





Adjectives and Prepositions


The main functions of adjectives are to follow and modify nouns and noun phrases, and to stand by themselves as nouns. Adjectives have gender and number in agreement with the nouns or noun phrases that they modify. (The feminine plural is usually not indicated except sometimes the plural strokes are shown.) There are three categories of adjectives: **primary**, **secondary** and

derived **nisbe** adjectives. There is only one primary adjective:  *nb* “every, all.”¹ The



secondary adjectives are the generic adjectives such as  *ikr* “excellent,”  *m3wi* “new,” and  *nfr* “good, beautiful.” Nisbes can be derived from nouns and


prepositions.


Examples for the use of the **primary** adjective:

 *(n)swt nb* “any king” [Kanais A];

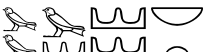
 *hk nb* “all magic” [Irtysen Stela 7];


 *zp nb* “every deed” [Kanais B, 8] with the threshing floor biliteral  *zp*;

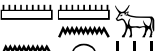
 *ht nbt* “everything” [Pr. II, 7];


 *ntrw nbw* “all gods” [Kanais A];

 *t3w nbw* “every land” [Kanais B, 1];

 *wrw h3swt nbt* “all the nobles/princes (lit. great ones) of the foreign lands” [Urk. IV, 612, 12];


 *mnmn(t) nbt* “all (kinds of) cattle” [Semna Stela I, 3] in which the

plural strokes of the feminine collective noun  *mnmnt* “cattle” are replaced by three signs of cattle.


¹ Note that  *nb* as a noun means “lord, master, owner.”



i3wt dšrt “red mounds” [Kamose Stela 2, 17] with the mound and

shrubs ideogram (and determinative)  *i3t*. In sporadic cases such as this the feminine plural is indicated by plural strokes. The evil bird determinative is because this is the pharaoh’s threat to burn down the settlements of his enemies.



rmṯt nbt “all mankind” [Urk. IV, 1, 17] showing the collective form of 

rmṯ “people” with feminine *t* ending.



More complex examples: *mnw m r-prw n ntrw nbw* “monuments in the temples of all the gods.”² *r-pr* is an Egyptian expression for “temple, chapel, shrine.”



ḥ3wt.sn i3wt.sn nbt m nwt m šḥt “all their fields and mounds in town and in the countryside.”³


Examples for **secondary** adjectives:



zp nfr “good deed” [Neferti 7];



mniw nfr “good shepherd” [Kanais A] (Middle Kingdom epithet of a pharaoh) with the

ideogram (and determinative)  *mniw* “herdsman;”





šmsw ikr “excellent follower” [ShS. 1];



nb t3 dsr “lord of the Sacred Land,” epithet of the gods Anubis or Wepwawet (the location refers to the cemetery at Abydos);

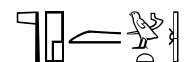


k3 nḥt “victorious/mighty bull” (epithet of a pharaoh) [Kanais A] with  *nḥt*

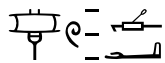
“victorious” only indicated by variant determinative ;



w3t nfrt “good road” [Kanais A];



ḥwt-ntr m3wt “new temple” [Kanais A] (with honorific transposition);





t3w wꜥ “sole wind” [Neferti 29] with the biliteral  *wꜥ*;

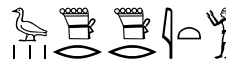
² See JEA, 63 (1977), Plate XXIIA.

³ Stela of Merer, see JEA, 47 (1961), pp. 5-9.


 *mdwt nfrt t3zw stpw* “fine words, choice

sentences” [Neferti 7-8] with the trilateral  *stp*;

 *z3t ktt* “little daughter” [ShS. 129];

 *3pdw drdrit* “foreign flock,” lit. “strange bird” [Neferti 29 and Ostrakon P38]

(wrong gender and number of the modifying adjective) with the biliteral  *dr*.


 *hmwt mrrt (n)swt* “the king’s beloved women” lit. “beloved women of the king” [Khetty Stela 1, 4] (honorific transposition and direct genitive).

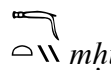

Nisbes Derived From Nouns


A⁴ + nisbe.


