

ARCHAEOLOGY OF CHILDHOOD WORKBOOK



ORIENTAL INSTITUTE
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Childhood: Ancient Egypt and Today

What was life like for kids in ancient Egypt? How does your own childhood compare? Write or draw your answers in the boxes below! What is most different about your childhood? What are some similarities?

Ancient Egypt



House model courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art

Home

Most people lived in small houses with only a few rooms. Everyone slept in the same room, and when it was hot, people slept on the roofs of their homes. Often, people lived with their extended families, including aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Clothes and Hairstyles

While ancient Egyptian kids were often shown naked in art, they would have worn clothes and sometimes shoes like adults. Kids would have also worn jewelry! Young boys often wore their hair in a “side lock” style, in which all of the head was shaved except for a small braid on the side.



Rameses II as prince, with side lock, E10507

Child's tunic, E18285



Children's shoes, E351A-B

My Childhood

Home

Clothes and Hairstyles



Jug,
E29280

Food

Ancient Egyptian kids would have been nursed for three to four years, and then would have eaten foods adults did, like bread, beer, and vegetables. Beer in ancient Egypt was much different than beer today; it had a lower amount of alcohol and more nutrients.

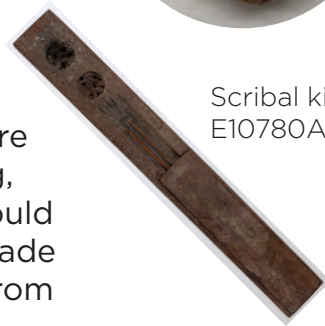


Bread,
E13641H

Food

School and Work

Only the children of wealthy families went to school, where they learned reading, writing, and arithmetic. Most kids would have learned their family's trade (the job their parents had) from their parents. Kids would also help their parents by taking care of animals or of younger siblings. By age fourteen, ancient Egyptians would have been ready to start a family of their own!



Scribal kit,
E10780A-D



Statue of woman
grinding grain, E10622

School and Work

Fun

Ancient Egyptian kids played games outside with their friends, and may have also played board games (which were played mostly by adults). Egyptian families often had pets like cats, dogs, or birds to play with too.



Bird relief,
E10555



Board game,
E371C

Fun

A Day in the Life: Ancient Egyptian Choose Your Adventure.

At the end of each paragraph you will find two choices. Make a decision on what you would like to do next as though you were really living in Egypt in the year 1324 BC. Then flip to the paragraph in parenthesis to read the next part of the story.

Part 1

Imagine you are a kid near your age living in Egypt in the year 1324 BC. You wake up and roll out of your reed bed. It is a beautiful day, and you can hear the water of the Nile bubbling outside your window. Everyone has taken the day off to prepare for the upcoming festival of Opet, leaving you with the whole day to do what you please.

Do you want to go down to the banks of the river? (go to 2b) Or do you want to go play with a friend? (go to 2a)

Part 2

2b: You tread carefully out your front door. Best not to wake your parents and siblings. Once you get outside, you put your arms up and stretch, letting the morning sun give you energy. Behind your house and down a steep embankment is the river. Rushing fast and every moment picking up more speed, the portion of the river that your family lives upon is known as the White Nile. But as you reach the water, the color is really more of a muddy brown, the same color as the mud squishing between your toes.

Do you want to continue walking downstream? (3c) Or would you like to head into town? (3d)

2a: You tread carefully out your front door. Best not to wake your parents and siblings. Once you get outside, you put your arms up and stretch, letting the morning sun give you energy. Down a small path through the jasmine and cornflower that grows up around your house lies the family home of your friend Atum. When you arrive at his house, he is already outside waiting for you. Turns out he wanted to hang out today too!

