1

The Instruction Addressed to Kagemni[1]

wḏꜣ snḏw ḥz mt(i)

wn ẖn n grw wsẖ st nt hr

m mdww

spd dsw r th mitn

nn ḥn ni is ḥr zp.f

ir ḥms.k ḥnꜥ ꜥšꜣt msḏ t mrr.k

ꜣt pw ktt(t) dꜣr-ib

ẖww pw ꜣfꜥ iw ḏbꜥ.t(w) im

iw ikn n mw ꜥẖm.f ibt

---

[1] The grammar of the first seven lines (Papyrus Prisse I, 1-7) is discussed in (VII.A) of my Introduction to Middle Egyptian through Ancient Writings, Linus Learning, New York, 2013.

[2] The line numbers follow Gardiner's Plate XIV of Papyrus Prisse (Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris) pages I-II in JEA, 32 (1946) 71-74.

[3] For more compact arrangement, the horizontal scroll sign is sometimes replaced by its vertical variant.

[4] For better readability, ambiguous extended arm signs are sometimes specified by their exact variant.

iw mḫw r m šww smn.f ib

iw nfrt idn(.s) bw-nfr iw nh(i) n ktt idn(.f) wr

ẖz pw ḥnt n ẖt.f sw3 tr

smḫ.n.f wstn ẖt (i)m(i) pr.sn

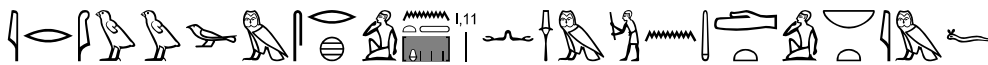*ir ḥms.k ḥnꜥ 3fꜥ wn(m).k 3ḫf.f sw3(.w)*

ir swr.k ḥnꜥ tḫw šzp.k iw ib.f ḥtpw

m 3dw r iwf r-gs skn

šzp dit.f n.k m win st k3 ssft pw

ir šww m srḫ n t ni sḫm n mdt nbt im.f

ḫtr n ḥr r df3-ib

im3 n.f k3hs r mwt.f

mrw.f pw bw-nb

imi pr rn.k iw gr.k m r.k nis.t(w).k

---

5 Following Gardiner, ibid, the text is emended at suspected scribal errors.

m ꜥꜣ ib.k ḥr ḫpš m-ḥri-ib ḏꜣmw.k

zꜣw itnw.k

ni rḫ.n.tw ḫprt   irrt nṯr ḫft ḫsf.f

rdi.n ṯꜣti nis.t(w) nꜣy.f n ḫrdw

m ḫt ꜥrḳ.f sḥr r(m)ṯ bit.sn m iit ḥr.f

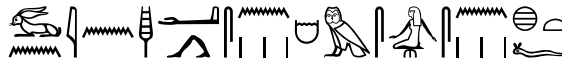*ḏr.n ḏd.n.f n.sn   ir ntt nbt m zḫꜣ ḥr pꜣ šfdw*

sḏm st mi ḏd.i st m sn ḫꜣw ḥr šꜣꜣt

wn.in.sn ḥr rdit st ḥr ḫwt.sn wn.in.sn ḥr šdt st mi ntt m zḫꜣ

wn.in nfr st ḥr ib.sn r ḫt nbt nti m tꜣ pn r ḏr.f

wn.in ꜥḥꜥ.sn ḥms.sn ḫft

ꜥḥꜥ.n ḥm nsw(t)-biti ḤWNI mini.n.f
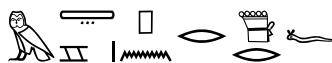
ꜥḥꜥ.n sꜥḥꜥ ḥm (n)sw(t)-biti SNFRW m nswt mnḫ m tꜣ pn r ḏr.f
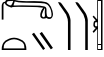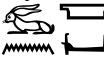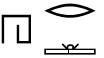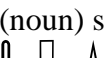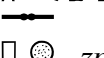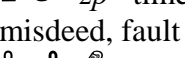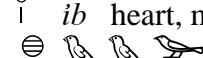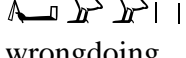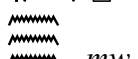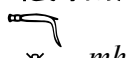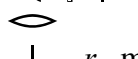
ꜥḥꜥ.n rdi kꜣgmni r (i)m(i)-r nwt ṯꜣti
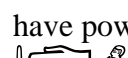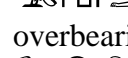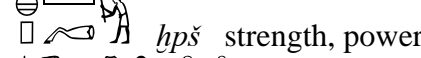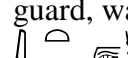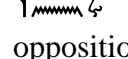
iw.f pw

