

# 10

## The Autobiography of Admiral Ahmose<sup>1</sup>

### Part I

#### Introduction



*hri hnyt i<sup>c</sup>h-ms z3 ib3n3 m3<sup>c</sup> hrw dd.f*



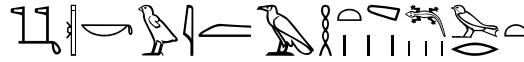
*dd.i n.tn rmt(t) nbt di.i rh.tn hzwt hprt n.i*



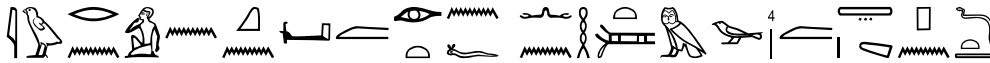
*iw<sup>c</sup>.kw m nbw zp 7 hft hr t3 r dr.f*



*hmw hmwt r mitt irw*



*s3h.kw m 3hwt ʿs3 wrt*



*iw rn n kn m irt.n.f nn htm m t3 pn dt*

#### Youth



*dd.f r ntt ir.n.i hprw.i m dmi n nhb*



*iw it(i).i m w<sup>c</sup>w n nswt-bitī SKN.N-R<sup>c</sup> m<sup>3</sup> hrw*

<sup>1</sup> The grammar of the 'Introduction' and 'Youth' is discussed in (VI.A) of my Introduction to Middle Egyptian through Ancient Writings.





wn.in.tw hr h3 hr mw m p3-ddkw n hwt-wrt



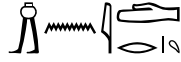
h.n h.f.n.i in.i drt I



smi.t(w) n whmw nswt wn.in.tw hr rdit n.i nbw n knt



h.n whmw h3 m st tn wn.in.i hr whm h.f im



in.i drt I



wn.in.tw hr rdit n.i nbw n knt m whm c



wn.in.tw hr h3 m t3 kmt rswt n dmi pn



h.n in.n.i skr-nh z(i) I



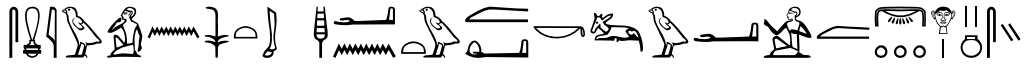
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m.k in.tw.f m mh hr t3 hrt p3 dmi



d3.n.i hr.f hr mw



smiw n whmw nswt h.n.tw hr iw.c.i m nbw hr snnw.si



wn.in.tw hr h3k hwt-wrt



*wn.in.i hr int h3kt im*



*z(i) 1 zt hmt 3 dmd r tp 4*



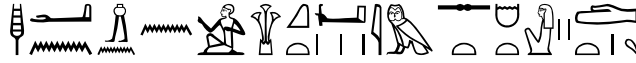
*wn.in hm.f hr rdit st n.i r hmw*



*wn.in.tw hr hsmt hr š3rh3n3 m rnpwt 3*



*wn.in hm.f hr h3k s(i)*



*ḥ.n in.n.i h3kt im zt hmt 2 drt 1*




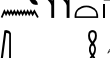

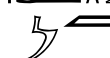



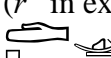
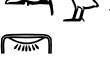




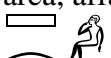







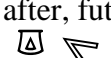

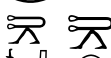

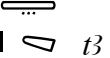
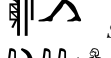
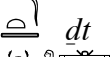




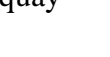
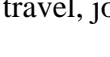





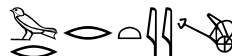


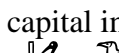



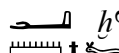

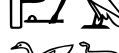
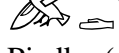
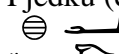
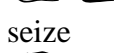
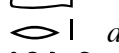


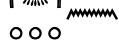
*wn.in.tw hr rdit n.i nbw n knt*


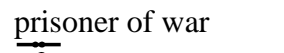
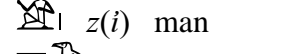