Do you want to go play a game? (3a) Or do you want to head into town? (3b)



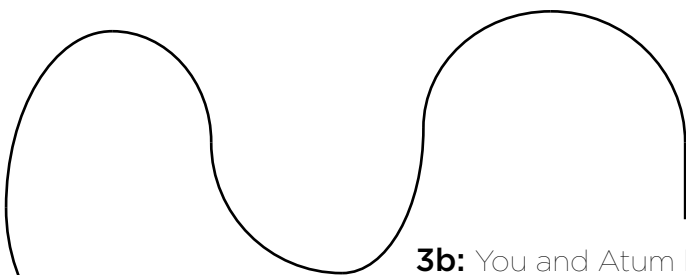
Part 3

3a: It's later in the day and getting a little hotter out, so you and Atum decide to sit in the shade of the house and play your favorite game: Senet. Atum is pretty good at Senet and beats you in the first game, but you come back and win the next two! After a while, you both get bored of the game and decide to practice your juggling. You're a pretty good juggler and just got new balls made of papyrus and covered in cloth. But this is the first time you've managed to juggle five balls at once! Atum is very impressed, but all of a sudden you lose focus, and one of the balls goes flying into the brush.

Do you go look for it? (4a) Or decide to go inside and have something to eat? (4b)



Senet is an ancient Egyptian game played on a rectangular board like the one above. Players throw colored sticks, similar to modern dice, in order to determine how your game pieces move around the board.



3b: You and Atum leave his house behind as you pick your way down the path toward the town. The walk isn't too long, and it is one you've made many times, often times carrying food for your family from the market. When you arrive, the town is busy setting up for the festival of Opet. (Opet was an ancient Egyptian festival celebrating the gods Amun, Mut, and their son Khonsu. It was celebrated in the second month of the lunar calendar and was a time to pray, feast, and make offerings to the gods.)

Do you decide to help set up for the festival? (4d) Or wander through the market? (4c)

3c: You face the current and pick your way slowly along the banks of the river. The banks are low, and water comes up and fills each of your footsteps as you walk. Along the way you see ibises—white birds with long black beaks—dotting the shoreline. Small toads jump out of your way, and you come across a soft-shell turtle sunning itself in the mud. Ahead is a thick patch of papyrus where your family hides their small fishing boat.

Would you like to get in the boat and float downstream? (4e) Or would you like to continue walking? (4f)

3d: You climb back up the bank and start walking upstream toward the town. Along the way you pass houses made of mudbricks, with families sitting outside or kids doing their daily chores. You pass by your friend Atum's house, and he pops his head out the small window.

"You going into town?" yells Atum.

"Yup! You want to come with?" you yell back.

Atum pops back inside and emerges from the house a few minutes later with his bag and sandals, and the two of you continue toward the town (3b).

Amun, god of the sun and the air.



Part 4

4a: You and Atum set off in the direction of the missing ball. It was colored with red paint, so it shouldn't be too hard to find, right? But after twenty minutes of searching, still no luck! You try moving farther from Atum's house until you meet a small stream that you know continues into the Nile a little farther along. There, sitting in the shade of a date palm, is an elderly lady holding your missing juggling ball.

"You found it!" you cry and run up to the lady. "Thank you so m—"

But before you can finish, she says, "Not so fast! This is your ball?"

"Yes," you reply, confused as to why she won't give you your ball back.

"Well," says the old woman, "this ball rolled right past my front door, and you're not getting it back unless you can answer my riddle first!"

"A riddle?" you reply.

"A riddle!" Atum cries, clearly more excited by this turn of events than you are.

"Yes, a riddle!" yells the old woman. "What, in the morning, walks upon four feet; on two feet in the afternoon; and in the evening upon three?"

Hmm . . . you cross your arms, thinking hard. Minutes pass, then all of a sudden:

"I've got it!" you say. "The answer is a human!" (5a) Or "The answer is a frog!" (5b).

4b: "Forget the ball," Atum says. "We can look for it later. Besides, my mom has just made lunch!" Suddenly, you realize how hungry you've been and decide lunch cannot wait. You follow Atum inside and sit down on his family's reed mat to enjoy a meal of cooked fish, bread, and dried figs. The food is delicious, but you have to remember your manners and not eat too quickly. You spend the rest of the day lounging in the shade outside the house, telling stories about past adventures and ones you have yet to have.

It's getting late; time to head home (6c).

4c: You and Atum turn down an alley between two large buildings and emerge into the town market. The market is full of traders and craftspeople selling their wares from little stands. Everyone is busy buying items for the festival or running around trying to bargain for the best prices on wheat or garlic. Boats float down the Nile, carrying all sorts of exotic foods and goods from distant lands. Piles of spices from around the Mediterranean overflow one table, while on another are clothes and linens from all over Egypt. You approach one stall and realize suddenly how late it's getting.

