

Excerpts from the Story of the Shipwrecked Sailor

"Who and whence art thou, and what caused thee to come hither?" "O my lord," answered I, " I am in very sooth a waif, a stranger, and was left to drown with sundry others by the ship we voyaged in. But Allah graciously sent me a wooden tub, so I saved myself thereon and it floated with me, till the waves cast me up on this island." When he heard this, he took my hand and saying, "Come with me," carried me into a great sardab, or underground chamber, which was spacious as a saloon. "

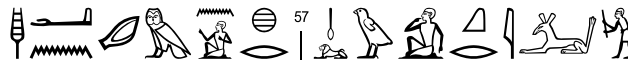
The First Voyage of Sinbad the Sailor, from the Arabian Nights,
translated by Sir Richard Burton

Part II

The snake god appears and questions the follower.

(The follower tells his story.)

The snake god promises him safe return to home.



ḥ^c.n sdm.n.i ḥrw kṛi



ib.kw w3w pw n w3d-wr



ḥtw ḥr gm gm t3 ḥr mnmn



kf.n.i ḥr.i gm.n.i ḥf3w pw iw.f m iit



n(i)-sw mh 30 hbzwt.f wr s(i) r mh 2



h^cw.f shr.w m nbw inwi.fi m hsbd m3^c



rk sw r hnt



iw wp.n.f r.f r.i iw.i hr ht.i m b3h.f



dd.f n.i (i)n mi in tw (i)n mi in tw nds



(i)n mi in tw ir wdf.k m dd n.i in tw r iw pn



rdi.i rh.k tw iw.k m zz hpr.t(i) m nti n(i) m3.t(w).f



iw mdw.k n.i nn wi hr sdm(.i) st



iw.i m b3h.k hm.n.(i) wi



h^c.n rdi.f wi m r.f it.f wi r st.f nt sndm



w3h.f wi nn dmit.i

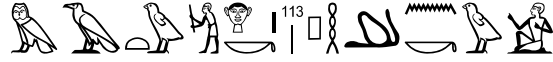


wd3.kw nn itt im.i

(The herald tells his story of shipwreck to the snake god. This is largely a repetition of his narrative to the commander, therefore skipped.)



dd.in.f n.i m snd m zp 2 nds



m 3tw hr.k ph.n.k wi



m.k ntr rdi.n.f nh.k in.f tw r iw pn n k3



nn ntt nn st m hnw.f iw.f mh(.w) hr nfrwt nbt



m.k tw r irt 3bd hr 3bd r kmt.k 3bdw 4 m hnw n iw pn



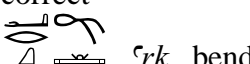











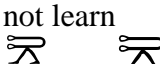
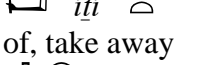




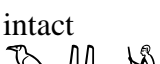







iw dpt r iit m hnw skdw im.s rh.n.k





sm.k hn(.sn) r hnw mwt.k m nwt.k


Vocabulary


 *hrw* voice, sound, noise
 *kri* thunder, storm, cloud
 *ib* think, suppose
 *w3w* wave
 *ht* (masc. noun) wood, tree, stick, mast
 *gmgm* crack, smash
 *mnmn* quake
 *kfi* unravel, uncover, strip
 *hf3w* snake
 *mh* cubit (52.5 cm or 20.6 inches)
 *hbzwt* beard
 *wr* great
 *h^c* body (usually in plural)
 *shr/shr* sweep, brush over; *m shr* overlay
 *nbw* gold
 *inwi* eyebrows
 *hsbd/hsbd* lapis-lazuli
 *m3^c* true, proper, correct
 *r^k* bend
 *hnt* (preposition) at the head of, in front of
 *wpi* open, split, part
 *ht* belly

 *b3h* presence; *m b3h* in the presence of
 *mi* (interrogative pronoun) who
 *ini* fetch, bring, get
 *zp 2* ditto sign
 *nds* commoner;
 *nds* little
 *wdfi* late, dwadle
 *zz* ashes
 *hm* be ignorant, not know, not learn
 *iti* take, take possession of, take away
 *st* place, throne
 *sndm* sweeten, reside
 *w3h* set, place, remain, last
 *dmi* reach, touch
 *wD3* uninjured, be whole, intact
 *3yt* pale, blanch
 *snd* become afraid
 *k3* ka
 *nh* live
 *ntr* god
 *mh* fill
 *km* complete

