proposed path of grammaticalization can be as follows:

<i>sdm-w-f</i>	$\emptyset$	>	<i>sdm-w-f</i>
listen\NMLZ-INDEF-3SG.M	COP		listen-MOD-3SG.M

**'It is a case of his listening' > 'he has to listen' > 'he shall listen.'**

The suggested original function of the <w> form as a classifying predicate in the nominal source construction also has the advantage to fit within a more general analysis of the morphology of Earlier Egyptian agent and action nominalizations. Beyond the step 'it is a case of V-ing,' where the nominalization marked as indefinite functions as a predicate in a nominal sentence with  $\emptyset$  copula, the path of change from deontic to future meanings is a well-documented one across languages.<sup>36</sup> The incipient stage of the process in the Egyptian case is thus the more informative for a typological approach of the different ways modality may emerge out of non verbal constructions. The following example is close to the suggested source construction:

36 See e.g. Bybee, Perkins, and Pagliuca (1994). This is not to say that a more detailed study of the way modal readings develop out of the postulated source construction is not in order, but our contribution focuses on the incipient stage of the process.

- (9) Nianchchnum and Chnumhotep, pl. 63 (Moussa & Altenmüller 1977 [V<sup>th</sup> Dyn.])  
*hʒi nw hr spw shwn-w hʒ hmww*  
 fall\PRF DEM on sheet **dispute**\NMLZ-INDEF around worker-PL  
 ‘This has fallen upon the sheet, and **it is (a case of) disputing** around the workers.’<sup>37</sup>

It appears to attest the use of a nominal predication without modal reading: ‘it is a case of V-ing.’ Here, the form appears without any participant. When a participant is expressed, the origin of the <w> form as an action nominalization fits well with the fact that both active uses and passive ones are attested in the same construction, as is also the case in its other syntactic positions:

- (10) *Urk. I 39, 7–9*  
*hpi-w-k r hrt ntr jʒw-t wrt m jmʒhw-j*  
**walk-MOD**-2SG.M to necropolis be\_old\PTCP.RESUL-2SG very as *imakhu*-1SG  
 ‘You **shall walk** to the necropolis in very old age as an *imakhu* of mine.’
- (11) *Urk. I 70, 14*  
*jri-w n-f mrtt m jšt-f*  
**do-MOD** to-3SG.M same from good-3SG.M  
 ‘The same **should be done** for him from his goods.’

From a semantic point of view, it is to be noted that deontic and future readings are not the only readings attested. The following example illustrates a semantic extension leading from a deontic modal meaning to a meaning close to epistemic:

- (12) *Heqanakhte I 1, rto 13*  
*mk nn s m ʕft qsnt mk ʕ-w ʒht 4/4 jt-mh hʒr 100*  
 PTCL NEG 3SG.M as yield bad PTCL **unite-MOD** arura 4/4 barley sacks 100  
 ‘Look, this is no bad yield, for 4/4 aruras **should give** 100 sacks of Lower Egyptian barley.’

The speaker does not indicate what quantity of barley the fields under discussion should give as a moral obligation but rather as a knowledge from experience. In daily life documents such as letters, this epistemic nuance co-exists with the more frequent deontic one:

- (13) pUC 32213 rto 23–24 (Collier & Quirke 2002 [late Middle Kingdom])  
*kʒ hmsi-w bʒk jm m NN*  
 PTCL **sit-MOD** servant here in NN  
 ‘so that this servant here **has to stay** in NN.’

From a systemic point of view, the suggested grammaticalization path, if accepted, implies the elimination of any past active reading of the <w> form. This point also has heavy con-

37 The form *shwnw* is a likely nominalization as shown by the hesitation of the editor to classify it as an unattested substantive. See Altenmüller (1977: 136) “Das bisher nicht in Wörterbuch verzeichnete Substantiv (?) möchte ich mit *shwn*, streiten, verbinden.”

sequences on the aspecto-temporal interpretation of passive <w> forms (see the following section), but also active ones, albeit the latter are much more infrequently claimed to have an inherently past meaning. The following example is sometimes taken as one of only two occurrences attesting a past reading for the <w> form after a conjunction:<sup>38</sup>

(14) pWestcar 3, 2 (Blackman 1988 [late Middle Kingdom])

<i>jr</i>	<i>m-ht</i>	<i>h3i-w</i>	<i>ndš</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>š</i>	<i>mj</i>	<i>nt-c-f</i>	<i>nt</i>	<i>r<sup>c</sup></i>	<i>nb</i>
TOP	after	go_down-MOD	man	to	lake	like	habit-3SG.M	of	day	every
<i>k3-k</i>	<i>h3<sup>c</sup>-k</i>	<i>p3</i>	<i>msh</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>mnh</i>	<i>r-s3-f</i>				
AUX-2SG.M	throw/MOD-2SG.M	this	crocodile	of	wax	after-3SG.M				

‘After the man **will go down** to the lake as he does every day, so that you will throw this crocodile of wax after him.’

Beyond the fact that such an extreme rarity already casts some doubt on the very existence of the past use of the <w> form, this analysis is far from compelling. The whole context of the utterance is in fact a projection into a future situation. The state of affairs expressed by the form *h3i-w* is seen, not as a completed situation, but as an event still to come, despite the translation effect often confused with the inherent value of a form.<sup>39</sup> It thus appear quite easy to eliminate the past value of the active <w> form. Things are slightly more complicated as regards the passive <w> form, as we shall see in the next section.

### 2.3 Collateral effect: doing away with ghost “second tenses”

As a complement to my historical analysis, it is necessary to make explicit a fact concerning the very existence of another postulated reading of the <w> form, for its features would not fit within the general proposed reconstruction: the past passive *sdm-w-f* with a patient encoded by the suffix pronoun, be it “predicative” or “abstract relative” (emphatic “second tense”). It is beyond the scope of this contribution to expose all implications of the proposed analysis concerning the passive system of Earlier Egyptian. I shall focus on what relates more directly to the notion of an emphatic passive verb form, namely the so-called “perfective passive *sdm-w-f*.” After briefly summing up previous approaches, I will give a synthetic account of the alternative analysis that I propose and review the classical examples upon which all accounts are based.

