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The Instruction Addressed to Kagemni

“A man’s best treasure is a thrifty tongue,
His most appealing gift, a tongue that moves
With moderation; for if you should speak
Slander, you’ll soon hear worse about yourself.”
Hesiod, Works and Days, translated by Dorothea Wender



wd3 sndw hz mt(i)



wn hn n grw wsh st nt hr



m mdww



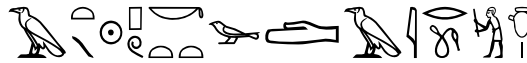
spd dsw r th mitn



nn hn ni is hr zp.f



ir hms.k hn^c s3t msd t mrr.k



3t pw ktt d3r-ib



hww pw 3f^c iw db3^c.t(w) im



iw ikn n mw hm.f ibt

¹ 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.

² For more compact arrangement, the horizontal scroll sign is sometimes replaced by its vertical variant.

³ For better readability, ambiguous extended arm signs are sometimes specified by their exact variant.



iw mh̄w r m šww smn.f ib



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



hz pw hnt n ht.f sw3 tr



smh.n.f wstn ht (i)m(i) pr.sn



ir h̄ms.k hn̄^c 3f^c wn(m).k 3hf.f sw3(.w)



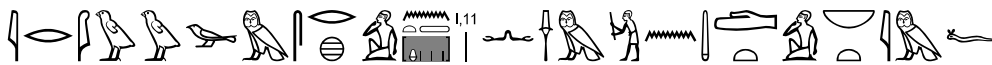
ir swr.k hn̄^c thw šzp.k iw ib.f htpw



m 3dw r iwfr-gs skn



šzp dit.f n.k m win st k3 ssft pw



ir šww m srh̄ n t ni sh̄m n mdt nbt im.f



htr n hr r dḫ-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

⁴ Following Gardiner, *ibid*, the text is emended at suspected scribal errors.



m 3 ib.k hr hps m-hri-ib d3mw.k



z3w itnw.k



ni rh.n.tw hprt irrt ntr hft hsf.f



rdi.n t3ti nis.t(w) n3y.f n hrdw



m ht r.k.f shr r(m)t bit.sn m iit hr.f



dr.n dd.n.f n.sn ir ntt nbt m zh3 hr p3 šfdw



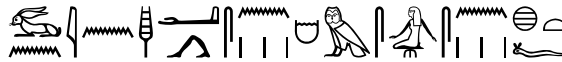
sdm st mi dd.i st m sn h3w hr š3t



wn.in.sn hr rdit st hr hwt.sn wn.in.sn hr šdt st mi ntt m zh3



wn.in nfr st hr ib.sn r ht nbt nti m t3 pn r dr.f



wn.in h.c.sn hms.sn hft



h.c.n hm nsw(t)-biti HWNI mini.n.f



h.c.n s.h.c hm nswt-biti SNFRW m nswt mnḥ m t3 pn r dr.f




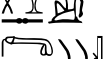
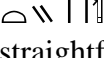






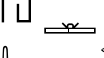

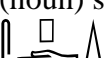





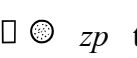









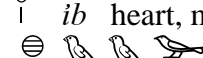
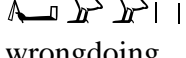












ḥ̄.n rdi k3gmni r (i)m(i)-r nwt t3ti










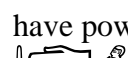




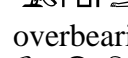







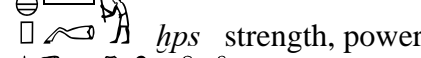


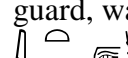
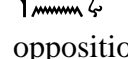
iw.fpw











