

Andréas Stauder

A rare change: the degrammaticalization of an inflectional passive marker into an impersonal subject pronoun in Earlier Egyptian*

Abstract: The paper describes a rare change whereby an inflectional passive marker is extended to new uses as an impersonal subject pronoun. The change is analyzed as an instance of degrammaticalization, more specifically of deinflectionalization. The possibility for change is modeled in terms of formal equivocation and semantic conditions favouring alternative construals of the passive construction, without prior reanalysis of the latter. The change is further related to the spread of SV patterns, which had their origins in non-verbal constructions. Degrammaticalization is thus argued to have been rendered possible by a broad conjunction of independent conditions, none of which individually exceptional. The mechanisms of change are themselves ordinary ones, consisting in occasional reanalysis, pragmatic enrichment, and context generalization. A further case of deinflectionalization in second millennium BCE Egyptian is discussed in an Appendix.

1 Introduction

Old and Middle Egyptian (collectively known as Earlier Egyptian: ca. 2700–1300 BCE) display a rich variety of passive forms and constructions. Yet, in the course of the second and early first millennium BCE,¹ the language gradually lost all of

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1 All periods in time are before the common era, and the siglum “BCE” is henceforth omitted

these. The present paper focuses on the central part of this overall process, the syntactic and semantic changes undergone by the passive morpheme {t}. In early times, {t}-marked constructions were promotional passives exclusively, fully aligned with other types of Earlier Egyptian inflectional passives. In the course of the second millennium, the morpheme {t} was extended to form new constructions, which are active impersonal in their syntax.² In these innovative uses, the morpheme {t} itself functions as a subject pronoun with non-specified reference (broadly similar in result to, but entirely different in origin from, for example, German *man*, French *on*).

While the change from a promotional construction (the passive) into a non-promotional one (the active impersonal) is found elsewhere, the rise of an impersonal subject pronoun out of an inflectional passive marker has apparently not been documented in other languages (Siewierska 2008) and therefore seems very uncommon. I describe here the evidence for this rare change as it can be traced philologically in the written record (§ 2–3, 7) and analyze how the change was made possible within the broader context of the changing grammar of early second millennium Egyptian (§ 4–6, 8–9).

As a contribution to the discussion of directionality in linguistic change, the change to be presented is submitted as an instance of degrammaticalization, and more specifically of deinflectionalization (§ 8; a further instance of deinflectionalization in second-millennium Egyptian is also introduced: § 10). The conditions for change are modeled in terms of formal equivocation and alternative construals of {t}-marked passives (§ 4–5), without prior reanalysis of the latter. I analyze how the present instance of degrammaticalization was made possible in relation to a whole series of largely independent dimensions (§ 4–6), some of which were entirely extraneous to passive voice itself (such as the gradual spread and semantic generalization of Subject-Verb patterns in the language: § 6). As with other rare changes, the possibility for change is thereby shown to have been with the conjunction of specific intra-linguistic circumstances – favorable conditions and motivating factors – none of which would have been sufficient alone, nor any exceptional in themselves (§ 9).

in the main text.

² A more precise term for “active impersonal” would here be “desubjective” (as in e.g., Haspel-math 1990). The former label is nonetheless retained here, in keeping with common usage.

Part I. Describing the change in the written record

2 Before change: passive voice in third-millennium Egyptian

2.1 Background: a brief overview of passive voice in third-millennium Egyptian³

Third-millennium Egyptian has three different types of finite passive formations (i–iii). In all of these, passive morphology is fully inflectional and specialized solely for the passive function. In addition, a form otherwise used with stative/resultative semantics, the Resultative, provides the regular expression of the passive voice with positive, fully asserted perfective events (iv):

- (i) V-passives:⁴ underlying morphology unclear; mostly unmarked in written form, rarely with a written ending *-w*;
- (ii) T-passives:⁵ marked by {t} (*-/tv-/) after the stem; main allographs include *-t*, *-tw*, and *-tʔ* (the last only in early times);
- (iii) Reduplicating passives: a more marginal type, only with some inflectional classes; marked by the reduplication of the last root consonant;⁶
- (iv) Resultative.⁷

Among these formations, the T-passive type comprises a variety of individual forms, such as *sdm-tw=f* (hear-PASS=3MSG), *sdm-n-tw=f* (hear-ANT-PASS=3MSG), etc. (in more detail below, § 4.2). The V-passive probably consists of two forms.⁸ The finite reduplicating passive is a single formal category.

Individual forms are complexly distributed in paradigms and in text. For instance, anterior passive events can be expressed by a V-passive, a T-passive, or

³ On Earlier Egyptian passive voice, Stauder (2014); Reintges (1997) (different analyses).

⁴ Stauder (2014: 21–44); also referred to in Egyptological discussion as “*sdm(w)=f* passives”.

⁵ Stauder (2014: 9–21); also referred to as “*tw*-passives”.

⁶ The reduplicating passive is arguably a secondary morphological formation, and possibly only a sub-type of V-passives (Stauder 2014: 44–60; 2008; different interpretation by e.g., Reintges 2003); this formation is also referred to as “*sdmm=f* passives”.

⁷ Stauder (2014: 108–119, 235–250, 279–287); also variously referred to as “pseudoparticiple”, “stative”, or “old perfective”.

⁸ Stauder (2014: 21–44); Schenkel (2004–2005); Allen (1984). Different view: Reintges (2004; 1997).

the Resultative, depending on polarity, information status, event semantics, and the nature of the subject.⁹ Similarly, posterior passive events can be expressed by a V-passive, a T-passive, or the reduplicating passive, depending on modality, inflectional class, and written register.¹⁰ Only relative present tense and imperfective aspect are the exclusive domain of one particular formation, namely T-passives (further discussion below, § 5.4).

All three types of passive formations (as well as the Resultative when used as a passive) can be followed by an agent phrase in syntactic periphery, introduced by *in* (§ 2.2.1). Moreover, both T-passives and V-passives are regularly derived from a variety of intransitive event-types, resulting in impersonal passives (§ 2.2.2).¹¹

2.2 Third-millennium {t}-marked constructions as genuine passives

Among the various types of passive morphology introduced above, only {t} was extended to new environments in the second millennium, resulting in constructions which are active impersonal in syntax. In connection with this development, doubt has been raised as to whether {t} was a genuine passive marker in the first place, rather than, perhaps, an impersonal subject pronoun all along. A preliminary step therefore consists in establishing the nature of later third-millennium T-passives as genuine promotional passives, systematically on a par with V-passives¹² across all relevant passive constructions.¹³ In order not to anticipate the result of the following conclusion, T-passives are provisionally referred to as “{t}-marked constructions”. This terminological precaution is adopted only here, and T-passives will subsequently be referred to as “T-passives” again (from § 3 on).

⁹ Stauder (2014: 235–347).

¹⁰ Stauder (2014: 230–234).

¹¹ No instances of impersonal reduplicating passives are found in the record, probably reflecting a gap in documentation (Stauder 2014: 75–76).

¹² For the sake of expository economy, the more marginal reduplicating passive type is omitted from now on.

¹³ Major parts of the following argument are already in Reintges (1996), who reaches the same conclusion and provides references to the previous debate.

2.2.1 Promotion and demotion

Late third-millennium {t}-marked constructions display the very same promotional properties as V-passives do. Both {t}-marked constructions and V-passives are Verb-Subject (henceforth: VS) patterns. In the VS conjugation (active and passive), singular pronouns distinguish subject and object forms (in more detail, § 4.1). For the P argument,¹⁴ {t}-marked constructions select subject clitics, just as V-passives do. The construction is therefore promotional with either passive type. Compare, respectively:¹⁵

- (1) a. [T-pass.]

n *ms-n-t=i* *i's* *msyt*
NEG give_birth-ANT-PASS=1SG.SBJ FOC birth
'I was not born through regular birth.' (Coffin Texts I 344c)

- b. [V-pass.]

n *ms-w=i* *i's* *msyt*
NEG give_birth-PASS.PFV=1SG.SBJ FOC birth
'I was not born through regular birth.' (Coffin Texts II 3g G1T)¹⁶

14 The following labels are adopted for grammatical roles:

- A, the first core argument of a transitive event (subject in active clause);
- P, the second core argument of a transitive event (direct object in an active clause; subject in a passive one);
- S, the sole core argument of an intransitive event (subject in an active clause).

Only in the context of describing word-order patterns is S used differently, for denoting the grammatical relation of subject. In this usage, “S” is always adjacent to a “V” (e.g., SV, VS).

15 Glossing follows the Leipzig Glossing Rules. Two additional glossing conventions have been adopted. In Earlier Egyptian, linguistic function is often a feature of the overall constructional scheme rather than solely of an individual morpheme. For the sake of clarity, the gloss is nevertheless placed under the most characteristic morpheme of a given scheme. Moreover, glossing is “functional”, rather than “etymological”. This is justified by the synchronic formal and functional autonomy of various constructional schemes in which meanings have become fully grammatical rather than being inferred pragmatically.

16 The meaning of (1a) and (1b) is the same and the difference here only a diachronic one: (1a) represents a more innovative construction than (1b). This particular change is unimportant for the subsequent discussion and is not further developed here (see Stauder 2014: 250–263, 297–318, 334–343).

Compare, in the active:

- c. *ms-n=i* *inw=s*
 give_birth-ANT=1SG.SBJ ropes=3FSG
 ‘I have fashioned (lit. given_birth) its ropes (viz., of the Neshmet-bark [a sacred bark]).’ (CG 20538 II, c, 4)

Late third-millennium {t}-marked constructions also display the very same demotional properties as V-passives do. With either formal type, the demoted agent can be expressed in syntactic periphery by a phrase introduced by *in*¹⁷ (henceforth: agent-expressing *in*-construction). Compare, respectively:

- (2) a. [T-pass.]

šzp-t *ʕ=f* *in ntr* *ʕ3*
 take\SUBJ-PASS arm=3MSG by god great
 ‘May his arm be taken by the great god!’ (Mereri, east wall false door, l.1)

- b. [V-pass.]

t(3)z *m3kt* *in rʕ* *hft* *wsir*
 knit\PASS.PFV ladder by Re before Osiris
 ‘A ladder was tied together by Re before Osiris.’ (Pyr. 472a^{WNNt} [PT 305])

Moreover, V-passives and {t}-marked constructions license the very same range of demoted unexpressed or expressed agents. In particular, demoted agents can be singular and specific with passives of either morphological type (with expressed agents, compare (2a–b)). In “active impersonal” constructions on the other hand, implied agents are typically plural and/or non-specific in reference, and singular and specific agents are typically disallowed or uncommon (e.g., Blevins 2003).

¹⁷ On *in*, Stauder (2014: 79–82, 95–108); Güldemann (in this volume); Reintges (1998; and in this volume).

2.2.2 Event types

Late third-millennium {t}-marked constructions are found with the very same range of event-types as V-passives are, and only with these. In Earlier Egyptian, passivization underlies a single semantic condition, namely that the event must have an (at least weakly) agentive participant (thus including, for example, verbs of perception):¹⁸

Semantic condition for passivization in Earlier Egyptian

The event to be passivized must have an (at least weakly) agentive participant.

Any transitive event that meets this requirement can be passivized, irrespective of the nature of the P argument (topicality, individuation, affectedness). Similarly, any intransitive event can be passivized, provided the above agentive-argument condition is met. These conditions apply to V-passives and {t}-marked constructions alike. With similar types of events, compare T- and V-passives in (3a–b) and (3c–d):

(3) a. [T-pass.]

n pr-n-t n snd=f
 NEG come_out-HAB-PASS for fear=3MSG
 ‘There was no coming out for fear of him.’ (Mo‘alla II η 1)

b. [V-pass.]

spr r(=i) r=s
 reach\PASS.PFV to(=1SG) about=3FSG
 ‘There was reaching to me about it.’ (Mo‘alla II η 2)

c. [T-pass.]

mtn š3¢-tw grt m rdt p3 ¢qw (...)
 COMP start\SUBJ-PASS PTCL in give this food_provisions
 ‘Look ,one must now begin to give out these food provisions!’ (Hegakhte II, ro 31–32)

¹⁸ Stauder (2014: 71–79).

d. [V-pass.]

mṯn š3ꜥ-w m wnm rmṯ ʕ3
 COMP start-PASS.PFV with eat people here
 ‘Look, one has begun to eat people here!’ (Heqanakhte II, ro 27–28)

Conversely, intransitive events that lack an (at least weakly) agentive participant are not found with V-passives. Nor are they found with {t}-marked constructions in late third-/very early second-millennium Egyptian either. Instead, a variety of other strategies are used whenever the non-agentive S of an intransitive verb is to be left unspecified. The following is illustrative of such alternative strategies, which include zero-subject active constructions (4a–c) and event-nominalization in presentative/existential patterns (4d). For the sake of the subsequent demonstration, examples have been taken from texts only slightly earlier than the ones in which innovative uses will be found (§ 3.1). Moreover, environments have been selected in which a {t}-marked construction is used with events meeting the condition for passivization. These include object clauses after governing (*r*)*dī* ‘give, cause to’ (4a, 4d), and general present tense state-of-affairs (4b–c):

- (4) a. *n rd-n=f ḥms-ø ḥ3 ib=f*
 NEG cause-HAB=3MSG sit\SUBJ around heart=3MSG
 ‘He (viz., the king) does not allow one to rest around his heart.’
 (Sinuhe B 59 [literary, ca. 1950 BCE])

Contrast:

rd-in st3-tw msw nsw
 cause-PST drag\SUBJ-PASS children king
 ‘(He) had the royal children ushered in.’ (Sinuhe B 263–264)

- b. *sḏr-ø n=f ḥdr rꜥ nb*
 lie for=3MSG anguished\RES day every
 ‘Because of it (viz., old age) one lies anguished every day’ (Teaching of Ptahhotep 10 [literary, ca. 1950 BCE])

Contrast:

īw ḥsf-tw n sw3 ḥr hpw
 COMP punish-PASS to transgress\PTCP on laws
 ‘There is punishment for the one who transgresses the laws’ (Ptahhotep 90)

- c. *ḥtp-ø* *ḥr* *bīn* (...) [intr., S non-agentive]
 be_content about evil
īw *ḥʕd3-tw* (...) [intr., S agentive; event passivizable]
 COMP plunder-PASS
īw *šw-ø m* *ʕk-īb* (...) [intr., S non-agentive]
 COMP lack in intimates
 ‘(To whom shall I speak today:) There is contentment about evil (...)
 (To whom shall I speak today:) There is plundering (...)
 (To whom shall I speak today:) There is lack of intimates (...)’ (Debate
 of a Man and His Soul 108–124 [literary, ca. 1950 BCE])

- d. *n-sp* *d(=i)* *ḥpr* *m(w)t* *n* *ḥkr* *m* *sp3t* *tn*
 never allow(=1SG) occur die\INF for hunger in province this
 ‘Never did I allow there to be starving in this province.’ (Moʿalla IV
 17–18 [ca. 2150 BCE])

[Event-nominalization in an existential/presentative construction with *ḥpr*
 ‘occur’. In the same text, contrast with (3a) *pr-n-tw* (come_out-HAB-PASS).]

As the above illustrates, {t}-marked constructions in the late third and very early second millennium underlie the very same semantic condition of passivization as V-passives do:

- Both V-passives and {t}-marked constructions are regularly used with intransitive events that have an (at least weakly) agentive participant (3a–d).
- Neither V-passives nor {t}-marked constructions are ever used with intransitive events that do not have an (at least weakly) agentive participant. With such events, alternative strategies are used whenever the non-agentive S is to remain unspecified (illustrated in (4a–d) for environments that, in the very same texts, display a {t}-marked construction with events that meet the semantic condition for passivization).

In early times, {t}-marked constructions are therefore genuine inflectional passives, systematically on a par with V-passives on all three accounts: promotion, demotion, and licensed event-types. Consequently, early {t}-marked constructions, such as the one discussed in the present section, are from here on again referred to as “T-passives”. The term “{t}-marked constructions” is henceforth reserved for innovative usages of the morpheme {t}, in constructions that can not be analyzed as passives anymore (§ 3).

3 Innovative constructions of {t} in second-millennium texts

Beginning in the early second millennium, {t} is extended to a series of new environments from which it was previously excluded. These include:

- (a) events that lack an agentive argument (§ 3.1);
- (b) subject-initial patterns, in which {t} is inserted into the pre-verbal subject-slot (§ 3.2).

In such environments, {t}-marked constructions cannot be analyzed as passives anymore, for semantic reasons (a) or for morpho-syntactic ones (b). Meanwhile, V-passives remained unaffected by either change. Both processes of extension are therefore specific to {t}.

3.1 Extension of {t}-marked constructions to event types and situations that cannot be passivized on semantic grounds

From the early second millennium on, {t}-marked constructions are found with event types and situations that do not meet the semantic condition for passivization, namely, that the event must have an (at least weakly) agentive argument (§2.2.2). Following the relative chronology of first occurrences in the written record, these innovative uses are the following:¹⁹

(i) Dynamic events lacking an agentive argument:

- (5) a. *s^cnḥw m rḏ mwt-tw*
 life_giver NEG.IMP give die\SUBJ-DETR²⁰
 ṣḥtmw m rḏ ḥtm-tw
 destroyer NEG.IMP give perish\SUBJ-DETR

¹⁹ For each environment to be discussed, I give only the earliest examples in the written record. Note that the fine dating of several literary compositions only transmitted in later copies remains difficult to establish precisely (see Stauder 2013).

²⁰ Innovative usages of {t} are henceforth glossed as “DETR” (for “detransitive”). The non-committal label is used in order not to anticipate on the analyses which follow. When {t} is used in the subject slot of Subject-Verb patterns and of non-verbal patterns (e.g., (7b), (8)–(12)), the morpheme is transcribed as =tw, reflecting its status as a clitic. In all other cases, {t} is transcribed as -tw.