Vocabulary

wdꜣ prosperous

snḏw submissive, timid, fearful, respectful

ḥzi bless, praise

mti modest, regular, correct, straightforward, precise, trustworthy, loyal

wn open

ḫn tent

gr silent, still, (noun) silence

wsḫ broad, wide

st seat, place, throne

hr(w) be quiet, at peace

mdw (verb) speak, talk, (noun) speech

spd sharp

ds knife

thi go astray, stray, transgress, overstep (path)

mitn path

ḥn rush, hurry, attack

zp time, occasion, event, deed, misdeed, fault

ḥmsi sit, sit down

ꜥšꜣt multitude of persons, company of guests

msḏi dislike, hate

t bread

mri love, desire, want

ꜣt moment, instant

ktt small, a trifle

ḏꜣr control temper

ḏꜣr-ib self-denial, restraint, self-control

ib heart, mind

ḫww base(ness), wrongdoing

ꜣfꜥ gluttony, intemperance, voracity; with the determinative *ꜣfꜥ* glutton, gourmand, gastronome, chowhound

ḏbꜥ point the finger (*m* at), reproach

ikn cup, jar

mw water

ꜥḫm extinguish (fire)

ꜥḫm quench (thirst)

ibi be thirsty

mḥ fill, be full of

mḥw r mouthful

r mouth, speech, spell

šww herbs, edible vegetable

smn make firm, strengthen

nfr   beautiful, good, fine

idn   stand for, replace, serve instead of

nh(i) n ktt   a mere trifle

wr   great, much, many

ḫz   vile

ḥnt   be greedy, covetous

ḫt   belly, body

sw3   pass

tr   time

smḫ   forget

wsṯn   roam, travel freely

wnm   eat

3ḫf   fever of appetite, greed

swr/swi   drink

tḫi   be drunk

šzp   take, accept

ḥtp   be content, pleased, happy, peaceful

3d   be savage, aggressive, angry

iwf   flesh, meat

gs   side

r-gs   beside, in the presence of

skn   be greedy

win   thrust aside, set aside, push away, refuse

k3   then (particle)

ssf   soothe

šwi   empty, free (*m* of)

srḫ   reproach, blame

t   bread

sḫm   (adj.) power, (verb) have power, give power (*n* to)

mdt   word

mdw   (verb) speak, talk (noun) speech

im3 (i3m)   kind, gentle (*n* to)

k3hs   be harsh, overbearing

mwt   mother

mrw   servants

pri   go up, emerge

rn   name

gr   silent, still, silence

nis   call, summon

ᶜ3   great, big

ḫpš   strength, power

d3mw   young men

z3w   guard, ward off, beware lest

itn   oppose, be in opposition

rḫ   learn, know

ḫpr   happen, evolve, occur

iri   do, make

𓊹 , 𓊹 , 𓊹   *nṯr*   god
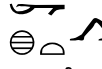
𓐍𓏏𓀀   *ḫft*   in front of, corresponding to, when, accordingly

ḫsf   punish

ṯȝti   vizier

ẖrd   child

ḫt   wake, aftermath

ꜥrḫ   know, perceive, gain full knowledge of, be wise
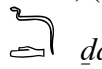
sḫr   conduct, nature, plan, counsel

r(m)ṯ   people
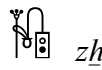
bit   character, qualities

ii   come, return

ḏr   (verb) end up; (preposition) since; (noun) limit

ḏd   say, tell, speak
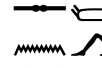
ntt   that

zẖȝ   write, writing

šfdw   papyrus-roll, register
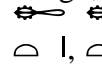
sḏm   hear, listen

mi   (preposition) like

zni   surpass, transgress
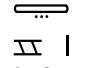
ḥȝw   wealth, increase, excess, surplus

šȝ   ordain, order, predestine, assign, settle

ẖt   belly
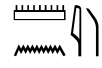
šdi   read aloud, recite

ḫt   thing, property

tȝ   land
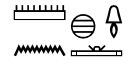
ḥm   incarnation, majesty

(n)swt bit(i)   King of the Upper and Lower Egypt

mini   moor, die

sꜥḥꜥ   install, raise up, set up

nswt   king

mnḫ   beneficient, functional, worthwile

(i)m(i)-r   overseer, steward

nwt   town

iwi   come, return

Grammar Points

wdꜣ snḏw ḥz mt(i)

The author, the father of Kagemni, conjectured[1] to be the famous sage Kaires,[2] shares his wisdom with his children. The last portion of the text states that Kagemni was a vizier of Sneferu (2613-2589 BC), the first king of the 4th Dynasty.

It has been suggested[3] but not universally accepted that Kagemni may have been another 6th Dynasty vizier of king Teti. The elaborate mastaba complex of this latter vizi-er Kagemni-Memi is well-documented.[4]

The text starts[5] with an adjectival sentence whose subject is *snḏw* "fearful, submissive, timid." According to Gardiner (§369)[6] and Hoch (§121) *snḏw* is a perfective active participle, lit. "the one who fears" which in masculine singular usually has no special ending (*snḏ*) but sometimes receives the flexional *w* or *y* ending. Borghouts (74.c) calls these endings `substantival markings' and the participle *sḏmw* substantivized. This simply means that the participle functions as a noun. Allen[7] however views *snḏw* not as a participle but a noun, a so-called noun of agent, derived from the verb *snḏ* "become afraid." According to this interpretation, masculine singular active participles cannot end

---

[1] W. K. Simpson, The Literature of Ancient Egypt, The American University of Cairo Press, 2005, and R. B. Parkinson, Poetry and Culture in Middle Kingdom Egypt: A Dark Side to Perfection, London, Continuum, 2002.

