

Eloquence of Speech as Expressed on Private Monuments

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The theme of the good speech seems to have been a central one in ancient Egypt, highlighting the positive effect of eloquence and rhetorical skills in varied situations. Admiration of the good speech was noticeably articulated in varied forms and expressions. The correct use of the language was conceived as “art”. Notions of the significance of knowing when to speak, how to speak and choosing the words to say were therefore frequently encountered. Therefore, texts alternating between negative declarations and positive affirmations of speaking good were often encountered. Being knowledgeable and skilled were significant qualities echoing a wise attitude. Carefully chosen utterances were opposed to the evil speech. The studied texts shed the light on the lexicographical diversity and the perspective of how eloquence of speech was conceived. The main aim is to consider the wide range of private monuments on which the value and significance of the good speech was recorded, reflecting wisdom and knowledge. Examples were encountered on varied medium such as tomb inscriptions, stelae and statues. The one eloquent of speech was characterized as being ‘skilled in speech’, ‘foremost of speech’, one who speaks in situations of wrath’ and ‘precise when he speaks’. Expressions that designate the good speech were related to the mouth, the tongue and the utterances such as ‘precise of speech’ and ‘wise of tongue’.

1. Introduction

Eloquence of speech was highly valued in the ancient Egyptian society. Being mindful of the uttered words was evidently linked to being knowledgeable. Admiration of the good speech was noticeably articulated in varied forms and expressions. Furthermore, saying what was good was on top of the high officials’ affirmations.¹ The correct use of the language was conceived as “art” as evoked by Assmann.² Notions of the significance of knowing when to speak, how to speak and choosing the words to say were therefore frequently encountered.

¹ M. Lichtheim, *Moral Values in Ancient Egypt*, OBO 155 (Freiburg, 1997), 20.

² J. Assmann, “Reden und Schweigen”, in W. Helck and E. Otto (eds.), *LÄ V* (Wiesbaden, 1984), 196.

Two basic compartments were extremely appreciated in Old Kingdom texts; neither speaking evil, nor doing it. Therefore texts alternating between negative declarations and positive affirmations of speaking good were often recorded on private monuments. Besides, one of the typical values affirmed since the Old Kingdom was the beautiful speaking, and speaking associated with attentive listening.³

2. Declarations of speaking good

Declarations of speaking good were often encountered on private monuments during the Old Kingdom.⁴ Positive declarations were as well paralleled in the Middle Kingdom,⁵ where Abydene stelae testify of the growth of vocabulary and the expansion of terminology. ‘Chosen utterances’ $\text{𓄏𓄏𓄏𓄏} \text{ stp } \text{t3sw}$ ⁶ and ‘excellent utterances’ $\text{𓄏𓄏𓄏𓄏} \text{ ikr } \text{t3sw}$ ⁷ would make a difference in speaking. Besides, all the speaking competences were laid out as requisites for holding offices.

The good speech was further recorded on private monuments dated to the New Kingdom as $\text{𓄏𓄏𓄏𓄏} \text{ mdwt } \text{ndmt}$,⁹ literally translated ‘the sweet talk’. The expression was interpreted by Sethe as “angenehme Rede”¹⁰ (the comfortable talk), as it soothes the heart.

3. Eloquence of speech in the language

The expressions encountered on private monuments are extremely varied in style. Some of them may seem recherché, and do not belong to the usual registers of the language. Yet, particular phrases were more popular, and were thus recurrent in many sources. A conspicuous variety of expressions was elaborated and came into use especially since the Middle Kingdom.

Furthermore, silence was conceived as a virtue that hinders quarrel. Lichtheim further explains “Right silence and right speech have equal value”.¹¹ When a mediator is needed to interfere, the one who appeases the situation was called $\text{𓄏𓄏} \text{ mdww}$ ‘the one who speaks’ as on the Abydene stela of *In-i-ti.f* son of *Snt* (BM EA 581).¹²

³ Assmann, “Reden und Schweigen”, 195-196.

⁴ E.g. *Urk. I*, 200, (4); J. Capart, *Une rue de tombeaux à Saqqarah* (Brussels, 1907), pl. 77, 79. (Tomb of *Nfr-sšm-Pth* called *Šši*, Saqqara).

⁵ E.g. Stela of *S3t Ht-Hr* (BM EA 569). Cf. the text on the stela of *S-n-Wsrt* (Louvre C 170 - E 3110); and that on the stela of *hw-Sbk* (Manchester 3306).

⁶ H. Fischer, “The Inscription of In-it.f, born of Tfi”, *JNES* 19/4 (1960), pl. VI.

⁷ W. K. Simpson, *The terrace of the great god at Abydos: The offering chapels of dynasties 12 and 13*, Yale Expedition to Egypt 5 (New Haven - Philadelphia, 1974), pl. 10, (8).


⁸ *Urk. IV*, 122, 16, 17 (tomb of *P3 hry* at El-Kab).

⁹ The word $\text{𓄏𓄏} \text{ ndm}$ can also be translated ‘pleasant, pleasing’, ‘comfortable’. See R. O. Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian* (Oxford, 1988), 144.

¹⁰ K. H. Sethe, *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie*. Bearbeitet und übersetzt von Kurth Sethe, IV. Historisch-Biographische Urkunden, (Leipzig, 1914), 60.





¹¹ M. Lichtheim, *Moral Values in Ancient Egypt*, *OBO* 155 (Freiburg, 1997), 24.

¹² M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Autobiographies Chiefly of the Middle Kingdom: A Study and an Anthology*, *OBO* 84 (Freiburg, 1988), 111, (n. 1)

Reporting well was valued as well; the expression ¹³ *smi nfr* ‘report well’ was attested in Middle Kingdom inscriptions. The ability to report personally (i.e. with no interference from mediators) was an indicator of wisdom.





Especially on occasions of distress being able to listen and to control what might be said was valued. The good speech would soothe the weeping one *sgr rm.w.*¹⁴ Moreover, ‘precision of speech’ *ḳ3 mdw* was emphasized as a reason for the ruler’s compensation.¹⁵

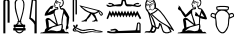
3.1. Expressions attested since the Old Kingdom

- ¹⁶ *dd(.i) n m3ct* ‘(I) spoke what was right’.
- ¹⁷ *sm3c mdw* ‘(one) who makes speech right’.
- ¹⁸ *dd.n(.i) nfr whm(.n.i) nfr* ‘(I) spoke what is good, (I) repeated what is good’.
- ¹⁹ *rh r3f* ‘(one) who knows his speech’.

3.2. Expressions attested since the Middle Kingdom

3.2.1. Expressions associated to ‘the mouth’ and/ or ‘the speech’ *r3*²⁰

- ²¹ *r3(.i) ikr(.w)* ‘(my) mouth was excellent’.
- ²² *nn isft prt m r3(.i)* ‘No evil came out of (my) mouth’.
- ²³ *spd r3* ‘efficient of speech’.
- ²⁴ *rh.w r3* ‘who know their speech’.

¹³ Simpson, *The terrace of the great god at Abydos*, pl. 17 (4, 5), stela of *S-n-Wsrt Ktt* (Louvre C 174 – E 3132). Cf. the parallel text on the Abydene stela of *S3t Ht-Hr* (BM EA 569):  *smi s3m.f nn ʿm-ib* ‘who reports his actions without forgetting’.

¹⁴ HTBM 2, 23; Simpson, *The terrace of the great god at Abydos*, pl. 12, (12), (stela of *Ini-iti.f*: BM EA 581).

¹⁵ H. O. Lange and H. Schäfer, *Grab und Denksteine des Mittleren Reichs in Museum von Kairo II*, Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du musée du Caire (Nr. 20400-20780) (Berlin, 1908), 90, 91, (12, 13), stela of *Hr-nḥt* (Cairo, CG 20499).