#### 2.3.1 No past passive *jri-w-f*

In his study on the passive in the classical literary corpus, Westendorf observed that no patient had the form of the suffix pronoun with the perfective passive.<sup>40</sup> However, Edel’s (1955–1964) general misconception of inherent TAM marking in Old Egyptian blocked the way to a better understanding of why it was so. His assumption that Old Egyptian re-

38 On this example, see Uljas (2007: 245).

39 The other example cited by Uljas (2007) (CT VII 308c: *dr jri-w-k ht nbt r-j* ‘as soon as you would do anything against me’) also occurs in a modal context where the speaker envisages a potential state of affairs.

40 See Westendorf (1953).

ally had a passive *sḏm-w-f* was to prevent another analysis of the data in the older phase of the language. Yet, based on his study of verbal inflection in the Pyramid Texts, Allen (1984) states that the perfective passive never shows the graphic ending <w>. He thus suggests that the <w> in the Pyramid texts was indeed characteristic for the modal passive form. However, the presence of perfective forms with a <w> in other corpora, most notably the Coffin texts, seemed to restrict the relevance of this observation, despite the fact that these normally have a full noun as patient (vs. a suffix pronoun). Thus, while Schenkel does accept Westendorf's statement about the nature of the patient with the "predicative perfective passive," he does not infer from this fact that there might not be such thing as a "predicative perfective *sḏm(w)-f*."<sup>41</sup>

Defenders of the unity of the passive *sḏm-w-f* form now need to elaborate a peculiar understanding of its aspectual value allowing a unique label for very disparate uses.<sup>42</sup> Without entering into a discussion on the relevance of the notion of "perfective" as an aspectual category in the Old Egyptian TAM system, I want to propose a new solution to the longstanding discussion on the unity of the very form traditionally called "passive *sḏm(w)-f*." For the visible morphology itself does indeed indicate a distinction between past and modal forms. The essential fact remains that the <w> ending in non modal passives is correlated to a nominal Patient, contrary to what happens with the <w> ending of the modal form that is both passive and active. To account for this phenomenon, I suggest to draw a different line between uses that were usually considered to form a unique paradigm.<sup>43</sup> The crucial point in this new analysis lies in the distinction between:

- (1) The inherently perfect(ive) passive *sḏm(-w)* always followed by a nominal Patient.
- (2) A passive *sḏm-(j)-f* whose function remains to be assessed.

(1) the inherently perfect(ive) passive *sḏm(-w)* always followed by a nominal Patient is the only form found in past contexts with a written <w>. The construction "jw jri-w [nominal Patient]" involving this form is marked at the level of information structure, for it represents, I propose (Oréal fc.(b)), the impersonal passive use of the predicative Pseudoparticle when the Patient has a rhematic status rather than a thematic one, as is illustrated by the following example:

41 See Schenkel (2012: 224). Very rare occurrences (*CT IV 45m*; *CT VI 311j*) of an ambiguous form with pronominal subject showing an <jj> ending (and not a <w>) may be the reason for this.

42 Thus Loprieno (1986) proposes a notion of perfective aspect that would unite past and non past uses of the form. Reintges' studies on passive forms and constructions (1997; 2003; see 2015 for a renewed defense of the unitary analysis) stay within the frame of the unity of the passive *sḏm(w)-f*. Stauder (2014: 22–40) hesitates between following Loprieno's analysis, which was his point of departure in his dissertation, and adopting Allen's (1984: §489–529) viewpoint, so that the question remains somewhat undecided in his study. His claim (2014: 22) that treating separately corpus with distinct graphic conventions makes the picture coherent is not really substantiated by his following chapter.

43 Schenkel (2012: 224–226) analysis of the data already leaves space for a distinction within the perfective passive *sḏm(-w)-f* for he confirms a contrast in graphic behaviour between two forms.

- (15) JE 49623 (Gardiner 1927: 75–78 [end of VI
- <sup>th</sup>
- Dyn.])

*jw jni-w zš ni bʿtj-zʿb-bʿtj n bʿk jm r jni-t ʿzʿt*  
 AUX bring\PTCP-PRED<sup>44</sup> letter of vizier to servant here to bring-INF troop  
 ‘there has been brought a letter from the vizier to the servant here concerning  
 bringing the troop.’

When the Patient has a thematic status in discourse, prototypically when it is a pronoun, it cannot appear in the same slot, after the Pseudoparticiple, and the S-V order is preserved:

- (16) CT VI 167a S10C
- <sup>45</sup>

*jw-f rdi-w n-j*  
 AUX-3SG.M give\PTCP-PRED to-1SG  
 ‘He has been given to me.’

According to the proposed analysis, the ending <w> should occur in the impersonal construction (with [Verb]–[rhematic Patient] order) in the same way as with the Pseudoparticiple, except for any phonetic process that might occur due to the presence of pronominal suffixes or substantival subject following the form. Moreover, it explains the absence of any attested <w> ending with the past passive in the corpus of the Pyramid texts as noticed by Allen (1984), which is not due to chance, but results from the very same process that occurs with the Pseudoparticiple. As is well-known, the latter never shows the <w> ending in Older Egyptian.<sup>46</sup>

(2) The participant/event nominalization serving as a base for the passive *sdm(-j)-f* has past translations that arise both from its use in past contexts and from its orientation on the patient. My suggestion is that this passive form is based on a nominalization identical to the passive-resultative participle that also has a characteristic <j> ending, namely the “Participle accompli passif” from Malaise & Winand (1999: §850) that is, according to my diachronic study on perfect grams in Earlier Egyptian, identical in origin to the “Pseudoparticiple” with <j> ending.<sup>47</sup> In accordance with this origin, the form sometimes, but rarely, shows a graphic <jj> ending with weak verbs such as *msi* ‘to give birth’ (see example 18 and 20). As with other nominalizations, the first participant is encoded as a possessor.<sup>48</sup>

44 I gloss the form usually called “Pseudoparticiple” as PTCP-PRED for, according to the analysis developed in Oréal fc.(b), it functions as a participle marked as predicative by its ending <w>, be it in its uses as primary or as secondary predicate.

