

THE SENET TAROT  
OF  
ANCIENT EGYPT  
PART I  
A HISTORY  
FROM PRE-DYNASTIC TIMES  
TO THE ROMAN ERA

BY  
DOUGLASS A. WHITE  
A DELTA POINT BOOK



CARD ILLUSTRATIONS  
BY AMY HSIAO



# The Senet Tarot of Ancient Egypt:

## Part I, A History from Pre-Dynastic Times to the Roman Era

by Douglass A. White, Ph.D.

A Delta Point Book

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**\*Companion for Study:** The Senet Tarot of Ancient Egypt, Part II and an Egyptian-style Tarot deck based on Dr. White's reconstruction of the divination system of ancient Egypt that was known as "Ra Passing Through [His Avatars]" (Senet Ra) [Book of the Dead, Chapter 115.] Available from [www.dpedtech.com](http://www.dpedtech.com).

**\*\*Highly Recommended:** The **Rider-Waite** version of the Tarot deck. You will find this deck extremely useful when you study the Tarot Card layouts and descriptions provided in Part II of this book. Much of the book's material refers to the drawings by Pamela Colman Smith made under the direction of Arthur Waite that form the Rider-Waite deck.

**\*\*\*Highly Recommended:** The **Builders of the Adytum** version of the 22 Major Arcana. These drawings by Jessie Burns Parke under the direction of Paul Foster Case are well executed and frequent mention of them is made in this book.

**\*\*\*\*Also Highly Recommended:** The deck designed by Oswald Wirth.

**\*\*\*\*\***Publication details are in the References at the back of the book. More detailed references are at the back of Part II.

## DEDICATION

*I dedicate this book to Thoth and all the great wizards and alchemists who have kept the knowledge of the Tarot alive over the countless millennia and who brought to the world the technology of enlightenment and the methods of preserving and teaching the Secrets through a system of symbols and the writing, engraving, and printing of the symbols in various media. I feel special gratefulness toward my German grandmother who was a poet, musician, psychic, and teller of cards. As a child I watched with curiosity as she laid out her ordinary deck of playing cards and mumbled readings in her German-English accent, calling me “Herzie” as she tried to explain what she was doing. Most of what she told me I later forgot, but she was my first inspiration and induction into the mystery of the cards. My mother, another musician -- and music director at a Jewish temple -- enticed me to sing in her choir during the High Holy Days. This started me learning the rudiments of Hebrew. Dennis Dowell, proprietor of the Oracle Tarot Shoppe, first introduced me to the Tarot cards and showed me how he did readings. I soon acquired dozens of decks and a library of books on the subject. My spiritual guides awakened in me the direct experience of Life. I am especially grateful to Baba-ji. He showed me so many of the Secrets of the Aakhu Light Beings that have become the contents of this book. If you are interested in exploring some of their amazing pathways to enlightenment, you will find mention of them in this book or in the reference materials. My academic mentors tried to teach me the essentials of scholarship. My wives Bonnie and Grace over the years put up with my unusual research and contributed in many subtle ways to making this work possible. Although these and many others -- especially my many wonderful students -- inspired me, I nevertheless have always stubbornly followed my own Star and must take responsibility for all the contents of this book.*

*The study of the history, content, and application of the Tarot is a vast and mysterious subject that ranges over the whole world and over long stretches of the human experience. Much of its development unfolded either within secret enclaves of wizards and magicians or among the vagaries of the common people as they entertained themselves over the ages. I welcome any corrections, suggestions, or further details on the subject and will include interesting new information in future editions of this work.*

*Please feel free to contact me at Dept. T, email address: [dpedtech@dpedtech.com](mailto:dpedtech@dpedtech.com).*

*Douglass A. White*

*June, 2004; updated 2011, Fairfield, Iowa*

## A Vision

"Imagine the surprise that the discovery of an Egyptian book would cause if we heard it said that a work of the ancient Egyptians still existed in our time -- one of the books saved from the flames which consumed their superb libraries -- and which contained their purest beliefs regarding interesting things. Everyone would, no doubt, be eager to know such a precious and extraordinary book. If we added that this book is in very general use in a large part of Europe and that it has been in the hands of everyone for a number of centuries, it certainly would be surprising were it to be believed. . . .

"This Egyptian book does exist. . . . It is even so common that not one scholar has condescended to bother with it since no one before us has ever suspected its illustrious origin, . . . . In a word this book is the game of Tarot . . . ."

-- Antoine Court de Gebelin

-- **Tarot Classic**, 34-36

Gebelin (a late 18<sup>th</sup> century occultist) was wrong in many of the details of his hypothesis when he tried to argue his case for the Tarot as an ancient Egyptian book. But read on, and you may be surprised at some amazing new findings that may well vindicate Gebelin as a man of remarkable intuitive vision or possibly of inside knowledge passed on secretly over the ages by the masters of the wisdom tradition.