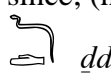



Vocabulary


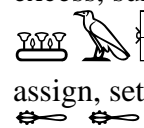

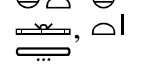





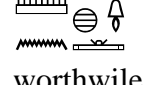

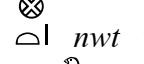

 *wd3* prosperous
 *sndw* submissive, timid, fearful, respectful
 *hzi* bless, praise
 *mt(i)* modest, regular, correct, straightforward, precise, trustworthy, loyal
 *wn* open
 *hn* tent
 *gr* silent, still, (noun) silence
 *wsh* broad, wide
 *st* seat, place, throne
 *hr(w)* be quiet, at peace
 *mdw* (verb) speak, talk, (noun) speech
 *spd* sharp
 *ds* knife
 *thi* go astray, stray, transgress, overstep (path)
 *mitn* path
 *hn* rush, hurry, attack
 *zp* time, occasion, event, deed, misdeed, fault
 *hmsi* sit, sit down
 *s3t* multitude of persons, company of guests
 *msdi* dislike, hate

 *t* bread
 *mri* love, desire, want
 *3t* moment, instant
 *ktt* small, a trifle
 *d3* control temper
 *d3r-ib* self-denial, restraint, self-control
 *ib* heart, mind
 *hww* base(ness), wrongdoing
 *3f* gluttony, intemperance, voracity; with the determinative  *3f* glutton, gourmand, gastronome, chowhound
 *db* point the finger (*m* at), reproach
 *ikn* cup, jar
 *mw* water
 *hm* extinguish (fire)
 *hm* quench (thirst)
 *ibi* be thirsty
 *mh* fill, be full of
 *mhwr* mouthful
 *r* mouth, speech, spell
 *sww* 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
 *hz* vile
 *hnt* be greedy, covetous
 *ht* belly, body
 *sw3* pass
 *tr* time
 *smh* forget
 *wstn* roam, travel freely
 *wnm* eat
 *3hf* fever of appetite, greed
 *swr/swi* drink
 *thi* be drunk
 *szp* take, accept
 *htp* 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

 *k3* then (particle)
 *ssf* soothe
 *swi* empty, free (*m* of)
 *srh* reproach, blame
 *t* bread
 *shm* (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
 *3* great, big
 *hps* strength, power
 *d3mw* young men
 *z3w*
 guard, ward off, beware lest
 *itn* oppose, be in
 opposition
 *rh* learn, know
 *hpr* happen, evolve, occur
 *iri* do, make


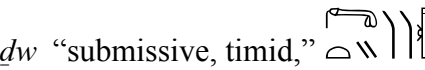


 *ntr* god
 *hft* in front of, corresponding to, when, accordingly
 *hsf* punish
 *t3ti* vizier
 *hrd* child
 *ht* wake, aftermath
 *rḳ* know, perceive, gain full knowledge of, be wise
 *shr* conduct, nature, plan, counsel
 *r(m)t* people
 *bit* character, qualities
 *ii* come, return
 *dr* (verb) end up; (preposition) since; (noun) limit
 *dd* say, tell, speak
 *ntt* that
 *zh3* write, writing
 *šfdw* papyrus-roll, register
 *sdm* hear, listen



 *mi* (preposition) like
 *zni* surpass, transgress
 *h3w* wealth, increase, excess, surplus
 *š3* ordain, order, predestine, assign, settle
 *ht* belly
 *šdi* read aloud, recite
 *ht* thing, property
 *t3* land
 *hm* incarnation, majesty
 *nswt biti* King of the Upper and Lower Egypt
 *mini* moor, die
 *sḥḥ* install, raise up, set up
 *nswt* king
 *mnḥ* beneficent, functional, worthwhile
 *(i)m(i)-r* overseer, steward
 *nwt* town
 *iwi* come, return

The Instruction Addressed to Kagemni

Grammar Points

中雍之道 (zhōng yōng zhī dào) is a famous Confucian quote in which 中 means “moderation, middle road,” 雍 means “harmony,” and 之 connects the modifier with the word modified. 道 originally means “principle, doctrine” later elevated in Taoism to “way, road, path.” The first two lines of The Instruction contain the words

 *sndw* “submissive, timid,”  *mt(i)* “modest, moderate, trustworthy, loyal,”  *gr* “silent, still,”  *hr(w)* “quiet, at peace,” and convey the same idea, adding that anyone who follows this principle will be rewarded.