45 Notice that the other text witness has no <w>.

46 On the morphology of the form in the older phase of the language, see Kammerzell (1991) and Jansen-Winkel (1991) and (1993). For reasons of space, I leave aside the detailed argumentation substantiating this claim. On this topic and the diachronic process according to which the Pseudoparticiple developed the use of the <w> ending, see Oréal fc.(b).

47 As do some event nominalizations emerge from past participles in various languages in a more or less sporadic way, e.g. french *déroulé*, a past participle that is used more and more as an event nominalization in the language of media.

48 Notice that, here as elsewhere in this paper, the gloss NMLZ I used to mark each form that has, according to the proposed analysis, its origin in a nominal form of the verb (not always the same nominal form). In doing this, I try to make clear what diachronic process seems to me to explain

The following example is cited in the literature as the only form with a written ending <w> combining a pronominal Patient and a perfective/past value<sup>49</sup>:

## (17) CT II 3g G1T

*ni msi-w-j js msjtt*  
 NEG give\_birth\NMLZ-MOD-1SG FOC birth

‘It is not by birth that **I shall be born**’ (Traditionally: ‘It is not by birth that I was born.’)

All other versions of the same passage show no <w>, so that it appears reasonable not to consider this isolated occurrence as an obstacle. Moreover, another version of this formulation in the same coffin shows the expected <jj> ending:

## (18) CT I 345c G1T

*ni msi-jj-j js msjtt*  
 NEG bear\NMLZ-PASS-1SG FOC birth

‘It is not by birth that I was born.’<sup>50</sup>

The negation *n ... js* is known for its use in focalizing sentence.<sup>51</sup> This does not mean that all verb forms occurring with this negation are themselves inherently marked for presupposition. The following example involving the same verb reinforces this analysis, for no adjunct is capable of focalization:

## (19) Mo’alla II a2 (Vandier 1950 [end of First Intermediate Period])

*ni msi(-jj) mjt-j*  
 NEG bear\NMLZ-PASS equal-1SG

‘My equal was not born.’

However, the co-occurrence of the construction with the focal negation is highly compatible with the original nature of the form as a nominalization. Here it might be in order to propose a distinction between two different kinds of “presupposition.” It is obvious that an event nominalization expresses some sort of presupposition: the simple clause “my being born” presupposes the birth in a way. Yet this presupposition is not the same as the one marked by definiteness in thematic position. The latter is more interlocutive in orientation: it marks the informational content as standing out of scope of the assertion, a knowledge shared by speaker and hearer. Shared knowledge and non-assertion thus appear to be a precondition to the “emphatic” use of the verb form, while the basic presupposition inherent to a nominalization is not correlated to the same semantic effect and argumentative use.

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better the way forms acquired their respective uses, but the question of how and when exactly these verb forms ceased to be nominalizations is postponed to further study. Thus, from a synchronic point of view, one might propose another way of glossing the same examples that would even make more sense. For a reflexion on this question, see already Claudi & Mendel (1991).

49 See Schenkel (2012: 225–226); Reintges (2004: 189). With a nominal Patient, CT III 77d (S1Cb) showing a <w> in *ni gmgm-w* seems to fit with a modal reading.

50 CT I 344–345c M28C: *ni msi-n-tw-j js msjtt*.

51 See Loprieno (1991); Oréal (2011: 114–123).

Accordingly, it might be in order to reconsider the supposed emphatic use of the passive *sdm(-j)-f*. We shall do this in the next section.

### 2.3.2 Is the passive *sdm(-j)-f* in past context emphatic?

Having suggested that the passive *sdm(-j)-f* occurring in past (but also other than past) contexts should be kept distinct from the  $\langle w \rangle$  passive that represents an impersonal use of the “Pseudoparticiple” (or “Old Perfective”) in main and dependent uses, one may ask the question of its syntactic and discursive function. The following example illustrates the usual approach:

(20) CTI 248e B4C

<i>jt-t</i>	<i>pw</i>	<i>msi-jj-t</i>	<i>n-f</i>
father-2SG.F	COP	give_birth\NMLZ-PASS-2SG.F	to-3SG.M

‘It is your father, you having been born to him.’ (Traditionally:) ‘It is your father, it is to him that you were born.’

The usual translation of this place indeed runs as ‘This is your father: you were born to him,’ with ‘to him’ representing the information under focus in an “emphatic” sentence. Such an example strongly supports the emphatic reading of the form.<sup>52</sup> However, the proposed alternative analysis as a circumstantial converb seems all the more acceptable as other occurrences do not seem to fit as well in the emphatic schema. The following example is often cited to illustrate the existence of an emphatic perfective passive  $\langle w \rangle$  form:

(21) *Urk. I 57*, 11–14

<i>jj-n-j</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>njw-t-j</i>	<i>pri-n-j</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>sp<sup>3</sup>t-j</i>	<i>qrs-j</i>	<i>m</i>
come-ANT-1SG	from	city	come_out-ANT-1SG	from	nome	bury\NMLZ-1SG	in
<i>jt-j</i>	<i>pn</i>	<i>dd-n-j</i>	<i>m<sup>3</sup>t</i>				
tomb-1SG	this	say-ANT-1SG	Maat				

‘I came from my city, I came from my nome (**I being buried >**) as I was **buried** in this tomb of mine, after I had said *Maat*.’ (Traditionally:) ‘(Only) after I had said Maat, I came from my city, I came from my nome and I was buried in this tomb of mine.’

