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Studies on the s_dm.t=f verb form in Classical Egyptian

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RIJKSUNIVERSITEIT GRONINGEN

**STUDIES ON THE
sDm.t=f VERB FORM
IN CLASSICAL EGYPTIAN**

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van het doctoraat in de
Letteren
aan de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen
op gezag van de
Rector Magnificus, dr F. van der Woude,
in het openbaar te verdedigen op
donderdag 18 september 1997
des namiddags te 4.15 uur

door

Ludovicus Martinus Johannes Zonhoven
geboren op 28 april 1943
te Schiedam

Promotores:

Prof. dr H. te Velde

Prof. dr G. Burkard

Referent:

Dr H.O. Willems

 "It is good to be engaged in the Future"

(*The Instruction for Merikare*, 75)

"Then Neferty said: 'Shall I tell you about the Past or about the Future, my lord?'. The king replied: 'About the Future!'"

(Adapted from *The Prophecy of Neferty*, P. 14-15)

to the memory of
my parents and Cees Gubbels

Een hoofdstuk van dit proefschrift is eerder verschenen als artikel.

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PREFACE

This book studies a verb form which began to attract my attention a long time ago. A study of the meaning and the uses of the sDm.t=f verb form was the more challenging since in Sir Alan Gardiner's *Egyptian Grammar* it is called "an obscure category of the verb", and in Dieter Mueller's unpublished introductory grammar of Middle Egyptian "one of the most enigmatic features of Egyptian grammar and morphology", which "has three seemingly unrelated uses". No doubt these statements are largely due to the nature of the hieroglyphic script, which writes no vowels. Had the vocalization been accounted for in the script, the problem of recognition would not have arisen, and no doubt a clearer view of the uses and meaning of the form would have existed long ago.

Unfortunately, its distinctive morpheme *t* is written with a sign which covers more grammatical phenomena. Moreover, the unique formation of its passive with -yt with ultimae infirmae verbs has added to its isolation and separation from the suffix conjugation family. Owing to these circumstances and the relatively small number of indubitable instances the form has received little attention.

However, that small and different can be interesting--though somewhat eccentric--and that the form may be of startling significance for the core of the verbal system in Middle Egyptian, is something I hope to be able to demonstrate.

Indeed, the form is of such relatively rare and restricted occurrence that the subject originally seemed to me to be too small for a monograph large enough to serve as a dissertation. Therefore I decided to submit as the dissertation a number of articles under the broader heading of verb forms and the verbal system in Middle Egyptian. At that time I could not foresee that the study of the sDm.t=f would gradually grow into the present six contributions and take up a disproportionate amount of space. Because the original idea thus had to be abandoned, the result now is that this dissertation is one coherent monograph, covering only one subject.

The fact that the first chapter on the sDm.t=f had already been submitted for publication as an article, and has, meanwhile, been published (though with some minor differences), forced me to pursue this policy for the other chapters too. Fortunately, the remaining five chapters will appear in Egyptological journals within a relatively short span of time, from late 1997 to late 1998.

I am most grateful to my supervisor Prof. Herman te Velde, who was willing to take over the guidance of this dissertation after the untimely and deeply regretted death of my previous supervisor, Prof. Jan Quaegebeur of Leuven University. The death of this great scholar and good friend confronted me with the question of what to do next, that is, to abandon the dissertation or to finish it as quickly as possible under a new supervisor. It was Prof. te Velde's characteristic gentleness, generosity and willingness to take over that stimulated me to finish the dissertation in a relatively short time. After all, it was only in December 1995 that I wrote to him with the request to act as my supervisor. I am no less indebted to Prof. Günter Burkard, who did not hesitate to offer his experience with Middle Egyptian grammar and texts when asked to act as second supervisor by Prof. te Velde. On hearing that Prof. Harco Willems had been appointed the successor to Prof. Jan Quaegebeur in Leuven, my feelings were somewhat mixed. On the one hand, I felt that this was undoubtedly a great honour for him, but, on the other hand, I knew that I would sorely miss not only an excellent colleague and close friend whose brief social calls during office hours I really enjoyed but also the challenging discussions with him about matters of grammar. Thus, when Prof. te Velde suggested that he should act as 'referent', I was delighted to be fortunate enough to cross swords with his sharp mind again on a mutual interest of ours.

