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
Slender, you’ll soon hear worse about yourself.”
Hesiod, Works and Days, translated by Dorothea Wender

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.
Following Gardiner, ibid, the text is emended at suspected scribal errors.
'h. n rdi k3gmni r (i)m(i)-r nwt t3ti

iw.f pw
The Instruction Addressed to Kagemni

Vocabulary

\[ \textit{wd3} \] prosperous
\[ \textit{sndw} \] submissive, timid, fearful, respectful
\[ \textit{hzi} \] bless, praise
\[ \textit{mt(i)} \] modest, regular, correct, straightforward, precise, trustworthy, loyal
\[ \textit{wn} \] open
\[ \textit{hn} \] tent
\[ \textit{gr} \] silent, still, (noun) silence
\[ \textit{wsh} \] broad, wide
\[ \textit{st} \] seat, place, throne
\[ \textit{hr(w)} \] be quiet, at peace
\[ \textit{mdw} \) (verb) speak, talk, (noun) speech
\[ \textit{spd} \] sharp
\[ \textit{ds} \] knife
\[ \textit{thi} \] go astray, stray, transgress, overstep (path)
\[ \textit{mitn} \] path
\[ \textit{hn} \] rush, hurry, attack
\[ \textit{zp} \] time, occasion, event, deed, misdeed, fault
\[ \textit{hmsi} \] sit, sit down
\[ \textit{st} \) multitude of persons, company of guests
\[ \textit{msdi} \] dislike, hate
\[ \textit{t} \] bread
\[ \textit{mri} \] love, desire, want
\[ \textit{3t} \] moment, instant
\[ \textit{ktt} \] small, a trifle
\[ \textit{d3} \] control temper
\[ \textit{d3r-ib} \] self-denial, restraint, self-control
\[ \textit{ib} \] heart, mind
\[ \textit{hww} \] base(ness), wrongdoing
\[ \textit{3fr} \] gluttony, intemperance, voracity; with the determinative \[ \textit{3fr} \] glutton, gourmand, gastronome, chowhound
\[ \textit{db} \] point the finger (\( m \) at), reproach
\[ \textit{ikn} \] cup, jar
\[ \textit{mw} \] water
\[ \textit{hm} \] extinguish (fire)
\[ \textit{hm} \] quench (thirst)
\[ \textit{ibi} \] be thirsty
\[ \textit{mh} \] fill, be full of
\[ \textit{mhr} \] mouthful
\[ \textit{r} \] mouth, speech, spell
\[ \textit{sww} \] herbs, edible vegetable
\[ \textit{smn} \] 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

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

šwi  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

c3  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

trk 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

šti belly

šdi read aloud, recite

š thing, property

š3 thing, property

t3 land

hm incarnation, majesty

nswt biti King of the Upper and Lower Egypt

mini moor, die

šhr install, raise up, set up

nswt king

mnh beneficiant, 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

\[
\text{sndw “submissive, timid,” } \text{mt(i) “modest, moderate,}
\text{trustworthy, loyal,” } \text{gr “silent, still,” } \text{hr(w) “quiet, at peace,”}
\]

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 Kingdom\(^1\) of Ancient Egypt thinkers arrived at the same idea.\(^2\) When translating the present text, this universal principle should be kept in mind.

\[
\text{wd3 sndw hz mt(i)}
\]

The author, the father of Kagemni, conjectured\(^3\) 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 suggested\(^5\) 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.


\(^5\) Parkinson, op.cit.
is well-documented.\footnote{See the web site http://www.osirisnet.net/mastabas/kagemni/e_kagemni_01.htm.}

The text starts\footnote{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.} with an adjectival sentence (adjectival predicate + subject) whose subject is $\textit{snDw}$ “fearful, submissive, timid.” According to Gardiner (§369)\footnote{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.} and Hoch (§121) $\textit{snDw}$ is a perfective active participle, lit. “the one who fears” which in masculine singular usually has no special ending (\textit{snd}) but sometimes receives the flexional $w$ or $y$ ending. Allen\footnote{Allen (23.3-5).} however views $\textit{snDw}$ not as a participle but a noun, a so-called noun of agent, derived from the verb $\textit{snd}$ “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, $\textit{3dw}$ and $\textit{zhmwl}$ are derived from the adjective-verbs $\textit{\text{3d}}$ “aggressive, angry” and $\textit{\text{zhm}}$ “hasty, impetuous.” Further examples are $\textit{sdnwl}$ “the one who listens, the listener” from $\textit{sdn}$ “hear,” $\textit{whmw}$, “the one who reports, the herald” from $\textit{whm}$ “repeat,” and $\textit{smsw}$, ”follower, retainer” from $\textit{smsi}$ “follow.”