Besides the fact that it does not show any  $\langle w \rangle$  ending, as any other non modal form with a suffixed participant, it appears that the emphatic perfective reading of the form itself is based on the parallelism with the two preceding active forms. However, parallelism is no argument in itself. In the context of a largely attested expression, one would even expect the clause *qrs-j m jt-j pn* to add a circumstance to its formulaic core represented by the first two clauses, rather than a third action on the same level.

52 See Stauder (2014: 254) following Schenkel (2006: 76).



(22) *Urk. I 51, 12–52, 3*

[*hrd ms m*] *rk mn-k3w-r<sup>c</sup>*  
 child bear\PTCP.PASS in time Menkaure

*šd-f mm msw-nsw m pr<sup>c3</sup> n nsw m hnw<sup>c</sup>*  
 raise\NMLZ-3M.SG among children-king in palace of king in privy\_chambers

*m jp3t-nsw špss hr nsw r hrd nb špss-ptḥ*  
 in royal\_apartment precious to king more child any Shepseskaf

‘a child born in the time of Menkaure, **being raised** among the royal children in the palace of the king in the privy chambers in the royal apartments, more precious for the king than any child, Shepseskaf.’ (Traditionally:) ‘a child born in the time of Menkaure, it is among the royal children in the palace of the king in the privy chambers in the royal apartments that he was raised, more precious for the king than any child, Shepseskaf.’

The emphatic reading of this example also seems to me suspicious, as the form occurs in the middle of nominal qualifications among which a circumstance is more likely to appear than a full sentence with marked information structure. This analysis removes nothing from the crucial status of the information given, but it seems slightly artificial to separate *msw-nsw* from *šd-f*.

According to Stauder (2014), the emphatic V-passive is attested only with verbs sharing an important lexical feature: *msi* ‘to bear,’ *qrs* ‘to bury,’ *tzi* ‘to raise,’ *wb3* ‘to reveal,’ all express a process affecting a patient and resulting in a state. He thus seems to consider the postulated emphatic use to be correlated to particular lexical semantics of the verb.<sup>53</sup> One remains skeptical on this point. Some examples do not fit well with the idea of a situational presupposition (see example with *wb3*). Moreover, situational presupposition is a notion that should be handled with caution, for it tends to underestimate the role of the speaker in presenting an information as a “préconstruit énonciatif.” These verbs are indeed prone to form a participle in <*j*>, a form that has resultative semantics. The reason for their possible affinity with the passive *sḏm(-j)-f* thus could reside in their higher compatibility with a form that has a resultative origin, namely the Resultative participle (traditionally “Pseudoparticiple”) in <*j*>.<sup>54</sup> In any case, the argumentation according to which any information already known by the interlocutor or implied by the situation (the speaker having been born, raised or buried) should be considered as presupposed is misleading. Information structure is not depending on this kind of logical reasoning, but on the speaker’s choice to present a state of affairs according to a given point of view.

Moreover, some of the examples even show forms whose informational content is difficult to interpret as presupposed or lack an adjunct capable of being focused.<sup>55</sup> The next example thus shows again the verb *qrs* ‘to bury,’ but is not capable of an emphatic interpretation:

53 See Stauder (2014: 250–259).

54 See Oréal fc.(b).

55 Accordingly, Doret (1986: 171) analyzes these uses as “circumstantial.”

(23) *PT* §474b–cW

šzp-t          rmt    qrs-sn          hʒ-s          m    tʒ    hʒ-s          m    hnqt  
 receive\PTCP-1F    people    bury\NMLZ-3PL    thousand-3F.SG    as    bread    thousand-3F.SG    as    beer  
 ‘What people receive **when they are buried**, their thousand of bread and their thousand of beer.’

Stauder (2014: 246–247) admittedly considers such an use of the form as an exceptional case where “a V-passive is used in lieu of an expected pseudoparticiple.” He interprets it as an archaic trace of a stage when the supposed complementary distribution of the Pseudoparticiple and the V-passive would not yet be generalized. However, this explanation a bit *ad hoc* fails to account for the fact that the passive *sdm(-j)-f*, as I argue, shows up in a circumstantial use. The same applies to the three following examples taken from Doret (1986), all of which fit well with the merely circumstantial reading of a former passive nominalization proposed here:

(24) *Urk. I* 134, 6–10

jw    jni-n-j          hqʒ-wj    n    hʒswt          jptn    n    hnw    m    htpw  
 AUX    bring-ANT-1SG    chief-DU    of    foreign\_countries    these    to    residence    in    peace  
 jwʒw    wndw    ʕnhw    gmi-sn          n    hnw  
 oxen    goats    live    find\NMLZ-3PL    to    residence

‘I brought the two chiefs of these foreign countries to the residence in peace, live oxen and goats, **being chosen** for the residence’ (Traditionally:) ‘I brought the two chiefs of these foreign countries to the residence in peace, live oxen and goats, it is for the residence that they were chosen.’

The traditional emphatic reading of this example implying the presence of an interpolated main clause and a contrastive focus on ‘for the residence’ appears indeed unlikely. The two following examples in later autobiographical discourse show verbs expressing promotion of the speaker:

(25) Hatnub 28, 5 (Anthes 1928 [end XI<sup>th</sup>-beginning XII<sup>th</sup> Dyn.])

jr-n-j          w<sup>cb</sup>    šhnt-j          m    hrd    n    ʕt n    hss          wj    nb-j  
 do-ANT-1SG    priest    promote\NMLZ-1SG    as    child    because    praise\NMLZ.DEF    1SG    lord-1SG

‘I became a *wab*-priest, **being promoted** as a child since my lord praised me so much.’ (Traditionally:) ‘I became a *wab*-priest, it is as a child that I was promoted since my lord praised me so much.’