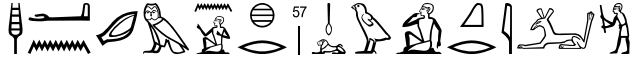
 3bd month

 šm walk, go (r to)

 mwt die

 nwt town

Grammar Points



ḥ̄.n sdm.n.i hrw kri



ib.kw w3w pw n w3d-wr

The two sentences here pose no grammatical problems. The first is a textbook example how the perfect (of the transitive verb *sdm*) can be used to express past tense when introduced by the particle *ḥ̄.n*. In the second sentence, the transitive use of the stative of the verb *ib* with *active* meaning is a rare holdover from early Egyptian. Its object is an unmarked noun clause which itself is an A *pw* nominal sentence with *pw* moved forward within the indirect genitive.



htw hr gm gm t3 hr mn mn

This is a pair of clauses using the pseudoverbal *hr* + infinitive construction expressing imperfect actions, in particular, actions in progress. They can be translated by English past continuous tense. This symmetric pair may be viewed as subordinate to the previous sentence and in this case the insertion of an auxiliary word such as “although” is called for.



kf.n.i hr.i gm.n.i hf3w pw iw.f m iit


The two clauses with perfect verbal predicates are followed by an unmarked A *pw* noun clause serving as the object of the second predicate. (The first can also be viewed as an initial adverbial clause since it tells *when* the second clause is true: “After I uncovered my face...” In this case *kf.n.i* is a perfect relative form used nonattributively.) Imbedded in this is the relative clause (without *nti*): *iw.f m iit*. Introduced by the particle *iw* it looks almost like an independent sentence except the suffix pronoun *.f* is coreferential to the antecedent *hf3w*. Typically, these kind of relative clauses contain a pseudoverbal

predicate; in our case an *m* + infinitive construction. As such it points to (an immediate) scary future; the fast approaching snake.



n(i)-sw mh 30 hbwzwt.f wr s(i) r mh 2

The adjectival sentence of possession *n(i)* A B here means “A belongs to B” since A is a dependent pronoun. It describes the length of the snake: “he was of 30 cubits/30 cubits long,” lit. “he belonged 30 cubits.” Converting to English units, the snake was about 50.5 feet long. This must have been a scary sight for the sailor as the largest anaconda ever


found in nature was only 37 feet long! Note the typical abbreviated spelling  of *nsw=n(i)-sw* “he belongs.”

The subject *hbwzwt.f* of the following adjectival sentence with predicate *wr* “great” is topicalized and referred to by the dependent pronoun *s(i)*. This sentence contains a comparative “his beard was greater than/over 2 cubits,” lit. “his beard, it is great with respect to 2 cubits.”




h^cw.f shr.w m nbw inwi.fi m hsbd m3^c

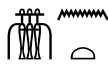
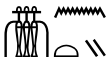
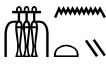
The subject-stative construction of the transitive verb *shr/shr* has passive meaning. It tells that the snake’s skin was covered/overlaid with gold. The adverbial sentence of identity (the so-called *m of predication*) describes the snake’s eyebrows being made of (genuine)


lapis-lazuli. Both are signs of divinity. Note the typical extra  in the suffix pronoun of the dual.




rk sw r hnt

This is an adjectival sentence with some subtlety. First, the adjectival predicate  *rk* “bent” is the passive participle of the 3-lit. verb *rk* “bend” (with the same spelling).

Second, in the prepositional phrase *r hnt* “up in front/forward,”  is short for the prepositional nisbe   used as a noun, lit. “one in front/at the head.”





67 
iw wp.n.f r.f r.i¹ iw.i hr ht.i m b3h.f

The second clause is a typical adverb clause, and only the context indicates that it is subordinate to the first. In translation, it can be introduced using “while.” Alternatively, if one insists that the particle *iw* should introduce a main clause, it can be treated as an

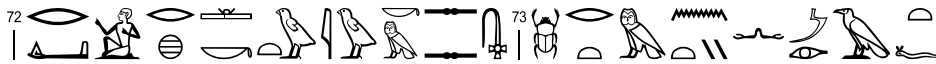
independent sentence.  *m b3h* is a common compound preposition meaning “in the presence of” a respected or high ranking person/god.