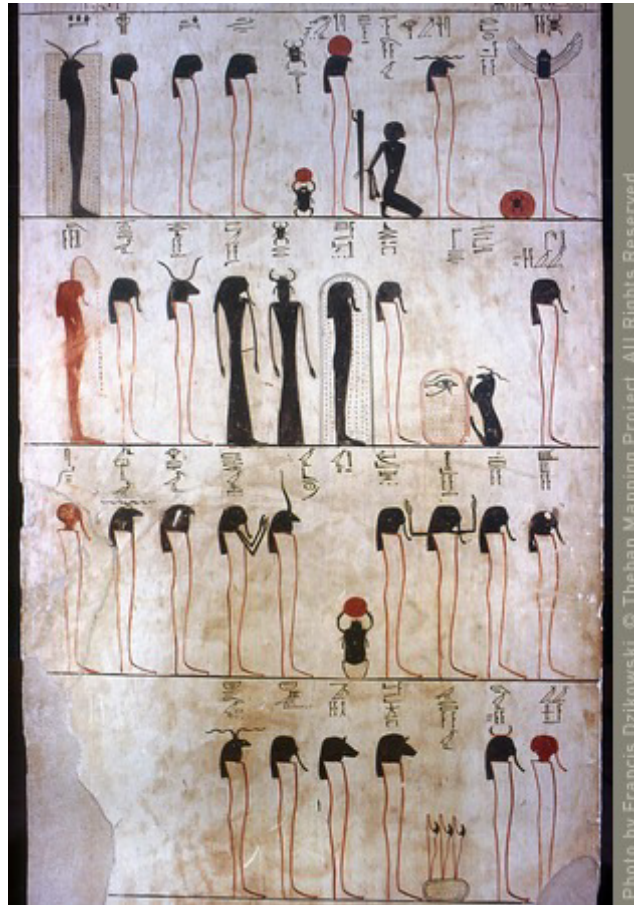


### An Ancient Vision

“My hair is the hair of Nu. My face is the face of the Disk. My eyes are the eyes of Hathor. My ears are the ears of Up-uat. My nose is the nose of Khenti-Khabas. My lips are the lips of Anpu. My teeth are the teeth of Serqet. My cheeks are the cheeks of the goddess Isis. My hands are the hands of Ba-neb-Tet. My forearms are the forearms of Neith, the Lady of Sais. My backbone is the backbone of Suti. My phallus is the phallus of Beba. My reins are the reins of the Lords of Kher-aha. My chest is the chest of Aa-shefit. My belly and back are the belly and back of Sekhmet. My buttocks are the buttocks of the Eye of Horus. My hips and legs are the hips and legs of Nut. My feet are the feet of Ptah. My fingers and my toes are the fingers and toes of the Living gods. There is no member of my body which is not the member of a god. . . . I am he who cometh forth advancing, whose name is unknown. I am Yesterday. ‘Seer of Millions of Years’ is my name. I pass along the paths of the divine celestial judges. I am the Lord of Eternity; I decree and I judge like Khepera. . . . I am Un-Nefer, from one period even unto another, and what I have is within me. I am the only One, who proceedeth from an only One, who goeth round about in his course. . . . I open the door in heaven. I rule my throne. I open the way for the births which take place on this day. I am the child who traverseth the road of Yesterday. I am To-day for untold nations and peoples. I am he who protecteth you for millions of years. . . . I am ‘He who cannot be known’ . . . . The might of my strength is within my hand, I am not known by thee, but I am he who knoweth thee. I cannot be held in the hand, but I am he who can hold thee in his hand. Hail O Egg! Hail, O Egg! I am Horus who liveth for millions of years, whose flame shineth upon you, and bringeth your hearts unto me. I am master of my throne. I advance at this season. I have opened a path. I have delivered myself from all evil things. I am the golden dog-headed ape, three palms and two fingers high, which hath neither arms nor legs, and which dwelleth in **Het-ka-Ptah**\*. I go forth as goeth forth the dog-headed ape which dwelleth in **Het-ka-Ptah**.”

-- **Book of the Dead**, Papyrus of Ani, Chapter XLII. (Translated by Wallis Budge.)

\* **Het Ka Ptah** means “The Temple of the Opener of the **Ka**” and was an ancient name for Memphis, the huge necropolis surrounding the Great Pyramid of Giza. Ptah was the blacksmith of the gods who forged the tool used for the opening of the mouth ritual to activate and empower the life energy (**Ka**) in a person so that they could express their full creative potential. Ptah is a special transformation of Baba (the transcendental yogi), and that transformation was especially important at Memphis, the site of the throat chakra in the ancient sacred geo-physiology of Egypt.



Examples of thin rectangular Tarok cards with labels found on the walls of the tombs of New Kingdom pharaohs in the Valley of Kings (see pages 55-86 for details).

Each complete deck contains 78 cards.