‘Life-giver, do not allow one to die! Destroyer, do not allow one to perish!’ (Eloquent Peasant B1 252–254 [literary, ca. 1900–1850 BCE])

- b. *iw hr-tw n hnt w3*
 COMP fall-DETR for greed far
 ‘One falls far for greed.’ (Eloquent Peasant B1 321–322)
- c. *n wrd-n-tw hr=s*
 NEG become_weary-HAB-DETR on=3FSG
 ‘There is no becoming weary through it.’ (Graffito of Antef at Sehel, 8–9 [= JEA 39, 50–59; ca. 1800 BCE])

(ii) Non-dynamic events (perforce lacking an agentive argument):

- (6) a. *n hkr-tw m mpwt=i*
 NEG be_hungry-DETR in years=1SG
n ib-tw im
 NEG be_thirsty-DETR therein
iw hms-tw m ir-t-n=i (...)
 COMP sit-DETR in do\REL-FSG-CPD=1SG
 ‘There was no being hungry in my years, there was no being thirsty then; one was relaxed (lit. sitting) through what I had done (...)’
 (Teaching of Amenemhat § 11c–d [literary, dating debated, ca. 1850–1450 BCE])
- b. *nn sdr-tw hkr n mt*
 NEG spend_the_night\SUBJ-DETR be_hungry\RES for death
 ‘The night will not be spent fasting for death.’ (The Prophecy of Neferti 9c [literary, dating debated, ca. 1850–1450 BCE])
- c. *nn šw-tw m [...]*
 NEG lack\SUBJ-DETR in
 ‘There will be no lack in [...]’ (The Lament of Ipuwer 10.6 [literary, dating debated, ca. 1800–1450 BCE])

(iii) With the Resultative, expressing a state:²¹

- (7) a. $\text{ḥ}^{\text{c}}\text{-}n=tw$ $\text{ḥ}^{\text{c}}\text{-}w$ im wr r
 AUX-PST=DETR rejoice-RES therein greatly more_than
 $\text{ḥ}t$ nbt
 thing any
 ‘One was in a state of rejoicing therein very greatly.’ (Ameniseneb,
 Stela Louvre C13, 16–17 [funerary self-presentation, ca. 1700 BCE])
- b. $tw=tw^{22}$ $kb-w$
 BASE=DETR be_fresh-RES
 ‘One is cool.’ (Paheri, pl. 3 [caption to a pictorial scene in a tomb,
 evoking colloquial registers, ca. 1450 BCE])

(iv) In situational predicate constructions (a nonverbal pattern: Subject – Adverbial Phrase):

- (8) a. $iw=tw$ m $3ḥt-itn$
 COMP=DETR in Akhetaten
 ‘One (viz., the king) was in Akhetaten’ (Amarna Boundary Stela U, 4
 [ca. 1350 BCE])
- b. $hrw pn$ $iw=tw$ m $\text{ḥ} (...)$
 day this CIRC=DETR in palace
 ‘On this day, when One (viz., the king) was in the palace (...)’ (Urk. IV
 2031, 15 [Tutankhamun’s Restoration Stela, ca. 1325 BCE])

Such constructions of {t} are seen to be innovative when contrasted with only slightly earlier strategies for expressing unspecified reference of the S argument with the same, or similar, event-types: zero-subject active constructions and event-nominalization in presentative/existential constructions (§ 2.2.2). Among the examples quoted above, contrast:

²¹ This construction remains low in text frequency in all later times. This reflects the semantic unnaturalness of combining an expression of unspecified reference ({t}) with a stative/resultative gram which naturally displays a strong tendency to select highly topical subjects.

²² For the formation $tw=tw$ (the Late Egyptian subject pronoun), see below, § 3.2.2.

- events of position:
 - *hms-tw* ‘there is sitting’ (6a);
slightly earlier: *hms-ø* (4a);
 - *sdr-tw* ‘one is lying’ (6b)
slightly earlier: *sdr-ø* (4b);
- physical and mental states:
 - *hkr-tw* ‘there is being hungry’ (6a), *ib-tw* ‘there is being thirsty’ (6a),
wrđ-n-tw ‘there is becoming weary’ (5c);
slightly earlier: *hṭp-ø* ‘there is contentment’ (4c);
- events of “disappearing”:
 - *mwt-tw* ‘there is dying’ (5a), *htm-tw* ‘there is perishing’ (5a);
slightly earlier: *hpr m(w)t* ‘there is dying’ (lit.: ‘death occurs’) (4d);
- events of “lacking”:
 - *nm šw-tw m* [...] ‘there will be no lack of [...]’ (6c);
slightly earlier: *iw šw-ø m* (...) ‘there is lack of (...)’ (4c).

3.2 {T} extracted out of its inflectional position and accommodated into the subject slot of subject-initial patterns

Like V-passives, T-passives belong to the synthetic Verb–Subject conjugation. In T-passives, the passive marker {t} occupies an inflectional slot after the stem and before subject clitics:

[active:] *sḍm-n=f* (hear-ANT =3MSG.SBJ)
 [V-passive:] *sḍm-w=f* (hear-PASS.PFV =3MSG.SBJ)
 [T-passive:] *sḍm-tw=f* (hear\SUBJ-PASS =3MSG.SBJ)
sḍm-n-tw=f (hear-ANT-PASS =3MSG.SBJ)
 (etc., further illustration below, § 4.2)

In early second-millennium texts, {t} begins to be extended to subject-initial patterns. These cannot be passivized because they have the lexical verb in the infinitive and therefore lack an inflectional slot after the stem. {T} is then accommodated into the subject slot itself. Syntactically, the construction is non-promotional:

iw=f r-sḍm=s (COMP=3MSG.SBJ FUT-hear\INF=3FSG.OBJ) (‘He will hear her’)
iw=tw r-sḍm=s (COMP=DETR FUT-hear\INF=3FSG.OBJ) (‘She will be heard’)

3.2.1 {T} in the subject slot of NP *ḥr-sḏm* and NP *r-sḏm*

The early stages of the process are observed with the subject-initial patterns NP *ḥr-sḏm* and NP *r-sḏm*:

- NP *ḥr-sḏm* (a progressive tense in (9a), and as part of a past narrative construction in (9b)):

- (9) a. *wn=t ḥr-ḳd ḥnrt pn (...)*
 AUX.PST=DETR PROG-build\INF enclosure this
 ‘This enclosure was being built (...)’ (RILN 74, 6–7 [Antefiqer’s Girgâwi rock inscription, Lower Nubia, ca. 1950 BCE])

Compare:

ḥr wn Ḥr ḥr-mr-t grg=s (...)
 for AUX.PST Horus PROG-wish-INF found=3FSG
 ‘For Horus had been wishing to restore it (...)’ (Moʿalla I α 2)

- b. *wn-în=tw ḥr-rḏ-t n=f t3 10 ḥnḳt*
 AUX.PST=DETR PST-give-INF to=3MSG bread 10 beer
ds 2 rʿ-nb
 jars 2 daily
 ‘And one began giving him ten loaves of bread and two jars of beer daily.’ (Eloquent Peasant B1 115-116 [ca. 1900–1850 BCE]).

Compare:

wn-în šḥty pn ḥr-rm-yt ʿ3w-wrt (...)
 AUX.PST peasant this PST-weep-INF very-much
 ‘And this peasant began weeping very much (...)’ (Eloquent Peasant B1 55–56)

- NP *r-sḏm* (a future tense):

- (10) a. *îw=tw r-rḏ-t ʿrk p3 z 2 m-dd (...)*
 COMP=DETR FUT-give-INF swear DEM man 2 saying
 ‘The two men shall be made to swear as follows: (...)’ (P. UC 32055, ro 9 [legal document, ca. 1800 BCE])

Compare:

iw=i r-d-t n=k tp (...)
 COMP=1SG FUT-give-INF to=2SG amount
 ‘I am to give you the amount (...)’ (P. UC 32055, ro 4)

- b. *tw r-šsp ḥw nw ḥ3 (...)*
 DETR FUT-seize\INF weapons of combat
iw=tw r-ir-t ḥ3w m bī3 (...)
 COMP=DETR FUT-do-INF arms in copper
 ‘Weapons of combat will be taken up, (...);
 (And) arms will be made of copper (...)’ (Neferti 8f–9a [literary, ca.
 1850–1450 BCE])

Compare:

s3 n s r-ir-t m=f (...)
 son of man FUT-do-INF name=3MSG
iw ʕ3mw r-ḥr n šʕt=f (...)
 COMP Asiatics FUT-fall\INF to massacre=3MSG
 ‘(...) The son of a man will make his name (...);
 The Asiatics will fall to his slaughtering (...)’ (Neferti 14a–e)

In a similar fashion, {t} is later extended to two other subject-initial patterns: Subject – Resultative and Subject – Adverbial Phrase (situational predicate construction). These have already been mentioned for not being passivizable on semantic grounds (§ 3.1, (iii)–(iv)). As to the morphological issue, compare now:

- Subject – Resultative:

ḥʕ-n=tw ḥʕ-w im
 AUX-PST=DETR rejoice-RES therein
 ‘Then one was in a state of rejoicing therein.’ [= (7a), ca. 1700 BCE]

ḥʕ-n=sn hr-w ḥr=s
 AUX-PST=3PL.SBJ be_content-RES on=3FS
 ‘Then they (viz., the priests of Wepwawet) were satisfied with it.’ (Siut I 276).

- Subject – Adverbial Phrase (situational predicate construction):

iw=tw m 3ḥt-ītn (...)

CIRC=DETR in Akhetaten

‘(...) when One was in Akhetaten’ [= (8a), ca. 1350 BCE]

iw īt=i m wʿw (...)

CIRC [father=1SG].SBJ as soldier

‘(...) when my father was a soldier (...)’ (Urk. IV 2, 10).

3.2.2 {T} as a component of the Late Egyptian subject pronoun

From the mid-second millennium on, {t} is accommodated into the paradigm of the newly developing Late Egyptian subject pronoun. In the first and second persons singular and plural, this pronoun is built on a (homograph, but entirely unrelated) base *tw=*, followed by the old subject clitics. The impersonal form of the new subject pronoun is analogical to interlocutive persons and accommodates {t} in the same slot as the old subject clitics:

Late Egyptian subject pronoun

- interlocutive persons: BASE + subject clitics

tw=i (BASE=1SG) ‘I’; *tw=k* (BASE=2MSG), *tw=t* (BASE=2FSG) ‘you’;

tw=n (BASE=1PL) ‘we’; *tw=tn* (BASE=2PL) ‘you (pl.)’;

- impersonal form: BASE + {t}

tw=tw (BASE=DETR) ‘one’.

The Late Egyptian subject pronoun is used in main clauses with some of the same subject-initial patterns illustrated above (§ 3.2.1): NP *ḥr-sḏm* (11, 22), Subject – Resultative (7b), Subject – Adverbial Predicate:

- (11) *ḥr tw=tw ḥr-3s=n m šmt*
 and BASE=DETR PROG-hurry\INF=1PL in going
 ‘And they are hurrying us in our going.’ (Paheri, pl. 3 [caption to a pictorial scene in a tomb, evoking colloquial registers, ca. 1450 BCE])

The first occurrences of *tw=tw* in the extant record (11, 7b) follow the first occurrence of the new subject pronoun itself only by a few generations. The differ-

ence in time is partly accounted for by the low density of less formal registers in the mid-second-millennium record compounded with the lesser text frequency of detransitive clauses in discourse. The chronological proximity of first occurrences therefore demonstrates that by the mid-second millennium, if not much before, {t} was freely used as an impersonal subject pronoun.

In the second part of the second millennium, {t} is further extended to all newly grammaticalizing Late Egyptian SV conjugational tenses (Conjunctive, Sequential (20b), Focusing tenses, Terminative, Negative Past, Negative Perfect, Negative Aorist); e.g., with the Terminative:

- (12) *imm=se m rmt-s3w iirt=tw gm it3w-rmt (...)*
 give\IMP=3SG as prisoner TERM=DETR find\INF thief
 ‘Make her a prisoner until a thief is found (...)’ (P. BM 10052, XV.8–9 [ca. 1100 BCE; NB.: here not the earliest occurrence])

Compare:

- imm=sw n=s iirt=i ii (...)*
 give\IMP=3SG to=3FSG TERM=1SG come\INF
 ‘Give it to her until I come (...)’ (P. Turin 1977, ro 7–8)

As with *tw=tw* just discussed, the first occurrences of these SV patterns with {t} shortly follow the first occurrences of the new patterns themselves. If need be, this further demonstrates the by then free use of {t} as an impersonal subject in SV patterns.

3.2.3 {T} doubled in the doubly inflected patterns *hr=f sdm=f* and *k3=f sdm=f*

Turning back in time, {t} was also extended to the doubly inflected patterns *hr=f sdm=f* and *k3=f sdm=f*, with earliest occurrences by 1800–1700 BCE. As with other SV patterns discussed above (§ 3.2), {t} is accommodated into the subject slot of active patterns. Moreover, {t} itself is replicated, thereby behaving differently from inflectional markers in Earlier Egyptian.²³ On both accounts, {t} aligns mor-

²³ Doubling of inflectional morphemes is limited in Earlier Egyptian to patterns grammaticalized from erstwhile serial constructions such as the narrative past tense *h^c-n sdm-n=f* (AUX-ANT hear-PST=3MSG) ‘(Then) he heard’ (< ‘He stood up and heard’ [stand_up-PST hear-PST=3MSG]).

phologically with pronominal morphemes rather than with inflectional markers of verbal categories. Compare:

- active, full noun subjects:

hr $rm\bar{t}_i$ $s\bar{d}m=f_i$ NP_j
(MOD²⁴ man.SBJ hear=3MSG.AGR NP.OBJ)

- active, pronominal subjects:

$hr=f_i$ $s\bar{d}m=f_i$ NP_j
(MOD=3MSG.SBJ hear=3MSG²⁵ NP.OBJ)

- detransitive, with {t}:

$hr=tw$ $s\bar{d}m=tw$ NP
(MOD=DETR hear=DETR NP)

- (13) a. (...) $k\bar{z}=tw$ $s\bar{d}m=tw$ m hs $ir-y$
 MOD=DETR hear=DETR in return to-ADV
 ‘(...) then there is to be news by return of it!’ (lit.: ‘then there shall be heard of it’) (P. UC 32190A, ro, III.x+9, [business letter, ca. 1800 BCE])

Compare:

$k\bar{z}$ $t\bar{z}ty$ $h\bar{z}b=f$ $[wp]wtyw=f$ $r=s$
 MOD vizier send=3MSG.AGR envoys=3MSG about=3MSG
 ‘The vizier is to send his envoys for it (...)’ (P. UC 32190A, ro, III.x+7–8)

 $k\bar{z}=k$ $\text{ʕ}pr=k$ $p\bar{z}y=k$ $bw-nfr$
 MOD=2MSG provide=2MSG POSS.ART=2MSG goodness
 ‘You shall then provide your own goodness’ (P. UC 32199, 8–9)

²⁴ MOD for “modal”. For a detailed analysis of the semantics and diachronics of various $k\bar{z}$ - and hr -marked patterns, Vernus (1990: 61–99).

²⁵ The second occurrence of the subject clitic, co-referenced to the first, can be analyzed here either as agreement (by analogy with the case of a full noun subject) or as a double realization of the pronominal subject in this particular pattern. The issue is inconsequential for the following discussion.

- b. $\dot{h}r=t$ $wbd=t=f$ ²⁶
 MOD=DETR burn=DETR=3MSG
 ‘Then he shall be burnt.’ (Abydenian boundary stela usurped by
 Neferhotep, 6 [ca. 1700 BCE])

Compare:

$\dot{h}r=k$ $\dot{d}=k$ $\dot{i}nt$ $n=\dot{i}$ $\dot{i}wt-n-\dot{h}b$
 MOD=2MSG cause=2MSG bring to=1SG Iutenhab
 ‘You’ll have to have Iutenhab brought to me.’ (Hegnakht II, ro 40)

Part II. Analyzing the change

The change described in the preceding section consists of two roughly simultaneous processes of extension, to event types that cannot be passivized on semantic grounds (§ 3.1) and to patterns that cannot be passivized on morphological grounds (§ 3.2). Meanwhile, {t} continued to be used with passivizable event types in VS forms throughout the second millennium, just as it was in the third millennium. Such continued uses of T-passives are no less productive than they were before. Nor do second-millennium T-passives differ morphologically from third-millennium ones. Moreover, with T-passives the passive construction itself remains at first unchanged in both its promotional and demotional properties (in detail below, § 7). In analyzing the mechanisms of the changes described in the preceding section, one is therefore prevented from positing a reanalysis of T-passives *prior* to the extension of {t} to new environments.

Instead, the conditions for innovative constructions of {t} are analyzed here in terms of formal equivocation²⁷ and in terms of discourse contexts that favor alternative construals of T-passives. Alternative construals (§ 5.1), made possible by formal equivocation (§ 4) and encouraged in certain discourse contexts (§ 5.2–4), occur in the occasional representations of speakers. They provide sufficient conditions for the extension of {t} to new environments, without T-passives at this early point themselves undergoing any reanalysis, nor indeed, at first, any change at all.

²⁶ On the formal realization of the P argument as a subject clitic, see the discussion below, § 7.2.3.

²⁷ The term “equivocation” is inspired by Mufwene (1989).

4 Formal dimensions

Formal pre-conditions for the changes described here are on two levels: the means of overt coding of grammatical relations in Earlier Egyptian (§ 4.1), and the nature of T-passive morphology, as contrasting with V-passive morphology (§ 4.2).

