

## ON THE ORIGIN OF THE PARTITIVE DETERMINER\*

### 1. Introduction

In my 1972 article "Partitive Assignment in Basque" (henceforth referred to as *P. As*), I separated stative *-(r)ik* as in *bakarrik* "alone", *bizirik* "alive", *pozirik* "happy" from partitive *-(r)ik*, calling it an entirely different morpheme and not a different "use" of the same morpheme (section III). In the same section, however, in my discussion of the partitive proper, I distinguish between two "uses", a basic use and a derived use. Yet, since the basic use represents a case-marker and the derived use is more properly thought of as a determiner, it would seem that there is at least as much motivation here to speak of different morphemes as in the first case. And indeed, there is not the slightest evidence in *P.As* that the basic ending *-rik* in *mendirik mendi* "from mountain to mountain" and the derived ending *-rik* in *Holandan ez dago mendirik* "There are no mountains in the Netherlands" constitute anything but an instance of purely accidental homonymy.

The case was not closed, however. Some data that came to my attention after *P.As* had been published neatly vindicate my original intuition that the same morpheme is involved in both the basic and the derived uses of the partitive. These data were found in the novel *Uztaro* (1937) by Tomás Agirre, born in Régil in 1899. The relevant syntactic construction is found in the following sentences:

- (1)a. ..., etzekien Libe'ren biotz-barrengorik ezer. (p. 114)  
"..., he knew nothing of what was inside Libe's heart."
- (1)b. Bai al zan, ba, alaingo mutil azkar eta egokiak etzezakeanik ezer? (p. 115)  
"Was there then anything that such a strong and proper boy would not be able to do?"
- (1)c. Bai al-da, noski, Gipuzkoa osoan nik ezagutuko ez nukeanik inor? (p. 241)  
"Is there now in the whole of Guipuzcoa anybody that I would not know?"

Later on, I noticed similar examples in other sources, mostly prior to *Uztaro*, but also some later ones, including one from 1960 by Ign. Eizmendi (Basarri), who was also born in Régil (1913).

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In the present article I will study the partitive case in some detail, and show how examples like the above provide the required link between it and the partitive determiner.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. The partitive case

Originally named "negativus" by Arnaud d'Oihenart in his work *Notitia utriusque Vasconiae* (1638), the case ending *-(r)ik* (i.e. *-rik* after a vowel or diphthong, *-ik* after a consonant) was recognized as a partitive by Fl. Lécuse in 1826: "Ce nominatif négatif peut être considéré comme un partitif"; (*Manuel de la langue basque*, p. 83). This designation, however, did not gain currency until after the publication of Iturry's *Grammaire basque* in 1920.

This partitive case appears to have originated as an ablative or an elative.

A history of this type would account for the presence of *-rik* as an allomorph of *-tik* in the elative case paradigm: original *-tarik* and *-etarik* were retained in the easternmost dialects, while replaced by *-tatik* and *-etatik* elsewhere.

In the modern dialects, including Batua, its independent role as an inherent case-marker is rather limited, inasmuch as it is restricted to indefinite noun phrases and appears in very few contexts. The contexts in question are divisible into two groups: adverbial contexts on the one hand, and quantificational contexts on the other.

(i). Adverbial contexts: The partitive is contained in a productive adverbial pattern of the form *N-ik N*, where *N* is a countable noun. Such adverbials specify the nature of the action as involving at least two separate instances of *N*, which are affected by the action either reciprocally or serially. Examples are:

ahorik aho	: from mouth to mouth (of news going round)
alderik alde	: from one side to the other, right through
aterik ate	: from door to door
bazterrik bazter	: from one corner to the other, here and there
besorik beso	: arm in arm
biderik bide	: to and fro, up and down, along the road
eskurik esku	: hand in hand
etxerik etxe	: from house to house
herririk herri	: from village to village, from town to town
hiririk hiri	: from city to city
kalerik kale	: from street to street
mendirik mendi	: from mountain to mountain
oherik ohe	: from bed to bed
zokorik zoko	: from nook to nook

<sup>1</sup> As on many other occasions, data gathering has been a real pleasure thanks to the eager cooperation of many Basque friends and colleagues, especially Patxi Goenaga, Beñat Oihartzabal, Felipe Yurramendi and Koldo Zuazo. Naturally, they should not be held responsible for the use I made of any data they provided.