Photos from Theban Mapping Project

## **Table of Contents**

<b>Dedication</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>A Vision</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>An Ancient Vision</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Preface/Postface: What is Intuition?</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>The Components of a Tarot Deck</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>The Primary Hypothesis of this Book</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>The Historical Origins and Development of the Tarot Cards</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>The Origin of Paper</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>The <u>Book of the Dead</u> and the Tarot Trumps</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>The Ancient Egyptian Game of Senet</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Play of the Game</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>The Weighing of the Heart and Senet Divination</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>The Geo-Physiology of Ancient Egypt</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Picking the Pips and Creating an Egyptian Tarot Deck</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>A Survey of Egyptian-Style Tarot Decks</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>The Ancient Egyptian Spiritual Books</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>The <u>Litany of Ra</u> and the Tarot</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>The 78 Avatars of Ra</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>The Tarot Deck of the Pharaohs</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>The Cult Tradition of the <u>Litany of Ra</u></b>	<b>68</b>
<b>The King List Deck and Theme-Based Playing Cards</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>The Number 72, the Lunar Fraction 1/72, and 78</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>The Name of the Game: Where Did “Tarot” Come From?</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Evidence in the <u>Litany of Ra</u></b>	<b>86</b>
<b>The Core Concept of the Egyptian Divination System</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>The Great Pyramid and the Meditation of Ra</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>The Difference Between Creation and Meditation</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>Technical Terms of Yoga</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>The Basic Attention Cycle</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>The Cycle of Attention Summarized</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>Meditation Using Mantras</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>Meditation Using Yantras</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>The Tarok Spreads Beyond Egypt</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>Phoenicians, Hebrews, and Other Semitic Peoples in Egypt</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>Qabalah and the Alphabet</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>Totems and Codes</b>	<b>107</b>

<b>The Qabalistic Origins of the Alphabet</b>	<b>109</b>
<b>Chart of the Qabalistic Hebrew Rune Alphabet</b>	<b>112</b>
<b>Rune Exercise</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>The Qabalistic Tree of Life and the Senet Oracle Board</b>	<b>114</b>
<b>A Link from Egypt to Qabalah: <u>The Emerald Tablet</u> of Hermes</b>	<b>117</b>
<b>Qabalistic Hebrew from the Roman Era to the Middle Ages</b>	<b>128</b>
<b>The Egyptian Technology Transfer</b>	<b>129</b>
<b>A Peek at the Genesis Egyptian Code</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>The Bembine Tablet, the Senet Oracle Board, and the <u>Amduat</u></b>	<b>134</b>
<b>How Did They Divine on the Oracle Tablet?</b>	<b>142</b>
<b>Material Related to the Isiac (Bembine) Tablet</b>	<b>143</b>
<b>Games from Roman Times up to the Time of Paper and Printing</b>	<b>144</b>
<b>The Invention of Paper and Printing</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>Evolution of the Suit Cards (Courts and Pips) in China</b>	<b>146</b>
<b>A Mysterious Ancient Chinese Board Game</b>	<b>151</b>
<b>Mamluk Cards in the Middle East</b>	<b>161</b>
<b>Pictures of Royalty on Court Cards</b>	<b>163</b>
<b>Blood and Paper in the Great Transition</b>	<b>164</b>
<b>The Word “Cathar” and the Qabalah</b>	<b>165</b>
<b>The Cards in Moorish Style</b>	<b>166</b>
<b>Petrarch and the Triumphs</b>	<b>167</b>
<b>Hand Painted Tarot Cards and Early Printed Decks</b>	<b>171</b>
<b>Influence of the Occultists</b>	<b>173</b>
<b>What is the “Best” Tarot Deck?</b>	<b>176</b>
<b>The Vedas, the Vedic Gods, and Vedic Rishis</b>	<b>176</b>
<b>The Sequence of the Trumps</b>	<b>178</b>
<b>The Relation of the Trumps to the Alphabet</b>	<b>180</b>
<b>Encoding of Meaning in Many Hebrew Roots</b>	<b>183</b>
<b>The Zodiac and the Planets</b>	<b>184</b>
<b>Secret Messages in the Alphabet Trumps</b>	<b>189</b>
<b>The Celestial Trump Sequence</b>	<b>190</b>
<b>The Book of Thoth and His 22 Triumphs</b>	<b>203</b>
<b>The Secret Message[s] in the Traditional Hebrew Alphabet Sequence</b>	<b>204</b>
<b>The Senet Oracle Board Hebrew Code</b>	<b>210</b>
<b>Transliteration of Hebrew</b>	<b>214</b>
<b>Transliteration of Egyptian</b>	<b>215</b>

## Preface/Postface: What is Intuition?

(Read or reread the following section after you read the book.)

We play with the Tarot to have **fun** and develop **intuition**. Tarot originated as a game and is the ancestor of many card and board games with which people find amusement around the world today. As an amusing set of games the Tarot is a gateway to **fun**. The development of these games into tools of divination opened a simple pathway to direct knowledge of self, intuitive understanding of human affairs, awakening to the present moment, and inspiration on the path of evolution to the future. This gives us an idea how the Tarot relates to **intuition**.