## (26) MMA 12.183.8 (Doret 1986: 171 [First Intermediate Period])

jn    jqr    jri          n-j    st    ʕʒ-j          r    ʕʒ-w  
 PTCL    Iqer    do\PTCP.PFV    to-1SG    3F.SG    make\_great\NMLZ-1SG    more    great-PL  
 sr-w          n-w    njwt-j    r-qr-s    m    mtrt    wj  
 official-PL    of-PL    city-1SG    whole    as    witness    1SG

‘It is *Iqer* that made it for me, I **being made great** more than great men, as officials of my whole city may witness.’ (Traditionally:) ‘It is *Iqer* that made it

for me, it is more than great men that I was made great, as officials of my whole city may witness.’

These examples do not seem compatible with a perfective analysis of the passive form, since being made great or promoted appears to be the reward developing the idea of promotion expressed in the main clause, rather than an event anterior to it. Resultative semantics on the contrary fit with both examples.

Another much commented example is the following:<sup>56</sup>

(27) Hammamat 191, 6 (Couyat & Montet 1913 [Mentuhotep II, year 2])

*ni hr hr n rmt hr-s wbʒ-s*  
 NEG fall\IPFV face of people on-3F.SG reveal\NMLZ-3F.SG

*n hm-f ds-f*  
 to majesty-3M.SG self-3M.SG

‘The glance<sup>57</sup> of someone did not fall on it, it **being revealed** to his majesty himself.’ (Traditionally:) ‘The glance of someone did not fall on it, it is to his majesty himself that it was revealed.’

A circumstantial use of the form *wbʒ-s* was never envisaged, for the traditional emphatic interpretation has long been generally accepted, the discussion concentrating on the identity and role of the beneficiary *n hm-f ds-f*. However, cohesion of the clause in *wbʒ-s* with what precedes is sufficient to make the converb reading easy, as soon as one puts it in relationship with other undebatable occurrences of a passive *sdm(-f)* in circumstantial use.<sup>58</sup>

To sum up this section, the supposed emphatic use of a perfective passive form, does not appear mandatory under close scrutiny of the examples, and is strongly disfavored in some of them.<sup>59</sup> The limited attestation indicates that the use of the *sdm(-j)-f* as a kind of circumstantial resultative/passive converb might have remained restricted to a pronominal Patient identical to a nominal participant in the main clause. Such a restriction appears as an indication of incomplete grammaticalization. As a converb, the form was indeed to be

56 See notably Vernus (1984), followed by Stauder (2014); Polotsky (1986); Reintges (1992).

57 For this translation, see Werning 2014b.

58 The supposed occurrence of an emphatic “perfective passive” in the inscription of Mehu-akhti, with the verb *jri* ‘to do’ is to be cancelled: it is not written *jr(-jj)-f n(-j)* but *jr-n-f*. The correction introduced by Edel (1958: 17–18) is not convincing, the suffix pronoun being better understood as referring to the *(j)m(j) jz pn* topicalized after *jr*, as Goedicke (1958: 24) has it. Other apparent occurrences with a nominal Patient may also conceal a stative predication of the *nfr sw* type with an adjectivized participle ending in *<j>* as a predicate.

59 As noticed in Reintges (2016: 312–313), there is some contradiction in Stauder’s (2014) analysis of his “V-passive” as a form staying in complementary distribution with the Stative/ Pseudoparticiples on one hand, and being employed in the emphatic construction on the other. The idea that the emphatic use would be conditioned by particular semantics of the verbs involved look *ad hoc* in view of the way a true “second tense” such as the *mrr-f* forms functions. Meanwhile, the proposed split between the impersonal use of the Old Perfective/Pseudoparticiples (with possible *<w>* ending and a rhematic nominal patient) and the true passive *sdm(-j)-f* solves the contradiction, without implying the existence of an emphatic use of the latter.

superseded, not by the seemingly competing t-passive, that has other semantics, but by the use of the Pseudoparticiple as a secondary predicate.<sup>60</sup>

### 3 Former nominalizations in completive constructions

Uljas' (2007) work on Earlier Egyptian modal system in complement clauses has drawn attention to the fact that various forms occur in completive constructions that are syntactically identical but show distinct semantic features. This synchronic approach of the data appears to be compatible with the diachronic process reconstructed in the present contribution. It involves the reanalysis of former nominalizations in complement function as verb forms. The modal readings of the <w> ending resp. gemination thus emerge out of nominal morphology marking indefiniteness resp. definiteness on the nominalized base combined to semantic features characterizing the whole construction and in particular the verb before the completive. The basic source construction thus appears to be the following:

Non-assertive verb + nominalization [ $\pm$  DEF] > non-assertive verb + modal form

In the next sections, I will very briefly deal with the modal reading associated with the former indefinite form, then with the semantics of the geminated form in the same syntactic position.

#### 3.1 The completive <w> form

As is to be expected, some contexts and in particular certain types of constructions are more prone than others to be associated with the former indefinite nominalization as a complement. Among them, verbs of preventing show a special affinity with the <w> form in the corpus of the Pyramid Texts.<sup>61</sup> The proposed analysis of the form as based on an indefinite nominalization allows to explain this affinity in a new way which represents a strong argument in his favor. Section 3.2.2 deals with the use of the forms in still other completive and non-assertive contexts.

##### 3.1.1 After verbs of preventing

The <w> form is frequently used after verbs of preventing in the *Pyramid Texts*. Relevant data were put into light by Allen (1986: §234), and are illustrated in the following examples:

(28) PT §1242aP

*Ppj pw hwi nni-w ntr-w m zhn-w jrt hr*  
 Pepi DEM prevent **get\_tired-MOD** gods in look\_for eye Horus

'Pepi is one who prevents the gods from **getting tired** of looking for Horus' eye.'

60 According to the emphatic interpretation of the form, it was replaced in this function by a t-passive, namely the *sdm-n-tw-f* (see Stauder 2014: 259–270). However, the latter is the morphological symmetric of an active form with which it shares at least part of its uses, while the passive *sdm(-j)-f* shows no such relationship to an active form. Stauder does not make clear along which concrete path of change the new passive form would really “replace” the older one in its hypothetical emphatic use.

