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Two Harpers’ Songs

The Stela of Nebankh

\[ \text{hsw} \text{tni}^\circ \dd f \]

\[ \text{mntwi} \ tw \ m \ st. k \ nt \ nh \ h \ m \ a h t. k \ nt \ dt \]

\[ \text{iw} \ smh. ti \ hr \ htp t \ df{}^\dd \ \text{rf} n. s \ bw- nb \ nfr \]

\[ k3. k \ hn^\circ \ k \ n(n) \ znt.f \ ir. k \]

\[ \text{htmt(i)-biti} \ imi-r \ pr \ wr \ ^\circ \ nb- nh \ i w \ n. k \ t3w \ ndm \ n \ mhy t \]

\[ \text{in} \ hsw. f \ s^\circ \ nh \ \text{rn. f} \ \text{im}^3 \ hy \ hsw \ tni^\circ \ mr. n. f \ \text{hs} \ n \ k3. f \ r^\circ \ nb \]

A Song from the Tomb of King Intef\(^1\)

\[ \text{hsw} \ nti \ m \ hwt \ TINF \ m^3 \ hrw \]

\[ nti \ m \ b3h \ p3 \ hsw \ m \ bnt \]

\[ w3d \ pw \ sr i \ pn \ nfr \ s3w \ nfr \ hdy \]

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\(^1\) The numbering and typesetting follows Hoch, Exercise XVI(B) pp. 232-233.
ht hr zbt  kt hr mn dr rk imiw h3t

ntrw hprw h-H3t htp.w(i) m mrw.sn

s\(\text{hw} \) ë\(\text{hiw} \) m mitt krs.w(i) m mrw.sn

kd(w) hwt nn wn swt.sn ptr irw m.sn

iw sdm.n.i ii-m-htp hn\(^c\) hrw-dd-f

sdd.ti m sddwt.sn rsi

ptr swt iri inbw.sn f\(\text{h}(.wi)\)
nn wn swt.sn mi nti(w) nn hpr.sn

bw iy im sdd.f kdw.sn sdd.f hrt.sn sm.f ib.n

r hnt.n r bw šmw.sn im

wd3.k ib.k r.s mh ib hr.s 3h n.k/mht-ib h\(\text{r} \) s\(\text{h} \) n.k šms ib.k wnn.k

imi ʿntiw hr tp.k  wnh n.k m p3kt

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2 Emended following Hoch, p. 234.
Two Harpers’ Songs

Vocabulary

hsi  sing
hsw  singer
mḥt  tomb
ḥtpt  offerings
dfw  provisions
zni  pass (by), surpass, transgress
ḥmt(ī)-biti  treasurer/seal bearer of the king of Lower Egypt
mḥt  northwind
imḥy  honored
ḥsw  song
bnt  harp
sri  official
ṣ3w  fate
hdi  destroy, injure, disobey (heart)
hdy  destruction
ḥt  generation
zbi  pass on, send
rk  time, era
imw  ancestors, lit. those who are in before
mr  pyramid
ṣḥ  noble, dignitary
ḥi  akh

krs  bury
ḥd  build
ptr  who, what
sddwt  literary works, quotation
rsi,  rssi  entirely, quite
inh  wall
ḥ  destroy, fall to ruins
ḥn  rush, hurry
ḥdw  form, state, manner, character
ḥrt  condition
ṣm  help, relieve
mḥi  forgetful, neglectful
ṣḥ  spiritualize (deceased), glorify (god), beautify (tomb)
ḥntiw  myrrh
wnḥ  put on (dress), be clothed
ḥpḳt  fine linen
ms  anoint
ḥ3w  excess, more
ḥfrw  beauty, perfection, happiness
ḥṣgi  weary, lazy
ṣḥ  cry, wail
sibhw (noun) cries, wailing
wrd (verb) weary, tire
i3kb mourning, plural

h3t tomb
m3wt new thing
nw again
Two Harpers’ Songs

Grammar Points

The Stela of Nebankh

\[ hsw \ tw \ mtnwi \ tw \ st.k \ nt \ nhh \ m \ mH.t.k \ nt \ dt \]

A noun + circumstantial \[ sdm.f \] /subject-imperfective construction introduces Tjeniaa, the singer of this song: “Tjeniaa, the singer, says.”

The song itself starts with an exclamatory adjectival sentence in which the subject, the deceased, is addressed in the form of the dependent pronoun \[ tw \]: “How firm you are in your seat of eternity!”

