Instruction of Ptahhotep

Zaba (P)

Created on 2009-10-18 by Mark-Jan Nederhof and Robert Myers. Last modified 2010-05-30.

Transcription of *The Instruction of Ptahhotep*, in the version of Papyrus Prisse, following Zába (1956). The missing line numbers 6.1, 8.13, and 17.5 were inserted on the basis of Jéquier (1911). On p. 49, line number 12.4 was corrected to 13.4.

In lines 7.5 and 12.9, what seems to be in Zába's transcription is here transcribed as .

Bibliography

• G. Jéquier. *Le Papyrus Prisse et ses Variantes.* Librarie Paul Geuthner, Paris, 1911.

• Z. Zába. *Les Maximes de Ptahhotep*. Editions de L'Académie Tchécoslovaque des Science, Prague, 1956.

Zaba (P)

Created on 2009-11-05 by Mark-Jan Nederhof. Last modified 2009-11-12.

The numbers of Devaud, as they occur at the beginning of lines in Zaba, for version P.

Mark-Jan Nederhof (P) - English

Created on 2009-11-22 by Mark-Jan Nederhof. Last modified 2010-06-02.

Za 4.1

MJN 1 | sbꜣyt nt 4 | jmj-rꜣ njwt ṯꜣtj Ptḥ-ḥtp

MJN 1 | Instruction of 4 | the leader of the city and vizier Ptahhotep,

Za

MJN 5 | ḫr ḥm n nsw-bjtj Jssj ꜥnḫ(.w) ḏt r nḥḥ

MJN 5 | under the majesty of the king of Upper and Lower Egypt Isesi (may he live forever

Za 4.2

MJN 6 | jmj-rꜣ njwt ṯꜣtj Ptḥ-ḥtp ḏd=f 7 | jty nb=j

MJN until eternity!). 6 | The leader of the city and vizier Ptahhotep says: 7 | 'Sovereign, my lord,

Za

MJN 8 | tnj ḫpr(.w) jꜣw hꜣ.w

MJN 8 | infirmity has developed, old age has befallen,

Za 4.3

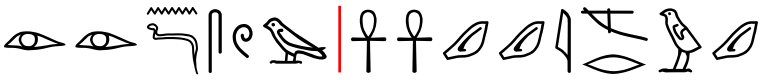
MJN 9 | wgg jw(.w) jḥw ḥr mꜣw

MJN 9 | feebleness has come, weakness is renewed.

Za

MJN 10 | sḏr.n=f ḫrd(.w) rꜥ nb

MJN 10 | One sleeps as a child every day.

Za 4.4 

MJN 11 | jrtj nḏs.w ꜥnḫwj jmr.w

MJN 11 | The eyes are weak, the ears have become deaf.

Za

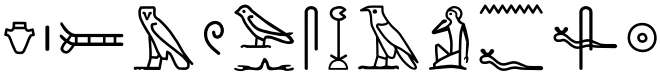
MJN 12 | pḥtj ḥr ꜣq n wrḏ jb=j

MJN 12 | Strength is waning through the tiredness of my heart.

Za

MJN 13 | rꜣ gr(.w) n mdw.n=f

MJN 13 | The mouth is silent and cannot speak.

Za 5.1 

MJN 16 | jb tm.w n sḫꜣ.n=f sf

MJN 16 | The mind has stopped and cannot remember the day before.

Za

MJN 17 | qs mn.n=f n ꜣww[1]

MJN 18 | bw nfr ḫpr(.w) m bw bjn

MJN 17 | The bones hurt because of the high age. | 18 Good has turned into evil.

[1] Reading is uncertain.

Za 5.2

MJN 19 | dpt nbt šm.tj

MJN 20 | jrrt jꜣw n rmṯ

MJN 19 | All taste has gone.

MJN 20 | What old age does to people

Za

21 22

MJN | bjn(.w)[1] m jḫt nbt | fnḏ ḏbꜣ(.w) n ssn.n=f

21 22

MJN | is bad in every respect. | The nose is blocked and cannot breathe,

[1] The masculine form is explained by Gardiner (1957), §511 4.

Za

23

MJN | n tnw ꜥḥꜥ ḥmst

23

MJN | because of the difficulty of standing and sitting.

5.3

Za

28

MJN | wḏ.tw n bꜣk-jm jrt mdw-jꜣwj

28

MJN | May this humble servant be ordered to appoint a staff-of-old-age,

---

Za

30

MJN | jḫ ḏd=j n=f mdw sḏmyw

30

MJN | so that I may tell him the words of those who have heard

---

Za

31 32

MJN | sḫrw jmjw-ḥꜣt | pꜣw sḏm n nṯrw

31 32

MJN | the counsels of the ancestors | who once listened to the gods.

5.4

Za

33 34

MJN | jḫ jr.tw n=k mjtt | dr.tw šnw m rḫyt

33 34

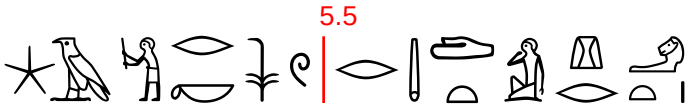
MJN | May the same be done for you, | may suffering be driven away from the people,

---

Za

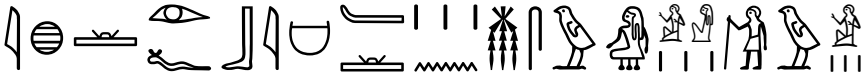
MJN 35 | bꜣk n=k jdbwj 36 | ḏd.jn ḥm n nṯr pn

MJN 35 | and may the Two Banks serve you!' 36 | And the majesty of this god said:

Za 

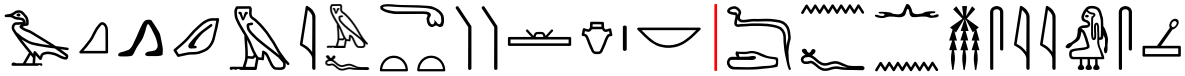
MJN 37 | sbꜣ rk sw r mdt ḫr-ḥꜣt

MJN 37 | 'Instruct him in the words of the past,

Za 

MJN 39 | jḫ jr=f bj n msw srw

MJN 39 | so that he will be a model for the children of officials.

