An Interlinear Translation Of

The Instructions Of

#### **PTAHHOTEP**

Ptahhotep, Sem Essessi, others...

Foreward by <someone>

August 22, 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.

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## **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 this appears to be a spelling mistake in the original.
- 7 iw is a particle with no direct translation in English.



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



it it	nb G7 A1	<b>tni</b> A19	<b>xpr</b> r
ity	nb.i	tni	xprw <sup>4</sup>
sovereign,	my lord,	infirmity	develops <sup>4</sup>



<b>i A w</b> A19	<b>h A w</b> D54	<b>w g g</b> wr <sup>5</sup> D54
iAw	hAw	wgg
old aae	befalls.	feebleness

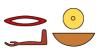
<b>w</b> i <sup>6</sup>	i H w wr <sup>5</sup>	Hr ·	<b>mA</b> A <b>w</b> Y1A	
iw <sup>7</sup> .w	iHw	Hr	mAw	
comes,	weakness	is	renewed	

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

- 8 this appears to be a spelling mistake in the original.
- 9 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.
- 10 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.
- 11 *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.
- 12 the word *r* seems to be used for both the mouth and for speech.
- 13 speech is only implied, this construct seems to mean something more like the colloquial or artifical english construct "wording" or "to do words".







<b>s Dr</b> r A55 <b>n f</b>	<b>X d r</b> wr <sup>8</sup>	r A rA nb
sDr.n f	Xrd.w	rA nb
one sleeps	like a child	every day <sup>9</sup>









ir ir	n D s W wr	Anx Anx sDm sDm	<b>i mr w</b> sDm
irti	nDs.w	Anxwi	imr.w
both <sup>10</sup> eyes	blind,	both <sup>10</sup> ears	deaf



<b>p H</b> pHt <b>t w</b> A3	Hr ·	a q wr ni	<b>wr</b> r <b>d</b> A2	ib · A1
pHtiw	Hr	Aq.n	wrd	ib.i
strenath	is	wanina.	tired	mv heart <sup>11</sup>



<u>r</u> ·	grAl	ni	md d w Al n f
r <sup>12</sup>	gr.w	ni	mdw.n f
mouth <sup>12</sup>	is silent,	not	speaking <sup>13</sup> words

15 - this is not an obvious translation, and the pieces referred to are not explicitly body parts. This could also be translated as places or things, although the usual word for things is xt.



ib ·	tm m W wr	ni	s X A n f	<b>sf</b> rA
ib	tm.w	ni	sXA.n f	sf
heart	fails,	not	remembering	yesterday







<b>q s</b> T19	mn n n wrfn	<b>Aw w</b> rA Y1A
qs	mn.n f n	Aww <sup>14</sup>
bones	hurt from	high age <sup>14</sup>















b W	nfr	xpr	n	b W	<b>b i n</b> wr
bw <sup>15</sup>	nfr	xpr	m	bw <sup>15</sup>	bin
pieces <sup>15</sup>	beautiful	develop	to	pieces <sup>15</sup>	evil

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