[2] Kaires is mentioned in the Ramesside Papyrus Chester Beatty IV (British Museum 10684) in The Immortality of Writers. For a modern translation, see M. Lichtheim, Ancient Egyptian Literature, Vol. II: The New Kingdom, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976.

[3] Parkinson, op.cit.

[4] See the web site http://www.osirisnet.net/mastabas/kagemni/e_kagemni_01.htm.
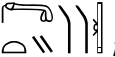
[5] The beginning portion of the text (of unknown length) is lost. Sharff and others assumed that that The Instruction Addressed to Kagemni has similar structure to the Instruction of Ptahhotep (that follows in the Papyrus Prisse). Based on similarities, there are various conjectures as to which parts are missing; see Gardiner, ibid.

[6] Gardiner (§X) stands for §X in A. H. Gardiner, Egyptian Grammar, Griffith Institute, 1927. Similarly, Hoch (§X) is §X in J. E. Hoch, Middle Egyptian Grammar, Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities Publications, 15, Mississauga: Benben Publications, 1996, and Allen (X.Y) is Chapter X, Section Y in J. P. Allen, Middle Egyptian, An Introduction to the Language and Culture of Hieroglyphs, Cambridge University Press, 2000.

[7] Allen (23.3-5).

with *w.* The question is a bit academic since a noun of agent is usually translated in English as a participle. In this and subsequent texts, these kind of participles/nouns of agent will occur several times. For example, in the Semna/Uronarti Stela of Senwosret III, *ꜣdw* and *zẖmw* are derived from the adjective-verbs *ꜣd* "aggressive, angry" and *zẖm* "hasty, impetuous." Further examples are *sḏmw* "the one who listens, the listener" from *sḏm* "hear," *wḥmw*, "the one who reports, the herald" from *wḥm* "repeat," and *šmsw*, "follower, retainer" from *šmsi* "follow."

In the second sentence the passive of the verb *ḥzi* is employed whose subject *mti* has many meanings. According to Gardiner,[8] a good translation of *mti* should have a touch of Confucian moderation and balance.

One of the primary motivations for Gardiner's notes was to render Scharff's previous German translation[9] into English, and to provide a different interpretation of the text. In doing so, he emphasizes that "the sage is preaching that a timid, retiring, taciturn nature finds the road open to free, unimpeded life."[10] In contrast, Scharff[11] uses the literal translation of *snḏw* as a participle "the one who fears/the fearful one" ("der Ehrfürchtige") and also renders *mti* as "trustworthy" ("der Zuverlässige") "characterizing the truly virtuous man, whose chief merit is his ability to keep silence."[12]

wn ẖn n grw wsẖ st nt ḥr

The adjectival sentences continue. Sethe takes *n* in the first clause as a preposition "to/ for" (emphasizing the reward of a quiet and modest person): "open (is) the tent to/for the silent."[13] Although Federn takes note of this, the parallel construction of the two clauses

---

[8] The principal reference for The Instruction Addressed to Kagemni is A. H. Gardiner's article: JEA, 32 (1946) 71-74. Note also W. Federn's additional comments in JEA, 36 (1950) 48-50, and Gardiner's own response in JEA, 37 (1951) 109-110. For more references to translations, commentaries etc., see also the Bibliography and Abbreviations.

[9] A. Scharff, ZÄS, 77 (1941-42) 13-21.

[10] Gardiner, op.cit, and also M. Lichtheim, Didactic Literature, in Ancient Egyptian Literature: History & Forms, edited by Antonio Loprieno, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996.

[11] Scharff, ibid.

[12] Gardiner, op.cit.

[13] K. Sethe, Komm. Pyr. III, 126.

indicates that *n* is more likely a genitival adjective: "open is the tent of the silent".[14] The latter is adopted by Gardiner and also by Lichtheim (I).[15]

Finally, Gardiner also notes that 𓉐𓏤 *hr(w)* (with the seated man as a determinative) can also mean "contented (one)."

m mdww

Conversation manners are emphasized here in a simple negation of the imperative; the negative word 𓅓 usually written as 𓅓 *m* "do not" is followed by the negatival complement of the verb *mdwi* "speak." Here contrary to norm the *w* ending is spelled out.