Za 

MJN 40 | ꜥq sḏm jm=f mtrt-jb nb ḏd n=f 41 | nn msy sꜣ.w

MJN 40 | May obedience and all sincerity[1] enter him. Speak to him, 41 | for none is born wise!'

[1] Exact meaning is uncertain.

Za

MJN 42 | ḥꜣt-ꜥ m ṯsw n mdwt nfrt 43 | ḏdt.n jrj-pꜥt ḥꜣtj-ꜥ

MJN 42 | Beginning of verses of fine words 43 | spoken by prince regent, count,

Za

MJN 43b | jt-nṯr mry-nṯr 44 | sꜣ-nsw sms n ḫt=f

MJN 43b | the God's father, beloved of the God, 44 | the king's eldest son, of his body,

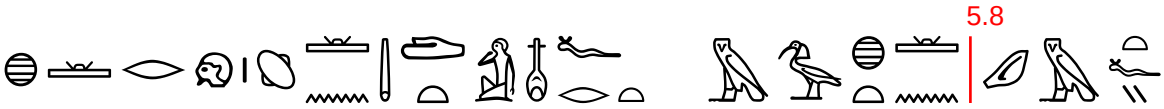
Za

46 47

MJN | jmj-rꜣ njwt ṯꜣtj Ptḥ-ḥtp | m sbꜣ ḫmw r rḫ

46 47

MJN | the leader of the city and vizier Ptahhotep, | in instructing the ignorant in knowledge

Za 

48 49

MJN | r tp-ḥbs n mdwt nfrt | m ꜣḫt n sḏm.tj=fj

48 49

MJN | according to the standard of fine words, | useful to him who will hear

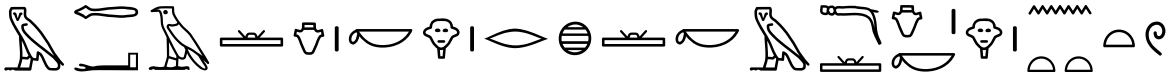
Za

50 51

MJN | m wggt n ntj r tht st | ḏd.jn=f ḫr sꜣ=f

50 51

MJN | and harmful to him who will deviate from them. | Thus he said to his son:

Za 

52

MJN | m ꜥꜣ-jb=k ḥr rḫ=k

52

MJN | 'Don't be arrogant because of your knowledge,

Za

54

MJN | nḏnḏ rk ḥnꜥ ḫm mj rḫ

54

MJN | but confer with the ignorant as with the knowledgeable!

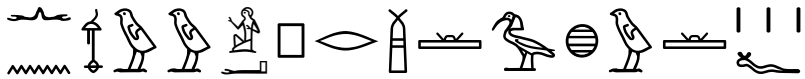
Za

55

MJN | n jn.tw ḏrw ḥmwt

55

MJN | The limits of craftsmanship cannot be attained,

Za 

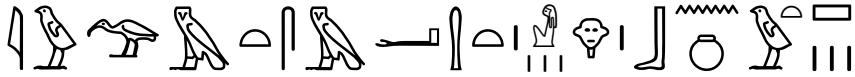
56
MJN | nn ḥmww ꜥpr ꜣḫw=f

56
MJN | and no craftsman has fully acquired his mastery.

5.10
Za

58
MJN | dgj mdt nfrt r wꜣḏ

58
MJN | Fine words are more hidden than malachite,

Za 

59
MJN | jw gm.tw=s m-ꜥ ḥmwt ḥr bnwwt

59
MJN | yet are found with the maids at the millstones.

Za

60
MJN | jr gm=k ḏꜣjsw m ꜣt=f

60
MJN | If you encounter a debater in action,

5.11
Za

61
MJN | ḫrp-jb m jqr r=k

61
MJN | one having authority so as to be superior to you,[1]

[1] The exact structure and meaning of this phrase is uncertain.

Za

62
MJN | ḫꜣm ꜥwj=k ḫms sꜣ=k

62
MJN | bend your arms and bow your back!

Za

63
MJN | m ṯꜣ jb=k r=f nn mn.n=f n=k

63
MJN | But don't be presumptuous to him[1] when he won't support you![2]

[1] Also possible seems mṯꜣ jb=k r=f, "If your mind challenges him".

[2] Perhaps one should read n rmn.n=f n=k.

Za

5.12

64 65
MJN | sᶜnḏ=k ḏd bjn | m tm ḫsf sw m ꜣt=f

64 65
MJN | Make little of bad speech | by not opposing him when he's in action!

Za

66
MJN | njs.tw=f m ḫm-jḫt pw

66
MJN | He will be called "this ignoramus"

Za

5.13

67
MJN | rmn.n dꜣr-jb=k ᶜḥᶜ=f

67
MJN | when your self-restraint has matched his prolixity.

Za

68
MJN | jr gm=k ḏꜣjsw m ꜣt=f

68
MJN | If you encounter a debater in action,

Za

69
MJN | mjtw=k ntj m rmnwt=k

69
MJN | someone like you, who's on the same level as you,

5.14

Za

70 71

MJN | ḏḏ=k ḫpr jqr=k r=f m gr | jw=f ḥr mdt bjnt

70 71

MJN | you will let your worth exceed his by silence, | while he is speaking evil.

Za

72

MJN | wr wfꜣ jn sḏmyw

72

MJN | The reproach by the authorities will be great,

Za

73

MJN | rn=k nfr(.w) m rḫ n srw

73

MJN | while your reputation will be good in the opinion of the officials.