"Maybe it's best to head home," you tell Atum. "The festival will be starting soon, and I know my parents want to go as a family."

"Yeah, you're right," your friend replies. "Probably a good idea to start heading back."

You leave the marketplace behind and start heading in the direction of home. (6b)



This juggling ball from the British Museum is a lot like the one you and Atum would have used.

Part 4 continues on the next page!

Part 4 cont.

4d: You and Atum happen upon your father's friend Babu, who is helping clear the town square for the arrival of the priests. "Hey kids!" says Babu. "Would you mind giving me a hand with this statue?"

"Sure," says Atum.

"Great! Just hold it steady while I check to make sure it is level."

Babu produces a plumb-bob level (insert picture of plumb from Ol along with an explanation) from inside his bag and holds it against the statue's front. Then, mysteriously, the string holding the plumb snaps!

"Oh great! Now what will I do?" cries Babu.

"I have an idea!" (5e) Or "Hmm . . . Maybe someone has a replacement?" (5f)

This ancient plumb and level tool is similar to the one Babu might have used.



4e: You push the small reed boat into the river and quickly hop in. Your boat glides over the surface of the Nile. To your left, there is a group of hippos lounging in the mud. To your right, you watch a monitor lizard slither down the banks and into the water. Below you, streams of boliti—a type of fish—shine and glisten, until a huge Nile perch comes by and disturbs their peace. It's getting late, and the sun has lowered so that the whole river begins to glow a bright red. You start to see the bank to your house approaching to your left and use the paddles to slow down and push toward shore.

Continue home. (6a)

4f: You pass by the patch of papyrus where your family keeps their boat and continue walking down the river. After a while, you find an area where the grasses have been smoothed over. Perhaps a hippo was lounging here earlier? you think to yourself. But then you spot a small mound of mud among the flattened grasses. A crocodile nest! you suddenly realize. The mound must be where the mama crocodile has laid and covered her eggs.

The mama crocodile might be nearby! Do you run away? (5h) Or decide to take a closer look? (5i)

Part 5

5a:

"I've got it!" you tell the old woman. "The answer is a human!"

"Drat!" the old woman cries. "People hardly ever get that one right."

Atum looks at you confused, still clearly not understanding the answer you gave.

"I don't get it," says Atum. "Humans don't have four legs or three. Just two." He gestures at his own two feet.

"Well, I realized that the morning, afternoon, and evening were actually different parts of a person's life. When you're a baby, in the morning, you crawl around on four feet. When you're an adult or a kid, in the afternoon, you use two legs, and when you're an old person, in the evening, you walk with a cane as your third leg."

"Yes, yes," said the old woman. "We know you figured it out. Now take your ball and get going!" The old lady reluctantly sticks out her hand to pass you back the ball.

Head home. (6c)

Part 5 cont. I

5b:

"I've got it!" you tell the old woman. "The answer is a frog!"

"Gah!" the old woman cries. "No one ever gets that right."

You look confused. "Wait, that's not right?"

"No, no, no," chides the old woman. "The answer is a human."

"I don't get it," says Atum. "Humans don't have four legs or three. Just two." He gestures at his own two feet.

"Well," the old woman replies, "the morning, afternoon, and evening, are actually different parts of a person's life. When you're a baby, in the morning, you crawl around on four feet. When you're an adult or a kid, in the afternoon, you use two legs, and when you're an old person like me, in the evening, you walk with a cane as your third leg."

"I still don't get it," says Atum. "Can my friend have the ball back now?"

"Fine!" snaps the old woman. "You can have your ball back, but no more juggling so close to my house." The old woman reluctantly sticks out her hand to pass you back the ball.

Head home. (6c)

5e: "I have an idea" you say. You bend down and begin untying the knot on your sandal that fastens it to your foot.

"What are you doing?" says Atum.

"Just a second," you shoot back. "There," you say, and hold up your sandal string to Babu. "You can use this to fix your plumb."

"You didn't have to do that!" replies Babu. "Although . . . it is just the right length." Babu reaches out and grabs the string. "Thank you. I think this will work just fine."

Head home. (6b)

5f:

"Hmm . . . Maybe someone has a replacement?" you tell Babu, and walk off to the nearest market stall. You find a stonemason's stall, full of elaborate tools and carvings.