With *N* denoting a period of time, the adverbial phrase *N-ik N* also exists and admits three different interpretations. Thus, for *egunik egun*, the *DGV* (VI, 476-477) provides the following meanings:

- a). (serially) : day by day, from day to day
- b). (in comparatives) : by the day
- c). (every day) : day after day

Similarly, for *aste* “week”, *ordu* “hour”, *urte* “year”, *mende* “century”: *asterik aste*, *ordurik ordu*, *urterik urte*, *menderik mende*.

(ii). Quantificational contexts: The partitive may be used to mark a noun phrase indicating the range of quantification. As shown by comparison with case systems in other languages, this is indeed a possible function of the elative or partitive. There are three types of quantification that are pertinent here:

a). Superlative Constructions

The partitive is one of the means to indicate the range of a superlative.

Taking *ederren* “most beautiful”, superlative of *eder* “beautiful” as an example, we get: *Donostiako emakumerik ederrena* “the most beautiful woman of San Sebastian”. Alternatives to the partitive are: the plural elative: *Donostiako emakumeetatik ederrena*, the plural inessive: *Donostiako emakumeetan ederrena*, or even no case ending at all: *Donostiako emakume ederrena*.

The partitive cannot be construed on a definite noun phrase. For “the most beautiful of those women”, we only get *emakume horietatik ederrena* or *emakume horietan ederrena*.

b). Indefinite quantifier expressions

Although the usual form of noun phrases governed by indefinite quantifiers is the indefinite absolutive, as in *emakume eder asko* “many beautiful women”, indefinite quantifiers not containing the determiner *bat* may instead assign the partitive, as in the following examples:

- (2)a. Ametsik asko sortu zaizkigu,... (Lopategi, in Mattin Treku, *Abal dena*, 29)  
Many dreams have sprung up in us,...
- (2)b. Onelako esanik aski bazebillen inguruko gazteen artean. (N. Etxaniz, *Antz*, 152)  
Plenty of such talk was going around among the young people of the area.
- (2)c. Lengo idazle zarren kartarik gutxi degu. (N. Etxaniz, *Nola idatz*, 41)  
We have few letters of the ancient writers of the past.

This use of the partitive is already found in Leizarraga’s New Testament translation. In the introductory summary of the contents of *Jn*. 21, we read: *Scribatu ezten gauçaric anbitz...* “Many things that have not been written down...”. The plain construction *anbitz gauça*, however, is much more common: *Mt*. 13.3, *Mk*. 6.20, *Mk*. 6.34, *Jn*. 8.26, *Jn*. 16.12, 2 *Jn*. 1.12, 3 *Jn*. 13.

By now, this optional use has virtually disappeared from the modern language, except in the fossilized phrase *eskerrik asko* (never *\*esker asko*) “many thanks”.

The examples given under (2), however, show that this disappearance is very much a recent phenomenon. Thus, Mitxelena's writings still contain quite a few examples of this partitive. We will cite here only those that occur in a purely affirmative context: *alde ederrik aski* (MEIG II, 47) "enough sunny sides"; *horrelakorik aski* (MEIG II, 94) "plenty of such"; *punturik aski* (MEIG III, 147) "enough points", *liburu inprimaturik aski* (MEIG V, 24) "plenty of printed books; *gauza jakingarririk aski* (MEIG VIII, 23) "plenty of interesting things"; *lanik aski* (MEIG VIII, 41) "plenty of work"; *Eleizalderekiko berririk aski* (MEIG VIII, 53) "enough news about Eleizalde"; *euskaldunik asko* (MEIG I, 57) "many Basques" *lore ederrik asko* (MEIG IX, 105) "many beautiful flowers"; *horrelakorik franko* (MEIG IV, 77) "a lot of such"; *liburu eta artikulurik franko* (MEIG VI, 62) "a lot of books and articles"; *gauza berririk gutxi* (MEIG I, 54) "few new things"; *horrelakorik gutxi* (MEIG VIII, 179) "few such things".