6.1

Za

74

MJN | jr gm=k ḏꜣjsw m ꜣt=f

74

MJN | If you encounter a debater in action,

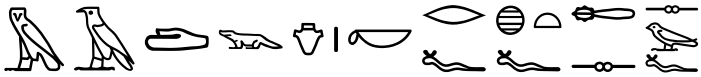
Za

75

MJN | m ḥwrw n js mjtw=k

75

MJN | one who is poor, not someone like you,

Za 

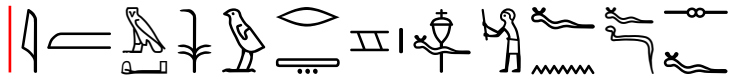
76

MJN | m ꜣd jb=k r=f ḫft ḫss=f

76

MJN | don't be aggressive against him because he is weak!

6.2

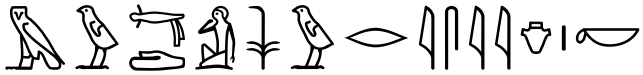
Za 

77

MJN | jm sw r tꜣ ḫsf=f n=f ḏs=f

77

MJN | Ignore him, and he will confute himself!

Za 

78

MJN | m wšd sw r jsj jb=k

78

MJN | Do not answer him to relieve your feelings!

Za

79

MJN | m jꜥ jb n ntj ḫft=k

79

MJN | Do not vent your feelings on your opponent!

6.3

Za

81

MJN | qsn pw ḥḏḏw ḥwrw-jb

81

MJN | Miserable is he who destroys a poor man.

Za

82

MJN | tw r jrt ntt m jb=k

82

MJN | But what is in your heart will be done:

Za

83

MJN | ḥw=k sw m ḫsf n srw

83

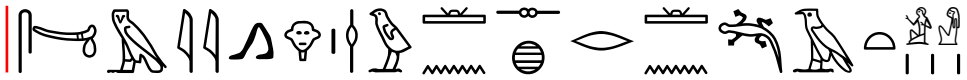
MJN | you will beat him through the punishment by the officials.

84

| jr wnn=k m sšmy

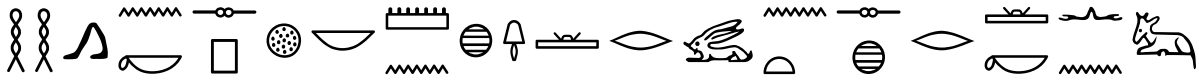
84

| If you are a leader

Za 6.4 

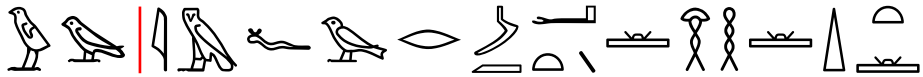
MJN 85 | ḥr wḏ n sḫr n ꜥšꜣt

MJN 85 | controlling the conduct of many,

Za 

MJN 86 | ḥḥ n=k sp nb mnḫ 87 | r wnt sḫr=k nn jw jm=f

MJN 86 | seek out for yourself any excellent deed, 87 | until your conduct is without wrong.

Za 6.5 

MJN 88 | wr mꜣꜥt wꜣḥ spdt

MJN 88 | Truth is great and (its) effectiveness endures;

Za

MJN 89 | n ḫnn.tw=s ḏr rk Wsjr

MJN 89 | it has not been confounded since the time of Osiris.

Za

MJN 90 | jw ḫsf.tw n swꜣ ḥr hpw

MJN 90 | He who transgresses the laws is punished,

Za 6.6

MJN 91 | swꜣt pw m ḥr n ꜥwn-jb

MJN 91 | and it is a transgression even in the eyes of the rapacious.

Za

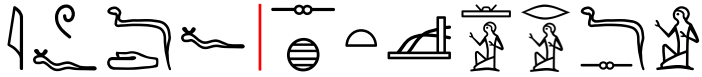
92
MJN | jn nḏyt jṯt ꜥḥꜥ

92
MJN | It is baseness that seizes riches,

Za

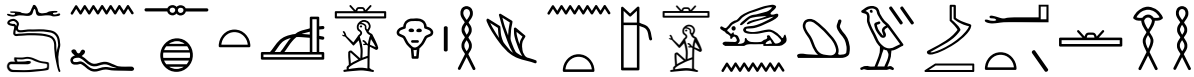
93
MJN | n pꜣ ḏꜣyt mnj sp=s

93
MJN | yet wrong has never reached its destination.

6.7
Za 

95
MJN | jw=f ḏd=f sḫt=j r=j ḏs=j

95
MJN | If he says "I snare for myself",

Za 

96
MJN | n ḏd.n=f sḫt=j ḥr ḥnt=j

96
MJN | he cannot say "I snare on account of my duty".

97
| wn pḥwj mꜣꜥt wꜣḥ=s

97
| In the end, truth endures,

Za

98
MJN | ḏdw s w jt=j pw

98
MJN | and a man will say "This is the domain of my father".

6.8
Za

99
MJN | jm=k jr ḥr m rmṯ

99
MJN | You should not create terror among people,

Za

100 101

MJN | ḫsf nṯr m-mjtt | jw s ḏd=f ꜥnḫ jm

100 101

MJN | as the god punishes in the same way. | A man thinks to live on it,

6.9

Za

102 103

MJN | jw=f šw=f m t n tp-rꜣ | jw s ḏd=f wsr

102 103

MJN | while he lacks bread for his mouth. | A man thinks to become powerful,

Za

107

MJN | jw=f ḏd=f sḫt=j r=j sjꜣt=j

107

MJN | and he says "I will snare for myself what I perceive".

Za

111

MJN | jw s ḏd=f ḥwtf ky

111

MJN | A man thinks to rob another,

Za

112

MJN | jw=f pḥ=f rḏjt=f n ḫm.n=f

112

MJN | but he ends up being given to someone he didn't know.