Cardinal point nisbes:

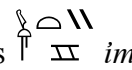

 *t3š rsi* “southern boundary” [Semna Stela I, 1] with the nisbe  *rsi* “southern”



derived from the noun  *rsw* south (weak consonants suppressed);

 *mḥti* “northern” derived from  *mḥt* “north;”

 *mḥtiw* “northerners” [Urk. IV, 612, 16] (written with the *tiw*-bird) and a little later in



the same text  *imntiw i3btiw* “westerners and easterners” [Urk. IV, 613, 3]

(connection), with the plurals of the nisbes  *imnti*,  *i3bti* derived from the nouns




 *imnt* “west” and  *i3bt* “east.”




Gentilic nisbes (indicating a person’s origin):



 *ntrw 3ḥtiw* “horizon-dweller gods” lit. “gods of the horizon” [Urk. IV, 142, 13],



plural of the nisbe  *3ḥti* “one of the horizon” (written with false dual) using the ideogram 
3ḥt “horizon;”

⁴ The noun modified (by the nisbe), may be absent.

 *nwti* “local” (also written with false dual ) from  *nwt* “town,” lit. “he of the town;”

 *h3stiw* “foreigners” (also written with the *tiw*-bird as ) from  *h3st* “foreign land,” lit. “those of the foreign lands;”


 *biti* “king of Lower Egypt” (wearing the red crown) from  *bit* “bee,” lit. “he of the bee.”


 *ntr(i)* “divine” derived from  *ntr* “god.”


Prepositions

When translating texts between French and English, one quickly realizes that there is no one-to-one correspondence between the different sets of prepositions of the respective languages. The same situation prevails between Middle Egyptian and English prepositions. Dictionaries give approximate correspondences and the translation is highly dependent on the context.


The most important simple prepositions are the following:


 *m* “in, from, of, as, by, with, through, at;”


 *r* “to, toward, at, against, from, concerning, according to, with respect to, more than (in comparative);



 *tp* “upon, atop;”


 *hr* “near, by, during, in the presence (of a person of different status);”


 *ht* “through, throughout;”



 *hr* “on, in, at, by, because, for;”

 *hr* “under;”



 or  *hnt* “in front of, at the head of;”


 *in* “by;”


 *hn^c* “(together) with;”

  *hft* “opposite, in front of, according to;”

 *mi* “like, as, in accordance with, according to;”

  *dr* “since;”

 *h3* “behind, around.”

A more complex example for compound propositions: 
**k hr-h3t pr hr-ph3ti* “the one who enters first and leaves last” [Hatnub Stela, 5]; quality of an official.

Prepositional Nisbes


Prepositional nisbes can not only modify nouns and noun phrases (as adjectives) and stand alone (as nouns) but (just like prepositions) they can also govern a following noun or noun phrase:

A⁵ (modified) + prepositional nisbe + B (governed).

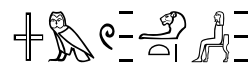
Examples for **prepositional nisbes**:


 *imi* “who is in” from the preposition , ⁶ *m, im* “in” written with the biliteral 


im:


 *ntrw imiw t3 hnmw* “the gods who are in the well” [Kanais A] with

the phonogram  *hnm*;

 *imiw-h3t* “ancestors” lit. “who are in the front/beginning” [Neferti 54, Intef 8]


with the forefront of a lion ideogram  *h3t* “front;”

 *(i)m(i)-r* “overseer, supervisor” lit. “one who is in the mouth” (sometimes written with





the tongue ⁷). Here it should be interpreted as a so-called **reverse nisbe** “the one in whom the mouth is,” that is, the person who gives commands;


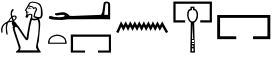
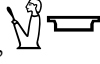



⁵ May be absent.





⁶ The second form is used with personal pronouns and as adverbs.


 *imi-r n prw ḥd nbw* “treasurer,” lit “overseer of the houses of silver and gold”
[Neferhotep Statue, 2].⁸


Note. The infrequently used preposition  *imitiw* “between” is from the prepositional nisbe *imi*.

 *iri* “who is pertaining to, associated with” (also written with the biliteral  *ir*) from the preposition ,  *r, ir* “(pertaining) to:”

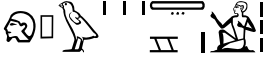
 *iri ʕt* “hall-keeper.” The official title  *iri ʕt n pr-ḥd* “keeper of the treasury” (with indirect genitive) is also attested.⁹ Similarly,  *iri ʕ3* “door-keeper” with the door ideogram ,  *iri pdt* “bowman” lit. “one pertaining to the bow,” written with the biliteral  *pd*.