It is worth noting that in exclamatory sentences an indefinite quantifier may delete with the partitive remaining:

- (3). Bada txakurrik Madrilen! "There are an awful lot of dogs in Madrid!"

c). Existential Quantifiers.

Among the existential quantifiers, only *inor* "anybody" and *ezer* (or its northern synonym *deus*) "anything" allow the partitive on the noun phrase indicating their scope. That is, only the negative polarity quantifiers allow it, not the others such as *norbait* or *zerbait*. Alternatives to the partitive are again the elative and the inessive, which can be used with all existential quantifiers.

The partitive noun phrase, sometimes reduced to a single adjective, may either precede or follow the quantifier. The latter option is both more ancient and more frequent according to the *DGV* (VII, 634), which adds that both options may, and quite often do, co-exist in the same text.

To our earlier examples with *ezer*, (1)a,b, we can add the following:

- (4)a. Ezer gauza onik nigan bada, ... (Kardaberaz, *Eg.* II, 57)  
"If there is anything good in me, ... (Lit. anything of good things)"
- (4)b. Baña Fariseoak etzuten, iñork ezer esankizunik,... (Lardizabal, *TB* 62)  
"But no one of the Pharisees had anything in the way of recrimination,..."
- (4)c. Otsoko buru gogorrekoa zan, nagı ta motzegia ezer gauza onik ikasteko,... (Agirre, *G.* 61)  
"Otsoko was thick-headed, too lazy and stupid to learn anything worthwhile,..."
- (4)d. Ogibiderik ez dauka ezer,... (Agirre, *G.* 368)  
"He has nothing in the way of a livelihood."
- (4)e. Beste penarik ez daukat ezer: euskera atzeratua. (Basarri, in Uztapide, *Noizb.* 64)  
"I have no other sorrow than the fact that Basque has retreated."
- (4)f. Ez dago ezer txarrık, ... (MEIG II, 114 = *MIH* 344)  
"There is nothing bad (about it),..."
- (4)g. Ez zaie besteai ezer ajolarik. (Labayen, *Su Em.* 188)  
"They are of no concern whatsoever to the others."

More examples in *DGV* VII, p. 635. Observe that the quantifier *exer* has been extraposed to the end of its clause in examples (4)d,e.

The *DGV* also carries many examples of the same construction with *deus*. Of these, I quote:

- (5)a. Deus gaizkirik gertha eztakidan. (Materre, 293)  
"So that nothing in the way of evil happens to me."
- (5)b. Ez dute deus arta bereziren beharrik. (Hiriart-Urruty, *Zezenak*, 72)  
"They don't need anything in the way of special care."
- (5)c. Ez da orai Oxaldez orhoitzapenik deus ageri Bidarriko hil-herrietan. (Oxobi, 196)  
"There is now nothing in the way of a memorial for Oxalde in the cemeteries of Bidarri."
- (5)d. Deus kontsolamendurik lur huntan badea ? (Mañex Etchamendy, 210)  
"Is there anything in the way of consolation in this world?"
- (5)e. Funtsarik deus ez dakit. (Larzabal, *Senpere-n*, 50)  
"I don't know anything of substance."
- (5)f. Ez da deus mundu hunetan eskubide osoz on dei dezakegun gauzarik,... (MEIG VIII 60)  
"There is no thing whatsoever in this world that we can call good with complete justification."

With *inor*, we have example (1)c as well as the following :

- (6)a. Ama langorik inor eztago lagunik, ... (E. Azcue, *P.B.* 320)  
"There is no companion such as mother,..."
- (6)b. Beretzat ez egoan beste gizonik inor. (Agirre, *Kresala*, 190)  
"For her there was no other man."
- (6)c. Toki orretan ez eukan inor ezagunik. (Agirre, *Kresala*, 184)  
"In that place she had nobody in the way of acquaintances."
- (6)d. Ez dago inor, erri onetan, ezkontzeko nik aña aukera daukan gizasemerik. (Agirre, *G.* 33)  
"There is no male in this village who has as much choice in marrying as I do."
- (6)e. Gizon onikan inor badago munduan, ... (Uztapide, *Sas.* 262)  
"If there is anyone in the world in the way of a good person, ..."