"Hello sir," you say to the man running the stall. "Do you happen to have a plumb level I could borrow for a moment?"

The man looks at you skeptically at first. "What for?" he shoots back.

You gesture over your shoulder to where Babu and Atum stand awkwardly by the statue.

"Ours broke, and we just need it to make sure the statue for the festival is level, sir."

The man's face lights up, and he breaks into a huge grin. "Oh, it's for the festival! Absolutely you can borrow a level." After a moment of rummaging through his stall, the man produces a level and hands it over.

"Thank you!" you say, and head quickly back to rejoin the others.

"This is perfect," says Babu. "Okay, now hold the statue still." Babu presses the level to the statue so that the weight from the plumb drops down its front. "All right. That looks all right to me. Thank you kids for all your help!"

Head home (6b).

5h: Your mom told you never to mess around with crocodiles, and you run so fast out of that patch of grass, you nearly slip and fall into the river. You head back to the papyrus patch where your family's boat remains stashed. Panting and out of breath, you turn around to look upriver to where you just were. Slithering out of the water is the largest Nile crocodile you've ever seen!

Quickly hop in the boat! (4e) Or scramble up the bank toward home (6a).

Almost done!

Part 5 cont. II

5i: Sometimes curiosity gets the better of you, and this is one of those times. You take a quick look around, and slowly, carefully, tiptoe toward the small mound of dirt. Once you get there, you put your hands on the wet earth. You remember your dad telling you once that crocodiles laid thirty to eighty eggs in a single nest. Must be weird to be down there with all 30+ of your siblings, you think. Then, all of a sudden, you hear a rustle in the water behind you. Slowly, you take your hands off the mound and turn around. Slithering out of the water is the largest Nile crocodile you've ever seen! For a second, you freeze on the spot, and the mama crocodile lurches toward you. Then your nerves kick in, and you run so fast out of that patch of grass, you nearly slip and fall into the river. Running and panting, you finally make it back to where your family's boat was stashed.

Head home (6a).

Part 6

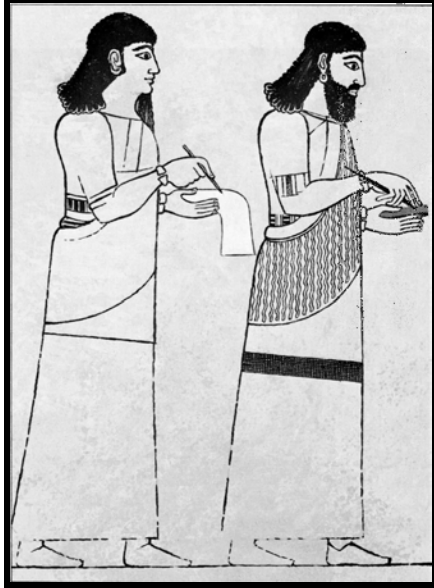
6a: Leaving the crocodiles, hippos, and birds behind, you make the trek up the side of the river's embankment and onto the short path toward home. After a moment, your house comes into view; your mom is outside weaving a basket from river reeds, your dad's friend Babu has arrived to bring gifts from the town's market, and your dad is sitting on the ground outside your door watching your younger siblings play. "Good day?" asks your mom as you approach the house. "A great day," you reply, and walk over to sit with her in the shade.

6b: It's getting late, and you still need to get back home before dark. You and Atum leave the town behind and start down the path. The mosquitoes buzz, and the two of you talk about your day, about the market, the festival, and what you would do if you were the pharaoh. The time passes quickly, and before you know it, you're back at Atum's house. "See you tomorrow?" you say to your friend. "See you then!" says Atum, and you turn to finish the walk home.

6c: Having had a full day, you decide to head back home. It's getting late, and your mom might worry if you aren't back soon. "Bye Atum!" you say, and start heading down the path. It's a short path between your house and his, and it's one you've taken many times before. But you're lost in thought, and it's nearly dark by the time you make it home. You creep into the front of your house, careful not to wake your parents or siblings, who by now must be sleeping. You take off your sandals and slide onto your cot. Staring up at the mud and bricks of your ceiling, you think, Today was a good day, before falling fast asleep.