61 See Uljas (2007: 153).

(29) *PT* §1633aNt

*ni rḏi-n ḥr bn-w-k*  
 NEG allow-ANT Horus **go\_away-MOD-2SG.M**

‘Horus did not allow **that** you **may go away**.’

(30) *PT* §1440a–bP

*ḥsf w rmt jr wnm t ḥsf-k w ḥ3i-w*  
 prevent\MOD NEG people from eat\INF bread prevent-2SG.M NEG **get\_on-MOD**

*Mrjj-R<sup>c</sup> pn m wi3-k pw*  
 Merire DEM in boat-2SG.M DEM

‘People shall not be prevented from eating bread. You shall not prevent this Merire from **getting on** this your boat. (Pepi is who prevent the gods from getting tired of looking for Horus’ eye.)’

It is crucial to note that both active and passive uses of the form are attested in the Pyramid texts, since this ambivalence is distinctive for the original function of the *sḏm-w-f* as an action nominal related to the indefinite perfective participle that is also capable of both passive and active readings:

## (31) Nt 293 (Jéquier 1933)

*ḥw stm-w-s*  
 prevent/IMP **get\_tired-MOD-3SG.F**

‘Prevent it from **being annihilated**.’

Uljas (2007: 140–153) proposes a conjoint analysis of the distribution of completive forms after verbs of preventing and the manipulative verb *rḏi*. Since his study has no diachronic orientation, he does not propose an explanation for it in terms of source construction, but duly notices the essential fact that, while <w> forms are not represented after *rḏi* in the Pyramid Texts,

“the verbs of preventing regularly select forms with the ending <w>. This divide might be more than a mere coincidence, but it is difficult to see what might have been the semantic difference between the two”<sup>62</sup>

From the diachronic point of view taken in the present contribution, the affinity between the <w> ending and verbs of preventing, but also negative constructions of *rḏi* (see ex. 29) appears to be based on the affinity between negative constructions and indefinite marking as a sort of negative polarity item:<sup>63</sup>

‘prevent any V-ing of his’ > ‘prevent that he might do V-ing.’

62 Uljas (2007: 153)

63 Think, for example, of the English negative polarity item *any* and its relationship to the indefinite article *a(n)*.

## 3.1.2 The &lt;w&gt; form: from indefiniteness to modal reading as potential

In the preceding section, I suggested an explanation for the affinity between the <w> form and completive constructions after verbs of preventing according to a diachronic path illustrating the reanalysis of a nominal feature as verbal morphology. However, the completive use of the <w> form is not limited to such semantic contexts. It also occurs after other kinds of verbs. In some cases, a negative dimension is present in the context, thus making the use of the <w> form as “distant” irrealis similar to what happens with verbs of preventing:

(32) *Heqanakhte* II 42–43

*jn-jw hm w<sup>c</sup> jm-tn r whd srh-w n-f hmt-f jh whd-j*  
 INTERR PTCL one in-2PL towards bear-INF **accuse-MOD** to-3SG.M wife-3SG.M CONJ bear-1SG  
 ‘Would really one of you support that his wife **might be denounced** to him,  
 that I should support?’

The speaker thus expresses a distance between what he acknowledges as actual and the envisaged state of affairs.

In other contexts, the intersubjective nuance brought about by the *sdm-w-f* is of the same kind, although the introductory verb in itself has no negative dimension. From an argumentative point of view, the semantic effect, far from a mere future, let alone “objective future” reading, functions as a way of signaling that the situation was not bound to happen, representing only a potentiality among other state of affairs:

(33) *PT* §1480cN

*wd-n-k hmsi-w NN r gs-k*  
 allow-ANT-2SG.M **sit-MOD** NN at side-2SG.M  
 ‘You allowed **that NN may sit** at your side.’

(34) *CT* VI 316r B1B0

*jn dd-tn hsi-w NN pn r w<sup>c</sup>b*  
 PTCL say\NMLZ-2PL **come-MOD** NN DEM to be\_pure\INF  
 ‘since you said that this NN **may go down** to purify himself.’

As shown in the translation, this modal reading is best rendered in English with the use of modal auxiliaries such as *may* or *might*.

## 3.2 The geminated form: the speaker’s viewpoint on presupposed information

The geminated form also occurs in completive constructions. This use has been studied in detail by Uljas (2007). His stimulating analysis suggests that the semantic reading of the form in this syntactic context may be characterized as “proximal irrealis,” i.e.

“Complements with the geminating *sdm-f* ... describe situations that are both ‘objectively’ and/or ‘subjectively’ ‘near’ to the speaker. Yet, asserting their reality by presenting this as optimally relevant information is not the speaker’s illocutionary intention.”<sup>64</sup>

64 Uljas (2007: 99).

While the label “irrealis” seems to me infelicitous inasmuch as it somehow implies as main semantic function a stance taken by the speaker regarding the actual status of the state of affairs, this analysis correctly points at the crucial fact that asserting the informational content is not the point. From a diachronic point of view, all these semantic effects can be related to, I argue, a source construction where a definite nominalization occurs in complete function, being later reanalyzed as a verb form with modal and intersubjective readings that emerge out of its former discursive status. Comparing the following example with example 33 that shows the *sdm-w-f* form after the same verb *wḏ* ‘order, allow’ is thus relevant to illustrate this point:

- (35) *Urk. I 301, 3–4*  
*jw wḏ-n ḥm-j srr-f*  
 AUX order-PRF majesty-1SG **be\_an\_official**\NMLZ.DEF-3SG.M  
 ‘My majesty ordered his assumption as an official.’