Many more examples can be found in the *DGV* (IX, 410-411), including some occurring in Etxepare and Leizarraga.

In all the example sentences given in this section, the partitive expresses the meaning relation between a quantifier and its scope. There is no question that this represents a basic use of the partitive, perfectly in line with its origin as an elative case ending.

Now what is crucial for our purposes is the following observation. Given the presence of a partitive noun phrase indicating scope, the indefinite pronouns *exer*, *deus* and *inor* will normally be omitted —nowadays for most speakers even obligatorily— provided they occur in the absolute form, i.e. are not reinforced by a case ending.

This deletion will account quite nicely for the existence and behavior of what is known as the partitive determiner, at least historically, and perhaps synchronically as well. Additional arguments for this claim will be offered near the end of the next section analyzing this determiner.

### 3. The partitive determiner

So far as surface grammar is concerned, in almost all of its occurrences (i.e. all, except those discussed in the previous section), the partitive ending *-(r)ik* does not act like a case-marker. Given that it attaches only to absolutive noun phrases, considering it a case-marker would force us to give up the generalization that the absolutive case in Basque is invariably marked by zero. Fortunately, there is no need to do this, since the partitive morpheme as used here has all the characteristics of a determiner rather than a case-marker. Syntactically it is a determiner in that it operates like an article on a par with *-a*, *-ok*, *bat* and *batzu*, with which it is incompatible. Its semantic import, moreover, is clearly that of a determiner: it serves to indicate that the noun phrase is construed as indefinite, or more precisely, that its reference is non-specific.

Our task now is to relate this determiner to the partitive case studied in section 2. According to the view set forth at the end of that section, a partitive noun phrase is nothing but a scope indicator for an abstract (i.e. phonetically unrealized) quantifier embodying the meaning of *ezer* "anything" or *inor* "anybody".

This proposal immediately accounts for the non-specific meaning value of the partitive, since the meanings of *ezer* and *inor* are also non-specific, as opposed to the specific indefinites *zerbait* "something" and *norbait* "somebody".

What is also accounted for is the otherwise puzzling fact that the distribution of the partitive noun phrase by and large corresponds to the distribution of *ezer* and *inor*: they are all associated with negative polarity contexts. To show this, we will embark on a brief outline of the use of the partitive determiner, although this may be rather superfluous for many of my readers, since the facts are well-known to Basque grammarians.

To start with negative sentences, use of the partitive there is obligatory for indefinite absolutives. Thus, while the noun phrase *txokolatea* complete with its article *-a* can mean either "some chocolate" or "the chocolate" in the affirmative statement (7)a, the same noun phrase can only be interpreted as "the chocolate" in the corresponding negative (7)b, since for the indefinite meaning "any chocolate" the partitive form *txokolaterik* is required, as seen in (7)c :

- (7)a. Gaur txokolatea erosi dut.  
"Today I have bought some / the chocolate."
- (7)b. Gaur ez dut txokolatea erosi.  
"Today I have not bought the chocolate."
- (7)c. Gaur ez dut txokolaterik erosi.  
"Today I have not bought any chocolate."

Since the partitive determiner is restricted to the absolutive case, subject noun phrases allow it only when the verb is intransitive.<sup>2</sup> Some examples:

- (8)a. Ez da dudarik. (Labayen, *TOE* II, 262)  
 "There is no doubt."  
 (8)b. Etxe honetan arratoirik ere ez da gelditzen. (Amuriza, *Hil*, 165)  
 "Not even rats are staying in this house."  
 (8)c. Baina ez zen Albanian inspektorerik azaldu. (Atxaga, *Obab.* 44)  
 "But no inspector appeared at Albania."  
 (8)d. Orain ez da lapurrik etorriko. (Garate, *Esku*, 128)  
 "No thief will come now."