Note Lichtheim's translation: "Do not chatter!"

spd dsw r th mitn

The violent nature of the adjectival sentence "the knives are sharp" and the negative meaning of the active participle *th* "he who transgresses" of the verb *thi* "transgress, go astray" clearly indicate that the preposition *r* here should be understood as "against." Stern warning is issued for *th mitn* "he who transgresses from the road," a phrase that Lichtheim simplifies as "the blunderer."
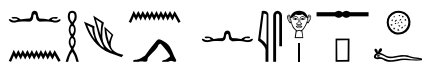
nn ḥn ni is ḥr zp.f

This sentence is problematic. First, the negative particle *nn* followed by the infinitive negates existence, so that the first part can be translated as "there is no hurrying/without hurry." Second, the negative particle *ni* and the particle *is* together negate contrastive words or phrases and thereby can be translated as "and/but not" or "except." The ambiguity comes from two sources: *nn ḥn* can be considered as the start of a new sentence,[16] and it can also be viewed as referring to the knives of the previous sentence.[17]

Unfortunately, the many possible meanings of *zp* can accommodate both views.

---

[14] Federn, op.cit.

[15] Lichtheim (X) stands for Vol. X of M. Lichtheim, Ancient Egyptian Literature, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974, 1976.

[16] Gardiner, op.cit, and Allen (11.4, Exercise 11.27, 14.15).

[17] Scharff, Federn, Lichtheim, op.cit.

In the first rendering, Gardiner takes the principal meaning of *zp* as "(proper) time," and henceforth translates the sentence as: "There is no speedy advance except at its proper time." Allen's translation is closely related to this: "There is no hurrying except at its proper time".

In the second rendering *zp* means "misdeed, fault," for example, [hieroglyphs] [hieroglyphs] *ni iw zp.i*[18] "no fault of mine came out." With this choice, following Scharff and Federn, Lichtheim's translation is: "without hurry except when he faults." According to this, the knives are waiting to strike for the moment when a misdeed is committed.

[hieroglyphs]

ir ḥms.k ḥnᶜ ᶜš3t msḏ(.k) t mrr.k

The topic now turns to table manners in a typical conditional sentence. The protasis here (and typically) starts with *ir* followed by the subjunctive *sḏm.f*[19] of the verb *ḥmsi*. Note that the determinative of *ḥmsi* "sit" is [hieroglyph], but in a playful mood, here and a number of times below the scribe uses the determinative [hieroglyph] *msi* "give birth." The apodosis contains the subjunctive of *msdi*. The suffix pronoun *.k* is inserted here; see also the similar constructions in lines I.7-8 and I.8-9 (where the suffix pronouns are written out).

As an interesting contrast, the object of the hatred is the imperfective relative form *mrr.k* "what you desire" of the verb *mri*. Finally, [hieroglyph] *t* "bread" can be promoted to "food."

[hieroglyphs]

3t pw ktt(t) d3r-ib

This is an A *pw* B nominal sentence, usually translated as "B is A." Here, instead of "is," "takes (only)" is better suited for the meaning, i.e. it takes only a brief moment to control one's desires. In general, *pw* stands as close to the beginning of the sentence as possible[20]

---

[18] [Urk. VI, 151, 2].
[19] This is the prospective *sḏm.f* of the Standard Theory, Hoch (§137-138). It corresponds to Allen's subjunctive. See also A. Loprieno, Ancient Egyptian, Cambridge (2000), 4.6.3.2(c), p. 81.
[20] Hoch (§129) and Allen (7.10).

and is placed "inside" a noun phrase with separable parts such as ⟨hieroglyphs⟩ *ꜣt ktt(t)*. This rule does not apply to bound constructions such as direct genitives.

Finally, note that *ꜣt* is a feminine noun and *ktt* is masculine, and because of the double *t* the extra feminine *t* ending is usually omitted.

⟨hieroglyphs⟩[21]

ḫww pw ꜣfꜥ   iw ḏbꜥ.t(w) im(.f)

In the A *pw* B nominal clause B serves as the preposed object of the second (main) clause (introduced by *iw*). The circumstantial/imperfective *sḏm.f*[22] of the verb *ḏbꜥ* is used here since the whole sentence expresses a general statement well suited to this verb form. The translation should use English present tense. The prepositional adverb *im* has omitted pronominal object (which should be *.f*), and it refers to *ꜣfꜥ*.

⟨hieroglyphs⟩

iw ikn n mw   ꜥḥm.f ibt

This is a typical circumstantial *iw.f sḏm.f* /subject-imperfective construction[23] describing a statement of fact or a generally true statement. The abstract noun ⟨hieroglyphs⟩ *ibt* "thirst" is derived from the verb ⟨hieroglyphs⟩ *ibi* "thirsty."

⟨hieroglyphs⟩

iw mḥw r m šww smn.f ib

The circumstantial *iw.f sḏm.f* /subject-imperfective construction continues. The noun ⟨hieroglyphs⟩ *mḥw* "filling" is derived from the verb ⟨hieroglyphs⟩ *mḥ* "fill." (Following Gardiner, the original ⟨hieroglyph⟩ is emended to ⟨hieroglyph⟩ as this is masculine.) *mḥ r* can be considered as a direct genitive "mouthful," lit. "filling of the mouth." The entire phrase *mḥw r m šww* "a mouthful of herbs" is the topicalized subject referred to by the following suffix pronoun *.f*.