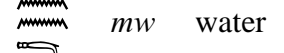
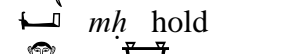


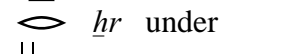
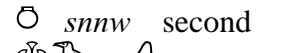


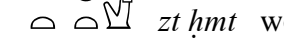
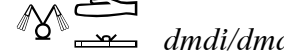





*m.k rdit n.i h3kt.i r hmw*

## Vocabulary

 <i>hri</i> (up)on	 <i>nhb</i> Nekheb (El Kab)
 <i>hni</i> row, transport (by boat)	 <i>iti</i> father
 <i>hnyt</i> crew	 <i>w'w</i> soldier
 <i>i'h</i> moon, Thoth	 <i>z3</i> son
 <i>m3'c hrw</i> justified	 <i>phti</i> strength
 <i>rmtt</i> men, mankind	 <i>db3, db3</i> replace ( <i>r</i> in exchange for)
 <i>hzt</i> favor	 <i>dpt</i> ship, boat
 <i>iw'c</i> reward, endow	 <i>sm3</i> wild bull
 <i>nbw</i> gold	 <i>h3w</i> time, vicinity, area, affairs
 <i>hmw</i> (male) servant	 <i>sri</i> little
 <i>hmt</i> (female) servant	 <i>hmt</i> woman, wife
 <i>s3h</i> endow ( <i>m</i> with)	 <i>sdr</i> lie down, spend the night, sleep
 <i>3ht</i> field	 <i>ht</i> wake, aftermath; <i>m ht</i> after, future
 <i>s3</i> many	 <i>grg</i> set up, establish
 <i>wrt</i> very	 <i>iti/iti</i> take (possession of)
 <i>rn</i> name, identity	 <i>mhti</i> northern
 <i>kni</i> (adjective-verb) brave, diligent, persevering	 <i>smsi</i> follow
 <i>htm</i> perish	 <i>ity, itii</i> sovereign
 <i>t3</i> land	 <i>nh(.w)-(w)d3(.w)-s(nb.w)</i> lph
 <i>dt</i> forever, eternity	 <i>rd</i> foot
 <i>hprw</i> form, shape, stages of growth	 <i>swtw</i> walk about, travel, journey
 <i>dmi</i> town, quarter, abode, quay	

 *wrrt* chariot  
 *hmsi* sit, sit down, besiege  
 *hwt-w<sup>c</sup>rt* Avaris (Hyksos capital in the Delta)  
 *b3h* presence  
 *hm* incarnation, majesty  
 *dhn* bow, appoint  
 *h<sup>c</sup>i* appear, rise  
 *mn-nfr* Memphis  
 *h3* fight  
 *p3-ddkw*  
Pjedku (canal at Avaris)  
 *hf<sup>c</sup>* grasp, make capture, seize  
 *drt* hand  
 *smi* report  
 *w<sup>h</sup>m* repeat  
 *nbw n knt* gold of valor  
 *st* place, throne  
 *rsi* south, southern


 *skr-<sup>c</sup>nh*  
prisoner of war  
 *z(i)* man  
 *h3i* go down, head (*r* for)  
 *mw* water  
 *m<sup>h</sup>* hold  
 *hrw r* apart from, besides  
 *d3i* cross (water), ferry  
 *hr* under  
 *snnw* second  
 *h3k* plunder  
 *h3kt* plunder  
 *zt hmt* woman  
 *dmd<sup>i</sup>/dmd<sup>i</sup>* unite, total, sum  
 *dmd/dmd (r)* total  
 *tp* head, top  
 *s3rh3n3* Sharuhen  
(town in the Negev Desert)  
 *rnpt* year