In the adverbial adjunct \[ mH.t \] or \[ mH.t \] “tomb,” and Lichtheim elevates this to “monument.”

\[ iw.s \ th.H \ hr \ hpt \ df \ nr.s \ bw-nb \ nfr \]

In the first sentence the abundance of offerings in the tomb is described by a subject-stative construction using the transitive verb \[ mH \] “fill” having therefore passive meaning. (The suffix pronoun \[ .s \] refers to \[ mH.t \], a feminine noun.) The preposition \[ hr \] “under” followed by \[ mH \] should be translated as “with.”

In the second sentence the circumstantial \[ sdm.n.f \] /perfect of the verb \[ rf \] “contain, enclose, include” denoting completed action further emphasizes that the tomb has everything that the deceased needs.
As a further comfort to him, in the third short sentence (with adverbial predicate) the presence of his spiritual element (kꜰ) is emphasized.

In the last unmarked adverb clause, the negated infinitive, qualifying the previous statement, starts with the negative particle /mdm/ indicated only by /mdm/. (Note that the context shows that the last clause is not a negated sḏmt.f construction which would mean “before/not yet heard.”) Another example for the negated infinitive with suffixed subject is

In the first sentence the titles and the name (nb-ꜥnḥ) of the deceased are given. A simple adverbial sentence of possession that follows contains a well-wish of the singer, lit. “The sweet air of the northwind is for you!”

The third sentence starts with a participial statement: “It is his singer.” This is followed by the active participle of the causative verb sꜥnḥ “make live, nourish, keep alive” with object rn.f “his name,” asserting the singer’s duty.

The relationship of the singer (who calls himself ḫmr.t “honored” with his name repeated) to the deceased is expressed by the perfect relative form mr.n.f “whom he loved” of the verb mṛ “love.”

Finally, the active participle of ḫs “sing” (with Tjeniaa as the antecedent) specifies how the ka of the deceased will be kept alive, once again, a reminder and assertion of the singer’s duty.

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1 [Urk. IV 498, 7-9].
A Song from the Tomb of King Intef²

A common feature of Late Egyptian is the appearance of out-of-the-place weak consonants w and y, superfluous t’s and seated man determinatives. This passage is no exception.

The simple grammar here has the subject hsw “song” modified by two relative clauses with adverbial predicates. hwt “enclosure” should be promoted to “funerary chapel.” The evil bird determinative (for the feminine bint “evil, badness”) is (probably) a scribal error and should be replaced with for “harp.”

This passage has been interpreted in different ways.

Federn³ splits the passage into three parts: w3d pw sri pn | nfr š3w | nfr hdy; interprets the first as an A pw B nominal sentence “B is A” and the last two as adjectival sentences with the same predicate nfr: “A happy one is this prince; good is the destiny; good is the injury.”

Lichtheim⁴ splits the passage into two parts w3d pw sri pn nfr | š3w nfr hdy; interprets the first nfr as modifying sri pn and the second as an AB nominal sentence: He is happy, this good prince! Death is a kindly fate.” But the use of AB nominal sentences with both A and B nouns or noun phrases is restricted.

Wilson⁵ agrees with Lichtheim in the division, but interprets the second part as a sentence with verbal predicate, the prospective/subjunctive sdm.f of the (intransitive) 3ae-

² The analysis here extends the grammar notes of Hoch, p. 234.
³ JNES 5(1946) p. 259.
⁴ M. Lichtheim (I), p. 197.
⁵ ANET, p. 467.
inf. verb *hdi:* “Prosperous is he, this good prince; Even though good fortune may suffer harm.”

\[ \text{ht hr zbt kt hr mn dr rk imiw h3t} \]

The passing of generations after generations is expressed by two pseudo-verbal *hr* + infinitive constructions. The alternative spelling of "generation" shows that it is a collective noun. The apparent adjective "(an)other" refers to *ht* and this is why it received the plural strokes. The presence of the determinative is due to its phonetic value *smn*.

The determinative is suggestive to the meaning of the phrase "ancestors,” lit. “those who are in before.” It is derived from the compound preposition *m h3t* by replacing *m* with the plural prepositional nisbe *imiw*.

\[ \text{ntrw hprw hr-h3t htp.wi m mrw.sn} \]

\[ \text{s\'hw 3hiw m mitt krs.w(i) m mrw.sn} \]

\[ \text{kd(w) hwt nn wn swt.sn ptr irw m.sn} \]

The first two sentences contain subject-stative constructions with (the transitive use of) the verb *htp* “rest (in tomb),” and the (transitive) verb *krs* “bury;” they both have passive meaning.