The nouns  *gr* “silent man” and  *rh* “knowledgeable man” are descriptive of a man who lives according to Maat, the principles of harmony and order.

It is fascinating that in such distant cultures as the Confucian China and the Middle Kingdom¹ of Ancient Egypt thinkers arrived at the same idea.² When translating the present text, this universal principle should be kept in mind.



wd3 sndw hz mt(i)

The author, the father of Kagemni, conjectured³ to be the famous sage Kaires,⁴ 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 suggested⁵ but not universally accepted that Kagemni may have been another 6th Dynasty vizier of king Teti.

The elaborate mastaba complex of this latter vizier  Kagemni-Memi

¹ The earliest form of The Instruction is the Papyrus Prisse dated from the 12th Dynasty. It is written in cursive hieratic.

² See also E. O. James, *Creation and Cosmology: A Historical and Comparative Inquiry*, Brill, 1969.


³ 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.

⁴ 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.



⁵ Parkinson, *op.cit.*


is well-documented.⁶


The text starts⁷ with an adjectival sentence (adjectival predicate + subject) whose subject is *sndw* “fearful, submissive, timid.” According to Gardiner (§369)⁸ and Hoch (§121) *sndw* is a perfective active participle, lit. “the one who fears” which in masculine singular usually has no special ending (*snd*) but sometimes receives the flexional *w* or *y* ending. Allen⁹ however views *sndw* not as a participle but a noun, a so-called noun of agent,


derived from the verb  *snt* “become afraid.” According to this interpretation, masculine singular active participles cannot end with *w*. The question is a bit academic since a noun of agent is usually translated in English as a participle. In this and

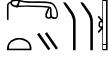
subsequent texts, these kind of participles/nouns of agent will occur several times. For example, in the Semna/Uronarti Stela of Senwosret III, *3dw* and *zhmw* are derived from

the adjective-verbs  *3d* “aggressive, angry” and  *zhm* “hasty,

impetuous.” Further examples are *sdmw* “the one who listens, the listener” from 

sdm “hear,” *whmw*, “the one who reports, the herald” from  *whm* “repeat,” and

šmsw, “follower, retainer” from  *šmsi* “follow.”

In the second sentence the passive of the verb *hzi* is employed whose subject  *mt(i)* has many meanings. According to Gardiner,¹⁰ a good translation of *mt(i)* should have a touch of Confucian moderation and balance.

⁶ See the web site http://www.osirisnet.net/mastabas/kagemni/e_kagemni_01.htm.

⁷ The beginning portion of the text (of unknown length) is lost. Sharff and others assumed that that the Instructions 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*.

⁸ 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.

⁹ Allen (23.3-5).


¹⁰ 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 at the end of the Grammar Points.

One of the primary motivations for Gardiner's notes was to render Scharff's previous German translation¹¹ 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."¹² In contrast, Scharff¹³ uses the literal translation of *sndw* as a participle "the one who fears/the fearful one" ("der Ehrfürchtige") and also renders *mt(i)* as "trustworthy" ("der Zuverlässige") "characterizing the truly virtuous man, whose chief merit is his ability to keep silence."¹⁴



wn hn n grw wsh st nt hr



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."¹⁵ Although Federn takes note of this, the parallel construction of the two clauses indicates that *n* is more likely a genitival adjective: "open is the tent of the silent".¹⁶ The latter is adopted by Gardiner and also by Lichtheim (I).¹⁷ Finally, Gardiner

also notes that  *hr(w)* (with the seated man as a determinative) can also mean "contented (one)." At the end of his article he summarizes "that the four words *sndw*, *mti*, *grw*, and *hr* in the first two lines all have a private implication - lack of overboldness, of exceeding the norm, of talkativeness, and of discontent."



m mdww

Conversation manners are emphasized here in a simple negation of the imperative; the

negative word  usually written as  *m* "do not" is followed by the negational complement of the verb *mdwi* "speak." Recall that the negational complement (for verbs

¹¹ A. Scharff, ZÄS, 77 (1941-42) 13-21.