---

[21] See the 3rd footnote in the introductory text.

[22] The circumstantial *sḏm.f* form, Hoch (§29), in the Standard Theory corresponds to Allen's imperfective. See also Loprieno, op. cit. 4.6.3.1(b), p. 79.

[23] In the Standard Theory, this is considered as a variation of the noun + circumstantial *sḏm.f* construction, Hoch (§31); in Allen's terminology, this is the subject-imperfective construction.

Note also that [hieroglyphs] *smn* "fix, set, establish" is a prime example of a causative derived from the verb [hieroglyphs] *mn* "become fixed, set."

[hieroglyphs]

iw nfrt idn(.s) bw-nfr iw nh(i) n ktt idn(.f) wr

These two symmetrically arranged clauses still contain circumstantial *iw.f sḏm.f* /subject-imperfective constructions with rare exceptions: omitted suffix pronouns. In the first clause the preposed subject is *nfrt*, a feminine singular adjective used as noun, expressing quality of a "thing," in fact, a"(single) good thing."

The object *bw-nfr* "goodnesss" is an example how [hieroglyphs] *bw* "place, position" prefixed to an adjective converts the adjective to a noun. Further examples include [hieroglyphs] [hieroglyphs] *bw-mꜣꜥ* "truth" and [hieroglyphs] *bw-ḏw* "evil." The topicalized subject in the second clause is *nhi n ktt* "a trifle something" and the object is *wr* which can be translated as "much."
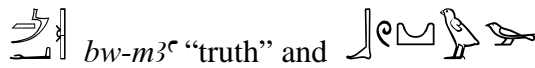
[hieroglyphs]

ẖz pw ḥnt n ẖt.f swꜣ tr

This is an A *pw* B nominal sentence. [hieroglyphs] *ḥnt* is an active participle "he who is greedy" of the verb [hieroglyphs] *ḥnt* "be greedy." With this the phrase *ḥnt n ẖt.f* can be rendered as "he who is greedy for his belly."

The text from *swꜣ tr* to the end of the next line is difficult. Federn and subsequently Lichtheim[24] consider *swꜣ tr* as an adverb clause of time; as such it can therefore be introduced by "when." According to this interpretation, *tr* is the time period for the course of a meal, and the meaning of the sentence is that the chowhound is rude by not observing the end of the meal time. Gardiner first translates *swꜣ tr* as "time passes." In his subsequent article however he admits that this is wrong but also disagrees with Federn. He makes the point that *tr* does not refer to a time period but to "the right time, the fitting season, not the time considered as a stretch."

---

[24] Federn, Lichtheim, op.cit.

smḫ.n.f wstn ḫt (i)m(i) pr.sn

One further problem with the Federn/Lichtheim interpretation is that it forces the perfect[25] (which should be used for completed action) of the transitive verb *smḫ* to be translated as present tense "he forgets." Following Gardiner, *sw3 tr* should be at the beginning of this sentence with the perfect of *smḫ* rendered as English perfect tense "time passes and he has forgotten." After this problem with the tenses, Lichtheim's translation agrees with Gardiner's. The circumstantial *sḏm.f* /imperfective of *wstn* with its subject *ḫt* clearly means that "the belly roams," but the twist comes viewing *m* as a nisbe (*i)m(i)* and *.sn* as a resumptive coreferent.[26] With these, (*i)m(i) pr.sn* in English means "(those) in whose house."

ir ḥms.k ḥnꜥ 3fꜥ wn(m).k 3ḫf.f sw3(.w)

Proper table manners are further emphasized in this conditional sentence employing the subjunctive *sḏm.f* of *ḥmsi* and (possibly) *wnm*. The form of the intransitive verb *sw3* "pass" in the adverb clause *3ḫf.f sw3(.w)* is stative expressing the state of the chowhound after he ate his fill and his greed is over. (The missing stative suffix is present in the next similarly constructed sentence.) This adverb clause is unmarked (only the context tells that it is not an independent sentence) and the subordination can be indicated in English by using the connecting word "when." The subject *3ḫf.f* of the stative is topicalized (fronted). This is a typical example of a subject-stative construction[27] in an adverb clause.

ir swr.k ḥnꜥ tḫw šzp.k iw ib.f ḥtp.w

Once again this is a typical conditional sentence introduced by *ir.* As before, the predicates of the protasis and the apodosis are the subjunctive *sḏm.f* of *swr* and *šzp*. The only function of the initial particle *iw* is to mark the beginning of the last clause that can be considered as circumstantial "when his heart…" or a result clause "so that/and his

---

[25] The circumstantial *sḏm.n.f* of the Standard Theory. See Allen (18) and Loprieno, 4.6.3.1(a). (Note that in Loprieno the perfect and perfect relative forms are discussed together as the basic preterital forms.)