¹⁶ *Urk.* I, 57, 1, 2. False door in the Giza tomb of *Sšm-nfr*.

¹⁷ *Urk.* I, 260, 1. Lintel in the tomb of *Nnki*, south Saqqara.

¹⁸ *Urk.* I, 200, (4); Capart, *Une rue de tombeaux à Saqqarah*, pl. 77, 79. *Nfr-sšm-Pth* called *Šši*, Saqqara

¹⁹ H. Junker, *Giza VIII. Bericht über die von der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien auf gemeinsame Kosten mit Dr. Wilhelm Pelizaeus unternommenen Grabungen auf dem Friedhof des Alten Reiches bei den Pyramiden von Giza*. VIII. Der Ostabschnitt des Westfriedhofs. Zweiter Teil, Philosophisch-historische Klasse 1947, 73/1 (Wien, 1947), 134-35, Abb. 62, Taf. XXIII b. Mastaba of *ḥw-wd3* at Giza.














²⁰ *Wb* II, 389, 5-9.

²¹ Fischer, “The Inscription of In-it.f, born of Tfi”, pl. VI. Stela of *Ini iti.f* son of *Tfi* (MMA 57.95).


²² J.J. Clère and J. Vandier, *Textes de la première période intermédiaire et de la XIème dynastie*, BAeg 10 (Brussels, 1948), § 24, (12). Stela of *Hnwn* (Cairo E. 36346)

²³ HTBM 2, 23; Simpson, *The terrace of the great god at Abydos*, pl. 12, (27). Stela of *Ini-iti.f* son of *Snt* (BM EA 581). Also *Urk.* VII, 59, 11 (east wall, southern half, text 248). Tomb-chapel of *df3(.i) ḥʿpy* (nr. 1), Assiut.

3.2.2. Expressions associated to ‘the utterance’ *t3sw* and/ or ‘the words’ *mdwt*, *dd*

-  ²⁵ *rh(.w) mdwt* ‘(one) skilled in speech’.
-  ²⁶ *stp* ²⁷ *t3sw* ‘(one) with chosen utterances’.
-  ²⁸ *hnty mdw* ‘(one) foremost of speech’.
-  ²⁹ *t3s(.i) wsr(.w)* ‘(my) utterance was powerful’.
-  ³⁰ *ink mdww m swt dnd* ‘I was one who speaks in situations of wrath’.
-  ³¹ *rh t3s(.w)* ‘(I was one) who knew the phrase(s)’.
-  ³² *ikr md(w).f* ‘excellence of his speech’.
-  ³³ *ikr t3sw* ‘excellent of utterances’.
-  ³⁴ *mty n dd.f* ‘precise when he speaks’.
-  ³⁵ *h(.w) nb.f hr mdw.f* ‘one on whose speech his lord relies’.
-  ³⁶ *ikr dd* ‘excellent at speaking’.
-  ³⁷ *r3.i rwd(.w)* ‘my mouth was firm’.
-  ³⁸ *hn nfr* ‘good speech’.

3.2.3. Expressions associated to ‘the tongue’ *ns*

-  ³⁹ *s[k]m ns* ‘wise of tongue; also (one) who makes perfect the tongue’.

²⁴ HTBM 2, 22, (10). Stela of *Ini-iti.f* son of *Snt* (BM EA 572). Also on the stela of *Mntw-htp* (Cairo CG 20539), verso 20.

²⁵ H. Fischer, “The Inscription of In-it.f, born of Tfi”, pl. VI.

²⁶ H. Fischer, “The Inscription of In-it.f, born of Tfi”, pl. VI.

²⁷ *Wb* IV, 338, 8 “wählerisch sein”.

²⁸ Clère and Vandier, *Textes de la première période intermédiaire et de la XIème dynastie*, § 24, (1). Stela of *Ini iti.f* son of *Myt* (Ny Carlsberg 1241).

²⁹ Fischer, “The Inscription of In-it.f, born of Tfi”, pl. VI.

³⁰ HTBM 2, 23; Simpson, *The terrace of the great god at Abydos*, pl. 12, (10). Stela of *Ini-iti.f* son of *Snt* (BM EA 581)

³¹ HTBM 2, 23; Simpson, *The terrace of the great god at Abydos*, pl. 12, (10).

³² F. L. Griffith, *The inscriptions of Siût and Dêr Rîfeh* (London, 1889), 10, pl. 5; *Urk.* VII, 57-58 (great hall, east wall, southern half, text 242, 243). Tomb-chapel of *df3(.i) h'py* (nr. 1), Assiut.

³³ Griffith, *The inscriptions of Siût and Dêr Rîfeh*, 10, pl. 5; *Urk.* VII, 57-58 (great hall, east wall, southern half, text 242, 243). Tomb-chapel of *df3(.i) h'py* (nr. 1), Assiut. Also on the stela of *Ini iti.f* (Louvre C 167 – E 3111).



³⁴ Simpson, *The terrace of the great god at Abydos*, pl. 10, (x+3). Stela of *Ini iti.f* (Louvre C 168).

³⁵ Lange and Schäfer, *Grab und Denksteine des Mittleren Reichs in Museum von Kairo II*, 155, (rt. 5). Stela of *Mntw-htp* (Cairo CG 20539), recto 5.

³⁶ Lange and Schäfer, *Grab und Denksteine des Mittleren Reichs in Museum von Kairo II*, 152, (vs. 9). Stela of *Mntw-htp* (Cairo CG 20539), verso 9.

³⁷ *Urk.* IV, 118, 13, 14. (Tomb of *P3 h'ry*, El-Kab).

³⁸ *Wb* III, 289, 1, 2; HTBM 2, 23.

-  ⁴⁰ *spd ns* ‘sharp/ efficient of tongue’.
-  ⁴¹ *ꜥk3 st-ns* ‘precise in speech’.

4. Textual corpus

The present research concerns mentions of eloquence of speech and rhetorical skills on private monuments. The examples attested are excerpts from private tomb inscriptions, stelae and statues. It is noteworthy that literary tales were not included in the study, being a specific genre of their own; different in both style and composition. The studied texts shed the light on the lexicographical diversity and the perspective of how eloquence of speech was conceived. The main aim is to consider the wide range of private monuments on which the value and significance of the good speech was recorded, reflecting wisdom and knowledge. Illustrative examples were categorized as follows:

- I. Positive and negative declarations concerning speech
- II. Speaking perfectly/ righteously
- III. Denial of lies, evil or falsehood
- IV. Precision of speech
- V. Useful and knowledgeable speech
- VI. The effect of good speaking on soothing the heart
- VII. The appreciation of being silent in specific situations

I. Positive and negative declarations concerning speech

1. Tomb inscription of *Nhbw*

Dating: Old kingdom

Location: Giza



*ink dd nfrt*⁴³ *wꜥm nfrt*

n sp dd(.i) ht nb dw r rmt nb

I am one who speaks what is perfect (and) repeats what is perfect,

Never did (I) say an evil thing against any man.

³⁹ Clère and Vandier, *Textes de la première période intermédiaire et de la XIème dynastie*, § 24, (1). The text is attested on the stela of *Ini iti.f* son of *Myt* (Ny Carlsberg 1241), and on the stela of *Hty* (Cairo JE 45057).

⁴⁰ Simpson, *The terrace of the great god at Abydos*, pl. 11, (8). Stela of *Ihr-Nfrt* (Berlin 1204).

⁴¹ *Urk.* IV, 993, 4-8.

⁴² *Urk.* I, 219, 6, 7.

⁴³ The word *nfr* could also denote beautiful or good. See R. B. Parkinson, *The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant: A Reader's Commentary*, *Lingua Aegyptia Studia Monographica* 10 (Hamburg, 2012), 4, 8.

2. Tomb inscription of *Šhmt-n-ḥ*

Dating: Fifth Dynasty (Sahure)

Location: Saqqara



n sp iri.i ḥt nb ḏw r rmt nb

Never did I do an evil thing against any man.