When I first began studying the Tarot, I was fascinated by the art involved with the designs on the cards, intrigued by the consistency of the tradition, and very curious to know where the tradition began and how it developed. I soon discovered that no one knew for sure what the origins of the Tarot were. The two most popular theories were that Tarot came from Egypt or that Tarot came from the Jewish Qabalah. Although Gebelin's theory that Tarot came from ancient Egypt influenced many of the Tarot artists in the past two centuries, the notion was rejected by archaeologists who found no recognizable Tarot decks in the tombs and temples that they excavated and fell into disrepute among scholars. So I began my research with the other popular theory: that Tarot was somehow connected to the mystical Jewish tradition of the Qabalah. At least there was some suggestive evidence with which to start an investigation. To my surprise I found that both theories are correct, but not exactly the way people imagined. In this book I present a new interpretation of the Tarot based on internal and archaeological evidence. I also present a large new body of solid evidence concerning the early history of the Tarot from the dawn of civilization to the rise of the Roman Empire. As we digest and integrate this evidence we may look forward to startling new revelations in coming years.

### The Qabalah (Qabbalah, Kabbalah, Cabbalah, etc.) Connection

The Tarot as we find it today often is associated with the letters used for writing the Hebrew language because there happen to be 22 Tarot Trumps and 22 letters in the original Hebrew alphabet. Hebrew words are written with letters that evolved from Phoenician letters. Phoenician merchants doing business in Egypt copied the idea of alphabet letters as a simplification of the Egyptian writing system and adapted it to their own language.

The ancient Egyptians wrote with letters to represent individual phonemes along with an elaborate system of syllabic and multi-syllabic symbols that also included many purely ideographic symbols used as semantic determinatives. The Phoenicians and Hebrews decided to use only phonetic letters for writing their languages and devised a simple set of letter symbols based on the Egyptian model, but without directly copying the Egyptian letters. All true alphabets in the world evolved from the Phoenician/Hebrew alphabet. The Phoenician scribes deliberately chose not to use the cumbersome cuneiform syllabic writing that was widely used in Mesopotamia by other Semitic cultures because clay tablets were not suitable for seafaring merchants and camel caravans. The semi-nomadic Hebrews apparently agreed with the Phoenician approach and adopted their alphabet as easy to learn and highly portable.

Many other cultures began to agree with this approach and the alphabet principle was adopted by many diverse cultures. How many communications in the world today depend in part or totally on alphabet letters? The first theory of this book is that the Tarot became a set of pictorial flash cards for learning the letters of the original Phoenician/Hebrew alphabet and the basic counting numbers. If this theory is correct and the Tarot turns out to be the key to understanding the letters we use to communicate with each other around the world, then the Tarot becomes an extremely important cultural document in the history of mankind.

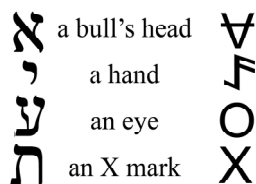
As I studied the traditions and the possible relations of the Tarot Trumps to the Phoenician/Hebrew alphabet, one thing immediately became clear. The correlation of the Tarot Trumps and the alphabet is based on a set of 22 letters and a set of 22 Trumps. However, the Hebrew letters that we often see printed on Tarot cards make use of the Hebrew calligraphy that evolved from the later Hebrew alphabet that now contains 27 letters. The five additional letters used in today's Hebrew are orthographic variants of five of the original 22 letters. This suggests that we should study the earliest forms of the original 22 letters to understand their connection to the Tarot Trumps and not the modern script.

The Trumps usually are numbered from 0 to 21, often with Roman numerals. This is a problem for the hypothesis of a Hebrew origin for the Tarot Trumps, because the Hebrew letters are already numbers, and the Hebrew numbers do not agree with the Roman or Arabic numerals that are usually printed on the Trumps.

In the first place there is no zero in the Hebrew numbering system (or the Roman numeral system). Therefore the frequent assignment of the number zero to the Fool

Trump becomes suspect. Secondly, the Hebrew letter-numbers only go in natural number numerical order from 1 to 10. Then they continue by tens: 20, 30, 40, and so on, up to 100. After that they proceed by 100's: 200, 300, 400, and so on, up to 900 and end with 1000. The Hebrews used the same letter "aleph" for 1 and for 1000. The numbers 500, 600, 700, 800, and 900 are not in the set of original 22, and therefore must have been added later to the alphabet to complete the counting system. The five variant "final" letters (letters written differently when they occur at the end of a word) apparently were added in order to have symbols for the rest of the "hundreds" series of numerals. (Numbers over several thousand are still a real problem in Hebrew.) As a result of these considerations I found it necessary to reject the use of the later Hebrew fonts that are in use today and all of the Roman or Arabic numbers on cards as later accretions that do not relate to the original Tarot.