4.1 Space for syntactic equivocation: the coding of grammatical relations in VS patterns

As previously discussed (§ 2.2.1), V- and T-passives are promotional constructions, i.e., constructions in which the P argument (the direct object in the active counterpart) is promoted to subject. On the other hand, the particular coding properties of grammatical relations in Earlier Egyptian result in considerable space for syntactic equivocation when it comes to passive constructions. This situation permits alternative construals of many passive constructions by language users as constructions in which the P argument is not necessarily promoted syntactically to subject.

The coding of core grammatical relations in Earlier Egyptian is primarily achieved by word order.²⁸ In SV patterns, coding is entirely determined at this level (S-V-O). In VS patterns (V-S-O), nominal morphology also comes into play, but only with singular pronominal clitics. Singular pronominal clitics distinguish two forms, which in VS patterns are associated with the roles of subject and object. The following Table illustrates those aspects of coding that are relevant to the present discussion:

– Nominal morphology (only relevant for VS patterns):

Singular clitics					Plural clitics			Full nouns
two sets of forms ²⁹					syncretic			no case marking
1SG	2MSG	2FSG	3MSG	3FSG	1PL	2PL	3PL	
= <i>i</i>	= <i>k</i>	= <i>t</i>	= <i>f</i>	= <i>s</i>	= <i>n</i>	= <i>tn</i>	= <i>sn</i>	
= <i>w(i)</i>	= <i>tw</i>	= <i>tn</i>	= <i>sw</i>	= <i>s(i)</i>				

²⁸ Intra-verbal agreement is limited to specific SV patterns, none of which are relevant to the present discussion.

²⁹ Referred to in Egyptology as “suffix pronouns” (first line) and “dependent pronouns” (second line). Both behave as clitics. The longer forms (second line) are historically derived from the shorter ones (first line), e.g., 2MSG =*tw* (with the Old Egyptian alternant =*kw*) < =*k* + -*w*. In synchrony, the two paradigms are fully distinct, morphologically and functionally.

– Word order in VS patterns:

Rigid V-S-O; clitics precede full nouns; with singular pronouns, the first set of clitics is used with subjects, the second set with objects; e.g.:

<i>sḏm nsw ḥrw</i>	(hear king voice)	‘may the king hear a voice’
<i>sḏm=f ḥrw</i>	(hear=3MSG.SBJ voice)	‘may <i>he</i> hear a voice’
<i>sḏm=sw nsw</i>	(hear=3MSG.OBJ king)	‘may the king hear <i>it</i> ’
<i>sḏm=f=sw</i>	(hear=3MSG.SBJ=3MSG.OBJ)	‘may he hear it’
<i>sḏm=sn nsw</i>	(hear=3PL king)	‘may the king hear them’ / ‘may they hear the king’.

In VS patterns – to which Earlier Egyptian inflectional passives belong – both subject and object lie on the same side of the verb. On the other hand, passive constructions have only a single core argument, P, or none (in zero subject constructions of the passive and with impersonal passives).³⁰ In a language in which coding is mainly a feature of relative word order, equivocation as to the syntactic status of the P argument is then facilitated, extending to all cases in which the P argument is not a singular pronoun.³¹

Passives derived from transitives

(‘let it be eaten’; ‘let them be eaten’; ‘let bread be eaten’; ‘let it be eaten’):

- P sg. pronoun: *wnm-tw=f* (eat-PASS=3MSG.SBJ) [non-equivocating]
- P pl. pronoun: *wnm-tw=sn* P subject, P object, or P indeterminate?
- P full noun: *wnm-tw t3* P subject, P object, or P indeterminate?
- Zero subject: *wnm-tw ∅* no overt expression of P

³⁰ Zero-subject passive constructions are constructions in which a subject low in individuation is left unexpressed as a strategy for inter-clausal cohesion (a kind of “anaphoric zero”; see Stauder 2014: 140–148). They are distinct from impersonal passives, which are derived from (primary or secondary) intransitives; in the latter, the construction is genuinely subjectless (Stauder 2014: 73–77; 158–178).

³¹ In comparison, the space for possible syntactic equivocation in Earlier Egyptian is even broader than in the Slavonic (Polish *-to/-no* and *-się* constructions) and Romance languages (Spanish *se* and Italian *si* constructions) in which a construction used as a promotional passive also went some way toward a non-promotional construction (for these, and other, changes, see Siewierska 2008; Haspelmath 1990: 57–58).

Impersonal passives, derived from (secondary or primary) intransitives

(‘let there be eating’; ‘let there be coming’):

- P erased: *wnm-tw* no P
- no P: *īl-tw* no P

4.2 Verbal morphology: the componentiality of T-passives

While the above equally applies to V- and T-passives, only the latter undergo the changes described in the present paper. In particular, only {t} is extracted out of its erstwhile exclusively inflectional position to be accommodated into the nominal subject slot of SV patterns. Among other things (see § 5.4 for semantic dimensions), this contrast relates to the different morphological nature of the two passive formations.

Earlier Egyptian verbal morphology can be broadly described as mildly synthetic, with a low degree of fusion and mostly singular exponence. Individual forms vary with respect to the above categories, as do inflectional passive formations. The morphology of (the) V-passive(s) remains difficult to reconstruct in any detail due to largely opaque graphemics. Yet, its fusional character is clear. Formally, V-passive morphology is characterized by a specific stem involving some distinctive vowel melody and/or stress pattern and syllable structure. Moreover, V-passive morphology codes passive voice and perfective aspect in a portmanteau fashion and is thus a rare exception to the aforementioned tendency of Earlier Egyptian verbal morphology to display singular exponence. Given such morphological and aspectual determinations, V-passive morphology is incompatible with any further inflectional marking of categories of Tense-Aspect-Mood.

By contrast, the morpheme {t} is mono-functional. It codes only the grammatical function of passive and is attached to the active stem after any Tense-Aspect-Mood markers there may be. T-passives are therefore componential, formally and semantically. Accordingly, T-passive morphology can be accommodated onto any active stem, provided the semantic conditions for passivization are met.³²

³² As noted above (§ 2.2.2), this excludes events that lack an agentive argument in their semantic representation. In a related manner, passivization of imperatives is prohibited in Earlier Egyptian (recourse is made to periphrastic patterns instead). This is in conformity with a general pragmatic condition, observed in many languages, that the addressee of a strong manipulative speech act such as the imperative should be agentive in order to be able to carry out the orders given to him/her.

The contrast between the two morphological types is illustrated by the following Table:³³

- V-passives: specific stems + subject
 - perfective passive: $\dot{i}r=f$ (passive counterpart to the anterior $\dot{i}r-n=f$ and to other forms)
 - future: $\dot{i}r(w)=f$ (passive counterpart to the prospective $\dot{i}r(w)=f$)
- T-passives: active stem (+ TAM affixes) + {t} + subject
 - unaffixed stems:

– OEg. past ³⁴	$\dot{i}r=f$	$\dot{i}r-t(w)=f$
– unaccomplished ³⁵	$\dot{i}r=f$	$\dot{i}r-t(w)=f$
– imperfective ³⁶	$\dot{i}r-r=f$	$\dot{i}r-r-t(w)=f$
– subjunctive ³⁷	$\dot{i}r(y)=f$	$\dot{i}r(y)-t(w)=f$
– prospective ³⁸	$\dot{i}r(w)=f$	$\dot{i}r(w)-t(w)=f$
 - affixed stems:

– anterior	$\dot{i}r-n=f$	$\dot{i}r-n-t(w)=f$
– past narrative	$\dot{i}r-\dot{i}n=f$	$\dot{i}r-\dot{i}n-t(w)=f$
– sequential modal forms	$\dot{i}r-k3=f$	$\dot{i}r-k3-t(w)=f$
	$\dot{i}r-\dot{h}r=f$	$\dot{i}r-\dot{h}r-t(w)=f$

As the above contrastive presentation of V- and T-passives directly suggests, a favorable condition for the extraction of {t} out of its erstwhile exclusively inflec-

³³ Morphological paradigms are illustrated here with $\dot{i}ri$ ‘do’ rather than with $\dot{s}dm$ ‘hear’ (as elsewhere in this paper). This is for expository purposes, because $\dot{i}ri$ belongs to an inflectional class that displays more alternations in written forms than the class to which $\dot{s}dm$ belongs. Parentheses in transcription refer to segments that can be present or not in written form, with varying frequencies, depending on formal categories and parameters such as genre, time, and associated scribal traditions.

³⁴ The morphology of the stem of the Old Egyptian past $\dot{s}dm=f$ remains unknown.

³⁵ Used as a relative present tense. Stem possibly realized as $*/jv:rv-/$ or the like (?? – evidence very scant).

³⁶ Used in a variety of constructions, several displaying more or less strong shades of imperfective semantics (Stauder 2014: 324–330); the label ‘imperfective’ falls much short of a full synchronic description of the versatile functional profile of the form, and is to be understood as conventional. Stem probably realized as $*/jv'rv:rv-/$, $*/jv'rvrv-/$, or the like.

³⁷ Stem realized as $*/jvr'ja-/$ (based on the form as preserved in Coptic *t*-causatives).

³⁸ Stem probably realized as $*/jvrv:vv-/$ or the like (Schenkel 2000).

tional position resides with the specific nature of T-passive morphology. The relevant dimensions – related to each other via a principle of “diagrammatic iconicity in stem-inflection relationships” (Bybee 1985: 11–12)³⁹ – are summarized below:

- singular exponence: {t} codes solely the function of passive voice;
- transparency: T-passives stand in a one-to-one relationship to active forms;
- no fusion: {t} is merely agglutinated to the active stem;
- position: {t} sits on the outer edge of the form, after any TAM markers that there may be.

5 Semantic and functional dimensions

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Passive constructions and active impersonal ones

The diachronic connection between passive and active impersonal constructions as two formal expressions of detransitive voice is well-documented cross-linguistically (e.g., Siewierska 2010; 2008; Givón & Kawasha 2006; Haspelmath 1990: 49–50). The phenomenon is interpreted as reflecting the considerable functional overlap between the two construction types.

Schematically, the passive construction re-maps arguments and syntactic functions (especially the one of subject) in the clause. With variation in individual languages, the passive is typically associated with functions determined by the relative topicality, individuation, and/or salience of core arguments in the clause. The passive, a functionally marked construction, is used in clauses that diverge from the prototypical discourse hierarchies (e.g., A is less topical than P, or A is unknown, irrelevant, or unexpected). The active impersonal, on the other hand, is a construction that allows an unspecified, and often non-specific, argument to fill the subject slot. Some argument other than the (here unspecified) agent is then the more topical one in the clause.

³⁹ Note in particular that the position of the mono-functional {t} *after* any TAM markers is in conformity with principle (2): “The more relevant a category is to the verb, the closer its marker will occur with respect to the verb stem.” By contrast, V-passive morphology, which synthesizes voice and aspect, consists in an altogether different stem, and is not compatible with any other marks of inflectional categories. This is in conformity with principle (3): “The more relevant a morphological category is to the verb, the greater will be the morpho-phonological fusion of that category with the stem.”

In broader functional and cognitive terms, the difference, as well as the proximity, between the two construction types has been described by contrasting them as a prominence-based construction and a specificity-based construction (Langacker 2006; 2004). In discourse, reduced prominence often comes with lesser specificity. Lesser specificity in turn often implies reduced prominence.⁴⁰ Unsurprisingly then, active impersonal constructions are often used instead of passive ones, depending on discourse conditions and registers in languages that have both construction types (e.g., Sansò 2006), and in languages that lack passives altogether (as in the later stages of Ancient Egyptian itself, Demotic-Coptic).

Typical differences in extension between the passive and the active impersonal follow from the above. The passive is generally restricted to dynamic events implying an agentive argument of some sort (for Earlier Egyptian, above, § 2.2.2). On the other hand, the unspecified subject of the active impersonal typically has a human, non-specific, and non-singular referent:

Typical conditions

	events	reference of the unspecified participant
passive:	<i>implying an agent</i>	(no conditions)
active impersonal: (no conditions)		<i>non-specific, or plural reference</i>

The active impersonal is therefore less restrictive in terms of the events it licenses (non-dynamic events, and even non-verbal situations, are often allowed) but is typically more restrictive in terms of the referents of the unspecified participant. This leaves considerable overlap.

Bearing the above background in mind, the change from a passive construction to an active impersonal one can be analyzed as a change from a prominence-based construction to a specificity-based one. Given the considerable functional overlap between the two construction types, alternative construals of a passive construction in terms of reduced specificity may easily occur in speakers representations under certain favorable conditions. I first examine how functional aspects of the Earlier Egyptian passive construction, including the broad use of impersonal passives, allow, and possibly even favor, alternative construals of the

⁴⁰ In Langacker's (2006: 130) own words: "A participant not accorded its usual focal prominence (e.g., a passive agent) often remains unspecified. Conversely, failure to provide specific information about a participant renders it less salient. Absence of focal prominence and absence of specificity are mutually reinforcing strategies of defocusing. Each detracts from the optimal circumstances for viewing a given participant: the situation of a single, clearly delimited, fully identified individual put onstage as the specific focus of attention."

passive construction (§ 5.2–3). I then discuss how such alternative construals are more strongly favored with T-passives than with V-passives in relation to the differential aspectual correlates and preferred agent types, of either morphological type in text (§ 5.4).

5.1.2 Occasional written traces of alternative construals

Prior to such discussion, one phenomenon in Egyptian writing is noteworthy in the present context. By definition, alternative construals occur in (individual) speakers' representations and are therefore not directly visible in a sequence of speech, let alone in a written record. In a handful of cases however, the passive morpheme {t} is followed in writing by the <PLURAL> classifier. Such semographic complementation obtains at the written level only, with no correlates in the spoken sequence. Yet, the phenomenon opens a window on one individual scribe's linguistic representation of the construction: in terms of reduced individuation of the implied agent, and thereby going some way toward a construal as a specificity-based construction. Significantly, the few instances known are from expedition inscriptions outside of the Nile Valley, i.e., from contexts in which a less formal performance of written language was permitted than in most other occasions at the time:

- (14) a. *ḥsbt* 22 *pr-t=tw^{PLUR}* *r ḥsmn n*
 year 22 going_forth-INF=DETR to natron for
ḥr ḥm-mswt (...)
 Horus Ankhmesut
 'Year 22. Going forth (to fetch) natron for Horus Ankhmesut (...)'
 (Wadi el-Hudi 10, 1–4 [mining inscription in the Eastern Desert, ca. 1925 BCE])⁴¹

⁴¹ In this specific example, ongoing change is further evidenced by {t} being used in a slot that is not inflectional, after an infinitive. In accordance with a formal convention of the textual genre of expedition inscriptions, the infinitive introduces the short narrative to follow. The possibility for an extension of {t} is given by the analogy with the fully regular construction of finite T-passives with similar events, as in (3a) *n pr-n-t (...)* 'there was coming out (...)'. The construction of the infinitive is here as if finite.

- b. *ḥw-3* *ir-t^{PLUR}* *sm3* *sfn* *inrw*
 MOD-MOD do\SUBJ-PASS ramp be_lenient stones
 ‘May a ramp be constructed that will make soft (the way for) the
 slabs!’ (Hammamat 19, 9 [inscription on a trade route to the Red
 Sea, ca. 1800 BCE])⁴²

5.2 The specialization of Earlier Egyptian detransitive morphology on the sole passive function

Earlier Egyptian detransitive morphology, both V- and T-passive, never expresses any function in detransitive voice other than the passive itself.

This situation markedly contrasts with other Afroasiatic languages, notably Semitic ones, where detransitive morphology typically combines several functions such as the reflexive/reciprocal, the anticausative, and the passive, as well as imparting, or reflecting, medial semantics of various sorts (e.g., Retsö 1989; Kouwenberg 2010: 288–323, 355–437). In common to all these functions is a situation in which the event is oriented on an affected participant. Detransitive morphology is thereby “passive” in a *semantic* – rather than in a syntactic – sense.⁴³ When imparting, or reflecting, medial semantics, detransitive morphology variously interacts with lexical semantics in ways that, although following general trends, are not predictable in individual details. By contrast, passive voice, narrowly defined as a syntactic transformation, does not interact with lexical semantics.

The contrast between Earlier Egyptian and Afroasiatic detransitive voice is best illustrated by the morpheme {t} itself, also found in other branches of Afroasiatic (Semitic, Berber, Cushitic). With considerable variation in individual languages, {t} has a wide range of detransitivizing functions, which are often combined. The passive is only one of such, or may even not be present at all (e.g., Kouwenberg 2010: 360–375 [and fn.68], 380–382; 2005; Gragg 2001). {T}-marked stems are typically represented in the lexicon of individual languages, reflecting

⁴² Note that, just two clauses later, the innovative {t}-marked SV pattern illustrated in (9b) is found: *wn-in-tw ḥr-sfn n3-n mnw* (...) (AUX-PST=DETR PST-be_lenient these monuments) ‘(A ramp was thus built,) and (the way for) these monuments one softened (...)’

⁴³ Incidentally, this semantic notion of “passive” is the one underlying Dionysus Thrax’s original notion of *páthos* (Andersen 1991: § 2.7). Note that Ancient Greek is a language in which, as in several Afroasiatic languages, passive voice in the narrower (syntactic) sense is often expressed by morphology that has more broadly middle and detransitivizing functions.

their position closer to the middle of the inflectional-derivational continuum. In Earlier Egyptian by contrast, {t}-marked forms are purely inflectional.⁴⁴

The specialization of Earlier Egyptian detransitive morphology solely for the passive function may relate to the rigid word order of this language. Unlike in several other Afroasiatic languages, a constituent cannot be moved in the clause when the prototypical hierarchies of topicality are diverged from (e.g., when the A is less topical than P).⁴⁵ A passive construction is then necessarily made recourse to in order to place the more topical argument (the P) before the less topical one (the A) in the clause. This probably favored the use of detransitive morphology with passive functions and possibly could have favored its exclusive specialization on such.