The End!

I hope you enjoyed your adventure in ancient Egypt. Now go back and choose a different path to follow for a whole new story!



Welcome to the Edubba!

You have traveled back in time four thousand years! Suddenly, all the buildings around you are made of mud. The smell of cooking drifts out into the street from nearby doorways. People are moving all around you, some dressed plainly and others covered in shining colors. All are chattering away, arguing over the price of grain, calling out to their friends over the noise of bleating goats and barking dogs, or praying at the small shrines hidden between every few houses. Welcome to Mesopotamia . . .

It's Your First Day of Scribe School

You can already read the ancient clay tablet below without any training in cuneiform! The signs used here are so "pictographic", or picture-like, that you can guess their meanings just from their shapes. These pictographic signs come from the very earliest stages in the development of writing!

Can you guess what each of these signs means?

Write your guesses below:










Hint! Don't forget that the signs *used to be* turned 90 degrees. Try looking at the picture of the tablet sideways, imagining the right edge is actually the bottom edge. Now do the signs look like anything different?







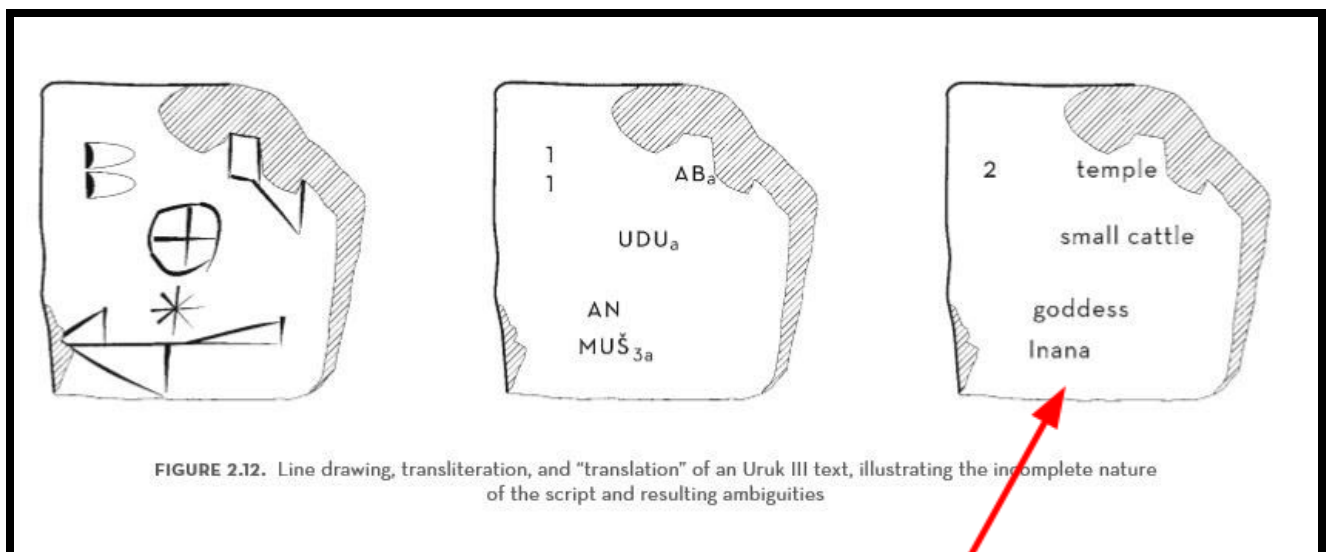


Another Hint! You might be wondering what on earth  is supposed to look like! Here's a clue...



(Don't forget—
ancient
Mesopotamians
had a sense of
humor, too!)

Answers:



Fun fact: Inanna is the goddess
of love and war

My Name in Cuneiform

Cuneiform signs are quite different from the letters we use to write in English. One cuneiform sign represents not just one letter (a, b, c) but actually two or more letters in a combination of sounds (ab, bi, ku). We call these "syllables." You put them together to form words, or in this case, names!



Examples:    

AL - LI - SU - UN ALLISON

NA - AN - SI NANCY

Notice that there are certain letters in English that just don't show up in cuneiform, like the "-cy" in "Nancy." You'll have to be creative! Look for signs that have a similar sound rather than similar spelling, like how "-si" sounds the same as "-cy."