When I went back to the earliest recorded Hebrew letters, it was immediately clear that the letters were designed as iconic images depicting various aspects of Hebrew life. Each ancient symbol represents an important part of the human body or an important physical object used in the immediate daily life of the semi-nomadic ancient Hebrews. The meaningful names given by the Hebrews to their letters confirmed the correctness of this insight. When the Greeks copied the Hebrew letters for their own language, they copied the sounds of the names, but had no idea what the names represented. To the Greeks the letter names were meaningless identifying tags that they memorized by rote. Gradually the calligraphic scripts of the various evolving alphabets became stylized until the correspondence between the original icons and the modern letters is no longer recognizable. Here are some examples. Which symbols do you think most resemble the original concepts – the modern letters on the left decorated with variable line widths and serifs or the original simple icons?



Hebrew is based on a small set of primal icons that graphically represent physical objects. There is a connection between the letters, sounds, and meanings of many Hebrew words. Each letter additionally represents a number, as I explained above, and Hebrew words therefore are mathematical expressions. This is not as true for languages such as Greek, Latin, or English that simply borrowed the Hebrew letters and adapted them to their respective languages. Because of these ancient

correlations, we often can explore the meanings of Hebrew words from the ancient letter icons with which they are spelled as well as the traditional meanings of root words, but first we must know about the original letters.

### **Tarot as an Educational Tool**

The first theory of this book, therefore, is that the Tarot card images became elaborate illustrations of the ancient Phoenician/Hebrew letters. Or we can say that the letters became extremely simplified line drawings of the images from which they were derived, and the Tarot Trumps became more detailed drawings of the images. In other words the Tarot cards formed a game consisting of flash cards representing the ideas and images behind the alphabet letters and graphic representations of the counting numbers. The Tarot was an ancient Sesame Street game to teach illiterate people the alphabet and counting numbers in times when schools for the general population were essentially non-existent. The images of the Trumps also introduced psychological, physiological, sociological, and natural archetypes that could help people better understand their lives. Over time the gaming aspect of Tarot persisted, but its educational value gradually faded, especially as the cards adapted to different languages and cultures. What remained was a vague sense that the Trump Cards related to certain archetypal qualities or virtues. The numerical values of the Pip Cards of course remained unchanged, but as the population gradually became more sophisticated, learning the basic counting numbers was only of value to small children. Awareness of the value of the archetypes expressed by the Trump images persisted only in circles where people used the cards for divination.

As part of the first theory I will describe how the original Phoenician/Hebrew iconic letters can be derived from a simple concept of geometry that has extremely profound cultural implications, and then show how the derived letters came to represent the archetypes of human life that form the core of the Qabalah tradition as it is encoded in the Tree of Life. The basis in abstract sacred geometry was artfully combined with images from human life and then fleshed out into the detailed pictures on the Trump Cards.

### **The Egyptian Origin of the Tarot**

The second major premise of this book is that Gebelin's hypothesis that the Tarot came out of Egypt was basically correct, although he could not back his claim up with archaeological data because the discipline of archaeology had not yet arisen in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the Egyptian language had been in disuse for so many centuries that no one could read the hieroglyphic records. Over the past century and a half scholars



have recovered the art of reading ancient Egyptian and assembled a vast collection of documents from the remains of classical Egypt. Based on a careful study of the documents and artifacts that we possess today, I have reconstructed the history of how the Tarot evolved in ancient Egypt. I not only can produce solid artifacts as evidence for my claims, I have identified several ancient Egyptian books on versions of the Tarot as it evolved in Egypt. I can identify early prototype versions, the probable designer of the original deck of 78 cards, and the subsequent development of the system in Egypt with its own inner circle of cultic tradition as well as a popular art form used for amusement and divination.

Once we understand the Egyptian background for the development of Tarot, we can realize the extent to which it characterized the very essence of Egyptian culture and then we can identify how the Semitic guests and residents in Egypt transferred the concepts into their Qabalah tradition, encoding the correspondences for private oral transmission to initiates only so that the general populace in later generations became unaware of the deep connections. With these keys the attentive reader can unlock many secrets that go far beyond the scope of this book and be inspired to explore other writings by this author and the many new discoveries that modern investigators are revealing as they uncover new evidence and analyze ancient artifacts with the latest research tools.

### **Tarot as a Tool for Recovering Intuition**

The third major insight of this book is an explanation of how playing with the Tarot letter-cards can effortlessly develop a person's intuition. Intuition is an ability of "insight" that each person innately has that allows him (or her) to see directly into a situation and know or sense its significance and how to deal with it in an appropriate manner. Intuition is not a substitute for thinking and analysis – it is an important precursor and adjunct.

If intuition is innate, why do people seem to lose it or lack it? The most common way is by accumulating stress through excessive complexity. When a person develops a complex lifestyle, a habit of pretense sometimes develops as a shortcut through the complexity. This only adds more complexity and often mental stress as well. Eventually a person embroiled in complexity loses the ability to view things simply just as they are and deal with them in an honest, forthright, and effective manner. This is not to say that complexity is a bad thing. The point is to enjoy the benefit of complexity without becoming lost and confused in it.