With respect to the change analyzed here, it is proposed that the specialization of Earlier Egyptian detransitive morphology for the sole passive function could have been a facilitating factor. The functions of the passive have to do with the relative prominence of participants in the clause, and passive voice generally does not interact with lexical semantics. This semantic “simplicity” of the passive – a characteristic shared by the active impersonal – could have facilitated alternative construals of the construction as one based on the specificity of participants.

I emphasize that this is only a facilitating factor, not a necessary condition for change to happen. As the case of, for example, Romance *se/si* constructions demonstrates, a construction that has various combined functions in detransitive voice (including medial ones) may well develop usages that can be described as active

⁴⁴ Another detransitive morpheme shared by Earlier Egyptian and Afroasiatic is {n} (Stauder 2014: 212–220; Vernus 2009; Edel 1955–1967: §§ 427, 431, 437, 445 [Earlier Egyptian]; Kouwenberg 2010: 288–323; 2004 [Akkadian, and references to Semitic more broadly]; Gragg 2001 [Cushitic]; Lieberman 1986 [Afroasiatic in general]). Like {t}-stems, {n}-stems in Afroasiatic languages display a wide variety of often combined detransitivizing functions; among these, the passive is but one (the detailed functional distribution of the {n}- and {t}-stems is a matter of considerable variation between individual languages). Just as {t}-stems, {n}-stems tend to interact with lexical semantics and to occupy a position toward the middle of the inflectional-derivational continuum. In Earlier Egyptian by contrast, {n} is a purely lexical derivation, reflecting or imparting intransitive or middle semantics, and is never used as a passive. Yet again, a formal category in common with Afroasiatic is functionalized differently in Earlier Egyptian. More generally, Earlier Egyptian detransitive morphology is either purely inflectional (T-passives), or purely derivational ({n}-stems). It never occupies a middle position on the inflectional-derivational continuum as is otherwise typical of many Afroasiatic languages.

⁴⁵ This situation is described as a “pragmatic inverse” in Givón (1994). In many languages, pragmatic inversion is realized by a change in word order. In languages where this is not possible, the function of pragmatic inversion may then be realized as a sub-function of passive voice.

impersonal. This is because alternative construals operate on actual instances of a given construction in discourse, not on the total set of its possible functions.

What is proposed here, then, is that specialization for passive voice, as observed in Earlier Egyptian, provides a favorable background for change by making the cases in which alternative construals are possible all the more numerous.

5.3 Impersonal passives

Unlike many languages, Earlier Egyptian licenses, and productively uses, impersonal passives, that is, passives from intransitives – either from primary ones, e.g., *iw* ‘come’, or from secondary ones, e.g., *wnm* ‘eat’ (under suppression of the P argument, ‘eat (in general)’).⁴⁶ Impersonal passives are used when the agent is unimportant or unknown, when discourse continuity bears on an oblique argument, or when the perspective is set on the event itself, often suggesting a thetic reading⁴⁷. This broad use of impersonal passives provides another favorable condition for the change under discussion.

5.3.1 The agent of impersonal passives

Passives from intransitives display a strong cross-linguistic tendency to disallow the expression of the demoted agent in syntactic periphery and to favor implied agents that are human and non-specific (e.g., Salvi 2008: 135–136; Shibatani 1985). The implied agents of impersonal passives thus come close to the ones typically associated with active impersonal constructions (see § 2.2.2, § 5.1.1).

In Earlier Egyptian, all passive constructions, from transitive and from intransitive events alike, are similarly limited to human agents (except for instances of personification). Impersonal passives therefore have no distinguished role in the change here analyzed on this particular level. Earlier Egyptian impersonal pas-

⁴⁶ Among languages that have a passive construction, a great many allow for passive derivation only when some argument is syntactically promoted to subject (the “passive prototype”, below, § 5.3.2). Within Afroasiatic itself, passives from intransitives are typically marginal in many languages, if licensed at all. This seems to relate to the fact that detransitive morphology in Afroasiatic languages is broadly defined in relation to the orientation of the event on some affected participant (§ 5.2).

⁴⁷ On the discourse functions of Earlier Egyptian passives from intransitives, Stauder (2014: 158–178).

sives, however, have a distinguished role on the other levels mentioned above: the tendency to disallow an agent phrase in syntactic periphery, and the tendency to be used with implied agents that are generic or plural rather than specific and singular. While none of this manifests itself as a rule of grammar in Earlier Egyptian, both tendencies are strong in texts. Instances of impersonal passives with expressed agents are found, including cases with specific and singular agents,⁴⁸ but these remain uncommon and comparatively more rare than with passives derived from transitives.⁴⁹ In the vast majority of cases of impersonal passives, the agent of an impersonal passive is unexpressed and non-specific (compare above, (3a–d)).

5.3.2 Deviation from the passive prototype

Impersonal passives are non-prototypical because they lack a P argument that could be promoted to the position of subject. One immediate consequence is that impersonal passives are subjectless (except for dummy subjects in some languages, but not in Earlier Egyptian), and therefore often formally equivocating (compare § 4.1). Just as important, if not more, are the semantic correlates of the lack of a promotional component in impersonal passives. These can be expressed in terms of how impersonal passives deviate from the passive prototype.

The passive prototype simultaneously involves an orientation of the event on its Endpoint and a backgrounding of the agent, in various weightings, depending on individual constructions in individual languages and discourse contexts. Passives from intransitives, for their part, lack a P argument that could register a change of state. With passives from intransitives, the Endpoint orientation otherwise characteristic of passives can only be conceived of at a metaphorical level at best (e.g., with an oblique as the Goal of an event of directed motion). This diffuseness, or outright lack, of Endpoint orientation with impersonal passives in turn reinforces the relative weight of the agent backgrounding component (Comrie 1977; Shibatani 1985). Impersonal passives thus come closer to active impersonal constructions, which are themselves defined in relation to the agent (§ 5.1.1).

⁴⁸ E.g., [V-passive:] *îw ng n=k în smn* (COMP gaggle\PASS.PFV for=2MSG by Nile_goose) ‘There has been gagged for you by the Nile goose’ (Coffin Texts I 74b–c B1P); [T-passive:] *nîs-t îr N în r* (call\SUBJ²-PASS to N by Ra) ‘There will be calling to king N by Ra’ (Pyramid Texts § 346a).

⁴⁹ For this, compare (2a)–(2b).

This is represented on the following schematic cline, which in the present case also has a diachronic interpretation. The cline is extended here in its topmost part in order to capture elements of the discussion in the preceding section (§ 5.2):

- (i) Endpoint orientation primary – *Middle voice, Stative/Resultative*
(orientation of the event on an affected participant [*páthos*, [see § 5.2.1 and fn. 43];
– often interacting with lexical semantics);
- (ii) Endpoint orientation *and* agent backgrounding – *Passive proper*
(construction based on relative prominence of participants [*passivus*];
– “semantic simplicity”);
- (iii) Agent backgrounding primary – *Impersonal passives*
(passive in syntax, but lack of a (syntactic) promotional component;
– agent generally human, non-specific and plural);
- (iv) Non-specific agent – *Active impersonal*
(active syntax; extension to events with no Agent in semantic representation;
– unspecified participant generally human, non-specific, and plural).

In Semitic (more broadly, Afroasiatic) languages, detransitive morphology, and especially {t}-stems, typically have functions in both (i) and (ii) (§ 5.2). The functions in (i) are generally primary, in term of frequency and/or historically. The passive agent can only rarely be expressed in syntactic periphery, and impersonal passives (iii) are not regular, if licensed at all. In Earlier Egyptian by contrast, the functional domain (i) is realized by other formal means,⁵⁰ and V- and T-passives are exclusively passive in function (ii). The agent is commonly expressed in syntactic periphery (the *in*-construction; § 2.2.1), and impersonal passives are fully regular (iii).

Beginning in the early second millennium, the Earlier Egyptian morpheme {t} was extended to environments that imply an analysis such as in (iv) (§ 3). As the proposed cline expresses, impersonal passives (iii) already diverge from prototypical ones (ii) because of their lack of a strong promotional component, the ensuing imbalance in favor of the agent backgrounding component, and the typically non-specific nature of the implied agent. They thereby provide a bridging construction

⁵⁰ In most schematic terms, these include: (i) middle voice and intransitive events – specific lexemes, mostly based on particular roots, some of which are marked by {n} (in Earlier Egyptian a purely lexical derivation, [§ 5.2.1, fn. 44]); and morphologically unmarked transitivity alternations (P/S ambitransitives, such as *wʿb* “be pure, make pure”: see Stauder 2014: 178–183); (ii) reflexive and reciprocal: use of the ordinary pronouns, coreferenced to the subject of the clause; (iii) stative/resultative voice: use of the Resultative form.

for {t} to be extended further down the cline. In VS patterns that do not meet the semantic condition for passivization, the gradualness of such extension is directly observed in the record: first to dynamic intransitive events that lack an agentive participant (5a–c), rapidly followed by non-dynamic events (6a–c), and eventually to statives (7a–b) and even non-verbal situations (8a–b) (§ 3.1).

5.4 The preferred aspectual correlates of T-passives in text

The dimensions discussed so far (§ 5.2–3) apply to V- and T-passives alike. Yet, only T-passives undergo the changes described here. Besides the morphological issues already evoked (§ 4.2), this is also due to the different aspectual correlates of the two passive types in discourse. In relation to these, T-passives are more commonly found with non-specific agents than V-passives are. This provides fertile ground for alternative construals of T-passives as a specificity-based construction.

5.4.1 V- and T-passives, and aspect

As already noted, {t} has singular exponence, coding voice only (§ 4.2). In T-passives, tense and aspect is expressed at the level of the stem to which {t} is appended; {t} itself is unmarked for tense and aspect. V-passive morphology, by contrast, synthesizes perfective aspect and passive voice. Perfective aspect is inherent to the passive nature of the form that is accordingly referred to as a “perfective V-passive”.⁵¹

These general determinations of Earlier Egyptian passive morphology translate into the following (here simplified) distribution of morphological types in the passive paradigm.⁵² The relative present tense is the exclusive domain of T-passi-

⁵¹ For the perfective aspect of the V-passive, Stauder (2014: 310–314); for V- and T-passives in contrast to one another, Stauder (2014: 308–310). Note that Earlier Egyptian conforms to the cross-linguistic prediction that whenever a language has multiple passives that do not differ in terms of the degree or nature of subject affectedness, they typically differ in terms of aspect (Keenan & Dryer 2006: 340–342; similarly observed in Reintges *forthc.*: § 6.2). The V-passive is thus an instance of the common “perfective skew” of passives (e.g., Comrie 1982). Diachronically, this may reflect a stative/resultative source of the Earlier Egyptian perfective V-passive, as is common in other languages.

⁵² The Earlier Egyptian passive paradigm is complex due to its sensitivity to the dimensions of polarity, information structure, and semantic transitivity. In addition, there is a diachronic component whereby in some environments T-passives tend to supersede V-passives. See Stauder

ves. Among forms and patterns to which the passive marker {t} can be appended, several are frequently interpreted as imperfective in text, and one (*irr=f*, below) is directly marked for such aspect. The anterior domain, on the other hand, displays a complex passive paradigm which involves both V- and T-passives as well as the Resultative form. Among these, anterior T-passives are used only in specific, functionally marked, environments. These include, most notably, negative and rhetorically weakened events. Both have in common the fact that they deviate from the conditions of high semantic transitivity otherwise typically associated with perfective passives.⁵³ For the purpose of present discussion, anterior T-passives are thus mainly used in environments that are less common in discourse than the ones in which V-passives are used. Compare the following extracts of the Earlier Egyptian passive paradigm:

- Relative present tense: only T-passives – in particular:
 - (*iw*) *sḏm-tw=f*: covering the whole domain of relative present tense; often interpreted as a general or habitual aspect in text ((15c), (16a));
 - *n sḏm-n-tw=f*: commonly used as the negative counterpart to the above; commonly expresses habitual or general aspect (16c);
 - *irr-tw=f*: often conveying imperfective shades of meaning, commonly used notably in clauses in which the rhematicity of the verbal predicate is weakened ((16b), (16d)).
- Anterior tense: V- and T-passives, Resultative
 - main paradigm (positive, fully asserted events):
 - Resultative (pronominal P) ~ V-passive (non-pronominal P [full nouns and subject complement clauses] and subjectless constructions] [impersonal passives]) (15d)⁵⁴

(2014: 26–31, 250–263, 297–318, 334–343).

⁵³ For the general notion of semantic transitivity, see Hopper & Thompson (1980). The tendency for anterior passives to be sensitive to semantic transitivity reflects the Endpoint orientation common to passive voice and perfective aspect (Comrie 1982; Woods 2008: 66–67, 285–301). For the case of Earlier Egyptian, see Stauder (2014: 235–348).

⁵⁴ In the same environments, a {t}-pattern is found in Old Egyptian (*sḏm-tw=f*). The Old Egyptian past *sḏm=f* enters obsolescence in positive patterns already by the late Old Kingdom (ca. 2200 BCE), and the form is productively used only in a bound negative pattern in Middle Egyptian (below in the Table, *n sḏm-tw=f*).

- T-passives limited to functionally specific environments:
 - fully asserted negative events: *n sdm-tw=f*;
 - rhematicity weakened:⁵⁵ *sdm-n-tw=f* (15b), negative *n sdm-n-tw=f is*;
 - *sdm-in-tw=f*: a narrative tense (largely limited to some formal written registers).

5.4.2 Aspect and the agent of the passive

An alternative construal of the passive construction as based on the non-specificity of the agent is favored when the unexpressed agent of the passive is low in discourse topicality, and even more so when it is non-specific. Conversely, such an alternative construal is disfavored when the agent is specific, singular, and definite.

As far as grammar is concerned, both V- and T-passives are equally compatible with all types of agents, including singular and specific ones (2a–b). In discourse however, singular and specific agents tend to be more frequently associated with perfective events. Conversely, plural and non-specific agents tend to be more frequently associated with imperfective events. Given the distribution of V- and T-passives in the passive paradigm (§ 5.4.1), T-passives are then associated with plural and non-specific agents much more commonly than V-passives are. In a usage-based perspective on linguistic change, such issues of relative frequencies would have played an important role in the change here analyzed.

As an illustration of the preferential associations just outlined, compare:

- Perfective aspect, with a positive, fully asserted event [V-passive]:
- (15) a. *t3z m3kt in r^c hft wsir*
 knit_together\PASS.PFV ladder by Ra before Osiris
 ‘A ladder has been knotted together by Ra before Osiris.’ (Pyramid
 Texts § 472a^{WNNt} [ca. 2350 BCE])

⁵⁵ In these constructions – which involve various other dimensions such as the presence or lack of certain discourse particles – the rhematic downgrading of the verbal event results in a correlative upgrading of some adverbial or circumstantial expression further down in the clause. These constructions have major functions in the domain of information structure (when the verbal event is pragmatically presupposed and/or for focusing upon an adverbial or circumstantial expression; see (15b) in the main text) and in the domain of inter-clausal cohesion (for establishing a tighter cohesion between the main clause and a following circumstantial clause).

- Anterior tense, in a functionally specific environment [T-passive]:

b. *ms-n-t NN pn hr=iš 3ht-i=iš*
 give_birth-ANT-PASS NN this Horus=as Horizon-ADJ=as
 ‘Like Horus, like the one of the Horizon, this (king) NN has been born.’ (Pyramid Texts § 934b^{PMN} [ca. 2300 BCE])
 (Contrasting with (15a), the rhematicity of the event is weakened: the birth of the king is here presupposed, and the scope of assertion is accordingly on the circumstances of such birth.)

- Relative present tense, with a reading as general/habitual aspect [T-passive]:

c. *in iw šd-tw hnnw m-hnw pr*
 INTR⁵⁶COMP bring_up-PASS tumult within Palace
in iw wb3-tw mw ʿdd gbb
 INTR COMP open_up-PASS water hack_up earth
s-wh3-tw ndsw hr ʾryt=sn
 CAUS-be_foolish-PASS commoners on doings=3MSG
 ‘Are people of tumult ever brought up in the Palace? Is water that destroys the fields ever let forth, and are commoners ever made into fools by their own actions?’ (Teaching of Amenemhat 9b–d [literary, ca. 1850–1450 BCE]).

5.4.3 Imperfective environments

Among the various environments in which T-passives are used, imperfective ones are maximally favorable for alternative construals. In imperfective environments, the P argument itself is often plural or non-specific (see (16a), also (15d), (24b); pronominal P's remain rare in text).⁵⁷ Moreover, imperfective passives are

⁵⁶ “Interrogative” (marking sentence questions).

⁵⁷ E.g., *mw m itrw swr-tw=f mr=k* (water in river drink-PASS=3MSG wish=2MSG), *t3w m pt hnm-tw=f dd=k* (air in sky breathe-DETR=3MSG say=2MSG) ‘Water in the river, it is drunk when you wish so; air in the sky, it is breathed when you say so’ (Sinuhe B 233–234). In this passage, the two clauses are stylistically balancing. The balanced P arguments (*mw m itrw* ‘water in the river’, and *t3w m pt* ‘air in the sky’, respectively) are extraposed to the left of their respective clause, as extra-clausal topics. The anaphoric subject pronouns are resumptive within each clause (*swr-tw=f*, *hnm-tw=f*). Outside such particular conditions, pronominal subjects are uncommon in imperfective passive environments such as the ones discussed here.

not uncommonly subjectless, even if derived from syntactic transitives. Two constructions are involved in such subjectless passives that will be discussed briefly in the following.

In both the active and the passive, the P argument can be introduced by the preposition *m* ‘in’: $V (...) P \rightarrow V (...) m P$. This construction – here referred to as “Mediate Object Construction” – has two, often combined, functions: setting P under narrow focus, and/or reducing the semantic transitivity of the event.⁵⁸ Whenever the latter function is at play, the Mediate Object Construction strongly correlates with imperfective aspect. When a passive is derived from a Mediate Object Construction, this results in a subjectless passive (16b).