The speaker appears to be free to choose between a <*w*> form and a geminated form in the same syntactic context, with distinct semantic readings. In examples 33 (and 34, after the verb *ḏd*, *say* used with manipulative semantics), the state of affairs in the complete clause is marked as being not actualized and representing only a potentiality. Things are different with the geminated form *srr-f*: while not explicitly assuming the actuality of its content, the speaker envisages the clause as expressing a presupposed information that is not open to discussion. The same is true in the following example, in which the status of the dead king is not the salient information in the utterance, but rather a presupposed one, while recognition of this status by the god Shu is the relevant point:

- (36) *PT §5dT*  
*jw jt-ḏ šw rḥ mrr-ḏ NN r mwt-ḏ tḥnt*  
 AUX father-2SG.F Shu know/STAT **love**\NMLZ.DEF-2SG.F NN more mother-2SG.F Tefnet  
 ‘Your father Shu knows **that** you **love** NN more than your mother Tefnet.’

Another point interesting for the diachronic analysis of the former nominalizations as marked for definiteness vs. indefiniteness lies in the fact that the geminated form shows an affinity with the syntactic function of subject complete that is not shared by the <*w*> form:

- (37) *Urk. I 221, 4*  
*wn ʕ ḥzz wj ḥm-f*  
 AUX big **praise**\NMLZ.DEF 1SG majesty-3SG.M  
 ‘**The way** his majesty **praised** me was big.’

It is to be noted that in the stative predication of the *nfr sw* type, the subject is generally definite in status<sup>65</sup>. Without dwelling more on uses that have been dealt with in detail by Uljas (2007), it is relevant to note that such a behavior confirms its characteristic feature at the level of information structure. Here again, definiteness of the (former) nominal form is

65 See Oréal fc.(b).





The *sdm-f* form that is used here is in itself unmarked for tense, I argue, and the temporal reading emerges out of the construction and its context as a whole.<sup>67</sup> Typologically, such a strategy of encoding negation is well-known:

“These constructions of type ‘there is non-V-ing’ or ‘there isn’t V-ing’ are clearly accounted for by the stativity of negation. In other words, the functional-level asymmetry – the stativity of negation – is reflected, by language-external analogy, in that in some languages negative constructions are overtly stative”<sup>68</sup>

Negative existential construction as a source for standard negation also attracted more attention in general linguistic studies since Croft (1991) shed light on the diachronic process at play in various unrelated languages.<sup>69</sup> More original maybe is the use of a nominalization marked for indefiniteness in the same source construction that results in a modal construction, described in the next section.

#### 4.2 From indefiniteness to modality in negative constructions: the <w> form

Section 3.1 on the completive use of the former indefinite nominalization after verbs with a negative orientation already illustrated the affinity between negative contexts and marked indefiniteness. Among its uses in a negative context, the <w> form is still attested as an action nominalization without the suffix pronoun encoding the participant with the *sdm-w-f* form. This form is known in grammars as the “negative complement.” It is found after negative auxiliaries such as *tm* and *jmi*:

(40) *Heqanakhte* I recto 8  
*m h3i-w hr 3ht nt rmt nb*  
 NEG descend\NMLZ-INDEF on field of-F people any  
 ‘do not go down upon the field of any people.’

67 I leave aside a more detailed account on other *sdm-f* forms that, according to the proposed analysis, are likely to share the same origin as a former nominalization used in various constructions. The gloss as IPFV-form hints to the fact that the perfective reading results from the whole construction, not the form itself, the latter showing no perfective value in other constructions. Allen (2014: 455–462) presents a theory of a tenseless/aspectless/moodless *sdm-f* that seeks to reduce all morphological features and contexts of use to one and only form. It thus presents some similarities with the proposed analysis that considers various forms (unmarked, definite, indefinite) of the same former action nominal to be the source for *sdm-fs* in distinct constructions. However, this remains a superficial similarity, since the diachronic approach developed here and in other forthcoming publications proposes an explanation of how modality, aspect or information structure get grammaticalized in constructions in a way that result in the emergence of distinct forms and constructions with their own functions.

68 See Miestamo & Van der Auwera (2011: 74).

69 See Croft (1991) and Veselinova (2014). Concerning the Egyptian case for a Croft or negative existential cycle, see my contribution to the workshop “Negation in Ancient Egyptian” (Paris, 2014), to appear (Oréal fc.(c)).

Schenkel (2000a: 7) already proposed that the negative complement and the “Prospektiv” are at least historically identical. His morphological observations on the corpus of the Coffin Texts support this view, showing that the writing of the ending <w> more or less conforms to the same parameters with both forms.<sup>70</sup>

The grammaticalization path of the modal negative construction *ni sdm-w-f* can thus be reconstructed as follows:

<i>ni</i>	<i>sdm-w-f</i>	>	<i>ni</i>	<i>sdm-w-f</i>
NEG.EX	listen\NMLZ-INDEF-3SG.M		NEG	listen-MOD-3SG.M

‘there is not any (his) listening’ > ‘there is no question of his listening’ > ‘he shall not listen.’

The “subject” of the form, formerly a possessor in the source construction, may have the semantic role of A, P or S, as is expected with an action nominal in itself unmarked for voice:

(41) PT §2118aN

<i>ni</i> (— <i>h</i> —)	<i>smh-w-j</i>	<i>tw</i>
NEG	forget-MOD-1SG	2SG.M

‘I **will not forget** you.’

(42) PT §2202cN

<i>ni</i> (— <i>h</i> —)	<i>ndri-w</i>	<i>tw</i>	<i>ʒkr</i>
NEG	seize-MOD	2SG.M	to

‘Aker **shall not seize** you.’

(43) PT §323dW

<i>ni</i> (— <i>h</i> —)	<i>rdi-w</i>	<i>Wnjs</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>nsr-tn</i>	<i>ntr-w</i>
NEG	give-MOD	Wenis	to	flame-2PL	god-PL

‘Wenis **shall not be given** to your flame, gods.’

(44) Helck (1978: 74, x+4 [Sesostris I])

<i>ni</i> (— <i>h</i> —)	<i>hʒi-w</i>	<i>pt</i>
NEG	go_down-MOD	sky

‘The sky **shall not go down**.’