6.10

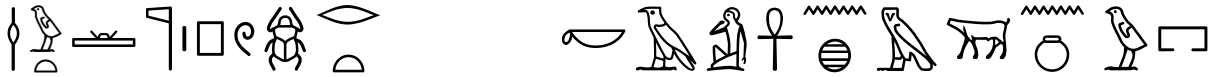
Za

115

MJN | n pꜣ ḥr n rmṯ ḫpr

115

MJN | The plans of men have never come about,

Za 

116 117

MJN | wḏt nṯr pw ḥprt | kꜣ ꜥnḫ m-ḫnw hrt

116 117

MJN | but what the god ordains will happen. | Intend to live in contentment,

Za

6.11

118 119

MJN | jy ḏḏt=sn ḏsj |

118 119

MJN | for what they give will come by itself. |

Za

Za

7.1

Za

Za

7.2

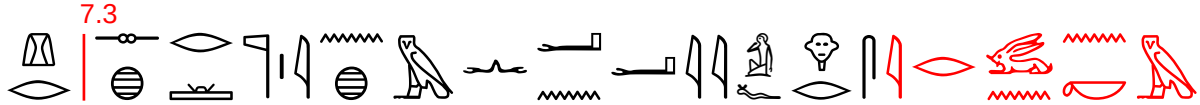
Za

Za

Za

Za

7.3

Za 

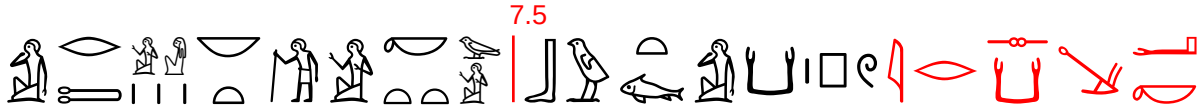
Za

7.4

Za

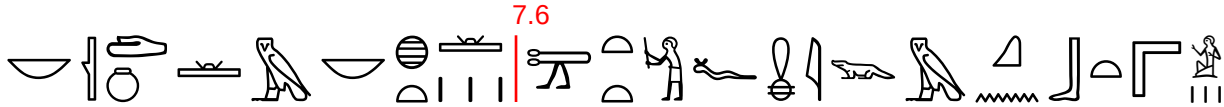
Za

Za

Za 

Za

Za

Za 

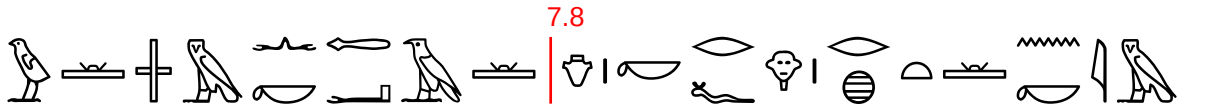
Za

Za

Za

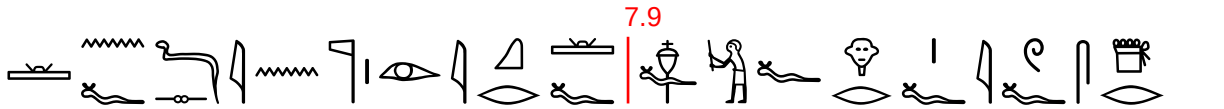
Za

Za

Za 

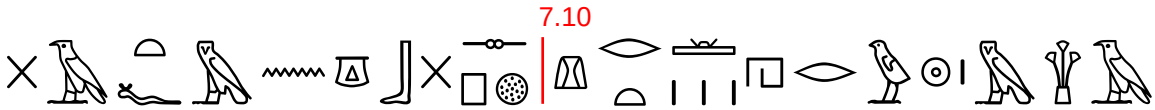
Za

Za

Za 

Za

Za

Za 

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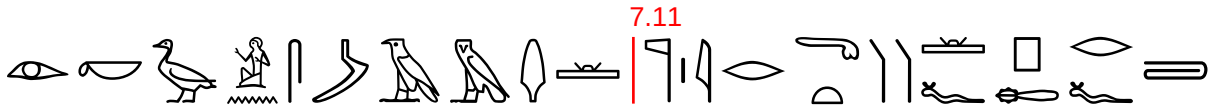
Za 

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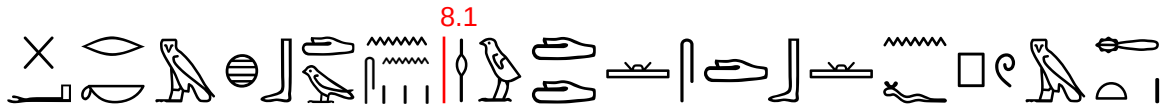
Za 

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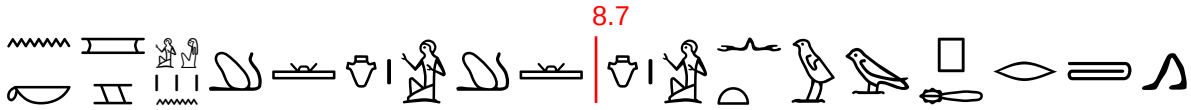
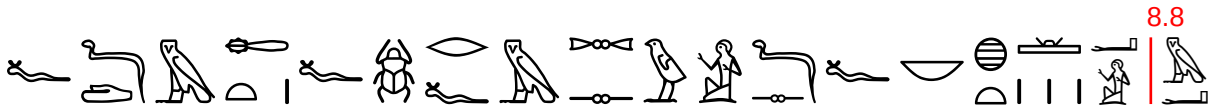
Za 

Za 

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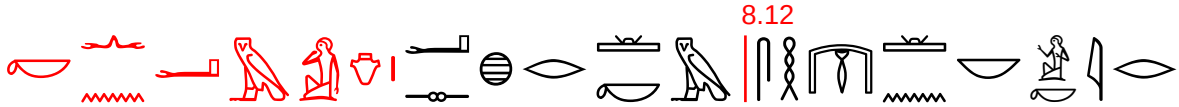
Za 