In both the active and the passive, the P argument can be suppressed, to express a generalization of the event. In this case – here referred to as “P-detran-sitivizing” – the construction strongly correlates with imperfective aspect. When a passive is derived from a P-detransitivized event, the resulting construction is subjectless (16c–d):

- P a full noun, plural or non-referential [very common]:

(16) a. *iw in-tw ʿkw wn ʒk*
 COMP bring-PASS intimates exist ruin
 ‘Intimates are brought when there is ruin.’ (Ptahhotep 349 P [literary, ca. 1950 BCE])

- Mediate Object Construction, P realized as an oblique: subjectless passive [not uncommon]:

b. *snw bīn in~n-tw m dṛdrw r*
 brothers bad\RES bring~IMPF-PASS MOC strangers for
mtt nt ib
 honesty
 ‘Brothers have become bad; one brings only strangers for honesty.’
 (The Debate of a Man with his Soul 117–118 [literary, ca. 1950 BCE])

⁵⁸ See Winand (this volume, in general); Stauder (2014: 173–188, for the interaction of the Mediate Object Construction with the passive). In much later times (beginning in Demotic, most clearly in Coptic), the construction evolved into a “Differential Object Marking” one (DOM), notably.

- P-detransitivized: subjectless passive [very common]:

- c. *n* *īwr-n-tw*
 NEG conceive-HAB-PASS
 ‘There is no more conceiving.’ (The Lament of Ipuwer 2.4 [literary, ca. 1800–1450 BCE])
- d. *īn~n-t* *n=f* *r-tnw* *dbḥ=f*
 bring~IMPF-PASS to=3MSG whenever ask\IMPF=3MSG
sꜥr-t *n=f* *r-tnw* *ībb=f*
 present\IMPF-PASS to=3MSG whenever be_thirsty\IMPF=3MSG
 ‘Whenever he asks, one brings to him; whenever he is thirsty, one presents to him.’ (Coffin Texts V 11c–d [ca. 2100 BCE])

As the above illustrates, passives interpreted as, or marked for, imperfective aspect overwhelmingly either have full noun subjects (16a, 15c) or are subjectless constructions (16b–d). In texts, Earlier Egyptian imperfective passives are therefore formally equivocating in most cases (§ 4.1). In addition, imperfective passives typically have plural or non-specific agents (§ 5.4.2). Moreover, they select T-passives (§ 5.4.1), in which passive morphology has singular exponence and lies at the outer edge of the form (§ 4.2). A variety of factors thus conspires in making imperfective passives in Earlier Egyptian a maximally favorable environment for alternative construals of the passive as a construction based on the non-specificity of the agent.

6 Triggering factors: the rise and spread of SV patterns

As the innovative constructions of the morpheme {t} in SV patterns presented above (§ 3.2) imply, one triggering factor for the change discussed here lies with the rise of SV patterns themselves. The change of Ancient Egyptian from a VS language to a SV language, begun in the mid-third millennium, was a protracted process, not completed until Roman times some two and a half millennia later. The present section examines the earlier stages of this process as they bear on the change discussed here. It is argued that the initial rise of SV patterns at first did not trigger the change discussed (§ 6.1). Rather, it was only the subsequent

spread of SV patterns to further domains of usage that eventually proved a powerful motivation for innovative constructions of {t} (§ 6.2).

6.1 The initial rise of SV patterns: counterpart relationships

6.1.1 The initial grammaticalization of SV patterns

In the mid-third millennium, two SV patterns mainly grammaticalize from situational predicate constructions:

- Situational predicate constructions:

$NP_{\text{subject}} \quad AP_{\text{predicate}}$

- SV patterns grammaticalizing from the situational predicate construction:

$NP \text{ } \dot{h}r\text{-}s\dot{d}m$ (NP on-hear\INF) ‘NP is hearing’ (progressive aspect)
 $NP \text{ } r\text{-}s\dot{d}m$ (NP to-hear\INF) ‘NP is bound to hear’ (event necessarily to occur) (later weakening into a future)

In both patterns, the lexical verb is in the infinitive. In Egyptian, the infinitive cannot be inflected for verbal categories. Consequently, inflectional passive morphology can not be directly accommodated onto such patterns.

The patterns $NP \text{ } \dot{h}r\text{-}s\dot{d}m$ and $NP \text{ } r\text{-}s\dot{d}m$ remain initially restricted to specific semantics, the former expressing progressive aspect, the latter an event that will necessarily occur. Passive counterparts are provided by various means, mostly through recruiting forms of the VS conjugation, which are passivized by appending {t} to the stem. The result is a series of non-isomorphic counterpart relationships between active and passive constructions (§ 6.1.2–3).

6.1.2 Active-passive counterpart relationships in the unaccomplished

The early (here simplified) paradigm in the unaccomplished can be summarized as follows:

	general/habitual events	ongoing events
active:	$N(P) \text{ } \underline{s\dot{d}m}=f$	marked progressive $NP \text{ } \underline{h\dot{r}-s\dot{d}m}$ / unmarked $N(P) \text{ } \underline{s\dot{d}m}=f^a$
passive:	$\longleftarrow \underline{s\dot{d}m}-tw \text{ } NP^b \longrightarrow$	

a) Ongoing active events can be expressed either by the unmarked unaccomplished $N(P) \text{ } \underline{s\dot{d}m}=f$ or by the dedicated progressive pattern $NP \text{ } \underline{h\dot{r}-s\dot{d}m}$. The latter has become more common in usage by ca. 2000 BCE but $N(P) \text{ } \underline{s\dot{d}m}=f$ is still found with ongoing events, particularly in higher written registers.

b) The passive pattern $\underline{s\dot{d}m}-tw \text{ } NP$ is based on the same morphological form of the verb as the active pattern $N(P) \text{ } \underline{s\dot{d}m}=f$. In the active, the subject is mostly anticipated in pre-verbal position. This anticipation does not occur in the passive. This difference between the active and passive patterns reflects the non-canonical nature of passive subjects (non-agentive and typically lower in discourse topicality than active subjects).⁵⁹

In the passive, ongoing events are thus at first not expressed by a direct morphological counterpart to the dedicated active pattern $NP \text{ } \underline{h\dot{r}-s\dot{d}m}$. Rather, the unmarked $\underline{s\dot{d}m}=f$ (as in the active $N(P) \text{ } \underline{s\dot{d}m}=f$, cf. n.a.) is recruited, and {t} is appended to it ($\underline{s\dot{d}m}-tw \text{ } NP$, cf. n.b.). This results in a situation in which the active distinguishes two categories while the passive does not (compare the Table above). The following example illustrates the counterpart relationship with ongoing events, first with two active ones, then with a passive one:

- (17) $\dot{i}w \quad srw \quad \underline{h\dot{r}-r\dot{d}-t} \quad n=k$
 COMP officials PROG-give-INF to=2MSG
 $\dot{i}w=k \quad \underline{h\dot{r}-\dot{i}\dot{t}-t} \quad \dot{i}n \quad \dot{i}w=k \quad m \quad \text{ʿ}w3y$
 COMP=2MSG PROG-take-INF INTR COMP=2MSG as robber
 $\dot{i}w \quad st3-tw \quad n=k \quad skw \quad \underline{h\dot{n}^{\text{'}}=k} \quad r \quad ps\dot{s}\dot{t} \quad \underline{\dot{s}dwt}$
 COMP drag-PASS to=2MSG troops with=2MSG for division plots
 ‘Officials are giving to you, and you are still taking – so are you a robber?
 People are ushered in before you, and troops are with you for the division of land-plots!’ (Eloquent Peasant B1 332–334 [ca. 1900–1850 BCE])

⁵⁹ Stauder (2014: 223–226, 343–344).

6.1.3 Active-passive counterpart relationships in the future

With events that have future time reference, two successive stages must be distinguished.⁶⁰ Reflecting its origin in a situational predicate pattern with the preposition *r* ‘to, toward’, the pattern *NP r-sdm* initially developed for expressing events that are bound to happen and/or to which the speaker is strongly committed. In relation to such semantics, the construction is not marked morphologically for voice, but is oriented semantically on the participant that is in some state entailing an event to come.⁶¹ In a glossing translation: ‘he is bound to hear’, ‘he is bound to be heard’, both as *NP r-sdm*. The earliest (here simplified) future paradigm, in the mid-/late third millennium, is thus as follows:

Future events, stage 1:

	future	events bound to occur (semantic orientation)
active:	$\dot{i}r(w)=f$	$NP_{A/S} r-sdm$
passive:	$\dot{i}r(w)=f, \dot{i}r(w)-tw=f^{62}$	$NP_p r-sdm$

The following pair of examples is illustrative of how the same construction *NP r-sdm* can have both passive and active readings when expressing events bound to occur:

- (18) a. $\dot{i}w=f$ $r-wd^c$ $hr=s$ $\dot{i}n$ ntr c3
 COMP=3MSG to-judge\INF on=3FSG by great god
 ‘He is to be judged for it by the great god.’ (Urk. I 122, 16 [ca. 2200 BCE])
- b. $\dot{i}w=tn$ $r-\dot{s}d-t$ $n(=i)$ $prr-hrw$
 COMP=2PL to-recite-INF for(=1SG) invocation_offering
 ‘Your are to recite an invocation for me.’ (Urk. I 119, 7 [ca. 2200 BCE])

Starting from such an initially highly restricted domain of use, the pattern *NP r-sdm* gradually weakens into a future. When used as a future, *NP r-sdm* is not

⁶⁰ In more details, Stauder (2014: 230–234).

⁶¹ Stauder (2014: 119–122, 129–130).

⁶² The V-passive ($\dot{i}r(w)=f$) is diachronically superseded by a T-passive formation $\dot{i}r(w)-tw=f$. The first stages of the process can be observed by ca. 2200 BCE. See Stauder (2014: 26–31).

oriented semantically anymore, and passive voice must be marked morphologically. In a manner similar to the one just described for *NP hr-sdm* (§ 6.1.2), a VS pattern that can also express the future, *ir(w)=f*, is recruited and passivized by appending the morpheme {t} to it. Around 2000 BCE, this resulted in the following counterpart relationships:

Future events, stage 2:

	future	(events bound to occur)
active:	← <i>NP r-sdm</i> (<i>ir(w)=f</i> , obsolescent) →	
passive:	← <i>ir(w)-tw=f</i> →	
	(/NP _p <i>r-sdm</i>)	

The following pair of examples is illustrative of the counterpart relationship:

[Passive: the king describing Sinuhe's future burial]

- (19) a. *wḏꜥ-tw n=k ḥ3wy (...)*
 assign-PASS to=2MSG night_vigil
ir-tw n=k šms-wḏ3 hrw sm3-t3 (...)
 do-PASS for=2MSG procession day burial
 'A night-vigil will be assigned to you (...); a funeral procession will be made for you on the day of joining the earth (...)' (Sinuhe B 191–193 [ca. 1950 BCE]).

[Active: Sinuhe's response to the king]

- b. *iw k3=k r-rd-t iry=i pḥwy ḥꜥw=i*
 COMP ka=2MSG FUT-cause-INF do\SUBJ=1MSG end body=1MSG
m ḥnw
 in Residence
 'Your *ka*⁶³ will let me make an end with my body in the Residence.'
 (Sinuhe B 203–204)

⁶³ A concept that is specific to the Egyptian cultural encyclopedia, with no equivalent in translation languages; roughly, the agentive force of the individual, also making him an individual.

6.1.4 The rationale for and initial stability of counterpart relationships

For centuries, the SV patterns *NP hr-sdm* and *NP r-sdm* therefore lacked direct morphological counterparts in the passive. Instead, complex indirect counterpart relationships obtain.⁶⁴ This situation, and its stability over centuries, reflect the following combined dimensions:

- Initial grammaticalization. Following a common trend, the new SV patterns initially grammaticalize with active, positive events.
- Morphology. SV patterns do not provide an inflectional slot onto which passive morphology could be directly accommodated (§ 6.1.1).
- Low text frequency. Two situations have to be distinguished:
 - (i) Initially restricted to events bound to occur, *NP r-sdm* is then oriented semantically (18a-b). The weakened usages of *NP r-sdm* as a plain future, which require morphological marking of voice, only gradually emerge during the late third and early second millennium (19a).
 - (ii) Progressive events tend to have a salient agent. With passive events, on the other hand, the agent is typically low in discourse salience. Passive ongoing events therefore tend to be uncommon in discourse.
- Availability of synthetic VS forms in the active. In the domains considered indirect passive counterparts to SV patterns could be formed by appending {t} to VS forms whenever needed ((17), (19a)).

6.2 The spread of SV patterns

During the first half of the second millennium, the SV patterns presented above spread in the language and came to be used in an ever-increasing number of functions. Also beginning in the early second millennium, one can observe the morpheme {t} being accommodated into the subject slot of these SV patterns (§ 3.2). As the compared chronology of developments suggests, it is the functional generalization and correlative spread of SV patterns – rather than their initial grammaticalization (§ 6.1) – that proved a strong motivating factor for the extraction of the morpheme {t} out of its erstwhile exclusively inflectional slot in VS forms.

⁶⁴ Similar indirect counterpart relationships initially also obtain in the negative paradigm (Venus 1990). The specific reasons, as well as the detailed chronology of developments, are partly different, but the general principle is similar.

6.2.1 Early stages of the spread

The following early developments are of major importance in providing the initial motivation for the innovative uses of {t} in the subject-slot of SV patterns:

- (i) Pursuing the development the early stages of which were sketched above (§ 6.1.3), *NP r-sdm* continued weakening into a future and eventually superseded *ir(w)=f* as the sole expression of non-modal future events.
- (ii) The formal category *NP hr-sdm*, initially only a progressive, was combined with narrative past auxiliaries:
 - (a) *wn-in=f hr-sdm* (late third millennium), alongside older synthetic *sdm-in=f* (rapidly confined to a few high-frequency verbs and/or with high-status subjects);
 - (b) *h^c-n=f hr-sdm* (early second millennium), alongside *h^c-n sdm-n=f*; by the mid-second millennium, the former has by and large replaced the latter, which is kept only in some elevated registers.
 - (c) *iw=f hr-sdm*, a narrative sequential tense (securely documented by the mid-second millennium).

The role of these developments was in part illustrated by examples quoted above (§ 3.2):

- (i) *(iw=)tw r-sdm* (COMP=DETR FUT-hear\INF): (10a–b);
- (ii.a) *wn-in=tw hr-sdm* (AUX-PST-DETR PST-hear\INF): (9b).

Regarding (ii.b) and (ii.c), compare:

- (20) a. *h^c-n=tw hr-iw^c=i m nbw*
 AUX-PST=DETR PST-reward\INF=1SG with gold
 ‘Then I was rewarded with gold.’ (Urk. IV 7, 16 [ca. 1500 BCE])
- b. (...) *iw=tw hr-rd-(t) iry=sn sdf3-tryt*
 PST=DETR PST-give-INF do\SUBJ=3PL oath_of_allegiance
 ‘(...) and One (viz., the king) had them swear an oath of allegiance.’ (Urk. IV 1304, 2 [ca. 1400 BCE])

In the same period, a few early occurrences of {t} with *NP hr-sdm* expressing the progressive are found as well. A detailed examination of these is revealing. The earliest instance (9a) is in a past progressive, providing a textual background. In such a discourse environment, the agent is naturally lower in salience than it usually would be in a present tense progressive (§ 6.1.4).

- (22) *ḥr tw=tw ḥr-šd b3kw=f m-di=i*
 and BASE=DETR PRS-request production=3MSG from=1SG
mpt n mpt
 year to year
 ‘And one was requesting its production from me year after year.’
 (P. Cairo 58075, 8 = KRI I 238, 14–15 [ca. 1300 BCE, not the earliest example])

Beginning in the mid-second millennium, an entirely new layer of SV patterns develops. Rather than grammaticalized from situational predicate constructions (S-PRED > SV) (§ 6.1.1), these are directly derived from erstwhile VS conjugational forms, periphrased by means of an auxiliary *iri* ‘do’. The auxiliary is inflected, and the lexical verb (dependent upon *iri*) is in the infinitive; e.g.: *sḏm-t=f* (do\REL-2FSG=3MSG) ‘what he hears’ > (*i*)*ir-t=f sḏm* (AUX.REL-3FSG hear\INF). In these *iri*-auxiliated patterns, events with non-specified agents are all expressed by placing the morpheme {t} in the subject slot (see above, (12)).

As a result of these combined developments, SV patterns of various origins become dominant in later second-millennium Egyptian. Accordingly, the majority of uses of the morpheme {t} are by then in the subject slot of such patterns. Old T-passives, although stable in themselves, have become limited to a constantly shrinking set of still productive VS patterns (§ 7).

Part III. The fate of T-passives in their original domains of use in the second millennium

7 T-passives and {t}-marked active impersonal constructions coexisting in synchrony

During the second millennium, SV patterns generalize their functional yield and become increasingly common in the language (§ 6.2). Such developments notwithstanding, several major VS forms remain fully productive, most notably the Late Egyptian past *sḏm=f*⁶⁵ and the subjunctive *sḏm=f*. With VS forms, T-passives themselves remain fully productive, no less than they were in the third millennium.

⁶⁵ This is the functional, and probably also the morphological, successor to the Old and Middle Egyptian anterior *sḏm-n=f*.

The continued use of T-passives (in which {t} is an inflectional passive marker) alongside the innovative SV constructions (in which {t} is accommodated into the subject slot of an active impersonal construction) raises a series of descriptive issues (§ 7.1). Moreover, some change is ultimately observed with T-passives themselves, despite considerable formal stability (§ 7.2). In addressing these issues, it is proposed that a construction-specific approach is most appropriate here and that some syntactic indeterminacy in ongoing change has to be allowed for.