The form may even remain without any participant:

(45) pEdwin Smith 17 – 7, 5 (Grapow 1958 [Second Intermediate Period])

<i>mr</i>	<i>ni</i> (— <i>h</i> —)	<i>jri-w</i>	<i>nij</i>
illness	NEG	do-MOD	ADV

‘An illness that one shall not heal.’

In that case, the source construction means literally something like ‘there is not any doing,’ resulting in the asubjectal reading ‘one can do nothing.’

<sup>70</sup> On these common features, see in particular Schenkel (2000a: 23).

## 5 Summary and perspectives

It might be of use to summarize the main points of this contribution, in order to stress what it has in common or not with previous approaches.

- Contrary to Vernus (1990) and in accordance with other linguistic analysis<sup>71</sup>, I argue that the main modal *sḏm-w-f* is not emphatic, that the notion of “non-initial main clause use” is unnecessary, and I propose a diachronic path in order to explain its attested semantic uses.
- Contrary to preceding studies on passive forms, I argue for a new division of forms and functions. I propose to distinguish between the remnant uses of a passive *sḏm(-j)-f* in past context as a circumstantial converb with resultative semantics (and not as an emphatic form, *pace* Stauder 2014), and a *sḏm(-w)-f* with both active and passive readings that is always modal.<sup>72</sup>
- Part of the proposed analysis concerning the completive use of the forms is compatible with Uljas’ (2007) intuition about semantic differences characteristic for *sḏm-w-f* and *mrr-f* in this context.
- The emphatic use of the geminated form in the “second tense” appears as resulting from the grammaticalization of a nominal feature (definiteness, Oréal 2014) within a source construction that is not an adverbial but a nominal predication (a Balanced Sentence as argued by Werning 2014). Only this diachronic analysis of how morphological and syntactic parameters combine may explain both TAM and information structure characteristics of the form, in its use as participant nominalization and as former event nominalization.

Interestingly, the diachronic orientation of the proposed analysis allows to reconcile to some extent the notion of “nominal forms” and the critics that have been made to this categorization in synchrony.<sup>73</sup> The concrete path of grammaticalization proposed here for the *mrr-f*, based on the analysis of the “emphatic” construction by Werning (2014), explains both its marked semantic profile and its nominal features. Egyptian data thus present a typologically fascinating case for the emergence of grammaticalized IS and modality marking on the verb out of former nominal morphology.

A question that remains to be explored is the moment when a nominal analysis ceases to be valid for a given form, that is to say, when the grammaticalization process as a verbal form may be said to have reached its end. While it remains out of the scope of this contribution to deal with it, it might be useful to put it into perspective. From the viewpoint of diachronic linguistics, it is of interest to note that some of the reconstructions I propose

71 See e.g. Borghouts (2010: §47, §111.b.1), Werning (2015: §40–41).

72 “Past” passive *sḏm-w* with written <w> + nominal Patient is analyzed as an impersonal anterior use of the Old Perfective (Oréal fc.(b)).

73 In this perspective, the argumentation against the nominal status of the *mrr-f* in Stauder (2016: 174) is all the more unfortunate as its radical turn somewhat naively rules out a diachronic solution to the issue. Moreover, it is often sophistic, running as follows: the *mrr-f* is no less semantically marked than the subjunctive, the subjunctive is not nominal, then the *mrr-f* is (probably) not nominal either.

involve a grammaticalization process that may not go until its expected end but remain incomplete. If one accepts to recognize a former participant/action nominalization in the form that constitutes the base for the passive *sdm(j)-f*, the question arises as to the reason why this form did not grammaticalize as a paradigm used with all kinds of verbs in Middle Egyptian. The passive *sdm(j)-f* seems to be falling out of use already in the Old Kingdom documentation. Grammaticalization studies indeed substantiate a number of cases where a process of change does not come to its potentially expected end.<sup>74</sup> At a more general level, there has been a growing interest in the correlation between morphological types and the fact that in a given language, grammaticalization processes do not go as far as theoretically possible. Earlier Egyptian data are of a great interest in this respect and require further study including a refined diachronic dimension. Heine & König (2005) make a distinction between languages that tend to show forms illustrating achieved grammaticalization processes (type A) and languages that do not (type B).<sup>75</sup> It is striking that Earlier Egyptian linguistics faces difficulties that appear distinctive for type B languages:

“an arrangement of grammatical forms and constructions in terms of morphological paradigms is frequently problematic since a given linguistic item can be described alternatively with reference to different functional and pragmatic parameters.”<sup>76</sup>

Further research will have to deal in detail with other constructions involving the same nominalizations, most notably in dependent clauses and in conditional systems that are likely to have emerged out of correlative systems similar to the Balanced Sentence. Also other nominalizations require investigation according to the same diachronic perspective, most notably the “circumstantial” converb (*jri-f*) whose base represents the unmarked (neither definite nor indefinite) form of nominalization. Moreover, it remains to explore the possible morphological realities underlying the visible graphic data attested in Egyptian documentation.<sup>77</sup>

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74 See Bybee (2010: 207) on “the hypothesis that morphological typology depends upon how far a language carries the grammaticalization process.” As for the Egyptian case, it remains difficult to explain why passive *sdm(j)-f* was blocked from running its full course to established verbal paradigm, if it was. Various causes may have played a role. The main fact obviously remains the concurrence of a more productive source, namely the extension of secondary predication using the Pseudoparticiple.

75 See Heine & König (2005: 92–95). Such a distinction is admittedly artificial in its schematic version, since, as Heine & König themselves put it, “both kinds of structural organization are to some extent present in both language types.”

76 Heine & König (2005: 94).

77 As demonstrated by Schenkel (2000b), some verbs never show a <w> ending in the corpus of the Coffin Texts. This fact is not a priori incompatible with the idea of the <w> ending marking indefiniteness on a nominalization, for the interaction with nominalized bases having distinct vocalic structure could well result in the absence of written <w>.

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