3. Tomb inscription of *Sšm-nfr*, Giza (nr. 53)⁴⁵

Dating: Fifth Dynasty (Isesi)

Location: False door



n-sp dd(.i) ḥt nb ḏw r rmt nb ḥr ḥm n nb(.i)

Never did (I) say anything evil against any man in the presence of (my) lord.

4. Tomb inscription of *Idw Snni* (Kasr al Sayad)⁴⁷

Dating: Sixth Dynasty (Pepy II)

Location: inscription above a shaft in the tomb



n dd.s ts⁴⁹ šn⁵⁰ ib(.i)

She did not say a phrase that repelled my heart.⁵¹

5. Biographical text of *ḥm mry Rḥ mry Pth* called *Nḥbw*, Cairo text (JE 44608)

Dating: Sixth Dynasty (Pepy I)

Provenance: Giza chapel, nearby Khufu's pyramid⁵²

The biography belongs to a royal master builder. The text relates to the category of texts concerning the organisation of workmen. The inscriptions mention that the stela owner followed his master's commands to his satisfaction. He further includes negative declarations of having wrongly behaved towards anyone with whom he dealt.

⁴⁴ A. Mariette, *Les mastabas de l'ancien empire, fragments du dernier ouvrage de A. Mariette*, publié d'après le manuscrit de l'auteur par G. Maspero (ed.) (Paris, 1889), 204, 205; *Urk.* I, 40, 4 (B) false door, right side.

⁴⁵ *LD* II, 81.

⁴⁶ *Urk.* I, 57, (1, 2).

⁴⁷ *LD* II, 114 a.

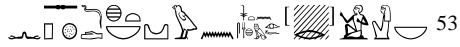
⁴⁸ *Urk.* I, 116, (10).

⁴⁹ Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, 308.

⁵⁰ *Wb* IV, 504, 5; Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, 269.

⁵¹ N. C. Strudwick, *Texts from the Pyramid age*, R. Leprohon (ed.), *Writings from the ancient world* 16, (Atlanta, 2005), 189.

⁵² *Urk.* I, 215. The chapel had been dismantled and the restored texts were probably originally on either side of a doorway. Strudwick, *Texts from the Pyramid age*, 265.



n-sp dd(.i) ht nb dw n nsw shm⁵⁴ ir.f [r] rmt nb

Never did (I) say anything evil to a king or a powerful person against any man.

6. Tomb of *Hr hw.f*, Qubbet el-Hawa

Dating: Sixth Dynasty (Pepy II)

Location: Façade, entrance



ink dd nfr whm mrrt

n-sp dd(.i) ht nb dw n shm ir.f r rmt nb

I am one who speaks what is perfect (and) repeats what is beloved,

Never did (I) say an evil thing to a powerful person (lit. power he does) against any man.

7. Stela of *Hnwn* (Cairo E. 36346)

Dating: Eleventh Dynasty (Intef II, Intef III)

Provenance: Thebes, Dra^c Abu el-Naga



ink dd nfr whm nfr ir(.i) ht n tp-nfr

I am one who speaks what is perfect (and) repeats what is perfect, who does a thing the right way.

II. Speaking perfectly/ righteously

8. Tomb inscription of *Hnk^w*, Deir el-Gebrawi⁵⁷

Dating: Fifth or Sixth Dynasty⁵⁸

Location: Deir el-Gebrawi



ink Hnk[w] dd nfr ndm

I am *Hnk^w* who speaks what is perfect and sweet.

⁵³ *Urk.* I, 217, (7).

⁵⁴ *Wb* IV, 249, 7.

⁵⁵ *Urk.* I, 122-123, (7).

⁵⁶ Clère and Vandier, *Textes de la première période intermédiaire et de la XIème dynastie*, § 32, (1).

⁵⁷ N. de G. Davies, *The rock tombs of Deir El Gebrâwi*. Part II. *Tomb of Zau and tombs of the northern group*, *ASEg* 12, (London, 1902), pl. 24..

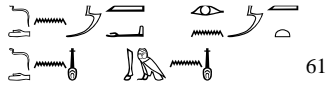
⁵⁸ *Urk.* I, 76; Strudwick, *Texts from the Pyramid age*, 366.

⁵⁹ *Urk.* I, 76, (1).

9. Tomb inscription of *Nfr-sšm-R^c* called *Ššī*, Saqqara⁶⁰

Dating: Sixth Dynasty (Teti)

Location: Middle jambs of the false door

*ḏd.n(.i) m3^ct ir.n(.i) m3^ct**ḏd.n(.i) nfr whm.n(.i) nfr*

(I) spoke justice, (I) performed justice;

(I) spoke what is perfect, (I) repeated what is perfect.

10. Tomb inscription of *Nfr-sšm-Pth* called *Ššī*, Saqqara⁶²

Dating: Sixth Dynasty (Teti)

Location: tomb facade

It is noteworthy that there are similarities with the text of *Nfr-sšm-R^c* (tomb no. 224).⁶³

This is most probably due to the close proximity of both tombs.

*ḏd.n(.i) nfr whm(.n.i) nfr*

(I) spoke what is perfect, (I) repeated what is perfect.

11. Tomb inscriptions of *Nnki*, Saqqara⁶⁵

Dating: Sixth Dynasty (Pepy II)

Location: architrave, lintel⁶⁶*sm3^{c68} mdw*

(One) who makes speech right.

12. Stela of *Inī-iti.f* (Strassburg 345 + Firenze 7595)

Dating: early Eleventh Dynasty

Provenance: Thebes, El-Tarif

⁶⁰ PM III², 511, 512.⁶¹ *Urk. I*, 198, (1); Capart, *Une rue de tombeaux à Saqqarah*, pl. 11.⁶² PM III², 511, 512.⁶³ Strudwick, *Texts from the Pyramid age*, 299.⁶⁴ *Urk. I*, 200, (4); Capart, *Une rue de tombeaux à Saqqarah*, pl. 77, 79.⁶⁵ PM III², 515, 516.⁶⁶ The lintel was in Leipzig (Inv. 359) but is lost. *Urk. I*, 57; Strudwick, *Texts from the Pyramid age*, 226.⁶⁷ *Urk. I*, 260, (1).⁶⁸ *Wb VI*, 124, 14.

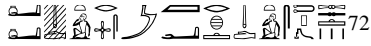
ḥk3 nb spr.y r[.f] ḥc.n<.sn> ḥc.y⁷⁰ m ḥsf⁷¹ w(i) n nfr.n dd(.i)

Every ruler arrived there. Then, they rejoiced over meeting me, because (my) speech was good.

13. Stela of *Ini iti.f* (MMA 57.95)

Dating: Eleventh Dynasty

Provenance: probably Thebes



did(.w) mdwt r wn.s m3c rh(.w) mdwt stp⁷³ t3sw

I was one who gives speech as its true being, one knowledgeable (in) speech, (with) chosen utterances.

14. Stela of *Ini iti.f* (MMA 57.95)

Dating: Eleventh Dynasty

Provenance: probably Thebes



mdw(.i) wstn.kwi m dd ib(.i) mh m c⁷⁵ k3 n nb(.i)

When (I) speak, I am unrestricted in speaking, my heart is filled of straightness for (my) lord.

15. Tomb-chapel of *df3(.i) ḥc^{py}* (nr. 1), Assiut

Dating: Twelfth Dynasty (Senusert I)

A parallel inscription is in the great hall of the same tomb in Assiut. Being efficient in speech was associated with the good conduct that the king loves.



spd⁷⁷ r3 m sh n srw

One efficient of speech in the hall of the officials.

16. Tomb-chapel of *df3(.i) ḥc^{py}* (nr. 1), Assiut

Dating: Twelfth Dynasty (Senusert I)

⁶⁹ R. Landgráfová, *It is my good name that you should remember: Egyptian biographical texts on Middle Kingdom stelae* (Prague, 2011), 2, (5, 6).