In the second sentence the passive of the verb $\textit{Hzi}$ is employed whose subject $\textit{mt(i)}$ has many meanings. According to Gardiner,\footnote{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.} a good translation of $\textit{mt(i)}$ 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 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 ln n grw wsḥ st nt ḫr

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, mt, 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 n usually written as m “do not” is followed by the negatival complement of the verb mdw “speak.” Recall that the negatival complement (for verbs

11 A. Scharff, ZÄS, 77 (1941-42) 13-21.
13 Scharff, ibid.
14 Gardiner, op.cit.
16 Federn, op.cit.
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 ṛ 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 ṛ 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 ḫr zpf

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, and it can also be viewed as referring to the knives of the previous sentence. 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.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 ḫms.k hn§ ḫt msd(.k) ṛ 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].
The topic now turns to table manners in a typical conditional sentence. A conditional sentence consists of a protasis (the conditional clause that contains the condition under which the content of the main clause holds), and the main clause, the apodosis. The protasis here (and typically) starts with *ir* followed by the subjunctive *sdm.f* of the verb *hmsi*. Note that the determinative of *hmsi* “sit” is 𓊋, but in a playful mood, here and a number of times below the scribe uses the determinative 𓊋 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, 𓊋 t “bread” can be promoted to “food.”

“So he spoke to me with his features stamped by the impression of that righteous ardor which burns with true control within the heart.”

Dante, Divine Comedy, Purgatorio Canto VIII, translated by James Finn Cotter

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 and is placed “inside” a noun phrase with separable parts such as 𓊋 𓊋 𓊋 𓊋 𓊋 𓊋 𓊋 𓊋 𓊋 𓊋 𓊋 *t ktt*.

This rule does not apply to bound constructions such as direct genitives.

This is the prospective *sdm.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.

22 Hoch (§129) and Allen (7.10).

23 See the 3rd footnote in the introductory text.
In the A \( pw \) B nominal clause B serves as the preposed object of the second clause (introduced by \( iw \)). The circumstantial/imperfective \( sdm.f \) of the verb \( dbi^s \) 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 \( fb \).

\[ iw \ ikn \ n \ mw \ \ "hm.f \ ibt \]

This is a typical circumstantial \( iw.f \ sdm.f \)/subject-imperfective construction 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.”

\[ iw \ mhw \ r \ m \ \ "sww \ smn.f \ ib \]

The circumstantial \( iw.f \ sdm.f \)/subject-imperfective construction continues. The noun \( mhw \) “filling” is derived from the verb \( mH \) “fill.” (Following Gardiner, the original \( mH \) is emended to \( mH^s \) as this is masculine.) \( mH^s \ r \) can be considered as a direct genitive “mouthful,” lit. “filling of the mouth.” The entire phrase \( mhw \ r \ m \ \ "sww \ a \ mouthful of herbs" \) 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.”

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

These two symmetrically arranged clauses still contain circumstantial \( iw.f \ sdm.f \)/subject-imperfective constructions with rare exceptions: omitted suffix pronouns. In the first

---

24 The circumstantial \( sdm.f \) 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 \( sdm.f \) 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 *nfr*, 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-mâ* “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.”

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 *swâ tr* to the end of the next line is difficult. Federn and subsequently Lichtheim consider *swâ 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 *swâ 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.”

One further problem with the Federn/Lichtheim interpretation is that it forces the perfect (which should be used for completed action) of the transitive verb *smh* to be translated as present tense “he forgets.” Following Gardiner, *swâ 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. 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

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 $sw\tilde{3}$ “pass” in the adverb clause $3hf.f sw\tilde{3}(w)$ 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 construction 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).
Once again this is a typical conditional sentence introduced by *ir*. As before, the predicates of the protasis and the apodosis are the subjunctive *sdm.f* of *swr* and *szp*. 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 *htp*. The “result” of the prior action *szp.k* is *ib.f* *htp.w*.

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

The imperative of *szp* is followed by *dit.f* “what he gives,” a perfective relative form of *di*. Gardiner 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 *sdm.f*, expressing future consequence.