7.1 Construction-specific analyses

Throughout the second millennium, singular pronominal P's of T-passives are coded by the same set of personal clitics (23a; also 25) as in the third millennium (1a). In active VS forms, these clitics are associated with the grammatical role of subject. On a formal level, T-passives therefore remain promotional.

With the agent-expressing *in*-construction, some change is eventually observed, but only centuries later (discussed below, § 7.2.2). In the earlier second millennium, the agent-expressing *in*-construction is still productively used in all written registers (23b), like it was in the third millennium (2a). T-passives thus contrast with the {t}-marked SV constructions developing at the same time, which, in accordance with their active syntax, cannot accommodate the agent-expressing *in*-construction.

The following examples are illustrative of both properties just discussed:

- (23) a. *ink rđ=i ir-tw=f n=k*
 1SG.FOC cause\PROSP=1SG do\SUBJ-PASS=3MSG.SBJ to=2MSG
 'I will have it done for you.' (P. UC 32197, 13 [business letter, ca. 1800 BCE])
- b. *h3b b3k-im (...) hr r[dt] ip-tw r*
 send servant (...) on cause count\SUBJ-PASS to
dmī n pr-hny in nb [...]
 quay of Perkheny by lord
 'This humble servant (viz., the speaker) is writing (...) about having it counted to the quay of Perkheny by the lord [...]' (P. UC 32305, 17–18 [same corpus])

In the very same corpus of texts (Illahun business documents, ca. 1800 BCE), {t} is already being accommodated into the subject slot of SV patterns (10a). In the same period, {t}-marked VS forms are extended to events that are banned

from passivization on semantic grounds (5a–c, 6a–c). These innovative constructions are non-promotional, with {t} itself functioning as an impersonal subject pronoun, at least in SV patterns. Yet T-passives still behave just as they did in the third millennium, as genuine promotional and demotional passives. If a uniform account of the syntax of earlier second-millennium {t}-marked constructions is sought in terms of constituency, one is faced with a contradiction.

This is solved if different analyses for different environments are allowed, i.e., if a perspective is adopted in which constructions, rather than their constituent parts, are considered as the primary objects of description and analysis. The two analyses then do not contradict each other, since they obtain in different environments. The morpheme {t} is defined in its function of expressing unspecified reference of the agent in either environment, and syntactic differences only emerge in relation to the broader constructional schemes in which the morpheme is used. All environments, innovative and older ones alike, involve a clear mapping of form and function: there was no functional pressure at this level for the language to change.

7.2 Formal retention and increasing syntactic indeterminacy

7.2.1 Background: the ultimate loss of all {t}-marked constructions

By the very late second millennium, {t}-marked constructions rapidly give way to active impersonal constructions with a non-anaphorically interpreted third person plural subject pronoun =w in the subject slot (also below, § 8.1.2). This development occurs with all {t}-marked constructions alike, both in SV and in VS patterns:

- SV patterns, e.g., negative past tense, ‘he has not been heard’:

bwpw-tw sdm=f (NEG.PST-DETR hear=3MSG.OBJ)
 > *bwpw=w sdm=f* (NEG.PST=3PL hear=3MSG.OBJ)

- VS patterns, e.g., past tense, ‘he has been heard’:

sdm-tw=f (hear\PST-PASS[?],DETR[?]=3MSG.SBJ[?])
 > *sdm=w NP* (hear\PST=3PL NP.OBJ)

In SV patterns, the impersonal pronoun {t} is merely replaced by the ordinary third person plural pronoun, and the overall syntax of the construction remains

No such constructions are found in any third-millennium texts, neither with T-passives nor with V-passives. Nor are these ever found with V-passives in any second-millennium texts. The development thus appears to be exclusive to

second-millennium {t}-marked constructions, extending to all of these alike. Examples such as (24b–c) then provide evidence for an at least incipient, or occasional, interpretation of {t} in T-passives as itself standing for the unspecified agent rather than as merely signaling passive voice as a syntactic derivation.

Some change with the agent-expressing *in*-construction points in the same direction. While still used productively in all written registers in the earlier centuries of the second millennium (23b), the construction becomes increasingly obsolete by the mid-second millennium, being kept only in most formal registers. Significantly, the following fairly late instance of the agent-expressing *in*-construction is from an inscriptional register, the language of which harkens back to past textual – and hence linguistic – models (sim. (26)):

- (25) *ḥs-tw=i* *ḥr rḥ=i* *m-ḥt mpwt*
 praise\SUBJ-DETR=1SG.SBJ on knowledge=1SG after years
in ntiw r-sn-t *r ir-t-n=i*
 by REL FUT-pass-INF by do\REL-FSG-ANT=1SG
 ‘May I be praised for my knowledge after years by those who will imitate
 what I have done.’ (Urk. 58, 2–3 [Ineni, funerary self-presentation, ca.
 1450 BCE])

Slightly later than with T-passives, the obsolescence of the agent-expressing *in*-construction further extends to V-passives as well. By the last third of the second millennium, the *in*-construction had become restricted to a few stock formulae in administrative language, all with V-passives. As the relative chronology of developments suggests, T-passives had a leading role in the process by which the Earlier Egyptian passive construction evolved into one that increasingly disallowed the peripheral expression of the agent by means of *in*. I propose that this change is evidence for a partial reinterpretation of T-passives, under the influence of {t}-marked constructions in SV patterns. Being active impersonal in syntax, these {t}-marked constructions in SV patterns could not accommodate the agent-expressing *in*-construction.⁶⁶ The increasingly high relative frequency of {t}-marked SV patterns in the language would have played a role in speakers’ changing representations of T-passives themselves.

⁶⁶ A handful of cases of agent-expressing *in*-constructions with SV patterns can be found (Urk. IV 1281, 14–15; KRI IV 19, 8; KRI IV 155, 12). These are all from specific inscriptional registers, the hybrid language of which displays complex interferences between past layers of the language that are imitated or emulated, and more contemporary varieties.

On an altogether different level, a marginal graphic phenomenon is also noteworthy in the present context. Mostly in Late Egyptian literary registers, the graphic classifier for divine beings not uncommonly follows the morpheme {t} when the unspecified agent is the king. The use of T-passives with implied royal agents (“honorary passive”) is documented from the third millennium on. However, written complementation by the classifier for divine beings is an innovation of later second-millennium scribes. Although merely a graphic phenomenon with no correlate in the sequence of speech, this scribal practice may be interpreted as further evidence for the ongoing reinterpretation of {t} in T-passives as itself standing for the unspecified agent.

7.2.3 Formal retention in doubly inflected patterns

As discussed above (§ 7.1, cf. (23a), (25)), the realization of singular pronominal P’s in T-passives by subject clitics remains stable throughout the second millennium. A series of phenomena suggests that over time this formal stability becomes a mere formal retention, while the passive construction itself becomes increasingly indeterminate in its syntax.

Innovative uses of {t} include those in doubly inflected patterns (§ 3.2.3). In these, {t} aligns morphologically with (pro)nominal morphemes in the corresponding active pattern (i). This suggests an analysis of {t} as an impersonal subject pronoun, similar to other {t}-marked SV patterns. On the other hand, however, singular pronominal P’s are still coded by subject clitics ((26), also (13b)), and {t}-marked doubly inflected patterns are compatible with the agent-expressing *in*-construction down to the mid-second millennium (26). These promotional and demotional properties suggest an analysis of the construction similar to that of T-passives (ii), thus conflicting with the one just made:

- (26) *ḥr-t* *ndr-t=f* *in* *wpwti*
 MOD-DETR seize-DETR=3MSG.SBJ?/.OBJ? by messengers
n *t3ty*
 of vizier
 ‘(...) then he shall be arrested by the messengers of the vizier’ (Duties of the Vizier, R3 [formal register, ca. 1450 BCE]).

(i) doubly inflected patterns, detransitive and active:

- {t}-marked: *hr-tw sdm-tw NP* ('NP must then be heard')
- active: *hr NP_i sdm=f_i NP_j* ('NP_i must then hear NP_j')
(MOD NP.SBJ hear=AGR NP.OBJ)

(ii) singular pronominal P's and/or agentive *in*-phrase:

- *hr-tw sdm-tw=f in N* ('He must then be heard by N')

Conflicting analyses:

- based on (i), analysis of the {t}-marked construction as "active impersonal" (?!):

hr-tw_i sdm-tw_i NP_p
MOD-DETR.SBJ hear-DETR.AGR NP.OBJ (?)

- based on (ii), analysis as a "genuine passive" (?!):

hr-tw sdm-tw=f_p in N_A
MOD-PASS hear-PASS=3MSG.SBJ by N (?)

In a constituency-based approach, these conflicting analyses could be accommodated by describing the construction in (26) and (13a–b) as syntactically hybrid or gradient, conflating both "active impersonal" (i.e., non-promotional) and "passive" (i.e., promotional) syntactic properties. In an alternative approach, introducing no ad hoc exceptions, it is proposed that the construction should be considered in terms of the functionality of its form-function mapping. On the one hand, the innovative construction of the morpheme {t} in doubly inflected patterns relates to the broader process of the extension of {t} to new environments (§ 3.2), and is a token of a gradual evolution of {t} towards assuming features characteristic of pronominal morphemes. On the other hand, the continued coding of singular pronominal P's with subject clitics is in line with the fact that all constructions that have {t} in its old inflectional slot – as is also the case in doubly inflected patterns – maintain the inherited realization of singular pronominal P's with subject clitics. The continued acceptability of the agent-expressing *in*-phrase is accounted for along similar lines, in relation to a partial constructional commonality with the still productively used T-passives:

V-{t}=SBJ.CLITICS (*in* N) (T-passives: § 7.1, § 7.2.4)
MOD-{t} V-{t}=SBJ.CLITICS (*in* N)

In such conditions, it is proposed that the increasingly common (non-equivocating) {t}-marked SV patterns reinforce a representation in which the (often equivocal)

cating) T-passives become increasingly indeterminate as to the syntactic status of the P argument. In an informal dependency-based approach, the condition for such “attraction” of the syntax of T-passives to the syntax of {t}-marked SV patterns is represented as:

- (i) [SV patterns:] {t}-V \leftarrow P P direct object (non-equivocating)
- (ii) [T-passives:] V-{t} \leftarrow P P subject, often equivocating
 \rightarrow P increasingly indeterminate

A full actualization, i.e., a formal mapping out (Harris & Campbell 1995: 77–89), of the incipient reinterpretation of T-passives as non-promotional constructions would consist in instances of **sdm-tw=sw*, with singular pronominal P realized as object clitics. Except for a handful of mostly late instances, all of which are philologically disputable, no instance of such is ever found in the record. The situation in mid- and late second-millennium Egyptian is therefore illustrative of a general principle in linguistic change whereby behavior is affected before coding (Haspelmath 2010; with detransitive constructions in particular, Siewierska 2010; Givón & Kawasha 2006; Givón 2006). In Egyptian, various changes in behavior relating to the unspecified agent are to be observed with second-millennium T-passives (§ 7.2.2) and may perhaps be interpreted as a partial actualization of ongoing change. On the other hand, the formal realization of singular pronominal P's as subject clitics remains stable (§ 7.1), even in constructions where {t} itself increasingly patterns as a pronominal morpheme (doubly inflected constructions, § 7.2.3).

This situation does not result in any interpretive ambiguity. In VS patterns, the single core argument of the detransitive clause is immediately identified as a P, regardless of how the morpheme {t} is analyzed syntactically⁶⁷ and independently of the fact that singular pronominal P's are realized morphologically with pronouns that are otherwise associated with the subject function in active VS patterns. With VS patterns becoming increasingly marginal, this formal retention, limited to singular pronouns, becomes a construction-specific idiosyncrasy, an island phenomenon within the overall syntax of the language. It would ultimately be solved by the overall replacement of {t}-marked patterns with the 3PL-active impersonal construction (§ 7.2.1).

67 Note that the situation is again easily represented in a dependency-based approach, informally as: $V\{-t\} \leftarrow P$. A constituency-based framework would have to assume rebracketing: $[V\{-t\}_{PASS} P_{SBj}] > V[\{-t\}_{SBj}] P_{OBJ}$. For other cases of changes that are more naturally described in a dependency-based approach, Haspelmath (1998: 330–332).

Part IV. Degrammaticalization; mechanisms and circumstances of a rare change

8 An instance of degrammaticalization

8.1 Preliminaries: what degrammaticalization in general, and the present change in particular, are not

Degrammaticalization does not refer to the literal reversal of a particular process, or path, of grammaticalization. In line with recent studies on the subject, degrammaticalization is a compound change that goes counter to certain dimensions associated with the general cline of grammaticality (for a more precise definition, see below, § 8.2). In particular, the term does *not* refer to the reversal of a change which previously happened in one particular language (“token reversal”). Nor does it refer to the reversal of a specific path of grammaticalization (“mirror-image reversal”).

8.1.1 Token reversal

“Token reversal” has been described as “fantastically unlikely”, and “token irreversibility”, consequently, a “non-issue” (Norde 2009: 59, 61).⁶⁸ In Earlier Egyptian as well, the changes undergone by {t} do not constitute token reversal.

Although the origins of *{t} in Afroasiatic remain unclear in detail, they surely do not lie with an impersonal subject pronoun.⁶⁹ With considerable variation in individual Afroasiatic languages, {t} displays various, generally combined, reflexive, reciprocal, medial, anticausative, and/or passive functions (§ 5.2). Among these, the passive function is secondary, and the reflexive function is often salient. Earlier Egyptian T-passives may therefore represent the outcome of a classical grammaticalization path REFLEXIVE > ANTICAUSATIVE > PASSIVE (e.g., Heine & Kuteva 2002: 44). Alternatively, Afroasiatic *{t} may initially have been intransitivizing in a broad sense, and the development leading to Earlier Egyptian T-passives would then be of the sort INTRANSITIVIZING > ... > PASSIVE, with different bifurcations in the intermediary stages in individual languages.

⁶⁸ Similar observations in Haspelmath (2004: 28), who coined the term “token reversal”.

⁶⁹ Stauder (2014: 220–221).

Either way, the original functions of Afroasiatic **{t}* lie in imparting, or reflecting, reduced (semantic) transitivity. Reduction of (semantic) transitivity operates on the lexical semantics of the event. By contrast, active impersonal constructions have to do with the reduced specificity of the A/S argument and leave event semantics untouched.

In a long-term perspective, reaching back into prehistory, the general line of development is thus as follows (compare (i)–(iv) in the Table in § 5.3.2):

reduction of (semantic) transitivity [Afroasiatic **{t}*]

→ various combinations of reflexive, reciprocal, medial, anticausative, or passive functions [individual historically documented AA languages]

→ *solely passive* [3d. mill. Egyptian, and some other AA languages]

→ *impersonal subject pronoun* [developing in 2nd mill. Egyptian]

8.1.2 Mirror-image, or type-reversal

Distinct from “token reversal”, “mirror-image reversal” would consist in “type-reversal”, i.e., in a gram moving up a given grammaticalization *chain* or *path*. No instance is known from the history of any language, and such development has been argued to “verge on the impossible” (Norde 2009: 123).⁷⁰

At first sight, the change undergone by Earlier Egyptian *{t}* may seem to be a reversal of the well-documented development from active impersonal to passive (e.g., Siewierska 2010; Givón & Kawasha 2006; Heine & Kuteva 2002: 236–237; Haspelmath 1990: 49–50). Yet a closer look demonstrates otherwise. To begin with, the general development from passive to active impersonal is by no means exceptional, and the (so far very broadly phrased) active impersonal-to-passive connection is therefore bi-directional (Siewierska 2008; Haspelmath 1990: 57–58). The diachronic connection between the two broad construction types reflects their functional overlap and cognitive proximity (§ 5.1). The bi-directionality of possible change further reflects the fact that both directions involve a relaxation of restrictions and thereby context generalization (§ 5.1.1, *fine*). For the present purpose, it is mainly emphasized that no direction seems privileged.

⁷⁰ Norde further recalls that degrammaticalization is defined as “a *single* change from right to left on the cline of grammaticality” (emphasis original) and argues that the “circumstances under which a degrammaticalization can take place are very rare, and it is quite unlikely that such circumstances would arise twice in the history of a given morpheme” (as would have to be the case in mirror-image reversal).

Moreover, the general development from active impersonal to passive does not in itself constitute a grammaticalization path.

It further appears that the respective source and target constructions for either direction of development are only superficially comparable. Passive constructions arising from active impersonal ones are often only incipient or emergent passives (Siewierska 2010; Givón & Kawasha 2006). Conversely, active impersonal constructions arising from passive ones are typically non-pronominal impersonal constructions (Siewierska 2008). Consequently, the two types of changes are not reversals of each other (Siewierska 2008):

- (i) impersonal (3PL subjects) → *incipient/emergent* passives
 - (– generally not extended to all types of agents
 - P often retaining a non-promotional coding)
- (ii) passive (full-blown) → *non-pronominal* impersonal

Finally, cases of change from active impersonal to passive quoted in the literature seem to always, or at least very commonly, involve a specific path 3PL > PASS. The latter, now in a more restrictive formulation, constitutes a path of grammaticalization (Heine & Kuteva 2002: 236–237). In the present case, however, the passive marker {t} develops into an impersonal subject pronoun. This is remarkable against the general background of (ii) above, apparently remains unparalleled, and directly relates to the proposed interpretation of the change as an instance of deinflectionalization (below, § 8.3). Yet, the development is still not into a 3PL pronoun.

To be sure, all former uses of {t} would ultimately be taken over by a construction with a non-anaphorically interpreted 3PL subject pronoun (§ 7.2.1). However, {t} is then replaced by the 3PL pronoun rather than developing into such itself:

- (i) the general grammaticalization path:

3PL > PASS (incipient, see above)

(ii) Earlier Egyptian {t}:

PASS	→	impersonal subject pronoun	(2nd mill.)
		↓	
		<i>replaced by</i> 3PL (=w)	(ca. 1100 BCE)
		[→ “incipient passive” (cf. (i)) ⁷¹	(later 1st mill.)]