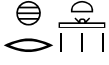
 *tpi* “who is on the top” from the preposition ,  *tp* “atop” written with the ideogram  *tp*;



 *inpw tp(i) dw.f* “Anubis who is on the top of his mountain;”

 *tpt dww* “(one) which is on the top of mountains” (referring to a precious stone)

[Khetty Stela 2, 10];


 *tp(i)w-t3* “the living” lit. “those (who are) on earth” [Kanais C, 11].


 *hrt* “state, need, condition” [ShS. 20], a (feminine) nisbe lit. “what is near” derived

from the preposition  *hr* “near, by, during.” Similarly,  *hrt* “interest, concern, affair”

[Kanais B, 12];


 *ht* “those who are pervading” [Neferti 32], a (plural) nisbe derived from the


preposition  *ht* “throughout;”



⁷ The tongue  itself is the biliteral *ns* but here it should be spelled as *imi-r*.



⁸ British Museum EA 632.

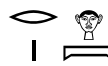
⁹ A.D. Espinel, JEA, 91 (2005) p. 91.


 *hr(i) hnyt* “crew-commander, naval commander,” lit. “one above the crew”



[Urk. IV, 1, 16] with *hri* a nisbe (usually written with the sky determinative as 

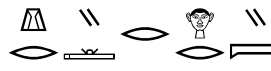
hri) derived from the preposition ,  *hr* “on.” There is a graphic transposition in the noun




 *hnyt* “crew” written with the biliteral  *hn*.

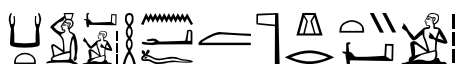
 *r-hr(i)* “chief speaker” lit. “the mouth that is above” [Nebwawi Stela 1, 3]¹⁰ (rare priestly title);


 *hr(i)w s* “desert nomads/Bedouins” lit. “those upon the sand” [Urk. IV, 617, 13].


 *hri* “what/who is under” (may indicate possession) from the preposition  *hr* “under;”

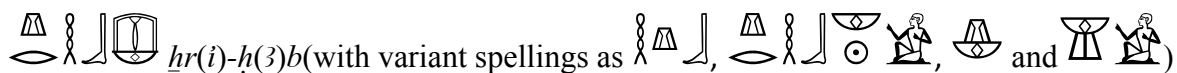





 *hri r hri* “undermost to become uppermost”¹¹ [Neferti 55] (description of adverse times) with the preposition *r* “to, towards;”



 *hr(i)-ntr* “necropolis, cemetery, the place where god is” lit. “(the place) which is under god” [Neferti 55] with honorific transposition, variant writings  and 

 *k3wt hn.c fm hrwt-ntr* “the (construction) workers with him as stone cutters” lit. “those under the necropolis” [Kanais B, 10] with the seated man determinative turning the (plural) nisbe into a noun;

 *dmi hr(i) hwt-ntr* “town which has (lit. which is under) a temple” [Kanais B, 9];


 *hrw.sn* “their dependents” with the seated man and woman determinatives lit. “those who are under” [Semna Stela 2, 15];

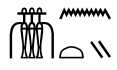

 *hr(i)-h(3)b* (with variant spellings as , , ,  and 


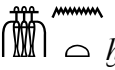
“lector-priest” lit. “(one) who has/carries (lit. is under) the festival scroll.” It is written with the feast determinative and ideogram  or  *h3b*.)


¹⁰ British Museum EA 1199, see E. Froom, JEA, 89 (2003) p. 65.


¹¹ Lichtheim’s translation.




 *m pr-hri pr-hri* “from bottom to top” (Egyptian idiom, here referring to cleaning a temple);¹²


 *hnti* “foremost” lit. “one in front/at the head” [ShS. 65] (with the jar-rack trilateral 

or  *hnt*) is derived from the preposition  *hnt* “in front of, at the head of.”

 *hnt(i) imntiw* “foremost of the westerners,” epithet of Osiris.



 *ntr 3, nb 5nh, hnt(i) 3bdw* “great god, Lord of Life, Foremost of Abydos” epithets of Osiris [Khu-Sobek Stela 14]¹³


The genitival adjective  *n(i)* is the prepositional nisbe derived from the preposition  *n* “(belonging) to, for.” The most frequent example is  *nswt* “king” (also written with the king determinative) which stands for *n(i)-swt* “(one) who has (lit. belongs to) the sedge.”¹⁴

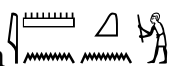

A more complex example:  *inpw tp(i) dw.f* *imi wt nb dsr m swt.f nb nfrt w^cbt*¹⁵ “Anubis, who is upon his mountain, and in the place of embalming, lord of the Sacred Land,¹⁶ in all his beautiful and pure places.”



