


The Perfect *s_{dm}.n.f*

Generally speaking the (non-emphatic) perfect is a tenseless verb form that expresses **completed action** (from the speaker's standpoint). This is an aspect, not a tense.


Morphologically, it is an easily recognizable verb form of suffix conjugation in which the suffix *n* directly follows the verbal stem and it is followed by a suffixed pronominal or a nominal subject: *s_{dm}.n.f* or *s_{dm}.n X*. Syntactically, the perfect can appear as: (1) The main verbal predicate of a sentence (usually introduced by the particle *iw* or one of the introductory words *ḥ^c.n* or *wn.in*); (2) A verbal phrase in a subordinate (most often adverb or noun) clause. The **perfect** is normally reserved for **transitive** verbs. For completed action described by an **intransitive** verb (such as verbs of motion) Middle Egyptian usually employs the **stative**. The perfect is negated by the negative particle *ni* (or *nn*) and (irrespective of transitivity or intransitivity) it is primarily used for **present** tense negation of an action, inability, or negation of necessity.

Examples:

Comparison of the **stative** (for intransitive verbs) and the **perfect** (for transitive verbs):


 *tni.kw ph.n.i i3wi* “I grew old, I reached old age...”


[Urk. IV, 10, 6] (The **stative** of the **intransitive** verb *tni* “grow old” is followed by the **perfect** of the **transitive** verb *ph* “reach.”)

 *šm.k(w) m wp(w)t nt nb.i pn ir.n(.i) mrt.n.f* “I went down on a mission of this my lord, I did what he wished/desired.” [Khetty Stela, 6] (The **stative** of the verb of motion *šmi* is followed by the **perfect** of the **transitive** verb *iri*. The object of the perfect is *mrt.n.f*, a perfect relative form.)

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Perfect as a **main verbal predicate** of a sentence:

 *iw ir.n.i t3š.i* “I have made my border” [Semna Stela II, 4];


 *iw m3.n st ḥm.f* “His majesty has seen it” [Semna Stela II, 13-14]


(Note the Middle Egyptian word order. The variant Uronarti Stela has only *iw m3 st*.)


 *ist wi m tp n mš^c.n iw ḥ3.n.i r*


wn-m3^c “When I was at the head of our army, I have fought really.” [Urk. IV, 7, 8] (The


particle *ist* allows the adverb clause to stand in front of the main clause; the latter is introduced by the particle *iw.*)


 *ḥᶜ.n dwn.n.i rdwi* “Then I stretched my legs...” [ShS. 45];

 *ḥᶜ.n ss3.n(.i) wi* “Then I satisfied myself...” [ShS. 52-53]
(perfect with **omitted subject**);


 *ḥᶜ.n ḥm n (n)swt-bit(i) HWNI*
mini.n.f “Then the majesty of Upper of Lower Egypt Huni died” [Pr. II, 7-8] (with the king’s name Huni¹ as **topicalized subject**);

 *ḥk3 nb ᶜpr.n(.i) sw* “I acquired all magic” [Irtysen Stela, 7] (The artisan-sculptor Irtysen asserts his skills. The perfect has **omitted subject** and the **topicalized object** is referred by the resumptive dependent pronoun *sw*.)

 *dr.n dd.n.f n.sn* “Then he said to them” [Pr. II, 4] (with a rare use of the introductory word *dr.n* grammatically similar to *ḥᶜ.n*);

 *m.k ph.n.n hnw* “Look, we have reached the Residence/home” [ShS. 2-3].

Perfect in **noun** clauses:

 *dd.fr ntt ir.n.i hprw.i m dmi*
n nhb “He says as follows: ‘I spent my youth in the town of Nekheb.’” [Urk. IV, 2, 9]

Admiral Ahmose’s tomb biography. (*r ntt* “as follows/inasmuch as” lit. “with respect to the fact that” introduces the noun clause. *hprw* means “form, shape, stages of growth.” The Egyptian phrase *ir.f hprw.f m* can be rendered as “he spends his youth in” or “he has his upbringing in,” lit. “he passes his stages of growth in.” *nhb* is the ancient Nekheb, near the present day El Kab, south of Luxor.)

Perfect in **adverb** clauses:

¹ Nysuteh, 2637-2613 BC, last king of the 3rd Dynasty.

ib.f 3w(.w) m knt nht

it.n.f rs(i)w mh*t*iw “His (the king’s) heart was happy in the valor of victory as he has taken possession of the southerners and the northerners” [Urk. IV, 5, 14];

ist wd.n hm.f “His majesty commanded” [Bull Hunt Scarab, 10] (The particle *ist* marks the following adverb clause.)

Perfect in **negation**:

ni sr.n.i “I will not foretell...” [Neferti, 26];

ni rh.n.tw hprt “One cannot not know what (may) happen” [Pr. II, 2]. (The subject is the impersonal pronoun *tw*, and the object is *hprt*, a perfective active participle);

nn whd.n.tw “One cannot endure...” [Neferti 50];

ni tkn.n.tw.f “He cannot be approached” [Urk. IV, 615, 10];

ni b3g.n.i hr mšc.i “I was not negligent about my army” [Kamose Stela 2, 25]. (Negated perfect of the **intransitive** verb *b3gi* “lazy.”)