¹² Gardiner, op.cit, and also M. Lichtheim, *Didactic Literature*, in *Ancient Egyptian Literature: History & Forms*, edited by Antonio Loprieno, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996.

¹³ Scharff, *ibid.*

¹⁴ Gardiner, op.cit.

¹⁵ K. Sethe, *Komm. Pyr.* III, 126.

¹⁶ Federn, op.cit.

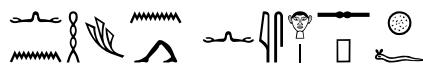
¹⁷ Lichtheim (X) stands for Vol. X of M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974, 1976.

with non-geminated stems) is formed by the base stem plus *w*. Here contrary to norm the ending is spelled out. Lichtheim’s vivid translation “Do not chatter!” is interesting.



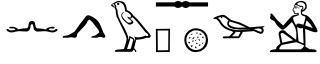
spd dsw r th mitn

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 hn ni is hr 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 hn* can be considered as the start of a new sentence,¹⁸ and it can also be viewed as referring to the knives of the previous sentence.¹⁹ Unfortunately, the many possible meanings of *zp* can accommodate both views. 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,  *ni iw zp.i*²⁰ “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.



ir hms.k hn' cš3t msd(.k) t mrr.k

¹⁸ Gardiner, op.cit. and Allen (11.4, Exercise 11.27, 14.15).

¹⁹ Scharff, Federn, Lichtheim, op.cit.


²⁰ [Urk. VI, 151, 2].

In the A *pw* B nominal clause B serves as the preposed object of the second clause (introduced by *iw*). The circumstantial/imperfective *s_{dm}.f*²⁴ of the verb *dbʒ^c* 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 would be *.f*), and it refers to *ʒf^c*.



iw ikn n mw hm.f ibt

This is a typical circumstantial *iw.f s_{dm}.f*/subject-imperfective construction²⁵ describing a statement of fact or a generally true statement. It is usually introduced by a particle,



most often, as here, by *iw*. The abstract noun  *ibt* “thirst” is derived from the



verb  *ibi* “thirsty.”




iw mh>w r m šww smn.f ib

The circumstantial *iw.f s_{dm}.f*/subject-imperfective construction continues. The noun

 *mh>w* “filling” is derived from the verb  *mh* “fill.” (Following Gardiner, the

original  is emended to  as this is masculine.) *mh r* can be considered as a direct genitive “mouthful,” lit. “filling of the mouth.” The entire phrase *mh>w r m šww* “a

mouthful of herbs” is the topicalized subject referred to by the following suffix pronoun *.f*.

Note also that  *smn* “fix, set, establish” is a prime example of a causative derived

from the verb  *mn* “become fixed, set.”






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

These two symmetrically arranged clauses still contain circumstantial *iw.f s_{dm}.f*/subject-imperfective constructions with rare exceptions: omitted suffix pronouns. In the first



²⁴ The circumstantial *s_{dm}.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.


²⁵ In the Standard Theory, this is considered as a variation of the noun + circumstantial *s_{dm}.f* construction, Hoch (§31); in Allen’s terminology, this is the subject-imperfective construction.

²⁶ Following Gardiner, *ibid*, the text is emended at suspected scribal error s.