With transitive verbs only the direct object allows the partitive, never the subject:

- (9)a. Ez dut adiskiderik. Ez da premiarik ere. (*MEIG* IX, 96)  
 "I have no friends. There is no need either."  
 (9)b. Ez dut saririk eskatzen. (Labayen, *TOE* II, 266)  
 "I am not asking for any reward."  
 (9)c. Nire aurrean ez zuen inoiz drogarik hartu. (Garate, *Iz.* 35)  
 "She never took drugs in my presence."

As confirmed by the verb forms in all the examples given, a partitive noun phrase invariably counts as singular. This is true even for noun phrases otherwise restricted to the plural, such as *dvandva* compounds of the type *anai-arreba* "brother(s) and/or sister(s)":

- (10)a. Baditut anai-arrebak. "I have brothers and sisters."  
 (10)b. Ez dut anai-arrebarik. "I have no brothers or sisters."

Even proper nouns are liable to be turned into indefinites by the partitive:

- (11)a. I baua, Moxolorik ezten agertuko. (Agirre, *G.* 314)  
 "If you go away, no Moxolo will appear."  
 (11)b. Ez da Maria Vöckel-ik sekula egon. (Atxaga, *Obab.* 106)  
 "There never has been a Maria Vöckel."

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Beth C. Levin on page 356 of her impressive dissertation *On the Nature of Ergativity* makes the claim that the subject of the intransitive verb *ari* allows the partitive only if the embedded gerund is also intransitive. Accordingly, she states that (i) is grammatical, but (ii) is not:

- (i) Ez zen gizonik etortzen ari.  
 "Not a man was coming." (Better: "No man was (in the process of) coming".)  
 (ii) Ez zen gizonik liburua irakurtzen ari.  
 "Not a man was reading the book". (Better: "No man was reading the book".)

It turns out, however, that this claim stems from an instance of imperfect communication between Dr. Levin and her Basque informant, Dr. P. Salaburu. A consultation with the latter, a native speaker of the Baztanese (sub)dialect, brought to light that he rejects both (i) and (ii). Apparently, in his dialect, subjects of *ari* cannot take the partitive, while subjects of other intransitive verbs can. Neither he nor I have an explanation for this constraint, which does not seem to be operative in other dialects making use of *ari*.

The following example, contributed by Dr. P. Goenaga, has exactly the same structure as example (ii). It is rejected by Dr. Salaburu, but sounds quite natural to my other informants:

- (iii) Ez zen emakumerik gurekin ardoa edaten ari. "No woman was drinking wine with us."

More in general, a partitive may sometimes be preferred over a more straightforward designation for rhetorical purposes:

- (12)a. Baña gaur nere arrebarik eztezu ikusiko. (Agirre, *G.* 308)  
 “But today you won’t see any sister of mine. (Only one sister, Malen, was wanted)”
- (12)b. Apika nire izenik ez dakizue? (Atxaga, *Obab.* 400)  
 Maybe you don’t know my name?

The partitive can be freely used in yes-no questions, without any expectation of the answer being negative:

- (13)a. Bai al-dek izenik? (Etxaniz, *LBB*, 264) “Do you have a name?”
- (13)b. Ba al da euskal musikarik? (*MEIG* I, 55) “Is there Basque music?”
- (13)c. Ostu al dezu oillorik? (Urruzuno, *E.Z.* 61) “Have you stolen any hens?”
- (13)d. Zure neurriko soinekorik aurkitu al duzu? (*EGLU* I, 131)  
 “Have you found any dresses in your size?”

As long as they are mere requests for information, wh-questions do not admit the partitive. Those wh-questions, however, that are in fact meant as denials, or at least indicate disbelief or consternation on the part of the speaker, may very well contain the partitive. A certain rhetorical style, such as the one pervading Axular’s classical work *Gero*, is particularly conducive to this type of questions:

- (14)a. Non da guiristino goiz-tiarric? (Ax. 172)  
 “Where are there any prompt christians?”
- (14)b. Norc edirenendu ene baithan faltaric? (Ax. 448)  
 “Who will find any faults in me?”
- (14)c. Norc ičanendu sorbaldaric sostengatceco? indarric iasaiteco? Eta pairuric, eta pacientiaric sofriteco? (Ax. 599)  
 “Who will have a shoulder to support him, strength to bear it, and stamina and patience to endure it?”