If the Tarot is a tool for recovering one's intuitive ability, then a person with a fully developed intuition does not need to "divine" with the Tarot, but is able to see what is what and how to deal with it right off the bat without any assistance. Part of my goal in this book will be to explain how the Tarot can help a person recover intuition. Tarot can be a path to solving problems and attaining relief from confusion, anxiety, and other forms of stress in personal life. I will introduce practical techniques for using the Tarot in ways to achieve these results that have long been lost from the public awareness.

### **Thoth and the Tarot**

Tarot has been called **The Book of Thoth**. The Egyptians considered that Thoth (called Hermes by the Greeks) was the founder of human civilization. He invented the technology of writing that enabled mankind to record knowledge and wisdom for later generations. This made possible the accumulation of information and the rapid evolution of technology. In Egyptian Thoth was called Jehuty (or Dehuty), the Heavy One. He was also often called "Tekhy" because one of his totem animals was the ibis, called in Egyptian by that name. The ibis was a water bird found living among the papyrus reeds along the Nile, so the Egyptians used it as the totem for the technology of papyrus paper and reed pens. Thoth also represented the link between the Intellect and the Heart that is achieved through the awakening of the intuition. Thoth's other animal totem was the baboon, a symbol of the Egyptian recognition that man's clever wisdom is no more than a fancy version of a baboon's foolishness. Baba the Baboon totem emphasized the importance of being able to laugh at the joke of man's serious pretense of wisdom. The use of symbols came from Thoth as the ibis of tech-know-ledgy. The importance of fun came from Thoth as the baboon of play-full-ness.

**Intuition is the gentle voice of the Higher Self that whispers to your ego self the way to go on the path of life that is right for you.** For more on the subject of intuition, study the King of Swords (Spades) -- the last card in the Tarot according to some sequences. You also should study the Trumps of the Fool and the Magician, the traditional first cards in the **Book of Thoth**. They hold the secret keys to unlocking the physical manifestation of Intuition in the body. The interaction of these two Trumps forms the crossed keys that often appear on the High Priest card (Thoth's Trump) and is the Qabalistic symbol of the Lover Card Trump. The thread connecting the upside down Ego Self to the Higher Self is the rope from which the Hanged Man hangs. The whole thread of the Tarot story hangs in that Trump. At first glance the Way of Intuition may not make much sense from the viewpoint of

logic or conventional wisdom. It is an exploration from the Known into the Unknown. It is the real **Torah**: a Tour of Possibilities, and Exploration of the Wonderful World of What If. Above all Thoth-Hermes teaches us to be the qualities of Compassion, Presence, Bliss, and Freedom. When people live from the level of Intuition, they tend to live lives that spontaneously express love, peace, creativity, happiness, harmony, and cooperation. These are symptoms that you can recognize in life experience.

The Tarot cards are wonderful tools for developing intuition. As you play with the cards you will begin to learn how to read the suggestions they make and the energy that they display. In a layout you will see how each card relates to the situation at hand. You will also learn to become sensitive to the patterns and relationships that they reveal. As your intuition grows, you will learn to discover in your readings the clues they display on the path to compassion, presence, bliss, freedom, love, peace, creativity, and cooperation in your life.

Is there anything else that you can do to develop intuition? In my nearly seventy years in this lifetime, I have encountered many wonderful paths to explore. There are three that I recommend highly as the most elegant, effective and general tools you can find. If you choose to explore any of them, they will speed up the pace with which your Intuition Eye opens. Once it opens it will unerringly lead you to discover what path in life is right for you.

Just as a suggestion, here they are. Each works primarily from one of the three fundamental fields of Life: Action, Thinking, and Being. Let's start from Being.

### **Silent Being – Meditation**

Being is Source Awareness. One of the fastest ways to open Source Awareness is meditation. Meditation is a simple, natural, effortless technique for relaxing and quieting the mind and body. A person can learn to meditate in a few minutes and use it throughout life. The most efficient technique of meditation I have encountered the ancient Egyptians called “Ocean Awareness Meditation”. The Transcendental Meditation (TM) technique as taught by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi is one example of this ancient technique as it is taught today. There are many other variations on the same approach. Zen meditation is very effective as are meditation techniques taught by many yoga instructors. You can learn to meditate in a few minutes from a book or a trained coach can guide you on your first experience of the shift from thinking thoughts to Source Awareness. During meditation the attention follows its

own natural tendency in a gentle and relaxed manner, experiences subtler and subtler realms of experience, and suddenly there you are in Source Awareness. Once you've got it, you've got it. You can do it any time you like and it works like any reliable scientific procedure. The rest is just regular practice and then enjoying the fun of exploring whatever possibilities you may like to explore in your life.