Unlike the previous conditional sentences, *ir* here has a different function: it introduces the long topicalized subject *šww m srh n t ni shm n mdt nbt im.f* 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 ṣww is a perfective active participle (with w ending, not uncommon in compounds) 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 ṣmm. The negative particle ni negates the noun phrase shm n mdt nbt “power of any word.” In the adverbial predicate im, 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.

According to Gardiner, since the phonetic value of is tr, the original needs to be emended into . Nonetheless htr and also dfβ are unknown words. Gardiner who suggests that dfβ-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 hwr 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.

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

Based on its meaning, \textit{z3w} should always be considered as imperative, although the final radical \textit{w} is a bit misplaced.\textsuperscript{38} Followed by one of the six \textit{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 \textit{itn}.

\begin{quote}
\textit{Well argued; but no living man can hope to force the gods to speak against their will.}
\end{quote}

Sophocles, Oedipus Rex, translated by F. Storr.

\textit{ni rh.n.tw hp rt  irr t ntr hft hsf.f}

Power of the divine is recalled here in a textbook example of a negated perfect of the verb \textit{rh} “know” with the impersonal pronoun \textit{tw} as a verbal suffix. The negated perfect does not mean completed action here, but expresses \textit{lack of ability}. The first object is the active participle \textit{hp rt} “what (may) happen,” and the second is the imperfective relative form \textit{ir rt (ntr)} “what (god) does.” Finally, in this complex sentence, the preposition \textit{hft} “according to/in accordance with” governs the (nominal) nonattibutive perfective relative form of the verb \textit{hsf} as it has an expressed subject, its suffix pronoun \textit{f} (referring to \textit{ntr}) “how he punishes.” (The infinitive as the object of a preposition usually appears without an expressed subject.)

\textsuperscript{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 Seamus Heaney

rdi.n t3ti nis.t(w) n3y.f n hr’dw

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 ‘rk.f shr r(m)’ 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 ‘rk as it has a (suffixed) pronominal subject. ‘rk 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 sf’dw

sdm st mi dd.i st m zn h3w hr s33t

The introductory word dr.n followed by the perfect is rare, but grammatically similar to the very common construction ‘h’.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 *sdm*. This object *n*t *nt* *m* *zh3* *hr* *p3* *sf3w* “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 *n*t *nt* 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 $\wedge$. Finally, *$\delta \delta \tau$* is the (feminine) geminated perfective passive participle of the 2-lit.verb *$\delta \delta$*. 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

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 *$\mathfrak{h}$* *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 *n*t *nt* *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 $t\beta\, pn\, r\, dr.f$ “this entire land” with the suffix pronoun $f$ referring to $t\beta\, pn$.

 wn.in $\varphi^{*}h^{*}.sn\, hms.sn\, hft$

After wn.in the indicative/perfective $sdm.f^{40}$ of the intransitive verbs of motion $\varphi^{*}h^{*}$ and $hmsi$ 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 $hft$ is employed here adverbially, meaning “accordingly.” This strange sentence is a metaphor and stands for: “to conduct themselves.”

 $\varphi^{*}h^{*}.n\, h\, n\, (n)\, swt\,-\, bit(i)\, HWNI\, m\, in\, n.f$

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.

 $\varphi^{*}h^{*}.n\, s\varphi^{*}h^{*}\, h\, n\, swt(t)-\, biti\, SNFRW\, m\, nswt\, mn\, h\, m\, t\beta\, pn\, r\, dr.f$

The verb form of $s\varphi^{*}h^{*}$ 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 $s\varphi^{*}h^{*}$ for $\varphi^{*}h^{*}$ with $\varphi^{*}h^{*}$ 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 $sdm.f$ in the Standard Theory.
The passive of \textit{rdi} is introduced by 	extit{ḥf.n}. Note that \textit{rdi} with the preposition \textit{r} (or \textit{m}) means “to appoint to” an office/position. The position in question is \textit{(i)m(i)-r nwt} (a reverse nisbe), the major or overseer of the town.

\textit{iw.f pw}

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

\textbf{Bibliography}


\textbf{Translations:} Bissing, Lebensweisheit, 52-53; Erman, pp. 66-67; Gardiner (1946) op. cit.; Gunn, pp. 61-64; Lichtheim, Vol. I, pp. 59-61; Simpson, pp. 149-151 (with additional references in the Bibliography).