Adjective as a Noun

As noted above, adjectives used by themselves are nouns. This is often indicated by a

determinative as in  *nfrt* “good thing” [Pr. II, 26],  *nfrwt* “good things”

[ShS. 116] and  *nfrwt* “beautiful women” [Khetty Stela 1, 3]. An adjective used as modifying a noun is also a noun that stands in apposition to the noun it modifies as

in  *imn kn* “Amun, the brave (one)” [Kamose Stela 2, 10], and 

ntrw wrw “great gods,” lit. “gods, great ones” [Kanais B, 11] where  is for  *wr*.

More examples:

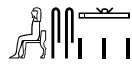
¹² Stela of Imenyseneb, Louvre 269, lines 7-8.

¹³ See T. Eric Peet, *The Stela of Sebek-khu*, Manchester Museum Handbooks 75 (1914).

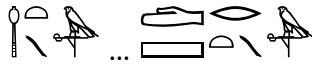


¹⁴ The emblematic plant of Upper Egypt (now extinct).

¹⁵ Stela of Merer (National Museum in Cracow); J. Černý, *JEA*, 47 (1961), pp. 5-9.

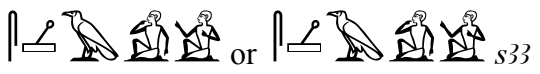


¹⁶ The cemetery at Abydos.



 *špsw* “fine things” from *šps* “fine, noble, special” [Khetty Stela 1, 2];


 *gr* “silent man” [Pr. II, 1] from  *gr* “silent;”

 *hdt* ... *dšrt* “the white one...the red one” [Neferti 59] (referring to the crowns of Egypt) with *hdt* usually followed by the determinative  and *dšrt* by the determinative .


 *knw* “brave things/deeds” [Kamose Stela 2, 4];


 or  *s33* “wise man” [Neferti 6] with  *s3i* “wise, prudent;”


 *mʿr* “successful man” [Kamose Stela 2, 10] usually written with the tree determinative .

 *nfrw n hr.k* “the beauty of your face” [Neferhotep Statue, 4]¹⁷ with the abstract noun *nfrw* written in Old Egyptian false plural.

A more complex example:

 *m33 nfrw nw wp-w3wt m prt-tpt* “Seeing the beauty of Wep-wawet at the First Procession.”¹⁸ (This refers to the first day of the Festival of the Mysteries of Osiris. Amid a mock fight against Osiris’ enemies, the procession is led by the jackal god


Wep-wawet whose name lit. is “the opener of the ways.”) ( *wp* “split, open (here a participle);”

 *w3t* “road.”)


Nfr-hr Constructions

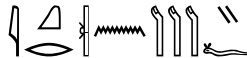
¹⁷ Statue of the Royal Scribe, Amenhotep, British Museum EA 632.


¹⁸ Louvre Stela 275, line 3.

An adjective and noun or noun phrase connection in direct or indirect genitive is called a *nfr-ḥr* construction. It is common in Middle Egyptian albeit difficult to translate directly:  “good (one) of face” an Egyptian idiom for “kindly.”

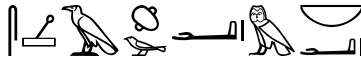

More examples:


 *kn gb3.f* “valiant of his arm” [Neferti 10];

 *ikr n db3w.f* “excellent of his fingers” [Neferti 10] (quality of a scribe);

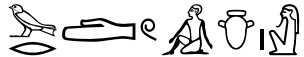
 *w^cb db^cw* “clean/pure of fingers” [Nebwawi Stela 1, 6]¹⁹ (the first eroded sign is reconstructed);


 *ḥd ḥr* “cheerful/bright of face” [Khetty Stela 1, 8];

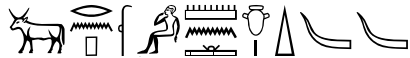

 *s3^c m nb^c* “the weak-armed is²⁰ strong-armed” lit. “the weak armed is a possessor of arm” [Neferti 54] with the biliteral  *s3*;

 *n^c ib* “kind, considerate” lit. “smooth of heart” [Kanais B, 4].

 *mn tbt* “firm of sandal” (epithet of an official);²¹

 *wrd ib.i* “weary of my heart” [Intef stela 35]. In general, this phrase means someone with inert heart or slow heart beat, and the god determinative clearly points to the dead Osiris.