My daily occupation in Egyptology as editor of the *Annual Egyptological Bibliography* in fact leaves little time for pursuing my personal interests in research. Under such circumstances a favourable environment is necessary for efforts such as the completion of a dissertation. Indeed, I owe a great deal to the pleasant atmosphere in the Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten and to the close cooperation with my colleague Willem Hovestreydt. I am most grateful to the Institute's director, Prof. De Roos, for creating that fertile soil, and I am honoured to have found him willing to act as first 'paranimf'. Among my many long-standing friendships, I would

particularly like to mention Dr Guido van den Boorn here who will act as second 'paranimf'. His own dissertation, written under similar circumstances, that is, primarily after office hours, stood as an example for me.

I would like to thank Profs. Koster, Van der Plas and Schneider for their willingness to act as reviewers. Further, I would like to express my gratitude to Profs. Comrie, Schadeberg, Schenkel, and Seuren, who were prepared to respond to queries I had about matters of great concern to my subject but which had received relatively little attention in linguistic literature or were beyond my perspective. I am grateful, too, to Dr Julia Harvey, who not only corrected the English text but whose keen eye also traced many a typographical inconsistency.

Last, but by no means least, I wish to thank my wife Renée, whose unfailing understanding of my long hours in the study in the evenings and at weekends during the first years of our marriage has been inspiring. Her knowledge of the English language provoked many a discussion about formulations. We will particularly cherish in our memories the long sessions in which we discussed the meaning of the crucial notion "not yet" and its use in a variety of English contexts.

Oegstgeest, July 1997

Louis Zonhoven

INTRODUCTION

The present studies are devoted to some synchronic aspects of the sDm.t=f verb form, primarily its meaning and its uses in Classical Egyptian.¹ In older studies of the verbal system the verb form has usually been granted a place separate from the suffix conjugation forms.² Although it is consistently included in grammars of Middle Egyptian, owing to its being a regular verb form in that language phase, it has received relatively little special attention if compared with other suffix conjugation forms, even in the years during and following the development by Polotsky of his Standard Theory on the verbal system.

In Polotsky's final presentation of the Standard Theory, the "Transpositions", the form is excluded owing to its very restricted use.³ It is also absent from Junge's study of the syntax of the Middle Egyptian literary language.⁴ Despite the fact that the verb form was related to the prospective/future time field by Westendorf,⁵ it was not taken into consideration in a recent study of future verb forms.⁶ Nor will its passive be included in a forthcoming study of the passive in Classical Egyptian.⁷ Indeed, modern specialized studies on this verb form or its uses are few,⁸ in fact there are only two, one by Satzinger,⁹ the other by Loprieno.¹⁰

Although these studies will be discussed in my subsequent contributions whenever appropriate, some preliminary remarks are in order here. Satzinger was the first to explicitly formulate that the form is a full member of the suffix conjugation family.¹¹ Whereas he deals with the form as a unity, Loprieno approaches the form differently in a later article.¹² He argues that the form must be subdivided into two "transpositions" which have quite distinct uses after certain prepositions and after the negation *n*, syntactically as well as semantically.

In the present study of the verb form the time of the publication of Gardiner's grammar in 1927 is taken as a point of departure,¹³ which is more or less contemporaneous with Gunn's important work on grammar¹⁴ and with the fourth and last edition of Erman's grammar.¹⁵ In these and earlier

¹ For a brief survey of the history of scholarly studies of the form in general and their assessment see Satzinger, sDm.t.f, *JEA* 57 (1971), 58-61 and 68-69. For the passive sDm.t=f see Westendorf, *Gebrauch Passivs*, 111-112.

² E.g., Erman, *Äg. Grammatik*, 208-211 (§418-420) under 10.c: the infinitival forms; so also in the earlier editions *op.cit.*: 1894¹, 118-121 (§283-291); 1902², 146-148 (§304-308); 1911³, 218-221 (§418-421). Although Sethe, *Verbum* II, 157-160 (§353-357) deals with the form as "substantivized" in an Appendix to the "Tempus sDm-f", see the additions and corrections, *op.cit.* II, 462 (note §357) for the identification as a feminine infinitive. Gardiner, *EG*, 316-322 (§401-409), before Lesson XXVIII introducing the suffix conjugation. De Buck, *Grammaire élémentaire*, 90-91 (§173-176), together with the infinitive and the complementary infinitive. Lefebvre, *GEC*, 211-214 (§415-424), between the infinitive and the participles. Edel, *AäG*, 367-372 (§730-740), together with the infinitive, the complementary infinitive and the negative complement.