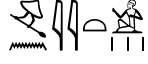

## Grammar Points



### Introduction

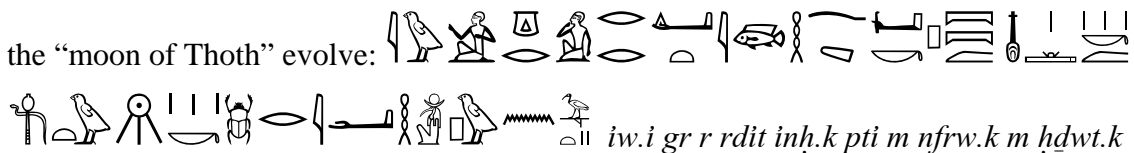


*hri hnyt iḥ-ms z3 ib3n3 m3ḥ hrw dd.f*


The prepositional nisbe *hri* “upper, lying on” is an adjective used here as a noun “chief, commander, master,” lit. “one who is above.” The double-stroke sign  is not shown but the sky/above determinative clearly points to the meaning.

There is a graphic transposition in  *hnyt* “crew”, a collective noun derived from the verb  *hni* “row.” The title “crew commander” can be upgraded to “naval commander.”

 or  *iḥ* originally meant the moon god but eventually became Thoth, the god of writing and knowledge. In the following speech the creator makes Thoth to embrace the two skies (the world and the Duat below) and with this act makes the “moon of Thoth” evolve:



*iw.i gr r rdit inh.k pti m nfrw.k m ḥdwt.k hpr iḥ pw n dhwti*<sup>1</sup>. (Here in the last A *pw* noun clause the non-attributive perfective relative form of *hpr* “evolve” is used as the predicate; note that *pw* moved forward in side the indirect genitive *iḥ n dhwti* “the moon of Thoth.”) The name *iḥ-ms* “moon/Thoth is born” contains the passive form of *msj* “give birth.”

*ib3n3* has been translated as Ibana, Eben, Abana, Abena, and Abina. The adjective phrase  *m3ḥ hrw* usually translates as “justified,” lit. “true of voice.” It

<sup>1</sup> See E. Hornung, *Der ägyptische Mythos von der Himmelskuh: eine Ätiologie des Unvollkommenen*, Academic Press Fribourg, 1991.

signifies that the person in question lived a just life, passed the weighing the heart ceremony, made a successful transition to afterlife, and joined the society of the dead.

The long topicalized subject is followed by the imperfective *s<sub>dm</sub>.f* of *dd*.<sup>2</sup>

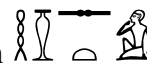


*dd.i n.tn rmt(t) nbt di.i rh.tn hzwt hprt n.i*

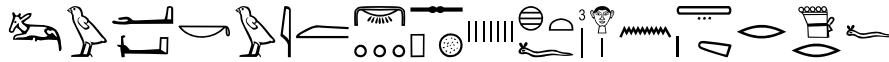
The two clauses here have verbal predicates of the verbs *dd* and *r<sub>di</sub>* both in intentional prospective/subjunctive *s<sub>dm</sub>.f* forms: “I will tell” and “I will let.” The feminine form of

*nb* reveals that, instead of *rmt* “people”, its collective form  *rmtt* “men, mankind”

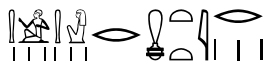
is used here. In the second clause the *r<sub>di</sub> s<sub>dm</sub>.f* construction “let him hear,” lit. “cause/give that he hear” is used with *r<sub>di</sub>* and, by construction, *rh* in prospective /subjunctive

*s<sub>dm</sub>.f*. Note the archaizing writing of the plural of the (feminine) noun  *hzt*.

Matching this, the perfective active participle of the verb *hpr* is in feminine plural form “which came” lit. “which happened.”




*iw.kw m nbw zp 7 hft hr t3 r dr.f*



*hmw hmwt r mitt irw*

In stative the transitive verb *iw* “reward” has passive meaning. The compound preposition *hft hr* can be translated as “in the presence/sight of,” lit. “before the face of.” The prepositional phrase *r dr* lit. “to the limit” is best translated as an (apparent) adjective “whole, entire.” The next two nouns (in apposition) “the male and female servants” are still governed by the preposition *m*. The plural of the closing phrase *r mitt iri* “as well” lit. “the like/similar pertaining to it” is composed of two nisbes from the prepositions *mi* and

*r*. We met this in the Story of the Shipwrecked Sailor:  *mitt iri hpr*<sup>3</sup>




*s3h.kw m 3hwt s3 wrt*

The sentence here matches with the previous with identical grammar.