The rise of the 3PL-impersonal construction characteristic of first-millennium BCE Egyptian results from the extension of the (ordinary) anaphoric 3PL pronoun (=w) to non-anaphoric contexts. The development was probably eased by the fact that the language already had a widely used active impersonal construction, the one in which {t} acted as an impersonal subject pronoun. In being extended to non-anaphoric uses, the 3PL pronoun merely had to replace {t} in the very same environments (see § 7.2.1). Crucially, however, this is then a new construction formally speaking.

In sum, the Egyptian change from passive to impersonal subject construction is not a “mirror-image reversal” – nor is the overall, indirect process which ultimately led to a situation in which 3PL-active impersonal constructions are used in the first millennium in contexts in which passive ones were used in the third.

8.2 General conditions for qualifying as an instance of degrammaticalization

Following Norde (2009: 120), degrammaticalization is defined as:

“a composite change whereby a gram in a specific context gains in autonomy or substance on more than on linguistic level (semantics, morphology, syntax, or phonology)”.

⁷¹ Centuries later (first possible occurrence around ca. 500 BCE, very few cases before Coptic), the 3PL-active impersonal construction would be extended to accommodate agent-phrases in syntactic periphery, thereby itself going some way along the grammaticalization path in (i). The agent phrase is then introduced by variants of a compound preposition *n-drt*, Coptic *hī-toot* ‘in/through/on the hand of’ (entirely unrelated to the old *in*-construction (§ 2.2.1) which had fallen out of use for more than a millennium (§ 7.2.2)). Even in Coptic, the new agent-explicating construction remained fairly uncommon in text and apparently limited to third person (mostly plural) agents. The overall construction is therefore described as an “incipient passive”, in broad conformity with similar developments observed elsewhere. An alternative qualification as “extended active impersonal construction” would perhaps be even more appropriate here.

For a change that goes against certain dimensions associated with the cline of grammaticality to qualify as a genuine instance of degrammaticalization, various conditions, all expressed in the above synthetic definition, have to be fulfilled.

The change has to happen “in specific contexts”, i.e., fulfill a condition of “preserving (constructional) identity” (Haspelmath 2004: 27–28). Degrammaticalization is therefore distinct from various phenomena of lexicalization of affixes and other items of minor word-classes (such as *the pros and cons*, *isms*, etc.), which result in entirely new contexts of uses of these (Norde 2009: 9, 122–124; Haspelmath 2004: 27–33; Lehmann 2004: 174–177). In the present case, {t} is extended to new environments, but always for expressing the non-specified reference of the subject. The morpheme’s function thereby remains within detransitive voice, and “constructional identity” is preserved. On the other hand, the ultimate replacement of {t}-marked impersonal constructions by 3PL impersonal constructions (§ 8.1.2., *fine*) does not belong to the process of degrammaticalization proper anymore since constructional identity is then breached on the formal level.

Secondly, the change has to involve some “gain”. This distinguishes degrammaticalization from “retraction”, i.e., a change in which a morpheme merely drops a more grammatical function and thus retracts to a less grammatical one that it had been used for all along (Haspelmath 2004: 33–35). The two types of changes contrast as in the following diagram. Only in degrammaticalization is the less grammatical function (A) innovated:

degrammaticalization: $B \rightarrow A$ (B) [the less grammatical function, A,
is new]

retraction:⁷² $AB \rightarrow A$ [the less grammatical function, A,
has been present all along]

That the change undergone by Earlier Egyptian {t} is not an instance of retraction has already been demonstrated in the context of previous discussions:

- By the early second millennium, {t} is extended to events that do not meet the semantic condition for passivization (§ 3.1). In earlier times, {t} was never

⁷² An illustration of retraction, in a related domain, is provided by English *man* (Haspelmath 2004: 34). In Modern English, *man* is used as a full noun only (like German *Mann*), while in Old English it was also used as an impersonal subject pronoun (like German *man*). However, the use as a full noun is also attested in Old English. Consequently, the change is in effect a loss, rather than a gain. In particular, the source construction – the full noun from which the impersonal had once grammaticalized – has remained present all along.

used with such types of events, while other formal strategies were demonstrably used instead with these (§ 2.2.2).

- By the early second millennium, {t} is extended to SV patterns (§ 3.2, § 6.2). In the later third millennium by contrast, passive counterparts to active SV patterns were never realized with {t}. Rather, they were then realized by recruiting VS patterns to which {t} was appended, resulting in indirect (non-isomorphic) active-passive counterpart relationships of various sorts (§ 6.1).

This is summarized as follows, in conformity with genuine degrammaticalization:

	3rd & very early 2nd mill.	→	early-late 2nd mill.
VS, passivizable events:	{t}		{t}
non-passivizable events:	<i>sḏm</i> -ø, etc. (§ 2.2.2)		{t} (§ 3.1)
SV patterns:	counterpart relationships (§ 6.1)	{t} (§ 3.2, § 6.2)	

Thirdly, the change must be “composite”, i.e., involve “gain (...) on more than one level”. This is demonstrated in the next sub-section.

8.3 An instance of deinflectionalization

I here consider the change undergone by {t} in terms of the reversal of primitive changes associated with grammaticalization. This demonstrates that among the three types of degrammaticalization identified by Norde (2009) – degrammation, deinflectionalization, and debonding – the Egyptian change qualifies more precisely as an instance of deinflectionalization.

Norde’s (2009: 130–132, 228–231) parameters of degrammaticalization are indexed on Lehmann’s (1995) parameters of grammaticalization which diversely apply to primary and secondary grammaticalization⁷³ (here symbolized as “1°” and “2°”). As argued throughout Norde (2009), the distinction is of relevance in

⁷³ The terms “primary” and “secondary” grammaticalization (Norde 2009: 124) go back to Kurylowicz (1975: 52) famous bipartite definition: “Grammaticalization consists in the increase of the range of a morpheme advancing from a lexical to a grammatical or from a grammatical to a more grammatical status.” In a complementary fashion, primary and secondary grammaticalization may be thought of as associated respectively with the left and right parts of the “cline of grammaticality” (Hopper & Traugott 2003: 7): “content word > grammatical word > clitic > inflectional affix”.

appreciating which primitive changes are reversed, and in identifying different types of degrammaticalization.

- (i) [Integrity:]
 - “*Resemanticization*”:
 - (2°) √ {t} has gained the function of expressing non-specified reference in SV patterns and with non-passivizable events and non-verbal situations.
(Compare also the occasional cases of graphic complementation (14a–b), [§ 7.2.2, *fine*]).
 - (1°) (no) [{t} does not develop full lexical semantics such as in e.g., *homo* or *Mann* (from which French *on* or German *man* grammaticalized in primary grammaticalization)].
 - “*Phonological strengthening*”:
 - (2°) (no) [{t} is realized as */t(v)/ in all environments.⁷⁴]
 - “*Recategorialization*”:
 - (1°) (no) [{t} remains limited to the syntactic position of subject⁷⁵ and cannot control subsequent anaphoric reference. It thereby contrasts with other Earlier Egyptian expressions used for expressing non-specified reference such as, most notably, s ‘man’ (below, (27a–b)).]
- (ii) [Paradigmaticity:] “*Deparadigmaticization*”:
 - (2°) √ To be used in the subject slot of SV patterns, {t} has been extracted from its erstwhile exclusive inflectional slot and thus “discharge(d) from an inflectional paradigm”.
 - (1°) (no) [{t} does not move “up” to an open class.]

⁷⁴ Over time, the fuller writing of {t} as <t+w> becomes more common than the shorter one as <t>. This relates to more general changes in scribal conventions. Significantly, the distribution of fuller vs. shorter writings does not correlate in any meaningful manner with different environments of use of {t}. Differences that there may have been in the realization of {t} in different environments were phonologically conditioned. See Stauder (2014: 10–16).

⁷⁵ One singular exception is found in (...) *r p3y=tw šm* (about POSS=DETR go\INF) ‘(...) about the fact that one has gone’ (P. Salt 124 vso I.11 [ca. 1200 BCE]). The uniqueness of this expression – a hapax legomenon in a, by this time, relatively dense written record – suggests an exploratory, or non-standard, status of the construction. Moreover, {t} still stands for the agent in a construction in which the “possessed” noun is an infinitive, i.e., a nominalized action. Taken together, this suggests an analogical extension of use, exploratory or in a non-standard register.

- (iii) [Paradigmatic variability:] “*Deobligatorification*” (1° and 2°):
 - (no) [In all its uses, including innovative ones, {t} remains an obligatory expression of non-specified reference. Moreover, it remains the sole grammatical expression of this category.⁷⁶ In particular, the construction with s ‘man’ (below, (27a–b)) is used in strict complementary distribution to {t}: when controlling anaphoric reference and/or in syntactic functions other than subject.]
- [(iv) Structural scope: This, a possibly problematic parameter in general (Norde 2009: 131), does not apply to the present change.]
- (v) [Bondedness:] “*Severance*”:
 - (2°) ✓ In T-passives, {t} is an inflectional affix (§ 3.2, introduction; § 4.2). When extended to SV patterns, it behaves as a clitic: (a) {t} is used in the slot otherwise occupied by subject clitics (compare the pairs of examples in § 3.2); (b) {t} can be attached to a variety of hosts: *iw=*, *nty=*,⁷⁷ *tw=*, *hr=*, *k3=*, *wn=*, etc.⁷⁸ The change is thus as: stem-{t} [T-passives] > host-{t} [SV patterns].⁷⁹ (Severance here does not entail “defusion”: Already as an inflectional affix, {t} was agglutinated to the stem).

⁷⁶ On another level, some very minimal paradigmatic variability is perhaps observed during the period around 1100 BCE when the 3PL pronoun gradually supersedes {t}, the two expressions shortly coexisting with each other for the same function (§ 8.1.2). As argued above, this part of the overall change does not belong to the process of degrammaticalization anymore and is therefore inconsequential for the present evaluation.

⁷⁷ Not illustrated so far in the present paper; earliest instance: (...) *nt-t=tw r-irt* (REL-FEM=DETR FUT-do) ‘(...) what is to be done’ (P. UC 32287, 2–3 [business document, ca. 1800 BCE]).

⁷⁸ E.g., *iw=tw* (8a–b, 10a–b, 20b); *tw=tw* (7b, 11, 22); *k3/hr=tw* (13a–b, 26); *wn=tw* (9a); *wn-ir=tw* (9b, fn. 42); *wn-hr=tw* (21); *h-n=tw* (7a, 20a); *irt=tw* (12); etc. In addition, a dozen cases are found in which {t} is not appended to any preceding host and stands at the beginning of the clause (e.g., (10b): *tw r-sdm*); see Stauder (2013: 358–370, 376–390). These constructions remain limited to three literary texts and one personal name. In all cases, the lack of a preceding host reflects specific syntactic circumstances. Moreover, the position of {t} is uniquely determined even in clause-initial uses. Rather than as “debonding” (definition in Norde 2009: § 6), these clause-initial uses of {t} are therefore better interpreted as exceptional instances of a pro-clitic use, limited to specific textual contexts and syntactic environments (expressed in an exact transcription as *tw=r-sdm*).

⁷⁹ In the lack of objective criteria, the morphological status of {t} in VS patterns with non-passivizable events can be considered either as inflectional (as in T-passives), or, in a perhaps more cautious fashion, as indeterminate. Discussion above, § 7.2.

- (vi) [Syntagmatic variability:] “*Flexibilization*” (1° and 2°):
 - (no) [{t} is used in a variety of conjugational patterns and constructional schemes. In each of these, the position of the morpheme remains uniquely determined.]

[NB: the *s* ‘man’-construction⁸⁰

Full noun *s* ‘man, *homo*’, generically interpreted; used in cases when {t} cannot be used:

- non-specified subject controlling subsequent anaphoric reference:

- (27) a. *s-ḥr s m sp=f bin s-sbt=f bw-nb (...)*
 CAUS-rage man in occasion=3MSG bad CAUS-laugh=3MSG everyone
 ‘When a man causes anger by his bad deed, he makes everyone laugh (...)’
 (Debate of a Man and his Soul 110–111)

- syntactic position other than subject (here also controlling anaphora):

- b. *iw r n s nḥm=f=sw*
 COMP speech of man save=3MSG.AGR=3MSG.OBJ
 ‘A man’s speech can save him’ (Shipwrecked Sailor, 17–18).]

The innovative uses of {t} observed in the second millennium thus involve the reversal of multiple primitive changes: resemanticization (i), deparadigmaticization (discharge from an inflectional paradigm) (ii), and severance (v). The present change is a compound change, qualifying as an instance of degrammaticalization. No changes in expression occur (cf. (i), *sub* “phonological strengthening”), but this is unproblematic for the present analysis since changes in expression, “as in grammaticalization, may or may not occur” (Norde 2009: 233).

All observed changes are reversals of primitive changes associated with secondary grammaticalization, and no primitive changes associated with primary grammaticalization are reversed. Moreover, the specific types of primitive changes that are reversed correlate with each other in a meaningful way, leading to the description of the change discussed here as an instance of *deinflectionalization* specifically. Compare the following definition and typical correlation of primitive changes reversed:

“Deinflectionalization is a composite change whereby an inflectional affix in a specific linguistic context gains a new function, while shifting to a less bound morpheme.” (Norde 2009: 152)

⁸⁰ On this construction, Stauder (2014: 189–192). On active impersonal constructions more generally in Earlier Egyptian, Stauder (2014: 183–200).

“In deinflectionalization, the crucial parameter is paradigmaticity, because what is most characteristic of these cases is that inflectional suffixes cease to form part of inflectional paradigms (deparadigmaticization). Thus they develop into a less bound type of morpheme (severance), and they gain a new function or new meaning (resemanticization). However, they are not being recategorized because they do not become members of a major word class.” (Norde 2009: 231)

9 Summary: the mechanisms of, and circumstantial conditions for, a rare change

The change described in the present paper is a rare change, as can be seen from two, here equivalent, perspectives. The change from passive to active impersonal is otherwise documented, but not as leading to a *pronominal* active impersonal construction (Siewierska 2008). Moreover, the present change qualifies as an instance of degrammaticalization (§ 8.2), and more specifically of deinflectionalization (§ 8.3).

As noted by Norde (2009: 102), “(...) affixal degrammaticalization is admittedly rare, but in case of *favorable circumstances*, such as some kind of internal Systemstörung (Plank 1995) and a *possibility of* morphosyntactic reanalysis, it is by no means impossible [emphasis mine].” This concluding section summarizes the mechanisms and factors at work in the Egyptian change under discussion and the favorable circumstances that made it possible within the specific linguistic context of early second-millennium Egyptian.

9.1 Mechanisms of change

The mechanisms of change are threefold. The possibility for *occasional* reanalysis, by individual speakers, is given by ample formal equivocation (§ 4). This phrasing – different from “reanalysis” plain and simple⁸¹ – is used in order to account for the fact that, even centuries after {t} had been extended to new environments, T-passives themselves remained unchanged in their morphosyntactic properties (§ 4, introduction). This implies that early second-millennium T-pas-

⁸¹ In many changes, reanalysis is considered a necessary mechanism (e.g., Harris & Campbell 1995: 61–96), including for grammaticalization (challenged by Haspelmath 1998). I submit that this is not the case in the change discussed here.

sives were still genuine passives (§ 7.1) only later to undergo some change themselves (§ 7.2). In the analysis advocated here, it is then the *possibility* for *occasional* reanalysis of T-passives – rather than *prior* reanalysis of such – that provides the condition for extending {t} to new environments.

The second mechanism for change – pragmatic enrichment – is observed in the passive marker {t} being associated with the referential properties of the non-specified agent itself (§ 5). In a passive construction, passive morphology codes a syntactic transformation and thereby only indirectly points to the agent. In its innovative uses, {t} itself stands for the non-specified, and often non-specific, agent. Following Langacker (2004; 2006), the condition for such change was described in terms of the alternative construal of a construction based on the relative prominence of participants (the passive) as a construction based on the (non-)specificity of the agent (the active impersonal) (§ 5.1). In Earlier Egyptian, T-passives were very commonly used in discourse-environments that not only permit but also often directly favor such alternative construals in speakers' representations (§ 5.2–4).

Finally, the change involves context generalization: to events that could not be passivized on semantic grounds (events and situations that lack an agentive participant (§ 2.2.2, § 3.1)) and to patterns that could not be passivized on morphological grounds (SV patterns originally grammaticalized from situational predicate constructions (§ 3.2, § 6.2)). The spread and functional generalization of these SV patterns language proved an important motivating factor for change. As in other instances of deinflectionalization,⁸² an entirely unrelated process of change thus provided a specific intra-linguistic context for a rare change which otherwise may well not have happened.

The mechanisms of change (potential for reanalysis, pragmatic enrichment, and context generalization) are thus ordinary ones, and similar to ones found in grammaticalization itself.

9.2 The intra-linguistic context for the change

In Part II, I discussed a series of specific circumstances that not only made the Egyptian change here discussed possible but might even, in their cumulative effect, have favored it. These are briefly recapitulated here for a conclusive assessment (the siglum [T] signals those conditions that apply only to T-passives):

⁸² Compare the role of the demise of the case system in the deinflectionalization of the -s genitive in Scandinavian and Germanic languages (Norde 2009: 235).

Formal equivocation:

- (i) *Coding properties of grammatical relations* (§ 4.1):
Coding of grammatical relations is mainly realized through relative word order in Earlier Egyptian. In a VSO language, both core arguments are post-verbal; word order is then nondistinctive for the sole core argument of a passive clauses (V-P, syntactically as V-S[?]/O[?]). In nominal morphology, only singular pronouns distinguish between subject and object cases, all other NP's being formally syncretic.
- (ii) [T] *T-passive morphology* (§ 4.2):
Unlike V-passive morphology, {t} has singular exponence and is directly affixed to active stems (morphological transparency). Moreover, {t} is agglutinated to the stem (no fusion) and stands at the outer edge of the form.