⁷⁰ *Wb* III, 40, 12.

⁷¹ Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, 197.

⁷² H. Fischer, “The Inscription of In-it.f, born of Tfī”, pl. VI.

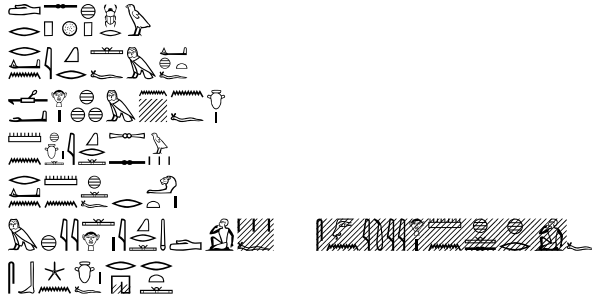
⁷³ *Wb* IV, 338, 8 “wählerisch sein”.

⁷⁴ Fischer, “The Inscription of In-it.f, born of Tfī”, pl. VI.

⁷⁵ *Wb* IV, 233, 9-13.  *c⁷⁵ k3 dd* ‘richtig redend’; Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, 50 ‘exact sense of speech, precise, accurate’.

⁷⁶ *Urk.* VII, 59, 11 (east wall, southern half, text 248).

⁷⁷ *Wb* IV, 109 “tüchtig”.



dr sp hprw

rdi.n ikr.f mht⁷⁹.f

w^c hr h m [wb3] n.f ib⁸⁰

mnh ib ikr⁸¹ t3sw⁸²

rdi.n mnh(w).f r-h3t

mhy⁸³ hr ikr md(w).f s[h_n]tiy hr mnh(w) shr.f

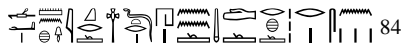
sb3.n ib.f r hrt

One who subdues wrongdoing (that happened),
 one whose excellence brought about his respect,
 one unique in confiding to him,
 one efficient of heart, excellent of utterances,
 one whose excellence was put in the front,
 one revered on account of the excellence of his speech, one promoted because of the efficiency of his counsels,
 one whom his heart taught to satisfaction.

17. Stela of *Ini-iti.f* son of *Snt* (BM EA 572)

Dating: Twelfth Dynasty (Senusert I)

Provenance: Abydos



w^c mnh ikr ndt-r3

hnn md(w) rh.w r3.sn

⁷⁸ F. L. Griffith, *The inscriptions of Siût and Dêr Rîfeh* (London, 1889), 10, pl. 5; *Urk.* VII, 57-58 (great hall, east wall, southern half, text 242, 243).

⁷⁹ Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, 115.

⁸⁰ *Wb* I, 290, 23 *wb3 n.f ib* “dem das Herz geöffnet wird = dem man etwas anvertraut”.

⁸¹ *Wb* I, 137, 1-15 ‘trefflich, nützlich’.

⁸² *Wb* V, 403, 10-21 ‘Spruch, Ausspruch, Rede’.

⁸³ *Wb* II, 129, 12.

⁸⁴ HTBM 2, 22, (10).

(I was) a uniquely efficient one, excellent of counsel,
who agrees with the words of those who know their speech.⁸⁵

18. Stela of *Mntw-wsr* (MMA 12.184)

Dating: Twelfth Dynasty (Senusert I)

Provenance: Abydos



*ink mdw r r-^c srw šw.y m dd p3w*⁸⁶

I am one who speaks according to the art of the officials,⁸⁸ one free of saying that (i.e. improper speech).

19. Stela of *Ini itif* (Louvre C 167 – E 3111)

Dating: Twelfth Dynasty (Senusert I)

Provenance: Abydos



w3h-ib ikr t3sw

A kindly one, excellent of utterances.

20. Stela of *S3t Ht-Hr* (BM EA 569)

Dating: Twelfth Dynasty (Amenemhat II)

Provenance: Abydos



mry nb.f m3^c n st-ib.f dd nfrt whm mrrt

*ir hst nb-t3wy smi sšm.f nn ʿm ib*⁹¹

One truly beloved of his lord, his trusted one, who speaks what is good and repeats what is beloved, who does what the lord of the two lands praise, who reports his actions without forgetting.

21. Stela of *S-n-Wsrt* (Louvre C 170 – E 3110)

Dating: Twelfth Dynasty (Senusert II)

⁸⁵ Compare with the stela of *Ini-itif* son of *Snt* (BM EA 572): HTBM 2, 21, (10).

⁸⁶ Landgráfová, *It is my good name that you should remember*, 130, (13).

⁸⁷ The precise meaning of *p3w* is not clearly determined. See Landgráfová, *It is my good name that you should remember*, 132, n. (242). M. Lichtheim (*Ancient Egyptian Autobiographies Chiefly of the Middle Kingdom: A Study and an Anthology*, OBO 84 (Freiburg, 1988), 105, n. (4) translates ‘gossip’.

⁸⁸ Cf. Lichtheim (*Ancient Egyptian Autobiographies Chiefly of the Middle Kingdom*, 105, (n. 4).

⁸⁹ Simpson, *The terrace of the great god at Abydos*, pl. 10, (8).

⁹⁰ HTBM 2, pl. 19-20 (9, 10).

⁹¹ *Wb* I, 184, 16, 17 *ʿm* ‘wissen, erfahren’. See also *Wb* I, 184, 14 *ʿm ib* ‘das Herz verschluckt etw. = hält es geheim’.

Provenance: probably Abydos⁹²

 93

*dd{.f} nfrt whm mrirt ir ht n tp nfr*⁹⁴

(One) who says what is good and repeats what is beloved, one who does things right.

22. Tomb inscriptions of the Nomarch *Imn-m-ht*

Dating: Twelfth Dynasty (Senusert I)

Location: Beni Hassan, tomb no. 2 (UE 16), portico⁹⁵

 96

*nn wn hnt*⁹⁷ *m ht.f*

dd.f m mdt m3t

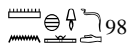
There is no greed in his body,

what he speaks is truth.

23. Inscription of *K3rs*, Thebes

Dating: Eighteenth Dynasty (Amenhotep I)

Location: Dra^c Abu el-Naga, Thebes (actually in Cairo)

 98

mnh dd

Excellent (in) speaking.⁹⁹

In the same text, another inscription specifies *K3rs*' ability to deal with what is heard as being confidential and therefore never speaks of it.¹⁰⁰

24. Tomb inscriptions of *Inni*, Thebes


Dating: Eighteenth Dynasty

Location: Sheikh Abd el Qurna, Thebes

Among the titles of *Inni* the following related to his qualifications as the king's adviser.

⁹² PM VIII³, 83 (803-026-601).

⁹³ Landgráfová, *It is my good name that you should remember*, 202, 203 (5).

⁹⁴ *Wb* V, 286, 3-6  *n tp nfr ir ht* 'richtig (handeln)'.

⁹⁵ The inscription is on the right door post.

⁹⁶ A. H., Gardiner, *Late-Egyptian Miscellanies*, BAe 7, (Brussels, 1937), 101, rto. (3,1).

⁹⁷ *Wb* III, 121, 12.

⁹⁸ *Urk.* IV, 47, 9.

⁹⁹ K. H. Sethe, *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie*. Bearbeitet und übersetzt von Kurth Sethe, IV. Historisch-Biographische Urkunden, (Leipzig, 1914), 25 "vortrefflich im Reden".

¹⁰⁰ *Urk.* IV, 47, 11.