### **Creative Thinking: Avatar**

Meditation is a wonderful way to go directly to Source. However it does not help you to manage the issues in your life. It shows you where Source is and starts the process of clearing your mind and body for more refined experiences, including the awakening of the Intuition. It also relaxes you in a general way from stress in your life. However, for handling the practical issues of daily life, you need to know how to manage your attention. For this I recommend a course created by educational psychologist Harry Palmer. Palmer calls his course Avatar®. There are other such courses, but this one is very systematic and all-encompassing. An avatar is a being that lives deliberately. An avatar decides where to be and what to do, and then appears there and does what was intended. Then the avatar leaves.

Like meditation the Avatar path is extremely simple, elegant, and effortless. Ocean Awareness Meditation takes you to Source Awareness and gives you an experience of relaxed heightened awareness. An avatar uses something Palmer calls the Creation Handling Procedure to define an intended creation and then to manifest it as an experience. The main principle behind it is that your experiences depend on the beliefs that you hold in awareness. You use will to define the beliefs that you prefer, and then activate them as experiences by means of the intensity of attention you give to them. Therefore, to manage your life experiences, the most effective approach is to learn how to manage your beliefs. First discover what you believe, and then learn how to let go of beliefs that generate experiences you do not prefer and create new beliefs that generate experiences that you do prefer. Just like intuition and meditation, belief management is an innate ability that sometimes tends to get lost in the shuffle of life experiences. However, there is no limit to what is possible once you reawaken these skills.

### **Dynamic Action: Baba's Kriya Yoga**

Some people prefer to go at life from the physical level. Reality is an integrated wholeness, so you can grasp the wholeness from any side and manage it.

The ancient Egyptians practiced forms of this physical technology for several

thousand years based on a science of life energy they attributed to a shape-shifting transcendental entity called Baba. Baba is the esoteric identity of Thoth as the teacher of yoga in the Egyptian tradition and often tends to appear as a young man with shoulder-length hair. Thoth is the master of the intellect, but as Baba he becomes the master of ways to stimulate physical sensations of bliss until it becomes a permanent foundational experience for a person. In ancient India the tradition goes back to Shiva and the Nagas of South Asia and Polynesia. Later the Vedic Seers carried on the tradition and celebrated it in Vedic Literature. Most of the 18 Arhats or Siddhas mastered these techniques. In India spiritual guides came to be called by the honorific “Baba” (a father, grandfather, or wise man). Sufi, Hindu, and Sikh ascetics often have this honorific appended to their names. There is a tradition that the transcendental Baba himself incarnated as the Maha-Avatar Baba-ji Naga-raj around the year 203 in south-east India and continues to appear from time to time in the form of a handsome young man with shoulder-length hair who teaches the ancient dynamic Kriya Yoga and sense of loving unity that has existed from time immemorial. The “ji” suffix sometimes added to the “baba” honorific is an expression of endearment and respect.

The essence of Kriya Yoga is to cultivate Bliss in the Body through simple manipulations of the physical body, breath, and life force energy.

All three of the technologies I briefly described are simple to learn and easy to practice. They all take you to the same place, but involve quite different procedures. In my experience they are also complementary and work together nicely as a program of personal cultivation. On the other hand, these are just my personal choices. Today we live in a world with many wonderful choices. Perhaps the right-for-you path is different. That is fine. Enjoy your progress on the path of your choice. Feel free to share your experiences, ideas, and feedback with me if you like. The intuition is a natural faculty that we all have. You do not need any technique to open it up. Just start to use it. It is your native ability. You may have gotten busy with some other things and forgot about it for a while. So dust it off and have fun.

# **The Senet Tarot of Ancient Egypt**

by

**Douglass A. White, Ph.D.**

## **The Components of a Tarot Deck**

A standard Tarot deck consists of 78 cards arranged in three groups. The first group contains 22 Trump cards that are also sometimes called Major Arcana (the great mysteries). Then there is a set of 16 Court cards. The third group has 40 Pip cards.

The 22 Trump Cards are usually numbered in sequence from 0 to 21 and illustrated with stylized archetypal images that contain traditional symbols as well as embellishments supplied by each deck's designer and artist.

The 16 Court Cards consist of four "royal" families with four cards each. Usually each royal family consists of a King, a Queen, a Knight, and a Page (or Princess), although some decks substitute other representative characters.

Each royal family also has a suit symbol as its heraldic "coat of arms". The heraldic suits also symbolize the four basic aspects of a society: educators and spiritual guides (suit of hearts or cups), administrators and civic leaders (spades or swords), merchants and business people (diamonds or coins), and craftsmen and workers (clubs or staves). The suits also correlate to the four classical elements: water, air, earth, and fire.

Finally there is a set of 40 Pip Cards with ten cards belonging to each suit. The Pip Cards of each suit are numbered in sequence from 1 to 10. The word "pip" originally meant a small seed and came to be used for a small dot or mark. In the Tarot deck the suit signs became known as "pips" or "spots" (in the manner of dominoes) and usually were repeated on the card as many times as the number for the card.