The first subject *ntrw* is modified by a relative clause. It is the antecedent of the plural of the perfective active participle of the verb *xpr* “happen, evolve.” is a Late Egyptian spelling of "under,” and the compound preposition *hr-h3t* means “before.”

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6 In this verb class the prospective/subjunctive can receive an *y* ending.
In the second subject the determinative indicates that should be viewed as a (plural) noun (and not the adjective “blessed” whose determinative is ) and it refers to the “akhs,” the spiritual entities of the Egyptian society, those who lived and made successful transition to afterlife. The compound preposition “likewise” can be translated as “too” or “also.”

In the third sentence the tone suddenly changes and the song turns the attention to the tomb builders. They are expressed by the plural perfective active participle of the verb “build” functioning as a noun. As noted in the analysis of the Poetical Stela of Thutmos III, with the indicative/perfective of expresses negation of existence “there is not,” “there does not exists.” The suffix pronoun is coreferential to .

The interrogative pronoun “who, what” (a contraction of the demonstrative pronoun and the particle ) followed by the plural perfective passive participle of “make, do” questions the fate of these dedicated workers. Since is an Egyptian idiom of “become of, happen to,” the whole clause can be translated as “what became/has become of them?”

In the first main clause, using the circumstantial /perfect of “hear, listen,” the singer claims familiarity with the words of the famous Old Kingdom sages Imhotep, the vizier of Djoser, and Hardedef, Khufu’s son.

In the indirect relative clause the stative has no preceding subject. The transitive caus. 2-lit.verb “recite, retell, relate” (+ m “of”) receives the 3FS stative suffix and carries passive meaning “recited.” The object is (itself a relative form of ) is more likely “literary works” than “quotations as the adverb “entirely, whole” emphasizes: “whose (literary) works are recited whole.”
This passage begins with a question: “What of the places…? The fate of the “places” (swt) of these sages is questioned, and instead of the suffix pronoun .sn, possession is expressed by the nisbe iri, lit. “that pertains to (them).”

The response comes immediately in a subject-stative construction describing the state of the walls with the stative of the transitive verb fh “destroy, fall to ruins.”

In beginning of the last sentence is repeated from line 11. The object of the preposition mi is the relative adjective nti functioning as a noun. The latter marks a relative clause containing a negated indicative/perfective ni sdm.f with the wrong negative particle. (Note that in Late Egyptian and are often interchanged.) The suffix pronoun .sn is coreferential to the places.

In Late Egyptian negation is often expressed by the negative word in place of n(i) and bn in place of nn. We actually have a double interchange as the negation bw corresponds to the negative particle in a negation of existence mn A. Here A is the perfective active participle iy of the verb ii “return” functioning as a noun (not the negated participle tm iy “(one) who did not return”). The adverb im “from there” refers the realm of the dead.

The three adverb (purpose) clauses that follow detail the (possible) outcome of return. The verbs are sdd “relate, tell” and sm “help, relieve” written wrongly as
and emended as 𓊒𓊫. (Hoch remarks that the scribe may have mistakenly believed that the line was the passive construction *sm.tw ib.n.*) All the verb forms are in prospective/subjunctive *sDm.f* and can be translated by inserting first “(so) that.”

Alternatively, Lichtheim bypasses the expressed subjects and uses infinitives. The *r + sdm.f* construction “until he has/had heard” applied to the verb *hn* “rush, hurry” (and suffix pronominal subject *n “we”) has an ironic tone.

Finally, *bw* is the antecedent of an indirect relative clause employing the (plural) perfective relative form of the verb form of *šmi* “walk, go” (with speed contrasting with *hn*). (Note the space-filler *t* above the walking leg determinative.) The coreferent is not expressed.

The main sentence has the prospective/subjunctive *sDm.f* 𓊒𓊫 “rejoice, take heart” expressing wish/command. The feminine suffix pronoun *\.s* is a general reference to the previous skepticism.

The next sentence can be interpreted in two ways. If the *t* above the evil bird is disregarded then this verb form is imperative with a Late Egyptian group-writing of 𓊒𓊫 “forgetful, neglectful.” Then 𓊒𓊫 is a complete sentence in which the general reference to the skepticism continues with the suffix pronoun *\.s*: “Be forgetful about it!” The next short adverb clause 𓊒𓊫 then has adjectival predicate with a sarcastic tone: “It is beneficent/profitable for you!”

On the other hand, if the *t* is considered essential then 𓊒𓊫 becomes a phrase for “forgetfulness, negligence.” The syntactically adverbial sentence 𓊒𓊫 𓊒𓊫 𓊒𓊫 with the infinitive of 𓊒𓊫 𓊒𓊫 applied to a deceased as “spiritualize,” to a god as “glorify,” and to a tomb as “beautify” can be interpreted as “advantageous.”