<sup>2</sup> Allen (20.14).

<sup>3</sup> [Sh. S. 21].



Note that the plural strokes in  𓆑𓆑𓆑 “many” is always a determinative.



*iw rn n kn m irt.n.f nn htm m t3 pn dt*

The first main clause is an adverbial sentence of identity introduced by the particle *iw*.

The subject is the noun phrase *rn n kn* “the name of the brave,” with *kn* “brave (one)” also a military title<sup>4</sup>. The “*m* of predication” is given by the perfect relative form of *iri* “that which (he) has done.” According to Goedicke, the alternate reading *irt n.f* is also possible with *irt* being the perfective passive participle of *iri*: “what is done.”

Note that in Middle Egyptian, *m* of predication is used for temporary or acquired identity or profession. In contrast, for unchangeable or natural identity nominal sentences are used.

The second sentence is a typical *nn* + prospective/subjunctive *sdm.f* construction and as such it has future meaning. The subject *rn n kn* is omitted since it is the same as in the previous sentence. This sentence is a proverb used also in the Thutmose III Inscriptions<sup>5</sup>.

## Youth



*dd.fr ntt ir.n.i hprw.i m dmi n nhb*

After the introduction Ahmose now begins to talk about his youth and upbringing. The passage starts with the narrative infinitive of *dd*. It is followed by the prepositional phrase *r ntt*, introducing a noun clause. It can be translated using “as follows” or “inasmuch as,” lit. “with respect to (the fact) that.” As we saw in the Story of the Shipwrecked Sailor already twice:

ready twice: *ir.n.i hrw 3 w.kw*<sup>6</sup> and *ir.n.i hrw 3 w.kw*<sup>6</sup> and

*m.k tw r irt 3bd hr 3bd*<sup>7</sup>, the verb *iri* (circumstantial

<sup>4</sup> [Urk. IV, 34, 2].

<sup>5</sup> [Urk. IV, 684, 17; 780, 14-15].

<sup>6</sup> [Sh. S. 41].

<sup>7</sup> [Sh. S. 117].

*sdm.n.f*/perfect here) not only means “make, do” but also “pass/spend time.”



*hprw* means “form, shape, stages of growth.” With these, 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.




*iw it(i).i m w'w n nswt-biti SKN.N-R' m'3 hrw*

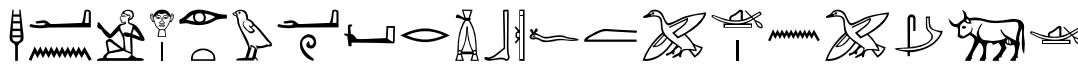
This is another adverbial sentence of identity, an *m* of predication. *SKN.N-R'* “Whom Re has made brave” is Sekenenre Taa II, a local Theban ruler and the next-to-last king of the 17<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, Second Intermediate Period, c.1560 BC. The verb form in the name is a perfect relative form (of the causative) of the verb *kni* “brave.”



*b3b3 z3 rint rn.f*

This is a typical AB nominal sentence used by Ahmose to tell his father’s and his (paternal) grandmother’s names: Baba, son of Ra-inet, was his name. Note the use of the Egyptian

ditto sign  *zp 2* in the name *b3b3*.




*h'c.n.i hr irt w'w r db3.f m p3 dpt n p3-sm3*





*m h3w nb t3wi NB-PHTI-R' m3'c hrw*

The pseudo-verbal construction *hr irt*, lit. “upon doing” describes the action in progress: Ahmose being a soldier or serving as an officer.