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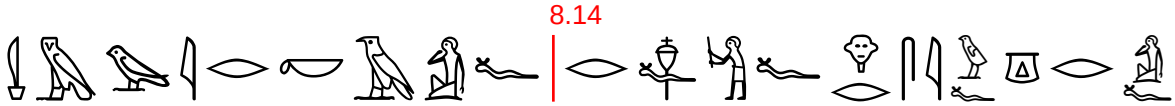
Za 

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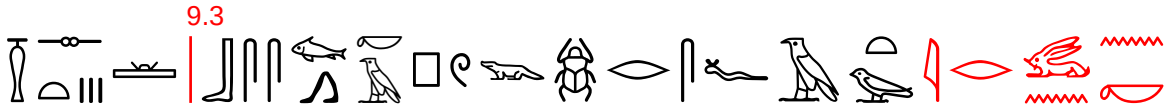
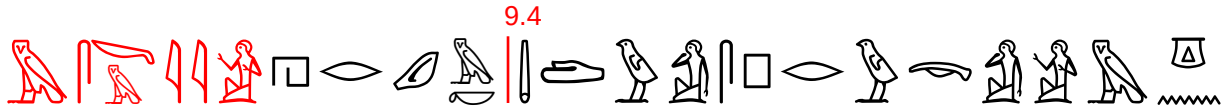
Za 

Za 

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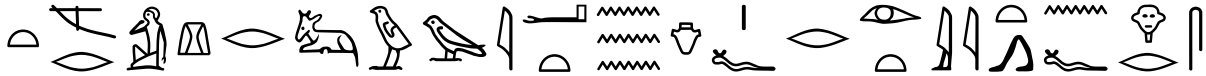
Za 

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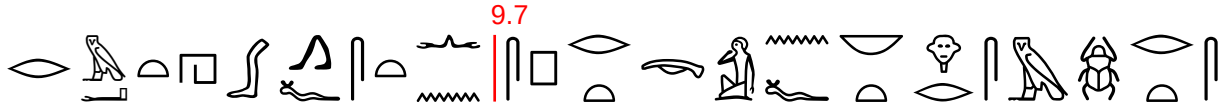
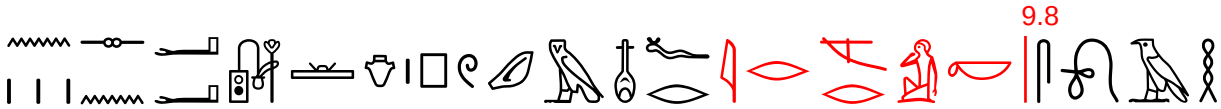
Za 

Za 

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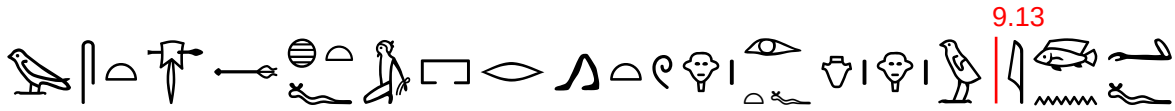
Za 

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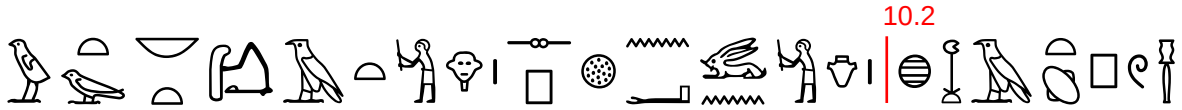
Za 

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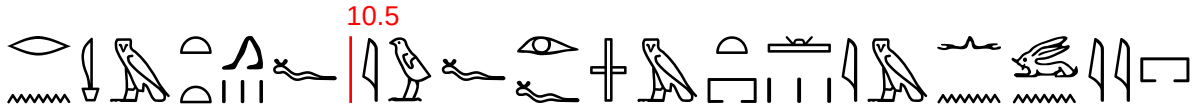
Za 

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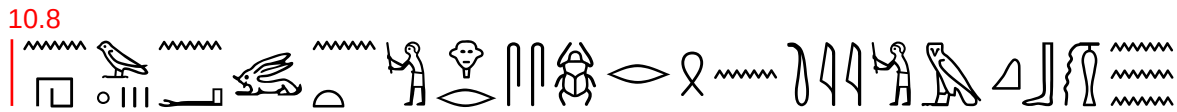
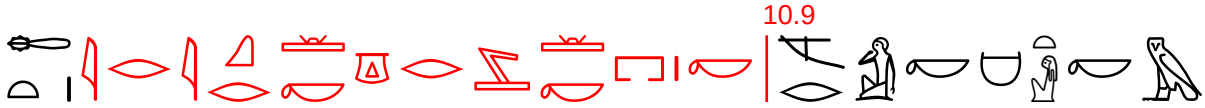
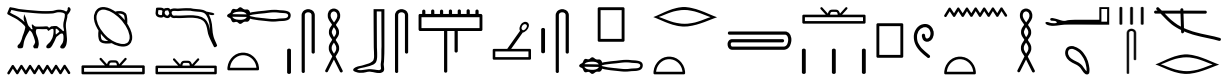
Za 

Za 

Za 

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Za 10.11

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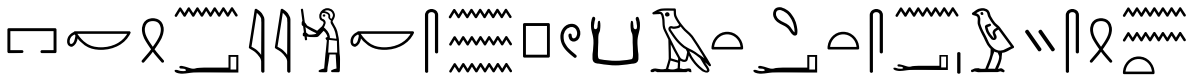
Za 

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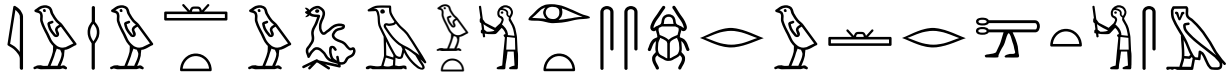
Za 