[26] As clarified by B. Gunn; cf. JEA 36 (1950) 112.

[27] Allen (17.9).

heart…" (although adverb clauses rarely contain topicalized subjects and even less likely an introductory particle). It contains another subject-stative construction with the stative of the adjective-verb *ḥtp*.[28] The "result" of the prior action *šzp.k* is *ib.f ḥtp.w*.

m ꜣdw r iwf r-gs skn

The affirmative tone turns now to negative employing the negative imperative *m* along with the negatival complement of *ꜣd.* The many meanings of the preposition *r* allow two interpretations of *m ꜣdw r iwf.* On the one hand, it could caution not to speak aggressively against the eating of meat,[29] and on the other, it could caution not to savagely grab the meat.[30]

šzp dit.f n.k m win st kꜣ ssft pw

The imperative of *šzp* is followed by *dit.f* "what he gives," a perfective relative form of *di.* Gardiner[31] emends into . After the negative imperative, the clause introduced by the particle *kꜣ* "then" contains an A *pw* nominal sentence with A being the infinitive *ssft* of the caus. 2-lit verb *ssf.* Note that *kꜣ* is normally followed by subjunctive *sḏm.f*, expressing future consequence.
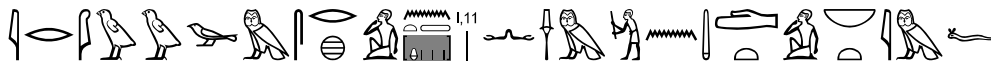
ir šww m srḫ n t ni sḫm n mdt nbt im.f

Unlike the previous conditional sentences, *ir* here has a different function: it introduces the long topicalized subject *šww m srḫ n t* and as such it is usually translated using the words "as for." In the subject *šww* is a perfective active participle (with *w* ending, not uncommon in compounds[32]) used as a noun. The entire topicalized subject has the literal meaning: "one who is free of blame in matters of (lit. toward) food."

As before, *t* is elevated from "bread," in fact, Gardiner emends the long lacuna

[28] See Gardiner's different approaches in the first and second/third edition of his Egyptian Grammar, and also Footnote 7 on p. 73 in JEA 32 (1946).
[29] Federn, Gardiner, op.cit.
[30] Scharff, Lichtheim, op.cit.
[31] Originally suggested by Sethe and Scharff.
[32] See Gardiner §359.

here as ⟨hieroglyphs⟩. The negative particle *ni* negates the noun phrase *sḫm n mdt nbt* "power of any word." In the adverbial predicate *im.f*, with a bit of flexibility, the prepositional adverb *im* should be taken to mean "over," and the suffix pronoun refers back to the topicalized subject.

⟨hieroglyphs⟩

ḫrr n ḥr r dfȝ-ib

According to Gardiner, since the phonetic value of ⟨hieroglyph⟩ is *tr,* the original ⟨hieroglyph⟩ needs to be emended into ⟨hieroglyph⟩. Nonetheless *ḫtr* and also *dfȝ* are unknown words. Gardiner who suggests that ⟨hieroglyphs⟩ *dfȝ-ib* may mean "stolid," translates this sentence as "the face is powerless over against one stolid," but admits that this is a guess.

Federn has an interesting attempt (supported by examples of the word *ḫwrr* from the Pyramid Texts and the Book of the Dead) to revert back to *ḫrr*, suggesting this to be the stative of an adjective-verb describing the quality of a calf. He therefore proposes this to be translated as "meek" and the rest as "to the degree of slow-wittedness." The complexity of the argument and the lack of precise grammatical information make this argument difficult to accept.[33]

⟨hieroglyphs⟩
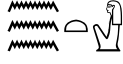
imȝ n.f kȝhs r mwt.f

This is an adjectival sentence in which, following Middle Egyptian word order, the dative *n.f* is placed in front of the nominal subject. Gardiner goes into great detail in proving that the adjectival predicate *imȝ* (*iȝm*) "gentle" is the exact opposite to the subject *kȝhs* "harsh," the latter being another adjective used as a noun here.

The comparative *r* allows two interpretations of the literal translation: "the harsh one is gentle to him with respect to his mother" depending on whether or not the preposition "to" is employed (and depending on whose mother is being referred to): "the harsh is

---

[33] Barns, in JEA 58 (1972) p. 160, has yet another interpretation: *ḥr tr n ḥr r dfȝ-ib*: "So will there be personal respect toward him who is of a satisfied disposition? Here *ḥr* is a particle introducing an adverbial sentence, and *tr n ḥr* is literally "respect of face."

kinder to him than (to) his mother." Finally, note the unusual spelling ⟨hieroglyphs⟩ of

⟨hieroglyphs⟩ *mwt* "mother."

⟨hieroglyphs⟩

mrw.f pw bw-nb
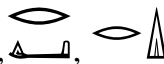
After all the grammatical hurdles, it is a relief to translate this simple A *pw* B nominal

sentence, meaning "B is A." The noun phrase ⟨hieroglyphs⟩ *bw-nb* is an Egyptian

idiom for "everyone."