69 
dd.f n.i (i)n mi in tw (i)n mi in tw nds (i)n mi in tw

The narrative infinitive of *dd* starts the snake’s speech. (The other possibility is that the scribe left out the *n* suffix from the perfect, *dd.n.f*, as the previous verb form *wp.n.f* is also perfect. In this case, this clause and the first clause in the previous passage bracket the second circumstantial clause.) The snake’s question is a participial statement A B. Part A

consists of the particle  *in* (spelled here only as ) combined with the interrogative pronoun  *mi* “who,” and part B consists of the perfective active participle of the verb  *ini* “fetch, bring, get” (with past meaning). Literally: “so, who is the one who brought...” || *zp 2* is the Egyptian ditto sign. Finally note that the snake calls the sailor *nds* “commoner” as at that time he had no official title.


ir wdf.k m dd n.i in tw r iw pn

72 
rdi.i rh.k tw iw.k m zz hpr.t(i) m nti n(i) m3.t(w).f

The protasis of this typical conditional sentence (introduced by *ir*) contains the subjunctive *sdm.f* of the negative verb *wdfi* “delay, dawdle,” and its object is *m dd* with the infinitive of *dd*. After *ir* the emphatic prospective *sdmw.f*/prospective verb form

¹ For a discussion of this passage from the point of view of narration and direct speech, see H. Polotsky, Egyptian Tenses, The Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Jerusalem, 1965, §35 and footnote 48, p. 17.

wdfw (with omitted *w*) is also possible; in any case, there is only a slight difference in the English translation. The protasis repeats the snake’s previous question with the interrogative pronoun omitted. In the apodosis, should he fail to respond, the snake threatens the sailor with two consequences. First, a *rdi sdm.f* construction is used with the emphatic prospective *sdmw.f*/prospective of *rdi* (the subjunctive uses only the base stem *di*), and *rh* (with the pronominal object *tw*, reflexive “yourself” in English) needs to be interpreted as “find, experience.” The two consequences that follow are two adverb clauses introduced by a “void”² *iw*. The first has an adverbial predicate, and the second, the stative of *hpr + m* “become something.” *hpr.t(i)* indicates the resulting state described in the following relative clause. (Although in English one may translate this as infinitive, grammatically it is clearly not, since the infinitive of the 3-lit. verb *hpr* uses the base stem.) The relative adjective *nti* which marks the relative clause has no antecedent and functions as a noun since it is governed by the preposition *m*. Thus this prepositional phrase can be translated as “as/like one who.” The relative clause itself contains the negated indicative/perfective *sdm.f: n(i) m3.t(w).f*. The use of the impersonal pronoun *tw* conveys passive meaning “a thing unseen,” lit. “he has not been seen.”






iw mdw.k n.i nn wi hr sdm st



iw.i m b3h.k hm.n(i) wi



Apparently, the sailor abruptly takes over the story here. There are at least two different interpretations of this passage. To begin with, we first give a rudimentary grammatical analysis. The circumstantial/imperfective *sdm.f* of *mdwi* “speak” in the first clause is not used for making a general statement (as usual) but for expressing an incomplete/ongoing past action. In the next clause the pseudoverbal construction *hr + infinitive* is syntactically adverbial, and as such, it can be negated by *nn*. This construction is rare

since Middle Egyptian normally uses the negated perfect  *ni sdm.n.k st*³





for this purpose. Though a minor issue, the original determinative  of  was

² As explained in line 33.

³ [Peas. B2, 114]

emended to . The third is a simple adverb clause, and we should keep in mind that the sailor is in the presence of the snake and, as noted above, the latter represents a superior divine authority. Finally, the fourth (also circumstantial) clause contains the perfect of the verb  *hm* “be ignorant, not know, not learn,” and the following dependent pronoun *wi* is used reflexively. The verb *hm* having the opposite meaning as *rh*, the clause *hm.n(.i) wi* can be interpreted as an expression for “having lost consciousness,” lit. “having lost knowledge of myself.”