Modern literature too can provide examples:

- (15)a. Nun arkituko du onelako etxerik? (Labayen, *TOE* III, 203)  
 “Where will he find a home like this?”
- (15)b. Non aurkitu holako emakumerik, ordea? (Garate, *NY* 115)  
 “Where to find any such woman, however?”

Another negative polarity context is the protasis of a conditional sentence. There too we find the partitive occurring freely:

- (16)a. ...hilko al zenuke gaur, aukerarik bazenu? (Amuriza, *Emea*, 40)  
 “Would you kill him today, if you had any opportunity?”
- (16)b. Ijitorik ikusten badezu, esaiezu eztaietara etortzeko. (*P.A.* 150)  
 “If you see (any) gypsies, tell them to come to the wedding.”

Furthermore, the partitive readily occurs on indefinite noun phrases introduced by the determiner *beste* “other”, also in affirmative contexts:



- (17)a. Badu beste kezkarik. (Garate, *NY* 44)  
 "He has other worries."  
 (17)b. ... baiñan orain ba det beste buruausterik... (Labayen, *TOE* II, 35)  
 "... but now I have other troubles..."  
 (17)c. Beste aberastasunik zuen harek gogoan! (Arradoy, *S. Frantses*, 151)  
 "He had other riches in mind."  
 (17)d. Eta besterik esatea da herejia. (J.B. Agirre, *Erac*. I, 550)  
 "Saying anything else is heresy."  
 (17)e. Hori besterik da. (N. Etxaniz, *LBB* 159, 188)  
 "That's something else."  
 (17)f. Beste gizonik bihurtu zen. (Orixe, *S. Cruz*, 127)  
 "He became another man."

Although *beste* undoubtedly contains a negation in its semantic representation, it may not be immediately obvious that it provides a negative polarity context, since in a purely affirmative clause one normally encounters *beste norbait* "somebody else", *beste zerbait* "something else", and not *beste inor*, *beste ezer*. Yet, this is no proof that we are dealing with a positive polarity context; it merely reflects the fact that a noun phrase introduced by *beste* in an affirmative clause is usually specific in reference, and therefore requires *norbait* or *zerbait* instead of *inor* or *ezer*. The crucial test here lies in determining whether the non-specific meaning embodied in *inor* or *ezer* ever occurs in an affirmative context following *beste*.

As a matter of fact, the sequences *beste ezer*, *beste inor*, while rather rare, do sometimes appear in affirmative clauses. In the relevant sections of the *DGV* (V,92; IX, 411), I found three examples:

- (18)a. Bertze inor bezain gu ere tresor zale baikare. (Goyhetxe, *Fableac*, 44)  
 "As much as anybody else, we too are fond of treasures."  
 (18)b. Norbere burua edo beste inor iltea. (*Krist. Ikasb.* (Zornotza, 1921), p. 68)  
 "Killing oneself or somebody else."  
 (18)c. ... ba-nebala mendijan beste inor itzi. (Otxolua, *Bert*. 98)  
 "... that I left somebody else in the mountains."

Actually, the relative rareness of such examples may be due in large measure to the general Basque practice of indefinite-deletion after *beste*, a process which has given rise to the so-called indefinite *beste*, as in: *Bestek goraiपा zaitzala* (*Prov.* 27.2) "Let someone else praise you".

The paucity of instances of *beste inor* or *beste ezer* might have been somewhat embarrassing had not the southern dialects come to our rescue. There, *inor*, a negative polarity item par excellence, freely occurs in positive contexts, but carrying a new meaning, to wit, "somebody else":

- (19)a. Inok beti errua. (Azkue, *Morf.* I, 191)  
 "Somebody else is always to blame."  
 (19)b. Vici zara inoren gachaz, inori min emonaz, inori odola ateriaz. (Mogel, *P.Ab.* 51)  
 "You make a living by somebody else's ailment, by causing somebody else pain, by letting somebody else's blood."