Cuneiform does NOT have: C F J O V X Y

If your name has one of the above letters, try some creative replacements:

K for C P for F G for J U for O W for V Z for X I for Y

But! Cuneiform does have some **EXTRA sounds**: Š (sounds like "sh")

Now that you know how to put syllables together and get creative with spelling, you can try to *build* words in cuneiform, like your name!

Step 1) First, split your name up into syllables. For example, split "Cathey" into "CA-AT-HE-EY." Try writing your name using the syllables represented by cuneiform signs. "Cathey" might look like

KA - AT - HI - I

Your name in syllables: _____

Step 2) Find the cuneiform signs that represent each two-letter syllable in your name using the sign chart provided. Put one finger on the consonant you need on the left side of the chart and another finger on the vowel you need at the top. Move your fingers down and across to meet in the middle of the chart at the sign you need!

Example:    

KA - AT - HI - I

Your name in cuneiform signs: Draw it here!

Want to become a **GOD** or **GODDESS**?

Just write the "god" sign before your name! Now you are a Mesopotamian deity!



[god sign]

...You are now like these other Mesopotamian gods:



Utu - Sun god!



represents the word for "day"



Marduk - Creator of the world, the "bull calf" (BULL CALF) of the sun god Utu



()




Enlil - God of the gods, or "lord (LORD) of the fool (FOOL)"



()



Ninlil - Enlil's wife, "lady () of the fool"



Inanna - Goddess of love and war. Her name could be "nin (lady) + an (sky, heavens)," but we don't really know!



Nisaba - Goddess of grain and **writing**. Both of the signs in her name are about grain, barley, and wheat.



Fun fact: This is a picture of the god Marduk with his pet dragon!

Challenge!

Now, put on your junior Assyriologist hat and use your cuneiform sign chart to translate the common modern names below into letters. Hint: To decipher the name, try to say your translation out loud.



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— — —


Cuneiform Fill-in-the-Blank!

Some signs in Akkadian represent whole words instead of just syllables, like:

 UR.GI₇ = *kalbum* = dog

 SA.A = *šurānum* = house cat

 UDU = *imмерum* = sheep/goat

 ANŠE = *imērum* = donkey

These signs, called logograms, are left over from Sumerian, which is why they have a reading of the sign that is different than the Akkadian word, like UDU in Sumerian, meaning immerum in Akkadian!

Match the emoji to the cuneiform sign by drawing a line connecting them:



Now, fill in the blanks with the correct animal sign in cuneiform!

1. Some people don't like the _____ because it isn't always very nice.
(Hint: It has sharp claws.)

2. The _____ lives on a farm. It grows fur that humans use for clothing!
(Hint: The sign for it is a funny body part.)
3. If you throw a ball, the _____ will probably run after it happily.
(Hint: "Man's best friend.")
4. The _____ is good at carrying heavy loads and pulling carts, but it is also known for being stubborn.
(Hint: It has tall grey ears and big teeth!)

B	AB	𐤁𐤀	BA	𐤁𐤀
D	AD	𐤁𐤃	DA	𐤃𐤁
G	AG	𐤁𐤄	GA	𐤄𐤁
H	AH	𐤁𐤅	HA	𐤅𐤁
K	AK	𐤁𐤆	KA	𐤆𐤁
L	AL	𐤁𐤇	LA	𐤇𐤁
M	AM	𐤁𐤈	MA	𐤈𐤁
N	AN	𐤁𐤉	NA	𐤉𐤁
P	AP	𐤁𐤊	PA	𐤊𐤁
Q	AQ	𐤁𐤋	QA	𐤋𐤁
R	AR	𐤁𐤌	RA	𐤌𐤁
S	AS	𐤁𐤍	SA	𐤍𐤁
Š	AŠ	𐤁𐤎	ŠA	𐤎𐤁
T	AT	𐤁𐤏	TA	𐤏𐤁
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Z	AZ	𐤁𐤑	ZA	𐤑𐤁

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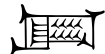


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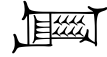


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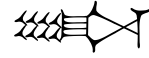


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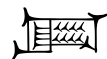


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















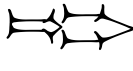










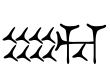
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