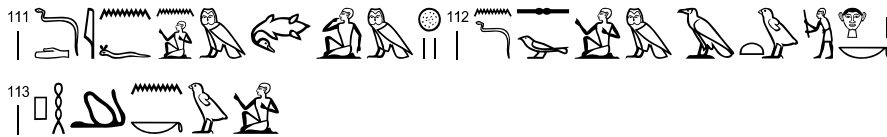
Now, at closer inspection, we find that this passage cannot be the sailor’s (out)spoken response to the snake as it lacks respect which then may result in making the snake angry, the last thing the sailor wants to do. In addition, the last clause would then be a misfit to the entire passage. To resolve this situation, one can assume that the sailor talks to himself, but then the last passage still sounds awkward. It therefore has been suggested that the suffix pronoun *.k* attached to *mdw* and *b3h* should be changed to *.f* (scribal errors). With these, the whole passage turns into a narrative of the sailor, and everything falls into its right place. Finally, note that a sentence similar to the second line is in Sin. B 253:

 *hm.n(.i) wi m b3h.f.*
 *‘h^c.n rdi.f wi m r.f it.f wi r st.f nt sndm*
 *w3h.f wi nn dmit.i*
 *wd3.kw nn itt im.i*

Contrary to expectation, the transitive verbs *rdi*, *iti* and *w3h* here are in indicative /perfective *sdm.f* forms (not perfect), a holdover from Old Egyptian. They are all governed by the initial word *‘h^c.n*. The causative verb *sndm* “(transitive) sweeten, (intransitive) reside” (in the infinitive) is derived from the adjective verb *ndm* “sweet,” and the phrase *st nt ndm* “place of residence” is similar to the English “home, sweet home.” The last three clauses are circumstantial. The first is introduced by the negative word *nn* and the verb form of *dmi* “touch” is infinitive with suffix pronominal subject.

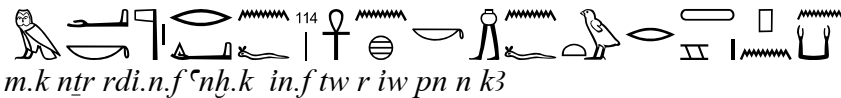
The one-word English translation “unhurt” covers up the grammar. After having been carried in the snake’s mouth, in the next clause the stative of *wḏ3* “uninjured, be whole, intact” expresses the resulting relieved state of the sailor. Finally, the negation of the infinitive of *tii* “take away/possession of” further reaffirms his good treatment.

(The sailor tells his story to the snake god. This is a repetition of his narrative to the commander, therefore skipped here.)



dd.in.f n.i m snd m snd nds m 3(y)tw hr.k ph.n.k wi

The snake, taking over the narrative with a *sḏm.in.f* verb form of *dd* signaling sub/consequent action, further quiets down the sailor in repeated negated imperatives of the adjective verbs *snd* “afraid” and *3(y)t* “pale, blanch.” The last clause contains the perfect of *ph* “reach, come to” expressing completed action. It can be attached to the previous passage by the connecting word “now.”



m.k ntr rdi.n.f ʿnh.k in.f tw r iw pn n k3

In the first clause the subject *ntr* is topicalized, not uncommon for a *sḏm.n.f* verb form.⁴ Gardiner⁵ calls this “anticipatory emphasis.” Using an English cleft sentence it can be translated as: “Look, it was god who ...” The verb form of *ʿnh* “live” is subjunctive *sḏm.f* and the construction has causative meaning. The indicative/perfective *sḏm.f* verb form (used to describe what the snake did to the sailor) continues in the second clause with the indicative/perfective of *ini* “bring.” Its subject is the suffix pronoun *.f* referring to *ntr* and its object, the dependent pronoun *tw*, refers to the sailor. The two clauses can be connected by “and” (Lichtheim).

A closer inspection of the overall meaning of this passage shows that the second clause can be considered subordinate to the first, a circumstantial clause explaining *how* the god let the sailor live. According to this view we have Polotsky’s emphatic construction here⁶ in which the theme (the given information) is that the god let the sailor live and the rheme

⁴ See Allen (18.4).

⁵ Gardiner §147.