- (19)c. Iñoren lepotic ondo edaten dabeela. (Mogel, *P. Ab.* 53)  
 “While they drink lavishly at somebody else’s expense.”
- (19)d. Gosea ill nai dute askok iñoren bizkarretik. (B. Mogel, *Ipui onak*, 118)  
 “Many people want to satisfy their hunger at somebody else’s cost.”
- (19)e. Nik iñorekin egin nuena, Jainkoak nerekin egin du. (Lardizabal, *TZ I*, 194)  
 “What I did to somebody else, God has done to me.”
- (19)f. Iñoren hizkuntza, gainera, geurea baino begi hotzagoz ikus dezakegu. (*MEIG VII*, 162)  
 “Moreover, we can see somebody else’s language with a cooler eye than our own.”

I take these data to be incontrovertible evidence for the underlying presence of *beste inor*, thus establishing that *beste* indeed creates a negative polarity context, which then explains the occurrence of the partitive in the examples under (17). (As to why its English counterpart *other* fails to license the partitive, see *P.As* p. 156).

While in modern usage, as far as I can tell, *ezer* does not show the same behavior as *inor* in this respect, it did so in an older stage of the language, as we may learn from the following early eighteenth century quotation:

- (20). Ezer ekarri bear danean, kriadu izango naiz. (Barrutia, *Acto*, v. 471)  
 “When something else has to be brought, I will act as a servant.”<sup>3</sup>

Another negative polarity context is the one produced by a word meaning “only”, such as *bakarrik* or *soilik*:

- (21)a. Horrelako astakeriarik Nixonek bakarrik egingo zukeen. (*P. As*, 149)  
 “Only Nixon would have made such a blunder.”
- (21)b. Seth-en ondorengo gucien artean Noe bacarric arquituzan, Jaincoa urricel cequiqueonic. (Ubillos, 13)  
 “Among all of Seth’s descendants only Noe was found whom God could have mercy on.”  
 (The point of this example being the partitive on the relative clause, which is licensed by the adverb *bakarrik*.)

Sentential complements of so-called “affective” predicates<sup>4</sup> constitute another well-known negative polarity context. Instances of such predicates are verbs such as *debekatu* “to prohibit”; *eragotzi* “to prevent”, “to forbid”; *ukatu* “to refuse”, “to deny”; *beldur (izan)* “to be afraid”; adjectives such as *harrigarri* “astonishing”; *sinesgaitz*

<sup>3</sup> In view of the immediately preceding mention of other things to be brought by the protagonist (“I will bring a badger’s paw from the mountains” (v. 464), “Every morning I will bring milk to your mother” (v. 467-468)), I find a translation using “something else” more fitting than the one provided by Dr. J. A. Lakarra, who translated “Cuando haya algo que traer” (When there is something to be brought), appropriate only if *zerbait* had occurred instead of *ezer*.

<sup>4</sup> The term “affective” was introduced for this type of predicate by Edward Klima in his seminal paper “Negation in English”, published in Fodor, J. A. and Katz, J. J., *The Structure of Language*, 1964, pp. 246-323. A more appropriate designation may be “inherently negative”, a term used by Dr. I. Laka on page 192 of her contribution “Negative complementizers: evidence from English, Basque and Spanish” to J. A. Lakarra & J. Ortiz de Urbina (eds.), *Syntactic Theory and Basque Syntax*.

'unbelievable', *zail* "difficult"; *zoro* "foolish"; as well as all forms with the suffix *-egi* denoting excess: *onegi* "too good"; *merkeegi* "to cheap", etc.

Only a few examples will be given here; more can be found in *P. As*, p. 151.

- (22)a. ... Martini errurik ezarriko zioten bildurrez. (Agirre, *G.* 232)  
 "... out of fear that they would put any blame on Martin."  
 (22)b. ... eta eragotzi ziola mota hortako irudirik eskolarat ekartzea. (Mirande, *Id.* 297)  
 "... and that he forbade him to bring any pictures of that type to school."  
 (22)c. Frantziako jaurlaritzak beti ukatu du breizeldunen edozein zenbakunderik egitea. (Mirande, *Id.* 283)  
 "The French government has always refused to take any census of Breton speakers."