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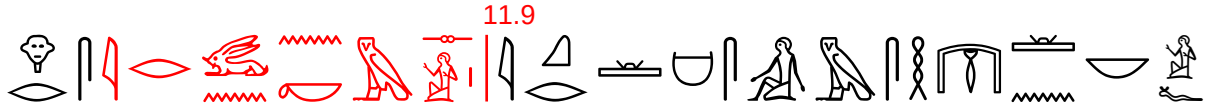
Za 

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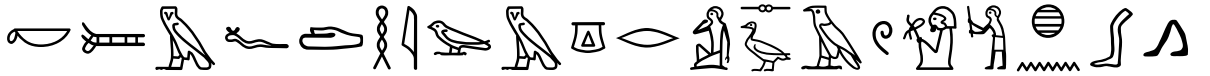
Za 

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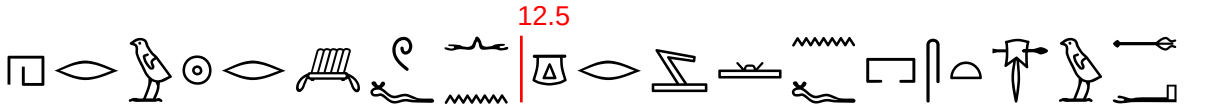
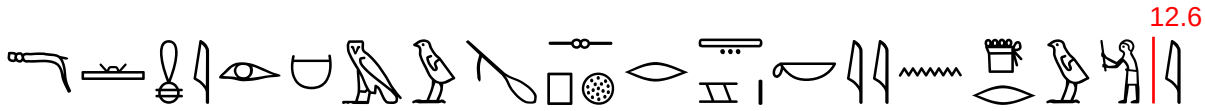
Za 

Za 

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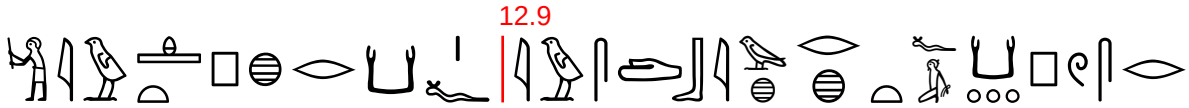
Za 

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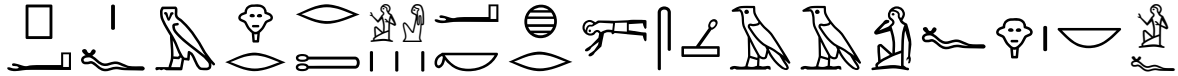
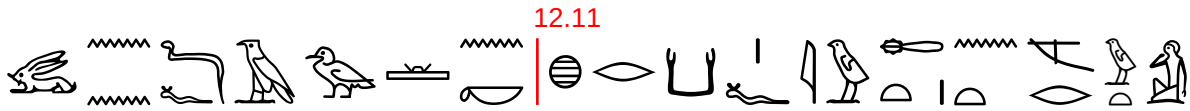
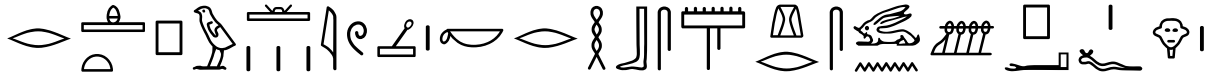
Za 

Za 

Za 

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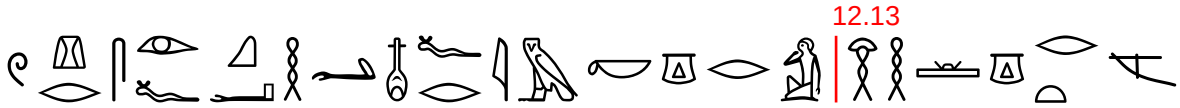
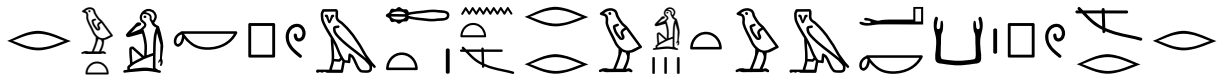
Za 

Za 

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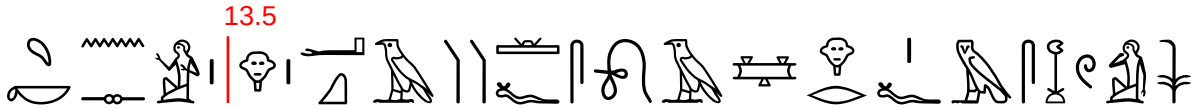
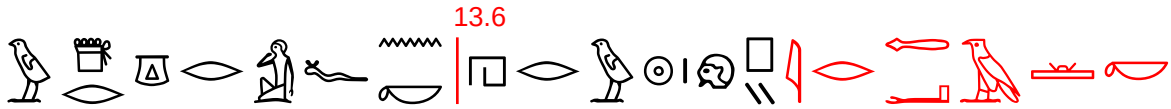
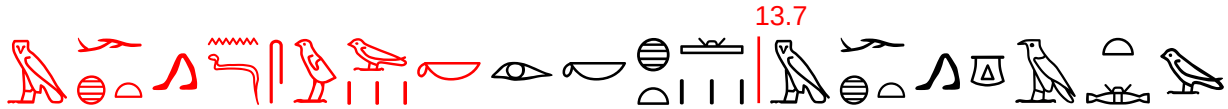
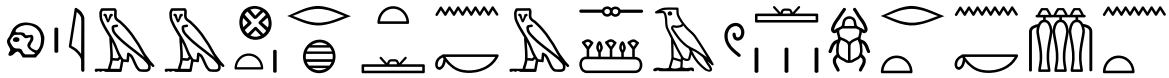
Za 