At this stage of the language *p3* is no longer a demonstrative pronoun but the definite article “the.”  *p3-sm3* “The Wild Bull” is the name of the ship.

The typical epithet *nb t3wi* “Lord of the Two Lands” refers here to the pharaoh *NB-PHTI-R'* “The lord of strength is Re.” This is the prenomen of Ahmose I (1550-1525 BC), the founder of the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, after he assumed the throne. Note that in the king’s

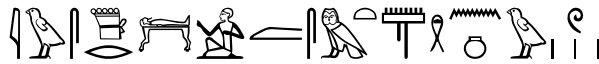
name the double *t* is not *tt* but a peculiar way of writing *ti*, the so-called “sportive dual.”

Alternative spellings of *pḥti* “strength” are  and .



*iw.i m šri ni irt.i ḥmt*

Another adverbial sentence of identity here is followed by an unmarked relative clause employing the *ni sdm.t.f* construction. We have already met this in the Story of the Shipwrecked Sailor. This construction carries the meaning that the action has not happened yet which, in this case, means that at this point Ahmose has not been married, lit. “has not made a wife.”



*iw sdr.i m smt šnw*

The particle *iw* introduces the imperfective of the verb *sdr* referring to habitual action in the past. In English this can be rendered inserting “used to” in front of the verb. The meaning of the phrase *smt šnw* is unknown. There is some support to the argument that it should mean some typical garment of youth<sup>8</sup> or a net of hammock (Gardiner and Gunn).

## Expulsion of the Hyksos



*hr m ḥt grg.n.i pr*

This is a good example for one of the basic functions of the particle *hr* as a converter to let the prepositional phrase *m ḥt* “after,” lit. “in the wake” stand in front of the sentence. Together they can be translated as “then later.” The usual meaning of the noun *pr* “house,” the object of the circumstantial *sdm.n.f*/perfect form of the verb *grg*, should be “household” here.




*ḥḥ.n.i it.kw r p3 dpt mḥti hr ḳnn.i*

In the subject-stative construction the transitive verb *iti/iṯi* has passive meaning, “was

<sup>8</sup> [Breasted, II, p.6].

transferred.”

The nisbe *mḥti* “northern” is derived from *mḥyt* “northwind,” and it is the name of the ship. Alternatively, though the plural strokes are missing,  may be the ideogram for *ḥw* “ship(s)” and together with the demonstrative pronoun *p3 ḥw* may mean “the fleet” (with *mḥti* being an adjective). The preposition *ḥr* “because” governs a clause of causality in which *ḥnn* is a non-attributive relative form of the adjective-verb *ḥni* “be brave” used nominally.



*wn.ḥr.i ḥr šms ity ḥnh(.w)-(w)d3(.w)-s(nb.w) ḥr rdwi.i*



*m ḥt swtw.t.f ḥr wr(r)t.f*

*wn.ḥr* “then” introduces a pseudo-verbal *ḥr* + infinitive construction indicating action in progress: “then I followed,” lit. “then I existed upon following.” Note that *wn.ḥr* is used only after the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty onwards.

 is another spelling of  *ity, itii* “sovereign” that we met before.


In the adverbial phrase introduced by the compound preposition *m ḥt* the verbal noun *swtw* “journey, travel” is derived from the rare 5-lit. verb *swtw* “walk (about), promenade.” Having plural ending, it cannot be infinitive. Nevertheless, a possible translation could use a verbal predicate: “when he was riding about,” lit. “in the wake of his journeys.”

Note that *wrrt* “chariot” is used in Egyptian history the first time during the Hyksos period.



*iw ḥms.tw ḥr dmi n ḥwt-wʿrt*

*ḥmsi* “sit down, reside” also means “besiege” and the *iw sdm.f*/imperfective construction with the impersonal suffix pronoun *tw* indicates that the action happened in the past; the English past imperfect “was besieged” is a good way to translate this construction.