For some speakers, *beharbada* "perhaps" and its various synonyms also introduce a negative polarity context:

- (23)a. Beharbada, entzungo dut albiste onik.  
 "Perhaps I will hear good news."  
 (23)b. Agian ikusiko dut inor ezagunik.  
 "Perhaps I will see somebody I know."  
 (23)c. Beharbada, izango dut semerik haren bitartez. (*Gen.* 16.2)<sup>5</sup>  
 "Maybe I will have sons through her."

What we have been seeking to demonstrate is that the partitive determiner occurs in exactly those contexts where the indefinites *ezer* and *inor* are apt to appear, i.e. in all negative polarity contexts. The survey we have just completed, it seems to me, provides overwhelming evidence in support of this claim.

Only one exception has come to light. The indefinites *ezer* and *inor* do not appear in positive exclamatory sentences, whereas the partitive does, as we have seen in example (3). But the partitive in such examples carries a special meaning, which can be captured by assuming that in an exclamatory context a quantity expression like *franko* "plenty" or *asko* "many" has been deleted, not an existential quantifier like in the negative polarity cases.

What I have described so far by no means exhausts the evidence in favor of my proposal regarding the origin of the partitive determiner. Some telling facts remain to be marshalled. What no grammarian ever seems to have noticed is that some putatively eligible noun phrases unexpectedly reject the partitive even in negative or interrogative contexts.

First, noun phrases containing interrogative pronouns can very well occur in purely rhetorical questions; yet such noun phrases never take the partitive determiner:

- (24)a. Zer sari (\*saririk) jaso behar du horrek, ba?  
 "What reward is he to get, then?"  
 (24)b. Zein ogen (\*ogenik) du horrek, ba?  
 "What guilt does he have, then?"

<sup>5</sup> This biblical quotation has been taken from *Elizzen Arteko Biblia* (1994). Duvoisin's version of the same text also shows a partitive, licensed by *bea*: *Sar zaitte ene neskeatoaren gana, bea hartarik bederen izan dezakedan semerik.* "Go in unto my handmaid, let's see if I can have sons at least from her."

Furthermore, the indefinites *inor* and *ezer*, while fulfilling all the requirements, never allow the partitive determiner either. In short, just those noun phrases not modifiable by *ezer* or *inor* seem to block the partitive. True, a synonym of *ezer*, the eastern dialect noun *deus*, does allow the partitive, but then, in contrast to the impossible sequence *\*ezerik ezer*, the combination *deusik deus* is also attested:

- (25). Eta deusik deusek ez ditu geroenean bereziko. (Mirande, *Idazlan bant.*, 142)  
 “And absolutely nothing (lit. nothing of nothing) will separate them afterwards.”

Likewise, some speakers allow the diminutive forms *ezertxo* and *inortxo* to occur in the partitive. The *DGV* (VII, 648) shows an example:

- (26). Eta beste ezertxorik ez daki. (Alzaga, *Bern.* 56)  
 “And he knows (absolutely) nothing else.”

Crucially, the sequence *ezertxorik ezer* also seems acceptable to many speakers who accept (26):

- (27). Ezertxorik ezerk ez ditu bereziko.  
 “Absolutely nothing will separate them.”

Obviously, such facts strongly corroborate my hypothesis that the partitive determiner has evolved out of the partitive case by deletion of the indefinite absolutes *ezer* and *inor*, and may even argue for a synchronic derivation along that line.

#### 4. Conclusion

While early generative grammar postulated a feature-changing transformational rule of partitive assignment, I have been arguing in these pages that the partitive determiner is to be derived from the partitive case marker by means of a deletion rule: deletion of an existential quantifier *ezer* or *inor* in polarity negative contexts, and deletion of a quantity expression such as *franko* or *asko* in the remaining contexts. It transpires from our discussion that rejecting this approach entails the following drawbacks:

1. The relation between the partitive case marker and the partitive determiner would be one of accidental homonymy.
2. The largely parallel distribution between the partitive and the indefinites *ezer* and *inor* would lack an explanation.
3. Neither would an explanation emerge as to why interrogative noun phrases are incompatible with the partitive.
4. The same must be observed with respect to the indefinites *ezer* and *inor*, which, despite fulfilling all the conditions on the use of the partitive, cannot in fact take it.

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