The Sebayt Of Ptahhotep

Ptahhotep, Sem Essessi, others...

Foreward by <someone>

August 21, 2024



For my father Ptah, who is South of His wall...

... and for Mut the mother of all of my mothers.

May Seshat and Thoth be satisfied.

Contents

Foreword	4
Preface	5
Introduction	6
Index	10

Foreword

Someone else needs to write this explaining...

- their relationship with the authors
- how it is useful to people
- how they contributed to the work
- signing their name at the end

Preface

Ptahhotep addresses his king, Djedkare Isesi and describes his plight, which is the suffering that comes with old age.

This is relevant to why he would want to pass down his wisdom as part of his legacy, and helps serve as an introduction to the rest of the text.

- 1 the title $imi\ rA$ is usually translated as "overseer" but is a pun around the r glyph having the shape of the mouth and being used for terms related to words and speech, and may mean something like "commander of words" or "commander through words".
- 2 the *niwt* sign can also determine a place, a town or other settlement and the choice of the word city is to convey a modern equivalent to this title.
- 3 the title of TAti translated as "vizier" is a somewhat modern projection here, it could perhaps also be translated as "prime minister", or as a "second in command" to the king.
- 4 *Xprw* is closely related to the god Khepri, who symbolises the making of progress of the sun when it rises.
- 5 wr as a determinative seems often to be used with concepts associated with *isfet*, as well as being a word on its own which is usually translated to mean "great" or "old". e.g. *Hrw wr* for "Horus the Elder" and *mHt wrt* for "the Great Flood"
- 6 iw is a particle with no direct translation in English.



m r niwt † ·	TA t ·	p t H Htp † p A50	Ddf
imi rA¹ niwt²	TAti ³	ptHHtp	Dd.f
Overseer ¹ of the city ²	∨izier³	Ptahhotep	(he) says:



it it	nb G7 A1	tni A19	xpr r
ity	nb.i	tni	xprw ⁴
sovereign,	my lord,	infirmity	develops ⁴



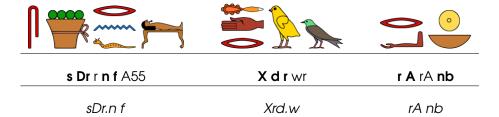
i A w A19	h A w D54	w g g wr ⁵ D54
iAw	hAw	wgg
old age	befalls,	feebleness



w i	i H w wr ⁵	Hr ·	mA A w Y1A	
iw ⁶ .w	iHw	Hr	mAw	
comes,	weakness	is	renewed	

Ptahhotep continues to lament his old age, describing and analogising his difficulties.

- 7 literally "all suns", rA meaning "sun" and nb used as a suffix meaning "all". rA is identical in spelling and form to the name of the sun god Ra.
- 8 the *-ti* and *-wi* endings signify duals, which are here translated by saying "both", whereas in English one might say "the eyes" or "the ears". In the original hieratic the singular signs are duplicated to convey the dual, and so the transcription here does the same.
- 9 *ib* is directly translated as heart, but the ancient Egyptians considered the heart to be the seat of intelligence and decision making, much as we today think about the brain.



one sleeps like a child every day⁷



ir ir	n D s W wr	Anx Anx sDm sDm		i mr w sDm	
irti	nDs.w	Anxwi		imr.w	
both ⁸ eyes	blind,	both ⁸ ears		deaf	
p H pHt t w	, A3 Hr ·	a q wr ni	wr r d A2	2 ib · A1	
pHtiw	Hr	Aa.n	wrd	ib.i	

waning,

is

my heart⁹

tired

strength

Index

Djedkare Isesi, 6 dual, 8

ib, 8, 9 isfet, 6

Mut, 2

old age, 6–8

Ptah, 2

Ptahhotep, 6–8

Ra, 8

Seshat, 2

Thoth, 2