Note that *dmi* not only means “harbor, quay” but also “town.”  *ḥwt-*

w<sup>rt</sup> is the name of the Delta town Avaris, the Hyksos capital at the time. It has been identified with the site Tell el-Dab'a.



wn.hr.i hr knt hr rdwi.i m b3h hm.f

The grammar of this sentence is similar to the one above. This time it is applied to the adjective-verb *kni*. It means that at the time of the siege of Avaris Ahmose fought bravely, lit. “existed upon being brave.”

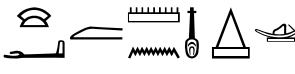
Note also the spelling of the adverbial adjunct  *m b3h* “in the presence of.”




*h<sup>c</sup>.n.i dhn.kw r h<sup>c</sup>-m-mn-nfr*

Once again a subject-stative construction involving the transitive verb *dhn* “appoint” has passive meaning.

*h<sup>c</sup>* is a perfective active participle of *h<sup>c</sup>i* “rise.” *mn-nfr* is Memphis, lit. “beautiful of monument,” or with a verbal interpretation “established and beautiful.” The ship de-


terminative shows that  *h<sup>c</sup>-m-mn-nfr* “Rising in Memphis” is the name of the ship. The first (pyramid) determinative is for the town of Memphis (because

of its necropolis), usually written as . Goedicke argued that *h<sup>c</sup>m mn-nfr* means a secondary coronation ceremony of Ahmose in Memphis, thereby the name of the ship may commemorate this event.



wn.in.tw hr h3 hr mw m p3-ddkw n hwt-w<sup>rt</sup>

For a change, here it is the impersonal suffix pronoun that makes the sentence having passive meaning. The pseudo-verbal *hr* + infinitive construction means action in progress, and the literal meaning “one was fighting” can be improved to “there was fighting.”

The determinative  reveals that *p3-ddkw* is a canal, less likely a harbor town or a quay. Excavations at Tell el-Dab'a point to the fact that the Pelusiac branch of the Nile,



The transitive verb *whm* appears first in passive and then in a pseudo-verbal *hr* + infinitive construction. The objects are the infinitives of *ḥ3* and *hf* used as nouns. Both clauses can be translated using the word “again,” lit. “fighting has been repeated” and “(upon) repeating capturing.”

The last sentence with the indicative/perfective (or circumstantial *sdm.n.f*/perfect; see the discussion above) of *ini* concludes the events.




*wn.in.tw hr rdit n.i nbw n knt m whm c*

This sentence has already appeared and has been discussed previously with the added remark that the adverb *m whm c* is an Egyptian phrase for “a second time, again.”





*wn.in.tw hr ḥ3 m t3 kmt rswt n dmi pn*

At least from the point of view of grammar, the biography here is repetitive. The tongue of land determinative  indicates that *rswt* is a noun, therefore the location *kmt rswt n dmi pn* is “Egypt, (which is to) the south of this town”, where ‘town’ is a reference to Avaris.



*ḥc.n in.n.i skr-ḥ z(i) l*

This time Ahmose ended the fight by carrying off (in circumstantial *sdm.n.f*/perfect) a prisoner of war. The passive participle of the verb  *skr* “smite, strike down” is used in the noun  *skr-ḥ* “prisoner of war,” lit. “(one) who is smitten alive.”



*h3.n.i r p3 mw*





*m.k in.tw.f m mh hr t3 hrt p3 dmi*



*d3.n.i hr.f hr mw*

Examining the three sentences we can reconstruct the sequence of events as follows.


Ahmoose went down to the water (*h3i r p3 mw*, lit. “head for the water” with the circum-

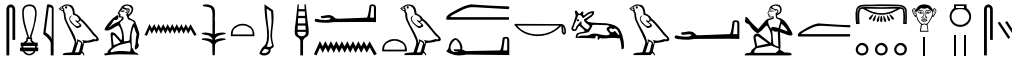
tantial *sdm.n.f*/perfect of  *h3i*), captured/carried off a prisoner (*ini m mh*, lit. “bring/carry as holding” with the circumstantial/imperfective *sdm.f* of  *ini* expressing

concomitant action and the infinitive of  *mh* “hold”) on the side of the town (*t3 hrt p3*

*dmi*), where the compound preposition  *hrw-r* (with omitted *r*) stands for “besides,” lit. “apart from.” Therefore the Egyptian army was on the other side of the town. The exact situation in this feat of bravery is further emphasized in the last clause by

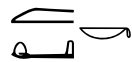
stating that he crossed the water (*d3i hr mw* with the circumstantial *sdm.n.f*/perfect of


 *d3i*) carrying the prisoner on his back *hr.f*, lit. “under him.”