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* “goodness” is an example how  *bw* “place, position” prefixed to an adjective converts the adjective to a noun. Further examples include  *bw-m3* “truth” and  *bw-dw* “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.”


hz pw hnt n ht.f sw3 tr

This is an A *pw* B nominal sentence.  *hnt* is an active participle “he who is greedy” of the verb  *hnt* “be greedy.” With this the phrase *hnt n ht.f* can be rendered as “he who is greedy for his belly.” The text from *sw3 tr* to the end of the next line is difficult. Federn and subsequently Lichtheim²⁷ consider *sw3 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 *sw3 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.”


smh.n.f wstn ht (i)m(i) pr.sn

One further problem with the Federn/Lichtheim interpretation is that it forces the perfect²⁸ (which should be used for completed action) of the transitive verb *smh* to be translated as present tense “he forgets.” Following Gardiner, *sw3 tr* should be at the beginning of this sentence with the perfect of *smh* 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 *sdm.f*/imperfective of *wstn* with its subject *ht*

²⁷ Federn, Lichtheim, op.cit.

²⁸ The circumstantial *sdm.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.)

clearly means that “the belly roams,” but the twist comes viewing *m* as a nisbe (*i*)*m*(*i*) and *.sn* as a resumptive coreferent.²⁹ With these, (*i*)*m*(*i*) *pr.sn* in English means “(those) in whose house.”

“On the tables were neatly arranged some fruit, vegetables, pasta, rice, refreshments and pea-noodle soup. Sanzang raised his chopsticks and started to say a grace over the food, but the idiot, who was impatient and hungry to boot, did not wait for him to finish before grabbing a red lacquered wooden bowl of white rice that he scooped up and gulped down in a single mouthful.”

Wu Cheng'en, *Journey to the West*,
translated by W. J. F. Jenner



ir hms.k hn' 3f' wn(m).k 3hf.f sw3(.w)

Proper table manners are further emphasized in this conditional sentence employing the subjunctive *sdm.f* of *hmsi* and (possibly) *wnm*. The form of the intransitive verb *sw3* “pass” in the adverb clause *3hf.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 *3hf.f* of the stative is topicalized (fronted). This is a typical example of a subject-stative construction³⁰ in an adverb clause. A closer inspection shows that this clause is meant to be emphasized since to eat at the presence of the chowhound is given (theme) but the new information is conveyed by the adverb clause, that is, that the one should only eat only after the glutton’s greed is over (rheme). With this, *wnm.k* can be interpreted as a nonattributive relative form and the emphasis can be brought out inserting the word “only” in the translation: “you eat only after/when...”



²⁹ As clarified by B. Gunn; cf. JEA 36 (1950) 112.

³⁰ Allen (17.9).

ir swr.k ḥnꜥ thw 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 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*.³¹ The “result” of the prior action *šzp.k* is *ib.f ḥtp.w*.





m 3dw r iw f r-gs skn

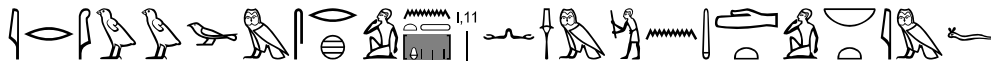
The affirmative tone turns now to negative employing the negative imperative *m* along with the negational complement of *3d*. The many meanings of the preposition *r* allow two interpretations of *m 3dw r iw f*. On the one hand, it could caution not to speak aggressively against the eating of meat,³² and on the other, it could caution not to savagely grab the meat.³³



šzp dit.f n.k m win st k3 ssft pw

The imperative of *šzp* is followed by *dit.f* “what he gives,” a perfective relative form of *di*.

Gardiner³⁴ emends  into . After the negative imperative, the clause introduced by the particle *k3* “then” contains an A *pw* nominal sentence with A being the infinitive *ssft* of the caus. 2-lit verb *ssf* (used nominally). Note that *k3* is normally followed by subjunctive *sḏm.f*, expressing future consequence.



ir šww m srḥ n t ni šḥm n mdt nbt im.f


Unlike the previous conditional sentences, *ir* here has a different function: it introduces the long topicalized subject *šww m srḥ n t* and as such it is usually translated using the

³¹ 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).

³² Federn, Gardiner, op.cit.




³³ Scharff, Lichtheim, op.cit.