101

ikr dd hr ib n nsw

skm ns

Excellent in speaking for the heart of the king,
(with) perfect tongue.¹⁰²

25. Tomb inscriptions of P3 hry, El-Kab¹⁰³

Dating: Eighteenth Dynasty (Thutmose III)

Location: livestock census



104

sn.f mry.f sš ikr n wn m3c

skm¹⁰⁵ ns

His son, his beloved, the excellent scribe truly,
(with) perfect tongue.¹⁰⁶

26. Tomb of P3 hry, El-Kab

Dating: Eighteenth Dynasty (Thutmose III)

Speaking about his moral conduct P3 hry mentions that his mouth was firm.



107

r3.i rwd(.w)¹⁰⁸

hr smnh n nb

My mouth was firm,
concerning what was excellent for the lord.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰¹ *Urk.* IV, 67, 12, 13.

¹⁰² Cf. Sethe, *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie*. Bearbeitet und übersetzt von Kurth Sethe IV, 35.

¹⁰³ J. J. Tylor and F. L. Griffith, *Ahnas el Medineh (Heracleopolis Magna): with Chapters on Mendes, the Nome of Thot, and Leontopolis / The Tomb of Paheri at El Kab*, MEEF 11 (London, 1894), 125.

¹⁰⁴ *Urk.* IV, 127, 14, 15.

¹⁰⁵ *Wb* IV, 317, 2-11.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Sethe, *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie*. Bearbeitet und übersetzt von Kurth Sethe IV, 62.

¹⁰⁷ *Urk.* IV, 118, 13, 14.

¹⁰⁸ *Wb* II, 412, 10.

¹⁰⁹ Sethe, *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie*. Bearbeitet und übersetzt von Kurth Sethe IV, 58.

III. Denial of lies, evil or falsehood

27. Tomb inscription of *Hnkw*, Deir el-Gebrawi

Dating: end of Fifth Dynasty or beginning of Sixth Dynasty

Location: Deir el-Gebrawi

110

n dd(.i) grg¹¹¹ im (?)

(I) did not speak lies therein.

28. Tomb of *P3 hry*, El-Kab

Dating: Eighteenth Dynasty (Thutmosis III)

112

dd.i n.tn

n grg im

I speak to you,

without lies therein.¹¹³

29. Tomb inscriptions of the sculptor *Dhwty*

Dating: Eighteenth Dynasty

Location: Kom el Ahmar (Hierakonpolis)

The sculptor *Dhwty* was praised for not speaking wrong or falsehood as follows:

114

n pr.n isft m r3.f

There was no falsehood that came out of his mouth.¹¹⁵

30. Tomb of *P3 hry*, El-Kab

Dating: Eighteenth Dynasty (Thutmosis III)

116

mdwt ndmt nt sd3y-hr¹¹⁷

¹¹⁰ *Urk. I*, 79, (24).

¹¹¹ *Wb II*, 189, 2; Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, 290 “falsehood, lie”.

¹¹² *Urk. IV*, 118, 13, 14.

¹¹³ Cf. Sethe, *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie*. Bearbeitet und übersetzt von Kurth Sethe IV, 59 “Ich rede zu euch, ohne dass Lüge darin ist”.

¹¹⁴ *Urk. IV*, 131, 11.

¹¹⁵ Sethe, *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie*. Bearbeitet und übersetzt von Kurth Sethe IV, 64.

¹¹⁶ *Urk. IV*, 122, 16, 17.

¹¹⁷ *Wb IV*, 15, 379, 12, 13.

n s33¹¹⁸ n ḥ3ty m sdm s(y)

A sweet speech of a pleasant conversation.

The heart will not cease (lit. be full) to hear it.¹¹⁹

31. Inscription of the vizier *P3 sr*, Theban tomb 106

Dating: Nineteenth Dynasty (Ramesses II)

Location: pillar D in broad hall, face A



n dd.i grg rh.i

I have told no lie knowingly (lit. 'I know').¹²¹

IV. Precision of speech

32. Stela of *Hny* (Moscow, Pushkin Museum I.i.a. 1137 a, b)

Dating: Eleventh Dynasty (Intef II)

Provenance: Thebes, El-Tarif



n sp ir rmt nb m r3(.i) smi¹²³(.i) n nb(.i) ds.i

Never did a man act as (my) mouth, (I) reported to (my) lord myself.

The text conveys the meaning that the stela owner never had a mediator to talk for him (lit. act as his mouth). Reporting personally to the lord was a privilege he enjoyed; definitely because of the precision of his speech.

33. Stela of *Mntw-ḥtp* (Cambridge E.9.1922)

Dating: early Twelfth Dynasty

Provenance: Abydos



gm t3s wšd.t(w).f ir.f wšb m-sp r sp¹²⁵.f

(I was) one who found the (right) phrase when he was asked for it, one who gives (lit. he gives) the answer at once and to the point.

34. Stela of *Ini iti.f* (Louvre C 168)

Dating: Twelfth Dynasty (Senusert I)

¹¹⁸ *Wb* IV, 15, 13, 14.

¹¹⁹ Sethe, *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie*. Bearbeitet und übersetzt von Kurth Sethe IV, 60.

¹²⁰ *KRI* III, 5, 8.

¹²¹ *KRITA* III, 4, 5:5.

¹²² Clère and Vandier, *Textes de la première période intermédiaire et de la XIème dynastie*, § 17, (7).

¹²³ *Wb* VI, 128, 14.

¹²⁴ M. F. Petrie, *Tombs of the courtiers and Oxyrhynchos*, BSAE 37 (London, 1925), pl. XXII.

¹²⁵ *Wb* III, 435, 4.

Provenance: Abydos

Being precise and accurate was as well a significant qualification repeatedly emphasized in biographies. In the following text it was further associated with speaking.



h^c.w r mty n dd.f nn wn sš

(One) who stands precise when he speaks without it being written.

35. Stela of *Hr-nht* (Cairo, CG 20499)

Dating: Second Intermediate Period¹²⁷

Provenance: Tell Edfou



rdi.n n.i hk3 wb3yt¹²⁹ nfrt n k3y n(.i) mdw.i

The ruler gave me a beautiful servant for the precision of my speech.

36. Granite statue of *Mn-hpr-R^c-snb* (Cairo 547)

Dating: Eighteenth Dynasty

Provenance: Abydos



k3 st ns¹³¹

(One) precise in speech.

V. Useful and knowledgeable speech

37. Tomb inscription of *Sšm nfr*

Dating: Fifth Dynasty (Isesi)

Location: Giza, tomb no. 53



wn(.i) dd(.i) hr nswt 3h n rmt

n sp dd(.i) ht nb dw r rmt nb hr hm n nb(.i)

¹²⁶ Simpson, *The terrace of the great god at Abydos*, pl. 10, (x+3).

¹²⁷ S. Kubisch, *Lebensbilder der 2. Zwischenzeit: Biographische Inschriften der 13.-17. Dynastie*, SDAIK 34 (Berlin-New York, 2008), 224.

¹²⁸ Lange and Schäfer, *Grab und Denksteine des Mittleren Reichs in Museum von Kairo II*, 90, 91, (12, 13).

¹²⁹ *Wb I*, 292, 7 , var. , *wb3yt* 'Dienerin'.

¹³⁰ *Urk. IV*, 993, 6.

¹³¹ *Wb II*, 320, 16 *st ns* 'Stelle der Zunge'.

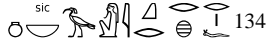
¹³² *Urk. I*, 57, 15, 16.

(I) used to tell the king what serves people,
never did (I) tell an evil thing against any person to the majesty of (my) lord.

38. Mastaba of *ḥnh-wd3*¹³³

Dating: Sixth Dynasty

Location: Giza

 ^{sic} 134

ink 3ḥ ikr rh r3.f

I am an excellent spirit, who knows his speech.

39. Stela of *D3ri* (Cairo JE 41437)

Dating: Eleventh Dynasty (Intef II)

Provenance: Thebes, Dra^c Abu el-Naga

Providing sustenance for the country was part of *D3ri*'s career. The text on the stela relates that the ruler caused him to fare down in order to acquire barley (*r irt wnmt nt it-šm^c*). He was caused to do that because his speech was beautiful and because of being knowledgeable.