³ Polotsky, *Transpositions*, *IOS* 6 (1976), 7, n.13.

⁴ Junge, *Syntax mitteläg. Literatursprache*; id., *Emphasis*, 33 contains only a marginal reference to the form.

⁵ Westendorf, *Gramm. med. T.*, 194-195 (§267); followed by Polotsky (see my note 3).

⁶ Vernus, *Future at Issue*. To judge from the introductory words about the difference between grammaticalization of the future in verb forms and future/prospectivity as a contextual feature, an assessment of the sDm.t=f in this light should have been obvious, given Westendorf's suggestion.

⁷ Personal communication by Reintges. For an adapted version of ch. 3 of his forthcoming dissertation *Passive Voice in Older Egyptian* see id., sDm-tw-f, *GM* 153 (1996), 79-99.

⁸ Not seen by me is a thesis on the sDm.t=f by Depuydt, ref. Vernus, *Études III*, *RdE* 35 (1984), 185, n.162.

⁹ Satzinger, sDm.t.f, *JEA* 57 (1971), 58-69. The reaction of Junge, sDm.t.f, *GM* 1 (1972), 32-34 was more concerned with matters of the terminology used by Satzinger than with the form; also, in Satzinger's reaction, *Rund um sDm.t.f*, *GM* 27 (1978), 45-49 the verb form played only a background role.

¹⁰ Loprieno, sDm.t.f, *GM* 37 (1980), 17-29.

¹¹ Satzinger, *op.cit.*, 59.

¹² Loprieno, *op.cit.*, 18 (1.2) and 27, n.4.

¹³ Gardiner, *EG*.

¹⁴ Gunn, *Studies in Eg. Syntax* (1924).

¹⁵ Erman, *Äg. Grammatik* (1928⁴).

works the origin of the verb form played such a prominent role that it has, in my opinion, considerably obscured the kinship of the sDm.t=f with the suffix conjugation. An intensive occupation with that language-historical issue is noticeable.¹⁶

No doubt owing to its remarkable 'not yet' notion, it is the n sDm.t=f construction which received the bulk of the attention in the years preceding 1927.¹⁷ The question of the origin of the verb form and of the relation of its *t*-morpheme to the feminine ending has received attention up to more recent times.¹⁸

It should be pointed out here that in the present study I refrain from language-historical discussion of the issue of the origin of the verb form's *t*-morpheme. A hypothesis about its historical development and its possible connections with the feminine ending -t and the passive morpheme *tw/i* is necessarily highly theoretically biased, without good possibilities for verification and disproval. It may result in quite divergent functions which only show a formal resemblance in a writing with *t* being brought together under one semantic denominator without a firm foundation.¹⁹ In my opinion, this approach does not further a better understanding of the meaning of the verb form and its uses in Classical Egyptian.

The present six studies on the sDm.t=f are presented separately to various journals. Nevertheless, they cannot be taken as separate entities, each in their own right. In fact, the series of studies is rather a coherent ensemble actually forming one long argument, in which each study depends on the results of the preceding ones. Although the central issue, that is the unity and the meaning of the verb form proper and its use in constructions, is treated from a unified viewpoint, some overlapping due to recalling results already obtained and repetition of important references in notes cannot be avoided. Otherwise, in my opinion, the understanding of the verb form I want to further would instead be obstructed.