⟨hieroglyphs⟩
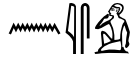
imi pr rn.k   iw gr.k m r.k   nis.t(w).k

The sentence starts with a typical *rdi* + subjunctive *sḏm.f* construction. In this construc-

tion, ⟨hieroglyphs⟩, ⟨hieroglyphs⟩ *rdi* "give, put, let, cause" itself can appear in any verb form and here it

is the imperative: ⟨hieroglyphs⟩ *imi* spelled as ⟨hieroglyphs⟩. (For example, in line 3 below, the

same construction appears with *rdi* in perfect.) This is a very common use of the subjunc-

tive and has causative meaning.[34]   It is followed by an adverb clause introduced by *iw*.

An obvious connecting word between the two clauses is "while." The verb form of *gr* "be

silent" is circumstantial/imperfective *sḏm.f* expressing concomitant action.

　　　As for the last clause, Gardiner puts it at the end of the current passage, and inter-

prets the verb form of ⟨hieroglyphs⟩ *nis* as "call, summon" in subjunctive *sḏm.f* to express

result: "so that you may be summoned" (to high office or court). Lichtheim puts this

clause at the beginning of the next passage, translating it as: "when you are sum-

moned…"

⟨hieroglyphs⟩

m ꜥꜣ ib.k ḥr ḫpš m ḥr(i)-ib ḏꜣmw.k

⟨hieroglyphs⟩

zꜣw itn(w).k

The negative imperative *m* rules out the (tempting) consideration of *ꜥꜣ ib* as a *nfr ḥr*

---

[34] Hoch (§75, 1) and Allen (19.10).

construction meaning "high-minded, proud," lit. "big of heart". In fact, here ꜥꜣ is an adjective-verb with subject *ib.k*, lit."do not let your heart get big because of/on account of your strength…" *ḥri ib* is an Egyptian idiom for "middle, midst" and *ḏꜣmw* refers to the

company of young men surrounding the one cautioned.

Based on its meaning, *zꜣw* should always be considered as imperative, although the final radical *w* is a bit misplaced.[35] Followed by one of the six *sḏm.f* forms it is usually translated as: "take care not to, make sure you do not" and the bit archaic "beware lest, guard." Here it is followed by the passive of *itn.*

ni rḫ.n.tw ḫprt irrt nṯr ḫft ḫsf.f

Power of the divine is recalled here in a textbook example of a negated perfect of the verb *rḫ* "know" with the impersonal pronoun *tw* as a verbal suffix. The negated perfect does not mean completed action here, but expresses *lack of ability*. The first object is the active participle *ḫprt* "what (may) happen," and the second is the imperfective relative form *irrt* (*nṯr*) "what (god) does."

Finally, in this complex sentence, the preposition *ḫft* "according to/in accordance with" governs the (nominal) non-attibutive perfective relative form of the verb *ḫsf* as it has an expressed subject, its suffix pronoun *.f* (referring to *nṯr*) "how he punishes." (The infinitive as the object of a preposition usually appears without an expressed subject.)

rdi.n ṯꜣti nis.t(w) nꜣy.f n ḫrdw

As noted above, this is once again a *rdi* + subjunctive *sḏm.f* construction with the perfect of *rdi*, lit. "has given that one summon." The possessives *pꜣy/tꜣy* + suffix + masculine/ feminine noun; *nꜣy* + suffix + *n* + plural noun were developed in the spoken language during the Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period.

m ḫt ꜥrk.f sḫr r(m)ṯ bit.sn m iit ḥr.f

The object of the compound preposition *m ḫt* "after," lit. "in the wake" is the (nominal)

---

[35] Gardiner (§338, 3) and Hoch (§99).

non-attributive perfective relative form of *ꜥrḳ* as it has a (suffixed) pronominal subject. *ꜥrḳ* refers to completion, gaining full knowledge. The infinitive (*iit*) appears after *m* whose use is to emphasize concomitant actions: his understanding the nature of men and their characters becoming clear to him, lit. "having come upon him."

ḏr.n ḏd.n.f n.sn   ir ntt nbt m zẖꜣ ḥr pꜣ šfdw
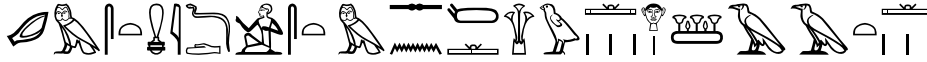
sḏm st mi ḏd.i st m zn ḥꜣw ḥr šꜣꜣt

The introductory word *ḏr.n* followed by the perfect is rare,[36] but grammatically similar to the very common construction *ꜥḥꜥ.n sḏm.n.f.* The 2-lit. verb *dr* means "end (up)," so that *ḏr.n* literally means "ended" and can be translated as "in the end." Once again *ir* "as for" introduces a long topicalized element, this time the object of the following imperative of *sḏm.* This object *ntt nbt m zẖꜣ ḥr pꜣ šfdw* "all that (lit. of what) is written in the papyrus-scroll" is referred back to by the dependent pronoun *st.* Within the object the (feminine) relative adjective *ntt* is used as a noun with the primary modifier *nbt* and the object of the preposition *m* is the passive participle of the verb *zẖꜣ* "write" once again used as a noun.