³⁴ Originally suggested by Sethe and Scharff.

words “as for.” In the subject *šww* is a perfective active participle (with *w* ending, not uncommon in compounds³⁵) 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 here as . The negative particle *ni* negates the noun phrase *šhm 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.



hrr n hr r df3-ib

According to Gardiner, since the phonetic value of  is *tr*, the original  needs to be emended into . Nonetheless *htr* and also *df3* are unknown words. Gardiner who

suggests that  *df3-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 *hwrr* from the Pyramid Texts and the Book of the Dead) to revert back to *hrr*, 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.³⁶

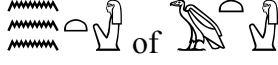



im3 n.f k3hs r mwt.f

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 *im3* (*i3m*) “gentle” is the exact opposite to the subject *k3hs* “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

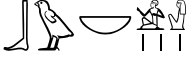
³⁵ See Gardiner §359.

³⁶ Barns, in *JEA* 58 (1972) p. 160, has yet another interpretation: *hr tr n hr r df3-ib*: “So will there be personal respect toward him who is of a satisfied disposition? Here *hr* is a particle introducing an adverbial sentence, and *tr n hr* is literally “respect of face.”

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 kinder to him than (to) his mother.” Finally, note the unusual spelling  of  *mwt* “mother.”



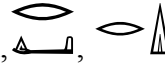
mrw.fpw bw-nb


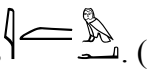
After all the grammatical hurdles, it is a relief to translate this simple A *pw* B nominal sentence, meaning “B is A.” The noun phrase  *bw-nb* is an Egyptian idiom for “everyone.”




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

The sentence starts with a typical *rdi* + subjunctive *s_{dm}.f* construction. In this

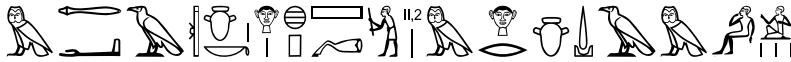
construction,  *rdi* “give, put, let, cause” itself can appear in any verb form

and here it is the imperative:  *imi* spelled as . (For example, in line 3 below, the same construction appears with *rdi* in perfect.) This is a very common use of the subjunctive and has causative meaning.³⁷ 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 *s_{dm}.f* expressing concomitant action. As for the last clause, Gardiner puts it at the end of the current passage, and

interprets the verb form of  *nis* as “call, summon” in subjunctive *s_{dm}.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 summoned...”

*“But the man remembered his mighty power,
the glorious gift that God had sent him,
in his Maker's mercy put his trust for comfort and help:
so he conquered the foe, felled the fiend...”*
Beowulf, translated by Francis B. Gummere

³⁷ Hoch (§75, 1) and Allen (19.10).



m ʕ ib.k hr hps̄ m hr(i)-ib d3mw.k



z3w itn(w).k

The negative imperative *m* rules out the (tempting) consideration of ʕ *ib* as a *nfr hr* construction meaning “high-minded, proud,” lit. “big of heart”. In fact, here ʕ is an adjective-verb with subject *ib.k*, lit. “do not let your heart get big because of/on account of your strength...” *hri ib* is an Egyptian idiom for “middle, midst” and *d3mw* refers to the company of young men surrounding the one cautioned.

Based on its meaning, *z3w* should always be considered as imperative, although the final radical *w* is a bit misplaced.³⁸ Followed by one of the six *sdm.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*.

*“Well argued; but no living man can hope
to force the gods to speak against their will.”*

Sophocles, Oedipus Rex, translated by F. Storr.



ni rh.n.tw hprt irrt ntr hft hsf.f

Power of the divine is recalled here in a textbook example of a negated perfect of the verb *rh* “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 *hprt* “what (may) happen,” and the second is the imperfective relative form *irrt (ntr)* “what (god) does.” Finally, in this complex sentence, the preposition *hft* “according to/in accordance with” governs the (nominal) nonattributive perfective relative form of the verb *hsf* as it has an expressed subject, its suffix pronoun *.f* (referring to *ntr*) “how he punishes.” (The infinitive as the object of a preposition usually appears without an expressed subject.)