 135

n rh mdt(.i) nfr dd.i

Because (my) words were knowledgeable and my speech was good.

40. Stela of *Ini iti.f* (MMA 57.95)

Dating: Eleventh Dynasty

Provenance: probably Thebes

 136

r3(.i) ikr(.w) t3s(.i) wsr(.w)

(My) mouth was excellent, (my) word was powerful.

41. Stela of *Ini iti.f* son of *Myt* (Ny Carlsberg 1241)

Dating: Eleventh Dynasty (Mentuhotep II)

Provenance: Thebes, Dra^c Abu el-Naga

 137

ḥnty mdw sbk šhr s[k]m ns

¹³³ PM III, 167.

¹³⁴ Junker, *Giza VIII*, 134-35, Abb. 62, Taf. XXIIIb.

¹³⁵ Clère and Vandier, *Textes de la première période intermédiaire et de la XIème dynastie*, § 14, (4, 5). See W. Schenkel, *Memphis - Herakleopolis - Theben: die epigraphischen Zeugnisse der 7.-11. Dynastie Ägyptens*, ÄA 12 (Wiesbaden, 1965), 100.

¹³⁶ Fischer, "The Inscription of In-it.f, born of Tfi", pl. VI.

¹³⁷ Clère and Vandier, *Textes de la première période intermédiaire et de la XIème dynastie*, § 24, (1).

(One) foremost of speech, wise of counsel, who makes perfect the tongue.

42. Stela of *Hty* (Cairo JE 45057)

Dating: late Eleventh Dynasty

Provenance: Thebes, El-Tarif

138

skm ns m sh n srw

(I was) wise of tongue in the hall of officials.

43. Stela of *Mntw-htp* (Cairo CG 20539), recto 5

Dating: Twelfth Dynasty (Senusert I, Amenemhat II)

Provenance: Abydos

139

gm t3s sndm ksnt¹⁴⁰ h.w nb.f hr mdw.f

One who finds the phrase (i.e. the right phrase), who eases what is difficult. One on whose speech his lord relies (lit. his lord relies on his speech).

44. Stela of *Mntw-htp* (Cairo CG 20539), recto 15

Dating: Twelfth Dynasty (Senusert I, Amenemhat II)

Provenance: Abydos

141

w h.w.w nfr mdwt

The unique one who protects good speech.

45. Stela of *Mntw-htp* (Cairo CG 20539), verso 5

Dating: Twelfth Dynasty (Senusert I, Amenemhat II)

Provenance: Abydos

In the following text wisdom was expressed by stating that Thot has written on the stela owner's tongue.

142

s3.n dhwtj hr ns.f

Thot had written on his tongue.

¹³⁸ Landgráfová, *It is my good name that you should remember*, 54, (7).

¹³⁹ Lange and Schäfer, *Grab und Denksteine des Mittleren Reichs in Museum von Kairo II*, 150-158, (rt. 5).

¹⁴⁰ *Wb V*, 71, 1.

¹⁴¹ Lange and Schäfer, *Grab und Denksteine des Mittleren Reichs in Museum von Kairo II*, 150-158, (rt. 15).

¹⁴² Lange and Schäfer, *Grab und Denksteine des Mittleren Reichs in Museum von Kairo II*, 150-158, (vs. 5).

46. Stela of *Mntw-htp* (Cairo CG 20539), verso 20

Dating: Twelfth Dynasty (Senusert I, Amenemhat II)

Provenance: Abydos

[*ink 3h*] *ikr rh r3.f**iw rh.i 3[ht m hrt-ntr]*

[I am] an excellent [spirit], knowing his speech.

I know the useful [in the necropolis].

47. Stela of *S-n-Wsrt Ktt* (Louvre C 174 – E 3132)

Dating: Twelfth Dynasty

Provenance: most probably Abydos¹⁴⁴*ink s33¹⁴⁶ mdd w3t¹⁴⁷ smi nfr n h3b sw*

I am wise and faithful (lit. who follows the way, i.e. loyal), one who reports good to the one who sent him.

48. Stela of *ddw Sbk* (BM EA 566)

Dating: Twelfth Dynasty

Provenance: Abydos

*si3 s r tpt-r3.f*

(One) who knows a man according to his speech.

49. Stela of *Thr-Nfrrt* (Berlin 1204)

Dating: Twelfth Dynasty (Senusert III)

Provenance: Abydos

Thr-nfrrt recorded that his majesty appointed him as ‘courtier’ *smr* while still young (aged twenty six), because of the reasons that he states in the text as follows.¹⁴³ Lange and Schäfer, *Grab und Denksteine des Mittleren Reichs in Museum von Kairo II*, 150-158, (vs. 20).¹⁴⁴ Simpson, *The terrace of the great god at Abydos*, 6.¹⁴⁵ Simpson, *The terrace of the great god at Abydos*, pl. 17 (4, 5).¹⁴⁶ Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, 208.¹⁴⁷ *Wb II*, 192, 4 ‘dem Weg jemds folgen, ihm ergeben sein’.¹⁴⁸ HTBM 4, pl. 37 (3).¹⁴⁹ Simpson, *The terrace of the great god at Abydos*, pl. 11, (8).

ikr šhr spd ns

(One) excellent of plans and sharp of tongue,

50. Stela of *hw-Sbk* (Manchester 3306)

Dating: Twelfth Dynasty (Senusert III)

Provenance: Abydos



dd nfr whm mrrt m hrt-hrw nt r^c nb

(One) who says perfection and repeats what is beloved in the course of every day.

51. Stela of *šhpt-ib-R^c* (Cairo CG 20538), recto 6

Dating: Twelfth Dynasty (Senusert III, Amenemhat III)

Provenance: Abydos



dd nfrwt whm mrrt

One who says good things and repeats what is beloved.

52. Stela of *Hr-nht* (Cairo, CG 20499)

Dating: Second Intermediate Period¹⁵²

Provenance: Tell Edfou



šm hrw n sr hr mdw.f^A54

(One who) walks quietly¹⁵⁵ for (?) the nobleman¹⁵⁶ because of his speech.

53. pLansing = pBM EA 9994 (rto. 3, 1)

Dating: Twentieth Dynasty

Provenance: Thebes, west bank



spd r3.k <hr> šdi¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁰ Simpson, *The terrace of the great god at Abydos*, pl. 31, (1).

¹⁵¹ Lange and Schäfer, *Grab und Denksteine des Mittleren Reichs in Museum von Kairo II*, 145-150 (rt. 6).

¹⁵² Kubisch, *Lebensbilder der 2. Zwischenzeit: Biographische Inschriften der 13.-17. Dynastie*, 224.

¹⁵³ Lange and Schäfer, *Grab und Denksteine des Mittleren Reichs in Museum von Kairo II*, 90, 91, (11, 12).

¹⁵⁴ Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, 159.

¹⁵⁵ Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, 159.

¹⁵⁶ Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, 235.

¹⁵⁷ Gardiner, *Late-Egyptian Miscellanies*, 101, rto. (3,1).

¹⁵⁸ Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, 273.