⁶ See Allen (25.10), also called an explicatory sentence construction; cf. Hoch §148.

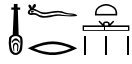

is in the second circumstantial clause (the so-called adverbial comment) specifying how the god did this. This normally would require the initial (here *sdm.n.f*) verb form to be bare, that is, without any auxiliaries.⁷ Instead here we find the initial particle *m.k* followed by the nominal subject *ntr*. (The situation would be more clear cut if we had: **rdi.n ntr 'nh.k...*) Polotsky states⁸ that “the context sometimes would seem to require, or at least to tolerate, an ‘emphatic’ form” and translates this passage as: “it is by bringing you to this island of a ka that a God...”

The expression *iw n k3* was translated by Maspero as “the phantom island,” lit. “the island of ka.” Note that at times *k3* was used as a name for geographical locations,⁹ for example, in Ptolemaic Egypt the Canopic branch of the Nile.



nn ntt nn st m hnw.f iw.f mh(.w) hr nfrwt nbt

The first clause has been discussed above. The second clause contains a simple subject-stative construction with the transitive verb *mh* “fill,” and therefore has passive meaning.

The scroll determinative and the plural strokes indicate that  stands for the plural noun “good things” derived from the adjective  *nfr* “good, beautiful.”



m.k tw r irt 3bd hr 3bd r kmt.k 3bdw 4



m hnw n iw pn

The first (syntactically) adverb clause contains a pseudoverbal *r* + infinitive construction (*r* of futurity) in which the snake predicts/prophesies the sailor a 4-month stay in the phantom island. This construction expresses an involuntary future in the sense that the sailor has no control over the length of his stay. In English translation this can be reflected by using “you are to spend” instead of the simple future tense “you will stay.” The verb form *sdmt.f* “until he (has/had) heard” as the object of the preposition *r* is

⁷ See Polotsky, loc. cit., p. 20.

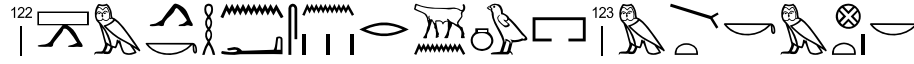
⁸ See Polotsky, loc. cit., pp. 6 and 21-22; also Hoch §148, p. 169.

⁹ A. H. Gardiner, *The Delta Residence of the Ramessides*, JEA 5 (1918), and *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica*, Oxford (1947). For a detailed discussion of this subject, see Ignatov, op. cit.

the scribe's perfect choice here.



iw dpt r iit m hnw skdw im.s rh.n.k



sm.k hnc.sn r hnw mwt.k m nwt.k

The first clause grammatically identical with the one in the previous sentence and promises the sailor the arrival of a ship from home. In the second adverb clause the scribe this time does not miss the plural of the subject *skd*; in the prepositional adverb *im.s* the suffix pronoun refers to the ship and *rh.n.k* is an easily recognizable perfect relative form of *rh* “know.” Finally, in the last two clauses the predicates are in subjunctive *sdm.f* again projecting events in the future, but this time the future is the sailor’s voluntary action. This is true even in the last clause not because the sailor wants to die (after surviving the shipwreck and the snake), but because he wants to die in his own town to receive proper burial.

Bibliography

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Commentaries/Grammar: J. Baines, Interpreting the Story of the Shipwrecked Sailor, JEA 76 (1990)55-72; A. M. Blackman, Notes on certain passages in various Middle Egyptian texts, JEA,16, no.1/2 (1930) 63-72; G. Burkard, Überlegungen zur Form der ägyptischen Literatur, die Geschichte des Schiffbrüchigen als literarisches Kunstwerk, ÄUAT 22, Wiesbaden, 1993; A. H. Gardiner, ZÄS, 45 (1908) 65; Keimer, Acta Or., 6 (1928), 288; D. Kurth, Zur Interpretation der Geschichte des Schiffbrüchigen, SAK 14 (1987) 167-179.

Translations: Brunner-Traut, Märchen, pp. 5-10; de Buck, pp. 100-106; Erman, pp. 29-35; Keimer, Lefebvre, Romans, 29-40; Lichtheim, pp. 211-215; Simpson, pp. 45-53.