The imperative returns in the last sentence employing the verb 𓊒𓊫 “follow” with a clear meaning. The short adverb clause (which can be introduced by “while”) contains

the circumstantial/imperfective sdm.f of wnn “exist, be.”

imi ʾntiw ḫr tp.k  wnh n.k m pḏkt

ms.ti m biḥw m3w n ḫwt ntr

The imperative continues this time with more specific suggestions.

In the first two sentences the imperatives of the verb rdi “put” and wnh “put on (dress), dress” are employed while in the third the imperative (as a command) is expressed by the stative with the second person suffix pronoun .ti.

Note that the noun biḥw can also be used for luxury items, and the phrase ḫwt ntr lit. “god’s things” can be translated as “fit for a god.”

imi ḫw tp nfrw.k  m b3gy(w) ib.k

šms ib.k hn ḫw tp t3 m ḫḏ ib.k

The imperatives still continue, first using the phrase rdi ḫw “increase, heap/pile up,” lit. “make excess/more,” and then with the negative imperative ℶ m “do not” (abbreviated here as ℶ) followed by the negatival complement of the adjective-verb bīgi “weary, lazy, sink.” This is an example of a 4ae-inf. verb which, in addition to the negatival complement ending w, also receives an additional y. In the usual spelling of the complement the scribe replaced the bī-bird with the flying pintail duck pī.

The “decorative” spelling of the imperative šms of the 4ae-inf. verb šmsi is a Late Egyptian feature.

For the last passage, note that iri ḫt is an Egyptian idiom “be active,” lit. “do/make things” (still imperative). Finally, based on symmetry, the last sentence can be considered as a negated imperative using the verb ḫḏl which here means “disobey.” Note that Lich-
Theim reads the passage as an adverb clause “as your heart commands” with \( wd \) replacing \( \text{h}d \).

\[ iw \ n.k \ hrw \ pf\beta \ n \ sbhwts \]

\[ bw \ sdm.n \ wrd-ib \ sbhwts.sn \]

\[ bw \ šd \ n\text{y}.sn \ i3kbw \ ib \ z(i) \ im \ m \ h(3)t \]

The initial adverb clause: “(when) the day of…” signals emphatic construction, so that the verb form of \( iw \) is a (non-attributive) relative form. The subject is the indirect genitive \( hrw \ n \ sbhwts \) in which the late form of demonstrative pronoun \( pf\beta \) (with the compounded determinative \( \text{H}A \)) is moved forward.

The main clause starts with the negated circumstantial \( sdm.n.f \) /perfect of the verb \( sdm \) expressing negation of action or inability. As discussed previously, the Late Egyptian negative word \( \text{bw} \) stands for \( n(i) \). The subject is the \( nfr \ hr \) construction \( wrd-ib \) “weary of heart” referring to Osiris.

The negated prospective/subjunctive \( sdm.f \) of the verb \( šdi \) “rescue, save” with \( \text{bw} \) in place of \( nn \) should be interpreted as negated future. The late form of the demonstrative pronoun \( n\text{y} \) is used in the subject \( n\text{y}.sn \ i3kbw \) with graphic transposition in the last noun. The object is the direct genitive \( ib \ z(i) \) and the vague adverb \( im \) “from it” is made precise in the attached prepositional phrase \( m \ h(3)t \) “from the tomb.”

\[ m3wt \]

\[ ir \ hrw \ nfr \]
The noun m3wt means “refrain,” lit. “a new thing,” and the out-of-place determinative is possibly influenced by the spelling of m3wt “shaft.”

Imperative of iri governs the special phrase “make holiday” which has a dual reference: one for everyday life and another for death and afterlife. In addition, ancient Egyptians also employed this term for funerary festivities held on special days in the cemeteries.

Using the negative imperative m and the negatival complement wrdw (of the verb wrd), the singer (present only by the suffix pronoun .i) makes a last effort to cheer up the listeners.

Calling for their attention with the particle m.k, he once more reminds his audience to enjoy life for two principal reasons given in the last two sentences. (The second particle should read m.k not m.k wi.)

Grammatically, the first uses negated passive (nn in place of n(i)) of the verb rdi expressing negation of action/ability “(it) is not allowed/permitted,” lit. “(it) is not given.”

The second uses the negated indicative/perfective sdm.f construction nn wnn of the verb wnn, lit. “there is not.” It is followed by the perfective active participles of the verbs šmi “go” and iwi “return,” lit. “there is no one who has gone and who has returned again.”