 *wr n rtnw ḥz^cwi* “chief of Retjenu,²² weak/feeble of arms” [Kamose Stela 2, 4] (AB apposition of an indirect genitive and a *nfr-ḥr* construction).


 *k3 rnp(i) mn ib spd^cbwi* “young bull, firm of heart, sharp of horns” [Urk. IV, 616, 3] (two *nfr-ḥr* constructions describing the pharaoh) with the palm branch ideogram (and determinative)  *rnpt* for “young;”

¹⁹ Reconstructed. British Museum EA 1199, see E. Frood, JEA, 89 (2003) p. 65.


²⁰ This is actually an adverbial sentence (of identity), the so-called *m* of predication.

²¹ See for example the stela of Khu-Sobek (Manchester Museum, line 11) in this web site.

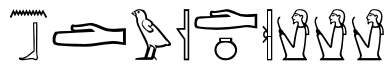
²² Present-day Lebanon.




 *ntr(i) hprw* “divine of evolution/form” [Semna Stela II, 1] (Senwosret III’s Horus name)

written with the nisbe  *ntri* and the trilateral  *hpr*.


 *ntr(i) mswt* “divine of birth” [Semna Stela II, 1] Senwosret III’s Two Ladies name.

 *hpš* “great of strength” [Bull Hunt Scarab 3] (epithet of the pharaoh).


 *nbdw kdw*, plural of *nbdw-ḳd* “evil of character” (the plural strokes are replaced by the foreigner determinatives) generally referring to the enemies of Egypt.

 *sdw ibw* “broken hearted (ones)” [Semna Stela 2, 13] (plural), where *sdw* “broken” itself is a perfective passive participle derived from the verb  *sd* or  *sd* “break.”

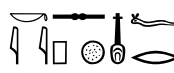
 *nfrt n dd* and in the same text  *nfrt dd*²³ “beautiful of speech.”


 *mn tbt, hr nmtt* “steadfast, (lit. firm of sandal), easy of bearing (lit. steps),” self-laudatory epithets [Khu-Sobek Stela 11].²⁴


Apparent Adjectives

There are Egyptian nouns or certain phrases that are not adjectives but equivalent to English adjectives. These are called apparent adjectives. The most frequent is the (MS) noun  *ky* “other.”

Examples:




 *ky zp nfr* “another good deed” [Kanais B, 8];

 *zp n ky* “the deed of another” [Kanais C, 5];

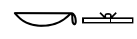
 *kt st* “another place” [Kanais C, 18];




²³ The Stela of Merer, loc. cit., in lines 4 and 14.



²⁴ See Peet, loc. cit.

 *kt* “another” (F) [Intef Stela 7] with plural strokes because it refers to  *ht* written as  “generation,” a feminine collective noun.


A more complex example:  *hzz w(i) hm.f r k(i)w(i)* “his majesty favored me to others.”²⁵


 *kt-h(t)* “(the) others” (PL) [Kanais C,2] (usually with the seated man determinative).

The plural of *ky* is  *kiwi* but when it stands alone it is written as  *kt-ht* (a variant of the example) or  *kt-hi*.

Other apparent adjectives are the nouns  *tnw* “each (one)” and  *nhi* “a little/few.” In addition, the prepositional phrases *r dr*, *r 3w*, *mi kd*, *mi ki* “entire, complete, whole” are also apparent adjectives.

Examples:

 *t3 r dr.f* “the entire land” [Urk. IV, 2,2];

 *sm3w r 3w.sn* “all the (lit. whole) wild cattle” [Bull Hunt Scarab 12].

A more complex example:

 *srw mšc nḥw nw mšc r dr.f mi kd.f hrdw n k3p* [Bull Hunt Scarab 9-10] with *srw nḥw* “the commanders” lit. “the officials of the army”

(direct genitive), *nḥw nw mšc* “the common soldiers” lit. “the citizens of the army” (indirect genitive), and *hrdw n k3p* “the children of the kap/nursery” (indirect genitive) with the ideogram

(and determinative)  *hrd*. Note that in some 18th Dynasty writings (as here)  *k3p*

resembles a wrist and hand. The attached apparent adjectives *r dr.f* and *mi kd.f* emphasize that

the entire army with all its attachments was present at the bull hunt.

²⁵ The Stela of Mentuhotep (UC, London); H. Goedicke, JEA 48 (1962), pp. 25-35.