The Stative

The stative (old perfective\(^1\) or pseudoparticiple\(^2\)) is a verb form that generally expresses the resulting state of a prior completed action. For transitive verbs the action is performed on its subject (passive) (except for the verb *rḥ* “to know”), and for intransitive verbs (such as verbs of motion and adjective verbs) the action is performed by its subject (active). The stative verb forms always come with specific pronominal suffixes indicating person, number and gender:

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In addition to the stative pronominal suffix, the subject of the stative is very often topicalized. This is called the **subject + stative construction:**

(nominal or pronominal) subject + verb . stative ending

The stative ending agrees in gender and number with the topicalized subject. The subject + stative construction is often introduced by a particle (*iw, m.k, nḥmn* etc.) or an introductory word (*ḥ.n, wn.in, wn.hr* etc.) and the usual grammatical rules apply.

Examples of the stative with **transitive verbs:**

*kw “I have been rewarded” [Urk. IV, 2, 2] (*w “reward” with the biliteral *iw*);

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\(^1\) In earlier Egyptian, (initial) first person stative was used to express completed (perfective) action: *ir.kw “I did...;”* see A. Loprieno, Ancient Egyptian, Cambridge University Press (2000), p. 80.

\(^2\) Expressing the result of a completed action, some uses of the stative can be translated by English past participle.
“I have been endowed” [Urk. IV, 2, 4] (sḥ “endow” with the phonogram šḥ);

“I was appointed” [Urk. IV, 3, 9] (dh “appoint, bow to”);

“I was put on” [ShS. 39] (rd “give, put, cause”);

“it is filled” [Harper I, 3] (mḥ “fill”);

“it was filled” [ShS. 116; Kamose Stela 2, 13];

“they are buried” [Harper II (vi, 2), 4] (krs “bury”);

“it was returned” [Kamose Stela 2, 27] (with the backwards walking legs determinative);

“they are recited” [Harper II (vi, 2), 6].

More complex examples for the subject + stative construction:

“I know the secret of hieroglyphs” [Irtysen Stela 6-7]. The artisan-sculptor Irtysen asserts his skills. Even though Ṳḥ “know” is transitive, it has active meaning; an exceptional case. Ṣḥ is a particle signaling the beginning of the sentence.

“Then it was rejoiced” [Louvre Stela 269, 17] (with the transitive verb Ṣḥ “rejoice;” the impersonal suffix pronoun ṣḥ should be ṣḥ).

“What of their places?3 … Their walls have been destroyed” [Harper II (vi, 2), 7]. (The verb ḥḥ can be transitive “loose, release, cast off, destroy, obliterate,” or intransitive “set out, depart.”)

“I was brave” [Stela of Khu-Sobek, 9]. (Egyptian idiom; lit. “my sight is blessed.” Baines,5 however, translates this as: “my face looked forward,” i.e. “confronting.”)

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3 Lichtheim’s translation.
4 Lichtheim translates this second sentence as “Their walls have crumbled” with the verb ḥḥ interpreted as intransitive.
Note: In earlier Egyptian, irrespective of transitivity, the stative expressed perfect tense. There are a handful of surviving examples of the stative of transitive verbs with active meaning (mostly in narrative in the 1st person) such as $ib.kw$ “I thought” [ShS. 57-58] (with the phonogram $ib$).

Examples of the stative with intransitive verbs:

- $šm.kw$ “I had gone” [ShS. 23] ($šmi$ “go, walk” with the biliteral $šm$);
- $mn.kw$ “I moored” [Kamose Stela 2, 31] ($mn$ “be set, be fixed, remain”);
- $mn.(w)$ “it stuck” [Urk. IV, 8, 15];
- $sdr.kw$ “I lied” [ShS. 42-43] ($sdr$ “lie down, spend the night, sleep” with the biliteral $dr$);
- $ii.kw$ “I have come” [Kamose Stela 2, 10] ($ii$ “come, return” with the phonogram $ii$);
- $ii.(w)$ “we returned” [ShS. 10];
- $ii.ti$ “welcome” (lit. “you have come,” an Egyptian idiom) [Urk. VI, 611, 15];
- $hpr.t(i)$ “you become” [ShS. 73] ($hpr$ “happen, evolve, grow up, become,” with the ideogram $hpr$);
- $htp.w(i)$ “they rest” [Harper II (vi, 2), 4];
- $sw.(w)$ “it has passed” [Pr. I, 7] ($sw$ “pass”);
- $m(w)t.(ti)$ “it died” [ShS. 38] ($mwt$ “die,” the second $t$ is suppressed);

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bdš.w(i) “they became weak” [Urk. IV, 8, 17] (bdš “become faint, weak, exhausted”);

sd(3).(wi) “they tremble” [Urk. IV, 616, 8] (sd3 “tremble” with the egret as a determinative for sd3);

hd.(w) “it was shining” [Kamose Stela 2, 32];

tni.kw “I grew old” [Urk. IV, 10, 5].

More complex examples for subject + stative construction:

ib.f Htp.w “his heart is content” [Pr. I, 9] (Htp “calm, content” with the ideogram Htp).

ḥfr.n.i ḫd.kw “Then I proceeded downstream” [Stela of Khu-Sobek, 22].

izwt.n ii.t(i) ḏ.t(i) “our crew has returned in safety” [ShS. 7] (with the phonogram iz, and ḏ “safe” with the biliteral ḏ. The 3FS stative endings are because izwt is a feminine noun. Two subject + stative constructions with shared subject.) The stative of the adjective-verb ḏ describes the quality of the subject (the crew) as the result of a prior action of “becoming safe.”

ib.i Aw(.w), ib.f Aw(.w) “I/he was happy,” etc. [Kamose Stela 2, 3; Urk. IV, 5, 13; see also Urk. IV, 612, 2; 613, 5] (Aw “long” is an adjective-verb, and ḏ “be happy” is an Egyptian idiom, lit. “long of heart.”)

ir iw sbḥt ḫmn.y “the gatekeepers bowed down” [Stela of the Official Mentuhotep, UC14333, 4] (iriw is a plural prepositional nisbe: “those pertaining to.” Note the rare 3PL stative ending y.)