³⁸ Gardiner (§338, 3) and Hoch (§99).

“And a young prince must be prudent like that,
giving freely while his father lives
so that afterwards in age when fighting starts
steadfast companions will stand by him
and hold the line. Behaviour that’s admired
is the path to power among people everywhere.”

Beowulf, translated by by Seamus Heaney



rdi.n t3ti nis.t(w) n3y.f n hrdw

As noted above, this is once again a *rdi* + subjunctive *sdm.f* construction with the perfect of *rdi*, lit. “has given that one summon.” The possessives *p3y/t3y* + suffix + masculine/feminine noun; *n3y* + suffix + *n* + plural noun were developed in the spoken language during the Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period.



m ht ʿrk.f shʿr r(m)t bit.sn m iit hr.f


The object of the compound preposition *m ht* “after,” lit. “in the wake” is the (nominal) nonattributive perfective relative form of *ʿrk* as it has a (suffixed) pronominal subject. *ʿrk* 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.”




dr.n dd.n.f n.sn ir ntt nbt m zh3 hr p3 šfdw



sdm st mi dd.i st m zn h3w hr š33t

The introductory word *dr.n* followed by the perfect is rare,³⁹ but grammatically similar to the very common construction *ʿhʿ.n sdm.n.f*. The 2-lit. verb  *dr* means “end (up),” so that *dr.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

³⁹ Gardiner (§483).

imperative of *s_{dm}*. This object *ntt nbt m zh3 hr p3 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 *zh3* “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 *dd* 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, *š33t* is the (feminine) geminated perfective passive participle of the 2-lit.verb *š3*. As such, it can be translated as “what has been ordained.”

*“And the Lord said unto Moses:
Write this for a memorial in a book,
And rehearse it in the ears of Joshua”*

Exodus 17:14 Bible, King James Version



wn.in.sn hr rdit st m hwt.sn wn.in.sn hr šdt st mi ntt m zh3

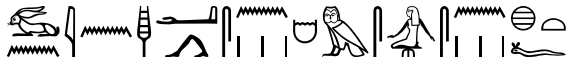
Filial piety, the virtue of loving and respecting the parents, is emphasized here in two syntactically adverbial clauses containing pseudoverbal *hr* + infinitive constructions. In narrative texts *ḥ^c.n* and *wn.in* are typical words to introduce pseudoverbal predicates. In these constructions they 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 zh3* serves as the object of *mi*.



wn.in nfr st hr ib.sn r ht nbt nti m t3 pn r dr.f

wn.in here introduces an adjectival sentence “thereupon it was good...” The sentence contains a textbook example of the comparative *r ht 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 dr* “entire,” lit.

“to the limit.” The latter is used in the Egyptian idiom *t3 pn r dr.f* “this entire land” with the suffix pronoun *.f* referring to *t3 pn*.



wn.in ḥḥ.sn ḥms.sn ḥft

After *wn.in* the indicative/perfective *sḏm.f*⁴⁰ of the intransitive verbs of motion *ḥḥ* 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 *ḥft* is employed here adverbially, meaning “accordingly.” This strange sentence is a metaphor and stands for: “to conduct themselves.”



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




ḥḥ.n sḥḥ ḥm nswt(t)-biti SNFRW m nswt mnḥ m t3 pn r dr.f

The verb form of *sḥḥ* 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* possibly in sportive dual. The best known example for a sportive

dual is  *NB-PHTI-R* the throne name of Ahmose I.



⁴⁰ Allen’s perfective corresponds to the indicative *sḏm.f* in the Standard Theory.

ḥ^c.n rdi k3gmni r (i)m(i)-r nwt t3ti

The passive of *rdi* is introduced by ḥ^c.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.fpw

The closing A *pw* nominal sentence contains the imperfective relative form of *iw* used nonattributively as the predicate: “that is how it goes,” lit. “it is that it comes.”

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