Semantic conditions:

- (iii) *Specialization of voice morphology solely for the passive function* (§ 5.2):
Earlier Egyptian voice morphology is purely grammatical in function and does not interact with the lexical semantics of the verbal event (“semantic simplicity” of the passive).
- (iv) *Broad use of passives derived from intransitives (impersonal passives)* (§ 5.3):
Earlier Egyptian regularly uses impersonal passives. In such constructions, the agent backgrounding dimension is strongly reinforced over the Endpoint orientation otherwise prominent in passives. In addition, impersonal passives strongly favor non-specific and plural human agents.
- (v) [T] *Frequent association of T-passives with plural/non-specific agents in text* (§ 5.4):
Although the morpheme {t} has no temporal-aspectual functions of its own, the overall distribution of V- and T-passives in the paradigm results in a situation in which T-passives are mostly used with relative present tense and/or imperfective aspect, and only rarely with anterior tense. Accordingly, the agent of T-passives itself is mostly plural or non-specific in texts.
- (vi) [T] *Only T-passives with events marked or interpreted as imperfective* (§ 5.4):
Imperfectives passives, always realized as T-passives, typically have full-noun subjects or are subjectless altogether. Semantic conditions relating to the agent (v) are thus matched by formal conditions (i)–(ii).

[NB: While several of these favorable circumstances apply to V- and T-passives alike ((i), (iii)–(iv)), other ones are exclusive to the latter ((ii), (v)–(vi)). This accounts for the fact that only T-passives undergo change, although both morphological types are used in the exact same passive construction (§ 2.2). More precisely, morphological dimensions (ii) directly account for the fact that {t} is selected to be accommodated into SV patterns. Yet the issue is not solely a morphological one, as shown by the simultaneous extension of {t} – and only {t} – to events that are not passivizable on semantic grounds (§ 3.1). This demonstrates the importance of the additional semantic conditions in (v) and (vi).]

Motivating factor:

- (vii) *Semantic generalization and spread of SV patterns originally grammaticalized from situational predicate constructions* (§ 6):
 - The latter specification is important: it is because of such a source construction (a non-verbal pattern) that SV patterns present the lexical verb in the infinitive, i.e., in a form that cannot directly accommodate inflectional morphology.
 - The former specification is important as well: the original rise of SV patterns did not lead to any change in passive voice for centuries (§ 6.1), and it was only when SV patterns dramatically generalized their functional yield, spreading across the verbal system, that {t} was eventually accommodated to these (§ 6.2).

Some of the above dimensions are remotely related to each other. The broad use of impersonal passives (iv) and the specialization of voice morphology solely for passive functions (iii) may both relate to the rigid word order patterns of Earlier Egyptian (§ 5.2.), a dimension that in turn plays a major role in the particular coding properties of grammatical relations (i). On another level, the privileged aspectual correlates of T-passives (v)–(vi) result from the presence in the language of a perfective passive gram (the V-passive), with {t} (itself not inherently marked for tense-aspect) taking over all other functions in the paradigm. The singular exponence of {t}, more broadly its low semantic relevance, in turn relates to other morphological properties of the morpheme, notably its position at the outer edge of the stem (ii) (§ 4.2, with fn. 39). Such relations, however, are only partial and indirect, and their identification retrospective. The above dimensions can thus be considered as largely independent of each other.

I propose that it was the combined effect of the above, largely independent, favorable circumstances that made the change discussed here possible.⁸³ In a post-

⁸³ “Combined effect” is here paramount. Several Semitic languages also witness the rise of

hoc account such as the present one necessarily is, it would almost seem that, given such conspiring of favorable circumstances, change “had” to happen. Yet no such functional teleology is permitted if this is understood in a strong, quasi-deterministic sense: for neither context to which {t} was extended was such an extension required. As regards events that are not passivizable on semantic grounds, other strategies, such as zero-subject constructions, were in use before the change began (§ 2.2.2, § 3.1, *fine*) and could have been kept later. As regards SV patterns, the active impersonal construction with a generically interpreted noun s ‘man’ – in use in VS patterns when the non-specific subject controlled subsequent anaphora (§ 8.3, with (27a–b)) – could have easily been generalized to cases in which it controlled no anaphora, and so made to provide the detransitive counterpart of innovative SV patterns. It so happened that for either environment Egyptian speakers selected another option, namely extending the uses of {t} itself.

Finally, none of the above circumstances are exceptional in themselves. As in other instances of rare changes, it is the contingent coming together of a series of ordinary circumstances that made an extraordinary change possible.⁸⁴ The mechanisms of change (§ 9.1), then, are themselves ordinary ones.

new SV patterns grammaticalizing from non-verbal constructions (e.g., Cohen 1984), yet none of them sees their respective T-stems undergo any change similar to the one here described in Earlier Egyptian. In contrast with Earlier Egyptian, this is accounted for by a variety of reasons. Morphologically, Semitic {t} is generally not at the outer edge of T-stems, and morphophonological processes, including some fusion, variously apply (contrast with (ii)). Semantically, Semitic T-stems display multiple, often combined, functions in detransitive voice, among which the passive is generally not the major one. Semitic T-stems thereby interact with lexical semantics and are broadly determined in relation to issues such as Endpoint-orientation and reduced (semantic) transitivity, contrasting with the solely passive functions of Egyptian T-passive (§ 5.2, contrast with (iii)). Moreover, Semitic languages in general – and Semitic T-stems in particular – tend to license passives from intransitives only marginally, if at all (§ 5.3.2, contrast with (iv)). In the lack of an equivalent of the Earlier Egyptian V-passive, Semitic T-stems do not show any preferential temporal-aspectual associations with imperfective events (contrast with (v)–(vi)). Finally, several Semitic languages have innovative SV patterns, but these do not undergo as dramatic a functional generalization as in Earlier Egyptian (contrast with (vii)).

⁸⁴ For a similar line of analysis of typologically unusual structures more generally, Harris (2008).

10 From adverbializing *-w* to third person plural clitic *=w*

Although more instances will no doubt be found upon further investigation, degrammaticalization in general, and deinflectionalization in particular, seem to be uncommon phenomena. Haspelmath's (2004: 29) list comprises a mere eight cases of degrammaticalization⁸⁵, and only a few more are given in Norde (2009), including the one described in Idiatov (2008). As for deinflectionalization specifically, Norde (2009: § 5.3–6) analyzes four cases and mentions no more. In the context of the present discussion, it is therefore appropriate to briefly present yet another instance of deinflectionalization that occurred in second-millennium Egyptian.

10.1 The change in the record

Around the mid-second millennium, Egyptian sees the rise of a new 3PL clitic pronoun *=w* out of an erstwhile adverbializing affix *-w*.⁸⁶ The stages of the process (Edel 1959: 30–37; Kroeber 1970: 35–40) are summarized as follows:

- (i) The Earlier Egyptian adverbializing ending *-w*⁸⁷

Notably used for deriving adverbs from prepositions (so-called “Präpositionaladverbien”), e.g.:

- *hnt* ‘before_{PREP}’ → *hnt(-w)* ‘before_{ADV}’;
- *hft* ‘according to’ → *hft(-w)* ‘accordingly’;
- *n* ‘to, for’ → *n(-y)* ‘therefore, for it’.

⁸⁵ In Haspelmath's original wording, these are labeled “antigrammaticalization”, while “degrammaticalization” is reserved for other phenomena which have in common the fact that they do not preserve constructional identity, such as lexicalization and conversion. The terminology is here harmonized with that in Norde (2009).

⁸⁶ Ironically, this is the very same 3PL pronoun that was ultimately to replace {t} in all its uses by the end of the second millennium (§ 7.2.1, § 8.1.2). The two changes are unrelated: the rise of *=w* as a 3PL pronoun occurs by the mid-second millennium under circumstances that are described in the present section; the spread of *=w* to the environments in which {t} was used occurs only much later, by the very end of the second millennium.

⁸⁷ Underlying morphology unclear; in written form, mostly <ø>, less commonly <-w> or <-y>; possibly a vocalic ending of some sort, with allomorphy not excluded.

(ii) (*N sdm-n(y)*) (attested from ca. 2000 BCE on)

In this construction, the *sdm-n=f* accommodates the adverbializing ending in the slot otherwise reserved for personal subject clitics (=f). A full noun is generally anticipated to the left of the verbal form; e.g., (note that the referent is plural and generic):

*hnmsw nw min n mr-n-y*⁸⁸
 friends of today NEG love-HAB-X
 ‘Friends of today, they do not love.’ (Debate of a Man with his Soul 104)

Following a cross-linguistically common process, the *sdm-n=f*, an anterior tense, arose some time before 2800 BCE from a possessive perfective passive construction of some sort with the preposition *n* ‘to, for’, along the general lines of: *sdm-n=f NP* (heard\PASS.PFV to=3MSG NP.SBJ) ‘NP is heard to him’ > *sdm-n=f NP* (hear-ANT=3MSG.SBJ NP.OBJ) ‘he has heard NP’ (PERFECT) > ‘he heard NP’ (ANTERIOR).⁸⁹ Although *-n-* in *sdm-n=f* is fully reanalyzed synchronically as a tense marker, its prepositional origin was probably still morphologically transparent enough by the time the construction (*N sdm-n(y)*) arose.⁹⁰ The construction *sdm-n(y)* thus results from the incorporation of the “Präpositionaladverb” *n(y)* into the *sdm-n=f* form itself, replacing the tense marker *-n-* to which it was historically related.

(iii) Extension to the subject slot of *other VS conjugational forms* (ca. 1550 BCE)

e.g., *d=w* (give\PST=3PL.SBJ) ‘they have given’ (Kamose, Second Stela, 18).

⁸⁸ The written form of the morpheme under discussion is <y> in the present case. Other written realizations in stage (ii) include <ø> and <PLUR> (for the latter, see below, § 10.3). The formal identity of all these with the adverbializing ending in (i) is established in Edel (1959).

⁸⁹ In itself, *sdm-n=f* expresses anterior tense. When part of the bound negative pattern *n sdm-n=f*, the form gradually specialized for the expression of negative habitual/general events, as in the example quoted above in the main text.

⁹⁰ Note that (*N sdm-n(y)*) may be older than its earliest attestation in the record, by ca. 2000 BCE. The written standard represented by Middle Egyptian (from ca. 2100 BCE) may be in part based on a different diatopic variety than the one on which Old Egyptian was based. Consequently, (*N sdm-n(y)*) may have been in use in earlier times already, in varieties other than the ones represented in the extant Old Egyptian written corpus.

- (iv) Extension to the subject slot of *non-verbal* patterns (ca. 1450 BCE)

e.g., (...) *iw=w r-ht=i* (CIRC=3PL under_authority=1SG) ‘(...) while they were under my authority’ (Urk. IV 54, 10).

- (v) Extension to *non-subject* slots, and thus to all slots in which personal clitics are used (ca. 1350 BCE)

e.g., as a possessive marker after a noun: *fnḏw=w* (noses=3PL) ‘their noses’ (Edel 1959: 17).

- (vi) Gradual replacement of the old 3PL clitic =*sn*, which ultimately disappears (ca. 1350–1000 BCE).⁹¹

10.2 An instance of deinflectionalization

The change presented here meets the conditions for it to be described as an instance of degrammaticalization (§ 8.2). The adverbializing *-w* is extended to new functions, and the change is therefore not an instance of retraction. The condition of constructional identity is less easily assessed since the functional extension is here ultimately to a new domain of grammar. Note however (ii) as a bridging context, in which the morpheme is extended to a verbal form that itself historically incorporates a preposition. Continuity in development is thus observed between stages (i) and (ii). Constructional continuity is further observed between stages (ii) and (iii), which both involve forms of the VS conjugation. A similar argument applies to subsequent stages of extension. By such continuity between each pair of successive stages, the change presented here differs from cases of “upgrading” that result in lexicalization, and qualifies as a genuine instance of degrammaticalization.

The change is a compound change and involves the reversal of the following primitive changes associated with grammaticalization:

⁹¹ The process proceeds at different paces depending on syntactic environments and written registers (with older =*sn* increasingly becoming an index of elevated language); detailed description in Winand (1995).

- Resemanticization (2°): The morpheme gains new functions as a third person plural pronoun.
- Deparadigmaticization (2°): The morpheme is extracted from its erstwhile exclusive affixal slot and is thus “discharge(d) from a (here derivational) paradigm”.
- Severance: As an adverbializing affix, *-w* was subject to lexical idiosyncrasies in derivation. The later status of *=w* as a clitic, on the other hand, is demonstrated by the following facts: (a) *=w* is ultimately used in all slots in which personal clitics are otherwise used; (b) *=w* can be attached to a variety of hosts, such as verbal forms (iii), clause complementizers (iv), and nouns (v).

On the other hand, *=w* does not develop full lexical semantics (no resemanticization, 1°), does not change in expression (no phonological strengthening), does not acquire morphosyntactic properties associated with a major word class (no recategorialization), does not “move up” to an open class (no deparadigmaticization, 1°), remains obligatory in each of its uses (no deobligatorification), and has a fixed position in each of these (no flexibilization).

In terms of the parameters of degrammaticalization, the change presented here scores exactly like the change affecting {*t*} (compare § 8.3). In this sense, both changes similarly qualify as deinflectionalization. The difference lies with the fact that the clitic {*t*} develops out of an inflectional affix, while the clitic *=w* develops out of a derivational affix. Strictly speaking, the change presented here would then be labeled a “de-derivationalization”, in direct analogy to “de-inflectionalization”. Alternatively, with the aim of avoiding terminological proliferation, the definition of deinflectionalization may be slightly extended to include a change in which the exact same processes that define deinflectionalization are made to apply to a morpheme that is originally derivational in nature.

10.3 Mechanisms and factors of the change

The mechanisms involved in the present change include pragmatic enrichment and reanalysis. Schematically:

Pragmatic enrichment:

- e.g., *hnt-w* ‘before_{ADV}’
- interpreted as ‘before *it*’: with situational reference (i.e., reference to a state-of-affairs)
- generic reference → PLURAL

These successive stages of enrichment by pragmatic inferencing are directly evidenced by the increasing range of discourse contexts in which the morpheme comes to be used over time (§ 10.1). In addition, the morpheme is occasionally complemented by the <PLURAL> classifier, already with “Präpositionaladverbien” themselves and then increasingly so in all subsequent stages of its development.⁹² Although merely a graphic phenomenon, this opens a window onto pragmatic enrichment at work in individual speakers’ (/scribes’) changing representations, even before reanalysis had begun showing any morphosyntactic effects in distributions. A similar graphic phenomenon was discussed above in connection with {t} itself (§ 5.1.2).

Reanalysis (sketch):

- *n-y* (to-ADV) ‘therefore, for it’ (i);
- used in *sḍm-[ny]*
(§ 10.1, sub (ii): morphological transparency of *sḍm-n=f*, historically itself incorporating the preposition *n*);
- reanalysis of *sḍm-[ny]* as stem-subject: [*sḍm-n*]=*w*
(by analogy to *sḍm-n=i*, *sḍm-n=k*, *sḍm-n=sn* (hear-ANT=1SG, =2MSG, =3PL));
- extension to other VS patterns (iii), e.g., *sḍm=w* (hear\SUBJ=3PL);
[and thence, subsequent extension to all other clitic slots, (iv)–(v)].

Morphological reanalysis was no doubt facilitated by the fact that *-w* lay on the outer edge of “Präpositionaladverbien” and, subsequently, of *sḍm-ny*. A similar condition was observed with {t} in T-passives (§ 4.2) and seems more gener-

⁹² Also Vernus (fc.: § 5.2.1).

ally characteristic of a variety of cases of deinflectionalization and debonding (Idiatov 2008: 160). As the above discussion further implies, another major facilitating circumstance was the contingent co-presence of two formal categories in Earlier Egyptian: adverbs morphologically derived from prepositions (“Präpositionaladverbien”) and a verbal form, the *sḏm-n=f*, that historically incorporates a preposition.

As described above in terms of pragmatic enrichment and ever-increasing extension, the change could have just proceeded by its own dynamics. In addition, one entirely independent, yet broadly simultaneous, change in the language may have acted as a motivating factor. By the mid-second millennium, the old 3PL clitic pronoun *=sn* (**/-svn/*) was reducing morphologically to **/s^(v)/*.⁹³ This resulted in increasing morphological syncretism with a series of other third person pronouns from either set of personal clitics (§ 4.1): set-I, 3FSG (*=s*); set-II, 3MSG and 3FSG (*=sw*, *=s(i)*), all *> */s^(v)/*. The extension of *=w* to most clitic slots from 1550 BCE on ((iii)–(v) in § 10.1) and its subsequent superseding of old *=sn* in all uses (vi) may in part have been in response to this situation of increasing syncretism, restoring formal distinctiveness.

10.4 Final consideration

A series of elements are in common to both cases of deinflectionalization presented here. Both morphemes undergoing deinflectionalization, {t} and -w, lay at the outer edge of their respective forms. In both cases, the possibility for change is given by the contingent conjunction of a series of independent favorable and facilitating circumstances, synchronic and diachronic, none of which is individually exceptional. Both changes involve context generalization and thereby, although going counter to some primitive changes associated with grammaticalization, conform with one very basic tendency in language change. Finally, pragmatic enrichment of affixes (passive and adverbializing, respectively) results in both cases in pronouns that are at the lowest end of the scale of discourse topicality: an impersonal subject pronoun (*=tw*) and a third person plural pronoun (*=w*).

⁹³ The earliest signs of the process are manifest by the earlier second millennium (Uljas 2010). The detailed chronology remains difficult to assess, due to the generally conservative written standards of Earlier Egyptian.

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