Your mouth is effective¹⁵⁹ (i.e. eloquent) <upon> reading.¹⁶⁰

54. Statue of the vizier *P3 sr* (Philadelphia UM E. 534+)

Dating: Nineteenth Dynasty (Ramesses II)

Provenance: Deir el Bahari, Metuhotep temple

Location: texts on the front



*mh nhwy*¹⁶² *Hr m m3t*

hr.tw hr pr n r3.f

(One) who fills the ears of Horus (i.e. the king) with truth,
one is satisfied with what comes from his mouth.¹⁶³

55. Naophorous cube-statue of *P3 hry pdt*,¹⁶⁴ (Brussels E. 8063)

Dating: Nineteenth Dynasty (Ramesses II)

Location: Naos left side



hpt di nsw Hr š.f nsw t3wy di.k h nfr m i3wt nfr

iw r3 wd3 iwt r st.s

An offering which the king gives to Herishef, king of the two lands, that you may give
a happy lifetime, with a happy old age,

The mouth being sound, the step being at its (proper) place.¹⁶⁶

56. Inscription on the door lintel of *Mry Tm*¹⁶⁷

Dating: Nineteenth Dynasty (Ramesses II)

Location: actually in Kestner Museum, Inv. 1925.186

The inscriptions express that he may be granted the mouth to be sound and that his
step be placed in the proper place.

¹⁵⁹ Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, 223, 224.

¹⁶⁰ M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, Bd. 2, *The New Kingdom* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1976), 168, 169; N. Take, *Verspunkte als Gliederungsmittel in ramessidendischen Schülerhandschriften*, SAGA 21 (Heidelberg, 2001), 88, 89.

¹⁶¹ KRI III, 17, 10.

¹⁶² Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, 44.

¹⁶³ KRITA III, 14, 17:10.

¹⁶⁴ *P3 hry pdt* was the King's steward.

¹⁶⁵ KRI III, 181, 8-9.

¹⁶⁶ KRITA III, 126, 181:5.

¹⁶⁷ Lieutenant of Chariotry.

iw r3 wd3(.w) iwt r st.sn

The mouth being sound, and the step being at its (lit. their) (proper) place.¹⁶⁹

VI. The effect of good speaking on soothing the heart

57. Stela of *Rdiw hnmw* (Cairo CG 20543)

Dating: Eleventh Dynasty (Intef II)

Provenance: Dendera

When good speaking is reciprocated in letting others speak up and express what is in their hearts, it is conceived as a graceful attitude. Containing others, especially those who would complain or feel unsatisfied is in this sense a good comportment.

sbt-hr¹⁷¹ n spr.ti r dd.f ntt m ib.f

(I was one) friendly to the one who comes so that he might say what is in his heart.

58. Stela of *Ini-iti.f* son of *Snt* (BM EA 581)

Dating: Twelfth Dynasty (Senusert I)

Provenance: Abydos

ink sfn.w¹⁷³ sdm.i rn.i n dd n(.i) wnnt m ib.i

I was gentle when I heard my name to the one who told (me) what was in his¹⁷⁴ heart.

59. Stela of *Ini-iti.f* (BM EA 581)

Dating: Twelfth Dynasty

Provenance: Abydos

sgr rm.w m hn¹⁷⁶ nfr

(One) who soothed the weeping (one) with a good speech.

60. Stela of *Ini-iti.f* (BM EA 581)

Dating: Twelfth Dynasty

¹⁶⁸ KRI III, 243, 4.

¹⁶⁹ KRITA III, 173, 181:5.

¹⁷⁰ Lange and Schäfer, *Grab und Denksteine des Mittleren Reichs in Museum von Kairo* II, 165, (5).

¹⁷¹ Wb III, 434, 10 'lachenden Gesichts, freundlich'.

¹⁷² HTBM 2, 23; Simpson, *The terrace of the great god at Abydos*, pl. 12, (11).

¹⁷³ Wb III, 443, 2-12.

¹⁷⁴ Obviously *ib.i* is to be rendered *ib<.f>*.

¹⁷⁵ HTBM 2, 23; Simpson, *The terrace of the great god at Abydos*, pl. 12, (12).

¹⁷⁶ Wb III, 289, 1, 2.

Provenance: Abydos

Offices held by *Ini-iti.f* son of *Snt* required competences such as consideration and attentiveness. He was supposed to perform multiple tasks, instructing officials and dealing with specific matters and petitions.¹⁷⁷

178

*spd r3 m swt hns-ib*¹⁷⁹

(One) efficient of speech on occasions of suffering.

VII. The appreciation of being silent in specific situations

61. Stela of *Ini-iti.f* (BM EA 581)

Dating: Twelfth Dynasty

Provenance: Abydos

180

*ink gr n dnd*¹⁸¹

I was one silent with the angry.

62. Stela of *Ini-iti.f* (BM EA 581)

Dating: Twelfth Dynasty

Provenance: Abydos

Speaking on occasions where there is anger required wisdom and careful listening rather than speaking. This is what was expressed by *Ini-iti.f* on his stela, confirming his ability to deal with difficult situations.

182

ink mdww m swt dnd

I was one who speaks in situations of anger.

63. Stela of *Wp-w3wt-ꜣ* (Leiden V4 = AP 63)

Dating: Twelfth Dynasty (Senusert I, Amenemhat II)

Provenance: Abydos

183

ink gr.w m-m srw dd.w r3.f s3.w iwt.f

¹⁷⁷ Lichtheim, *Moral Values in Ancient Egypt*, 81.

¹⁷⁸ HTBM 2, 23; Simpson, *The terrace of the great god at Abydos*, pl. 12, (27).

¹⁷⁹ The expression *swt hns-ib* concretely means ‘places’, yet it is used to denote abstract situations. See *Wb* III, 116, 12-16; M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Autobiographies Chiefly of the Middle Kingdom: A Study and an Anthology*, OBO 84 (Freiburg, 1988), 111, (n. 2).

¹⁸⁰ HTBM 2, 23; Simpson, *The terrace of the great god at Abydos*, pl. 12, (8).

¹⁸¹ Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, 323 “angry man”.

¹⁸² HTBM 2, 23; Simpson, *The terrace of the great god at Abydos*, pl. 12, (10).

¹⁸³ Simpson, *The terrace of the great god at Abydos*, pl. 30, (9).

I was a silent one among the officials, one of whom it was said ‘await that he comes’.

64. Stela of *Mntw-ḥtp* (Cairo CG 20539), recto 5

Dating: Twelfth Dynasty (Senusert I, Amenemhat II)

Provenance: Abydos



htm r3.f ḥr sdm.t.f

One whose mouth is closed (lit. sealed) at what he hears.

65. Stela of *Mntw-ḥtp* (Cairo CG 20539), verso 5

Dating: Twelfth Dynasty (Senusert I, Amenemhat II)

Provenance: Abydos



didi pr snwy ḥtp m pr.w n r3.f

(One) who caused the two contenders to go out satisfied because of the speech of his mouth.

66. Stela of *Mntw-ḥtp* (Cairo CG 20539), verso 9

Dating: Twelfth Dynasty (Senusert I, Amenemhat II)

Provenance: Abydos



nfr sdm ikr dd

(One) good at listening and excellent at speaking.

67. Stela of *Mntw-ḥtp* (Cairo CG 20539), verso 14

Dating: Twelfth Dynasty (Senusert I, Amenemhat II)

Provenance: Abydos



mdw r ḥrw.f m pr bity

*ḥry sgr n šnwt*¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁴ Lange and H. Schäfer, *Grab und Denksteine des Mittleren Reichs in Museum von Kairo II*, 150-158, (rt. 5).

¹⁸⁵ Lange and H. Schäfer, *Grab und Denksteine des Mittleren Reichs in Museum von Kairo II*, 150-158, (vs. 5).

¹⁸⁶ Lange and H. Schäfer, *Grab und Denksteine des Mittleren Reichs in Museum von Kairo II*, 150-158, (vs. 9).

¹⁸⁷ Lange and H. Schäfer, *Grab und Denksteine des Mittleren Reichs in Museum von Kairo II*, 150-158, (vs. 14).

¹⁸⁸ *Wb IV*, 498, 3; Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, 268.

h3p ht¹⁹⁷ hr shrw¹⁹⁸ ʕh




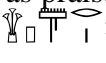
(One) silent concerning the counsels of the palace.¹⁹⁹

5. Conclusion

When the speaking is beautiful, the character is beautiful; a principle revealed by the texts, establishing what might be called ‘moral vocabulary’. The theme of the good speech seems to have been a central one recorded on private monuments, highlighting the positive effect of eloquence and rhetorical skills in varied situations. The study reveals significant illustrative examples highlighting how high officials were extremely keen to declare their ability to speak well among other competences. Recording such skills was encountered on private monuments since the Old Kingdom and continued through the Middle and the New Kingdoms.