*smiw n whmw nswt h<sup>c</sup>.n.tw hr iw<sup>c</sup>.i m nbw hr snnw.si*


The passive of the verb *smi* without an expressed subject starts the sentence “(it) was reported.” We now meet a strange peculiarity of this inscription, namely that before the in-

finitive of the verb *iw<sup>c</sup>* we would expect the preposition *hr* but find the particle 

*m.k*, a scribal error (possibly a hieratic confusion) which needs to be emended to  here.

In the expression *hr iw<sup>c</sup>.i* the suffix pronoun is the object of the infinitive, lit.

“upon rewarding me.” The phrase *hr snnw.si* “second time” involves the cardinal number

*snnw* “second” used as a noun, lit. “upon its second.” Note the extra  in the suffix pronoun copied from the dual.



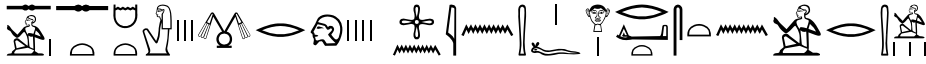
*wn.in.tw hr h3k hwt-w<sup>c</sup>rt*



*wn.in.i hr int h3kt im*



The fate of Avaris is described here (with a simple grammar) by the use of the verb *h3k* “plunder” and the derived collective noun *h3kt* “plunder.”





z(i) 1 zt hmt 3 dmd r tp 4 wn.in hm.f hr rdit st n.i r hmw

Ahmoose recounts here his gains: *dmd/dmd* (r) stands for “total”, a word derived from the verb *dmdi/dmḏi* “unite, total, sum.”

Note also that the captives were counted by  *tp* “head” (and the slain, as we saw above, by  *drt* “hand”).



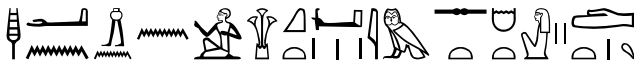
wn.in.tw hr hsmḏ hr š3rh3n3 m rnpwt 3

The earlier *iw sdm.f/imperfective iw hms.tw* is changed here to *wn.in.tw hr hmt*, a pseudo-verbal construction after *wn.in*, with the only difference in meaning is that *wn.in* (and *ḥḥ.n*) emphasize subsequent action. According to the Book of Joshua, Sharuhēn is in southern Canaan, Simeon’s tribal territory. Although many arguments have been put forward, there is not enough archaeological evidence to pinpoint its exact location. There is also a debate about the exact number of years of the siege of Sharuhēn; the readings vary between 3, 5 or 6. In any case, the stubborn resistance of the retreating Hyksos is apparent.



wn.in hm.f hr h3k s(i)

A sentence similar to this appeared above; the subject of the infinitive *h3k* is expressed (*hm.f*) therefore its pronominal object has the dependent form *s(i)*.



ḥḥ.n in.n.i h3kt im zt hmt 2 drt 1




wn.in.tw hr rdit n.i nbw n knt



m.k rdi.t(w) n.i h3kt.i r hmw

Most of the grammar here has been discussed above. In the last clause, the verb form of *rdi* (with the impersonal suffix pronoun *tw*) is indicative/perfective *sdm.f*, an infrequent

way to express the passive. The seated man  can be read as a determinative, and *ḥ3ḳt* can then be rendered as “captives.” Alternatively, it can be read as a suffix pronoun emphasizing that they are Ahmose’s own captives.