Za 

Za 

Za 

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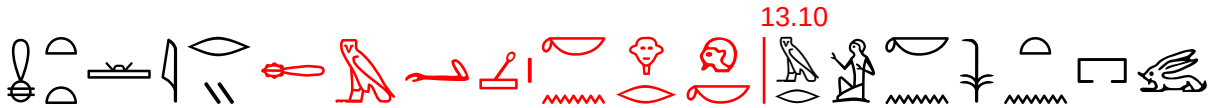
Za 

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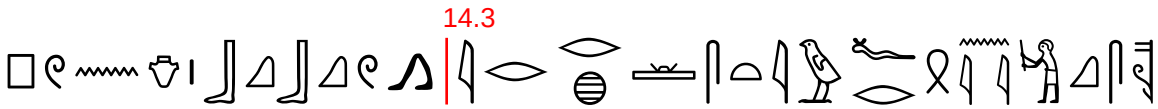
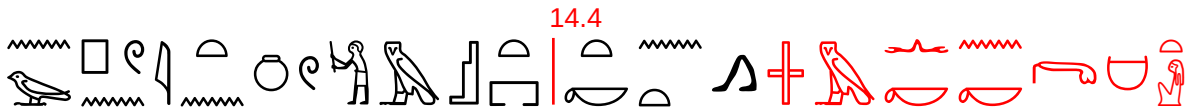
Za 

Za 

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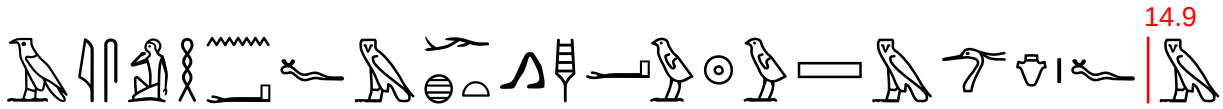
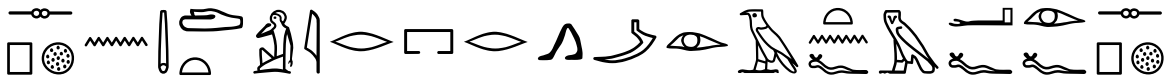
Za 

Za 

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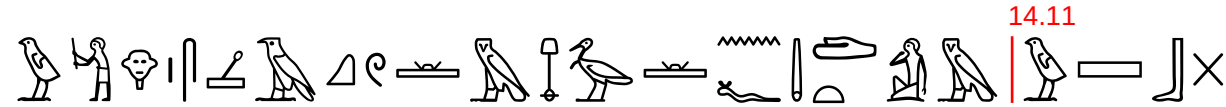
Za 

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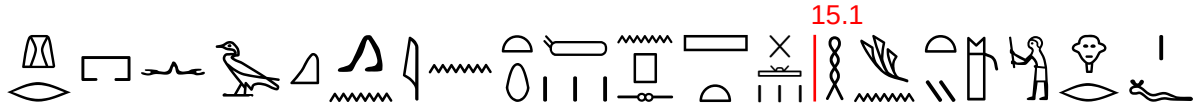
Za 

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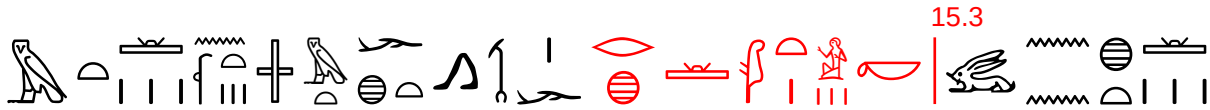
Za 

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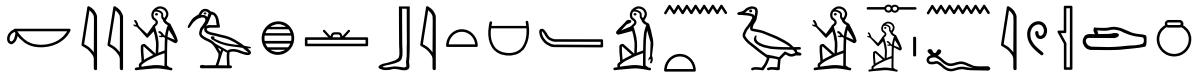
Za 

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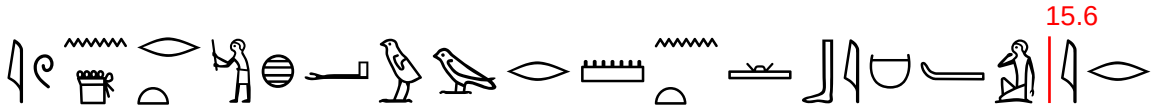
Za 

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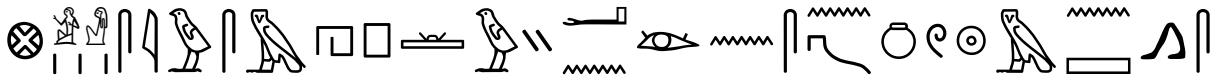
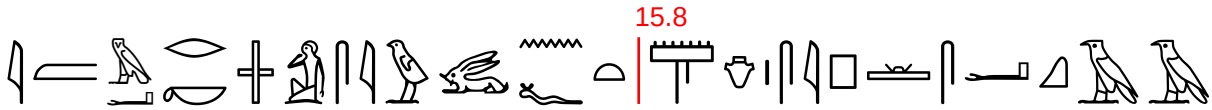
Za 

Za 

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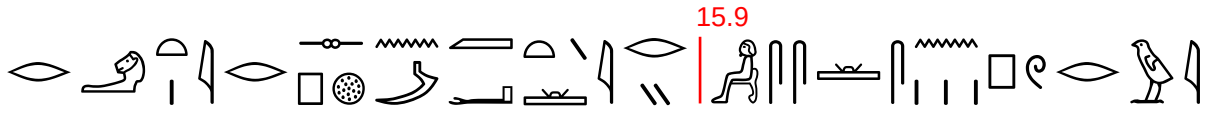
Za 