Being knowledgeable and skilled were significant qualities echoing a wise attitude. Carefully chosen utterances *stp t3sw* were opposed to the evil speech *dd bin* which reveals ignorance.²⁰⁰ The good speech was described as *nfr* ‘good, beautiful’, *wsr* ‘powerful’, *stp* ‘chosen’, *rh* ‘known’, *spd* ‘efficient, sharp’, *ikr* ‘excellent’ and *ʕk3* ‘precise’.

The texts were recorded on varied medium; tomb inscriptions, stelae and statues. They form a stylistic register of the language embodying varied ways of articulating speeches. Positive declarations of saying what was good for people were attested starting from the Old Kingdom. The declarations continued to be encountered in Middle Kingdom biographies. Both expressions of contrasting affirmations of speaking well and of disclaiming speaking evil were encountered. Negative declarations were paralleled in varied sources. Examples occur in the Giza tomb inscriptions of *Sšm nfr*²⁰¹ and *Nhbw*.²⁰² Variants of the negative declaration of not speaking evil against people were attested as well.²⁰³

Affirmations of not saying ‘lies’  *grg*²⁰⁴ (ex. 27, 28, 31) or ‘falsehood’  *isft*²⁰⁵ (ex. 29) were encountered in several texts. Not only was the good speech appreciated, but also being silent when needed was praised. In this sense  *htm r3* ‘(one) who closes the mouth’ (ex. 64, 69) and  *h3p r3* ‘(one with) covered mouth’ (ex. 70) were valued attitudes.

The terms and expressions used to denote eloquence of speech set the basic pattern for the characteristics of the good speaking. Officials’ biographies, especially during the

¹⁹⁷ Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, 163.

¹⁹⁸ Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, 242, 243.

¹⁹⁹ KRITA III, 11, 13:10.

²⁰⁰ Lichtheim, *Moral Values in Ancient Egypt*, 24.

²⁰¹ *Urk. I*, 57, 15, 16.

²⁰² *Urk. I*, 219, 6, 7.

²⁰³ E.g. *Urk. I*, 57, (1, 2). (*Sšm-nfr*, False door in his tomb at Giza).

²⁰⁴ *Urk. IV*, 118, 13, 14.

²⁰⁵ *Urk. IV*, 131, 11.



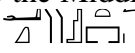
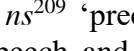
²⁰⁶ *Urk. IV*, 63, 15. (Tomb biographical inscriptions of *Inni*, Thebes).

Twelfth Dynasty, summed up the necessity of mastering how to talk by emphasizing the following:

- precision of speech
- soothing the heart
- perfecting the tongue
- becoming wise

The one eloquent of speech was characterised as being knowledgeable *rh(.w) mdwt* ‘skilled in speech’, *hnty mdw* ‘foremost of speech’, *mdww m swt dnd* ‘one who speaks in situations of wrath’ and *mty n dd.f* ‘precise when he speaks’.

The good words would not disturb the heart (ex. 4, 14, 57, 58). They were related to *M3^ct* (ex. 9, 22, 54) and to righteousness *k3* (ex. 14, 35, 36). They cause the ruler to rejoice *h^c.y* (ex. 12). Being selective in choosing utterances was praised (ex. 13). It might be deduced that the excellent utterances would be those who fulfil the formerly described characteristics.

Expressions that designate the good speaking were related to the mouth, the tongue and the utterance. Among the examples encountered  *hn nfr*²⁰⁷ ‘the good speech’ was attested since the Middle Kingdom,  *st ns*²⁰⁸ ‘place of the tongue’ was attested in the form  *st ns*²⁰⁹ ‘precise of speech’ and  *skm*²¹⁰ *ns* ‘wise of tongue’. Precision of speech and chosen utterances convey the meaning of voicing the speaker’s wisdom and maturity. This was echoed on the Abydene stela of *Mntw-htp* (Cairo CG 20539), where *Thot* was mentioned as having written on the stela owner’s tongue (ex. 45).²¹¹

The declarations follow a simple tone in self-presentations. The parallelism of the expressions is evident. Yet, the broad range of varied expressions and richness of vocabulary is impressive. Rhetorical skills seem to have been typical of an official’s professional requirement of a highly stylized composed portrayal of virtuousness and wisdom. The texts clearly illustrate the types of behaviour expected of the leaders, where self-expression as a medium to resolving stressful situations was appreciated.

Mastering philological expressions would lead to calming intensely troubled situations. Wisdom in talking would prevent greed; and would enable paraphrasing the demands in ways that would lead to dissolving arguments. Controlling speech, dealing with adversity and reconciliation would usually lead to the wished for ‘happy end’.

²⁰⁷ *Wb* III, 289, 1, 2; HTBM 2, 23.

²⁰⁸ *Wb* II, 320, 16 ‘Stelle der Zunge’.

²⁰⁹ E.g. Statue of *Mn-hpr-R^c-snb* (Cairo 547).

²¹⁰ *Wb* IV, 317, 2-11 “vollständig machen, beenden”; Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, 251. E.g. Stela of *Hty* (Cairo JE 45057).

²¹¹ Lange and Schäfer, *Grab und Denksteine des Mittleren Reichs in Museum von Kairo* II, 150-158, (vs. 5).

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فصاحة الحديث كما تم التعبير عنها على الآثار الخاصة

رانيا يونس مرزبان

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معلومات المقالة	المخلص
الكلمات المفتاحية الفصاحة؛ المهارات البلاغية؛ الآثار الخاصة؛ الدقة؛ التعبيرات.	إن موضوع الحديث الطيب ليعيد أحد الموضوعات المحورية في مصر القديمة، بما يعكسه من التأثير الإيجابي للفصاحة والمهارات البلاغية في المواقف المختلفة. ولقد تم التعبير عن فصاحة الحديث بوضوح من خلال تعبيرات وصيغ متنوعة، بل لقد كان الاستخدام الصحيح للغة يعد بمثابة "فنا". لقد تناولت نصوص عديدة ذكر الأهمية الخاصة لإدراك متى يمكن التعبير بالكلام، وكيف يتم استخدام الكلام وكيفية اختيار الكلمات. ومن ثم فإن النصوص تتنوع ما بين التأكيد الإيجابي عن الحديث الطيب والنفي المرتبط بما يقابله سلبيا. ولقد كانت كل من المعرفة والمهارة في الحديث تعد خصائص مهمة تعكس الحكمة. وأما الكلام المختار بعناية فهو على النقيض من الحديث السيء. والنصوص التي تمت دراستها في هذا الصدد تلقى الضوء على التنوع في التعبيرات، وكذلك على الكيفية التي يتم من خلالها إدراك قيمة فصاحة الحديث. والهدف الأساسي هو الوقوف على التنوع العريض للمصادر المسجلة على الآثار الخاصة والتي تبرز قيمة وأهمية الكلام الطيب، والتي تعكس الحكمة والمعرفة. ولقد وردت العديد من الأمثلة على آثار خاصة متنوعة مثل النصوص المسجلة في المقابر واللوحات والتماثيل. ولقد تم وصف الشخص الذي يتسم بفصاحة الحديث بأنه "الموهوب في الحديث"، "المتقدم في الحديث"، "الذي يتحدث في المواقف الصعبة" و"الذي يتسم بالدقة عندما يتحدث". وارتبطت التعبيرات التي استخدمت للإشارة إلى الحديث الطيب بالنغم واللسان والكلام، مثل "دقيق الحديث" و "حكيم اللسان".

(JAAUTH)
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