As regards the concepts of tense and time reference from general linguistics, so predominant in this study,²⁰ these are based on a single description, the use of which, in my opinion, will prove to be very rewarding for the treatment of the subject. By using a single view I hope to avoid the confusion sometimes caused by a promiscuous handling of concepts. The brief description of some essentials of tense and time reference as given in the beginning of the first study is only meant to provide the necessary basis, but the treatment of the form and its uses I consider to be rather philological with a grammatical bias than the reverse. The desired promulgation of the ideas set forth here seems to me best served by being too explicit rather than too succinct, and by using terms supposedly familiar to all Egyptologists rather than specialised linguistic terminology, which tends to work as a deterrent.²¹

To a considerable extent the present studies have been elicited by what I consider to be one of the very rare, though historically explicable, mistaken descriptions in Gardiner's *monumentum aere perennius*, which has exerted a considerable and long-lasting influence on the views and

¹⁶ For a lucid survey and discussion of the state of the art in around 1924, mainly founded on n sDm.t=f, see Gunn, *Studies in Eg. Syntax*, 174-179, discussing the identifications of (1) an infinitive by Sethe, *Verbum* II, 462 (note §357), (2) a feminine perfective passive participle by Gardiner, *Participial Formations*, *Rev. ég.* N.S. 2/1-2 (1920), 50-55 (repeated in id., *EG*, 318-319 (§405)), and (3) a feminine infinitival form by Erman, *Äg. Grammatik*, 208-209 (§418), with the note that the passive is formed with a feminine passive participle (*op.cit.* 211 (§421, Anm.)).

¹⁷ Although Vogelsang seems to have been the first to discover the 'not yet' notion of n sDm.t=f (see the remarks in Gardiner, *Participial Formations*, *Rev. ég.* N.S. 2/1-2 (1920), 50 (II) and Gunn, *Studies in Eg. Syntax*, 174, n.1; see later Vogelsang, *Klagen des Bauern*, 149, 190), it was first explicitly noted in Blackman, sDm.t-f, *ZÄS* 49 (1911), 103-105, soon followed by Erman, *Ausdrücke für "noch nicht", "ehe"*, *ZÄS* 50 (1912), 107-109. After a syntactic note by Peet, *Negative cDmtf*, *ZÄS* 52 (1914), 109-111, Gunn, *op.cit.*, 174-175 and Gardiner, *op.cit.*, 50-55 ("the passive of n cDmt.f") were the last to deal with it before the appearance of Gardiner's grammar.

¹⁸ Thacker, *Semitic and Eg. Verbal Systems*, 267-271. Schenkel, *Suffixkonjugation*, 45. Edel, *AäG*, 368 (§732, Anm.). Loprieno, *Verbalsystem*, 44. For an altogether different approach see Janssens, *Verbal System in Old Eg.*, 21-23 (§28-29).

¹⁹ Thus, e.g., Sander-Hansen, *Äg. Grammatik*, 114 (§429) and id., *Stud. Grammatik PT*, 100-101 (§280-282), whose "Fortuative sDm.t=f forms" containing a *t*-morpheme expressing the unavoidable and natural, independent of the speaker's will, encompass, among others, the sDm.t=f form under study and the suffix conjugation forms passivized with *.tw*; cf. Satzinger, sDmt.f, *JEA* 57 (1971), 59, n.8, where this "Fortuative" is justifiably called a "Prokrustes" bed.

²⁰ Comrie, *Tense*.

²¹ Fortunately Comrie, *Tense* and id., *Aspect*, are examples of clarity and succinctness which prove that the treatment of certain linguistic subjects do not need a specialised jargon. For a book review concerned with this matter see R.H. Pierce, *Acta Orientalia* 39 (1988), 133-138; for a reply see Loprieno, *Book Review*, *GM* 112 (1989), 35-41.

descriptions of the sDm.t=f verb form of later times, and which I have therefore taken as the point of departure.²² My reconsideration of the problem may show how a monument that has brought the knowledge of Egyptian grammar a giant step forward and is still irreplaceable has played a role in certain misconceptions concerning the sDm.t=f, which no doubt have been fed by its relatively rare occurrence. Because my reconsideration of something that is no more than a minute detail in the grammatical ocean of the Egyptian verbal system has proceeded from the description in Gardiner's grammar, my intensive occupation with that work has had the effect of increasing continually my admiration for Gardiner's achievement, didactically as well as scholarly, and for his feeling for the language.

²² See the remarks and the survey in the introductory part of my *Studies sDm.t=f I* (Dr sDm.t=f), §1 [publ. in *BiOr* 53 (1996), 613-644].