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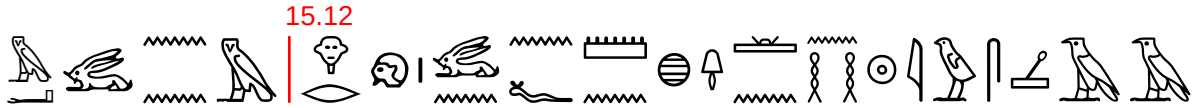
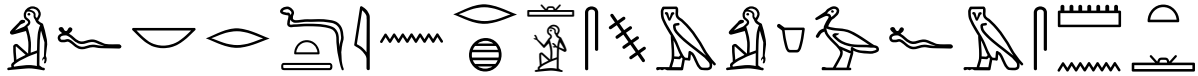
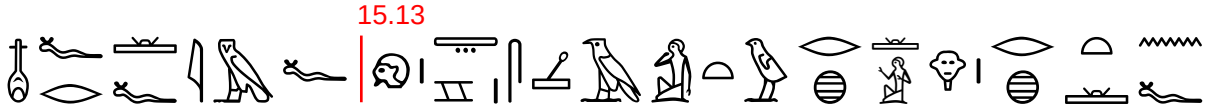
Za 

Za 

Za 

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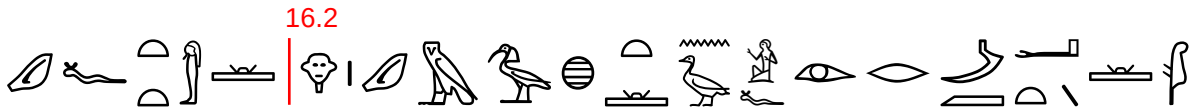
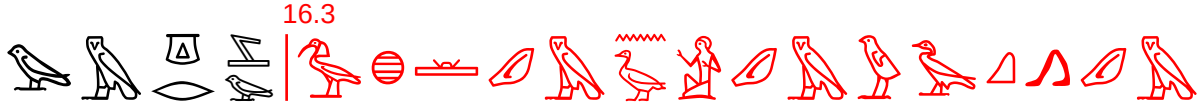
Za 

Za 

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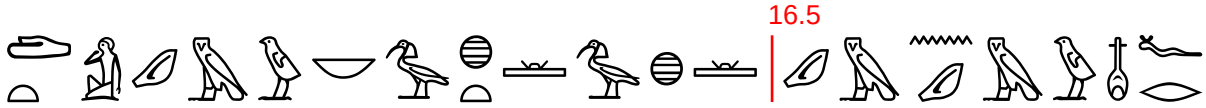
Za 

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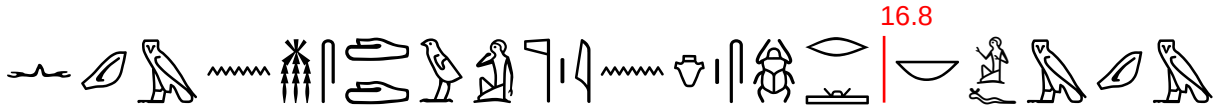
Za 

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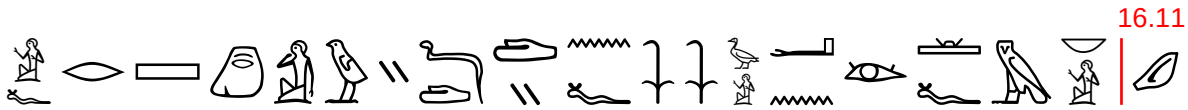
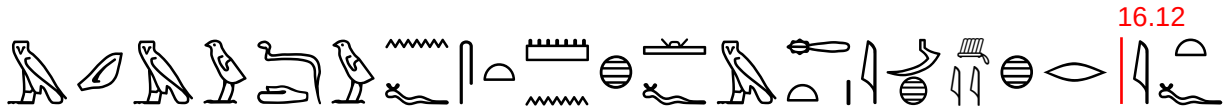
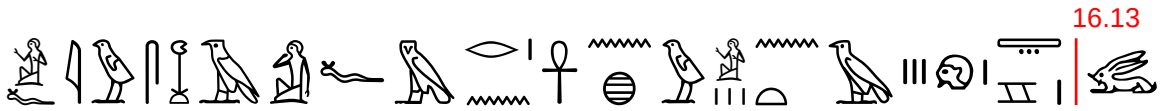
Za 

Za 

Za 

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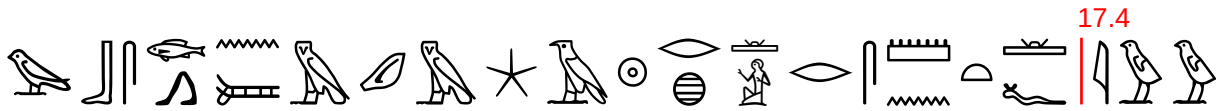
Za 

Za

Za 17.5

Za 17.6

Za 17.7

Za 17.8

Za 17.9

Za 17,10

Za 17.11

Za 17.12

Za 17.13

Za 18.1

Za 18.2

Za 18.3 18.4

Za 18.5

Za 18.6

Za 18.7

Za 18.8

Za 18.9

Za 18.10

Za 18.11

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Za 18.13

Za 18.14

Za 19.1

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Za 19.4

Za 19.5

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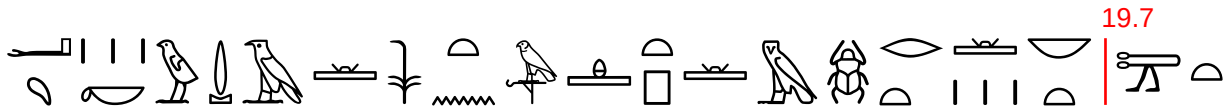
Za 

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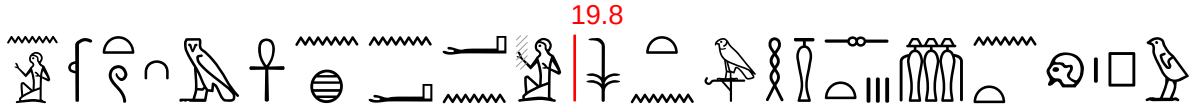
Za 

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