The entire clause starts the vizier's communication to his children. In the adverbial adjunct, the object of the preposition *mi* is the perfective relative form of *ḏd* as it has an expressed subject.

As Gardiner noted, in the negative imperative introduced by *m* the determinative of *zni* needs to be changed to . Finally, *šꜣꜣt* is the (feminine) geminated perfective passive participle of the 2-lit. verb *šꜣ*. As such, it can be translated as "what has been ordained."

wn.in.sn ḥr rdit st m ẖwt.sn wn.in.sn ḥr šdt st mi ntt m zẖꜣ

Filial piety, the virtue of loving and respecting the parents, is emphasized here in two syntactically adverbial clauses containing pseudo-verbal *ḥr* + infinitive constructions. In

---

[36] Gardiner (§483).

narrative texts *ꜥḥꜥ.n* and *wn.in* are typical words to introduce pseudo-verbal predicates. In these constructions they no longer have their original meanings, merely express subsequent actions, and as such they can be translated using "then." Note also the different singular and plural meanings of *st.* In the direct relative clause governed by the preposition *mi,* the feminine form of the relative adjective *nti* is used as a noun: "that which exists," and the entire (adverb) clause *ntt m zḫꜣ* serves as the object of *mi.*

wn.in nfr st ḥr ib.sn r ḫt nbt nti m tꜣ pn r ḏr.f

wn.in here introduces an adjectival sentence "thereupon it was good…" The sentence contains a textbook example of the comparative *r ḫt nbt* "beyond anything," lit. "with respect to everything."

The relative adjective *nti* introduces a direct relative clause which contains the frequently used apparent adjective, the prepositional phrase, *r ḏr* "entire," lit. "to the limit." The latter is used in the Egyptian idiom *tꜣ pn r ḏr.f* "this entire land" with the suffix pronoun *.f* referring to *tꜣ pn*.
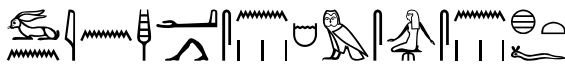
wn.in ꜥḥꜥ.sn ḥms.sn ḫft

After *wn.in* the indicative/perfective *sḏm.f* [37] of the intransitive verbs of motion *ꜥḥꜥ* and *ḥmsi* are used. This is not very common, and most often the perfect is used instead. Due to its position, it is clear that the preposition *ḫft* is employed here adverbially, meaning "accordingly." This strange sentence is a metaphor and stands for: "to conduct themselves." Spell 101 in the Coffin Texts has similar line:

ꜥḥꜥ.f ḥms.f ḫft.f. [38]

ꜥḥꜥ.n ḥm n (n)swt-bit(i) ḤWNI mini.n.f

This is a reference to the end of the reign of Huni (Nysuteh, 2637-2613 BC), last king of the 3rd Dynasty. Note also that the pharaoh's name is topicalized for emphasis, and in the

---

[37] Allen's perfective corresponds to the indicative *sḏm.f* in the Standard Theory.
[38] CT II 99a-b G2T.

perfect, the suffix pronoun .*f* refers to it.

ꜥḥꜥ.n sꜥḥꜥ ḥm nsw(t)-biti SNFRW m nswt mnḫ m tꜣ pn r ḏr.f

The verb form of *sꜥḥꜥ* is clearly passive. Sneferu (2613-2589 BC), the first king of the 4th Dynasty, was the first true (smooth sided and east-west aligned) pyramid builder. He was the father of Khufu, the largest pyramid builder in Egypt. Sneferu had two pyramids constructed at Dashur (the Bent Pyramid and the Red Pyramid), and at Meidum. The etymology of his name, the causative *snfrw* "to make beautiful, to make good," suggests that he may have been a benign ruler. Notice the peculiar writing ⸗ for ⸗ with ⸗ *biti,* a sportive dual. The best known example for a sportive dual is ⸗ *NB-PḤTI-Rꜥ* the throne name of Ahmose I. Alternatively, the two *t*'s in the usual arrangement ⸗ may have been stacked up at the end.

ꜥḥꜥ.n rdi kꜣgmni r (i)m(i)-r nwt ṯꜣti

The passive of *rdi* is introduced by *ꜥḥꜥ.n.* Note that *rdi* with the preposition *r* (or *m*) means "to appoint to" an office/position. The position in question is *(i)m(i)-r nwt* (a reverse nisbe), the major or overseer of the town.

iw.f pw

The closing A *pw* nominal sentence contains the imperfective relative form of *iw* used non-attributively as the predicate: "that is how it goes," lit. "it is that it comes."