Modern poker decks are Tarot decks reduced from 78 to 52 cards by removing the 22 Trump Cards and the 4 Knights while retaining 12 Court Cards and 40 Pip Cards. Many other less popular variations of deck structure occur among playing cards.

## **The Primary Hypothesis of This Book**

The Primary Hypothesis of this book is that the Tarot deck is a loose-leaf textbook that was developed in ancient Egypt and later adapted by the Phoenicians and Hebrews in various formats to present the basic knowledge necessary for becoming an educated person. It is a complete educational text unbound so that the student can play with it as a deck of flash cards or a game. The Trump Cards of the Major Arcana evolved into a method for teaching the fundamental concepts of civilization and personal development. Eventually the system included the alphabet. The Court and Pip Cards of the Minor Arcana taught the nuclear family structure basis of social relations and the numbers. The system became a resource for promoting literacy and simple social and accounting skills. The icons of the Majors additionally provided an anatomy of human psycho-physiology and presented the basic archetypes of human life, while the Minors introduced the dynamics of physical processes as well as the relationships and responsibilities of society. As a student becomes more familiar with the cards, the symbolism, and how they developed, he or she may begin to discover the higher spiritual teachings that they contain.

Historically the Tarot appeared as a game in ancient Egypt and evolved into a condensed version of Egyptian culture and a tool for divination and spiritual practice. The Phoenician and Hebrew people in ancient times later adapted the system to their own cultures and introduced major modifications. Other cultures also influenced the evolution of the imagery, and by the time of the European Middle Ages the introduction of printing techniques from China enabled the Tarot to become widely popular in the format of printed decks of cards. Modern media have popularized the Tarot throughout the world.

In this book I will first discuss my investigations into the historical origins and development of the Tarot, and then provide materials that facilitate the study and application of the Tarot in its various educational dimensions. Much of the materials that I present in this book and my other books and articles that deal with the Tarot directly or tangentially have never appeared before in works on the Tarot by other writers, and necessarily will be controversial. This is a research project in progress, and new evidence and insights regularly surface. You may wish to disagree with my interpretations but the data is real and verifiable. The material in this book is intended for reference and to inspire further research. The reader must play with the cards and their sources in order to discover the endless paths of revelation they embrace.

## **The Historical Origins and Development of the Tarot Cards.**

The concept of “cards” (small portable sets of symbolic and mnemonic tokens) with various themes and dedicated to all manner of serious purposes, spiritual growth, games, or gambling far predates the invention of paper. It must go back to when man first began to make symbols and develop tokens for inscribing them. Such tokens could be used for business or pleasure, religion or art. Some of the earliest examples of symbolic tokens that we have that were designed for business purposes are the Sumerian clay Bullas. These hollow clay balls held little clay tokens of various standardized shapes that were used to represent various objects used in commerce. The bulla was a sealed document or invoice listing the goods in a shipment. Statues and images of animals, gods, kings, and other important figures occur in almost all early societies. We also have clay game pieces shaped like animals that go back to pre-dynastic times in Egypt. Recently archaeologists found in Africa decorative shells that go back tens of thousands of years.

In this book we are going to focus on a particular set of images that came to form the pack of cards commonly known as the Tarot. For hundreds of years this pack has been used for cartomancy (divination with cards) as well as for playing many amusing card games. The design and contents of the Tarot deck have shown remarkable consistency over the years. Students of the occult have claimed that the pack's Trump cards originated in ancient Egypt or came from the Jewish Qabalah. However, modern scholars scoff at these claims pointing to the lack of playing cards in Egyptian tombs and declaring that the agreement between the number of Hebrew letters and the number of Trumps is coincidental. Yet no one has proposed a coherent theory to explain the origin and development of the set of powerful archetypal images that constitute the Trumps. Why were these particular images chosen, and why have they remained so consistent over the centuries?

We know that playing cards existed in Europe as early as the 14th century and Tarot decks definitely were in use there by the 15th century since a few cards from that time survive. Remarkably the basic themes depicted on the Major Arcana cards were already established when the cards first appeared in medieval times and have remained consistent to the present day.

The Tarot cards as they exist in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are the product of contributions from several major civilizations over a period of many centuries and represent a wonderful combination of folk art and the highest teachings of learned scholars. Thus we can



not attribute the creation of the Tarot to the genius of any one individual. In fact the natural division of the deck into Major and Minor Arcana, with the subsequent evolution of modern poker-style playing cards from the Minor Arcana suggests that the Tarot may be a merging of several games or systems of knowledge over time to form a single large set of images.

The Major and Minor Arcana may come from the same source, but it is also possible that the Minor Arcana developed independently in several locations. The simple reason for this is that the Minor Arcana are based on the number ten displayed with four suits. Ten is the most widely used base for the counting numbers because people have ten fingers. In many parts of the world the year clearly divides into four seasons due to earth's orbit around the sun and the ancients observed that the phenomenal world naturally consists of four basic states of matter: solid (earth), liquid (water), gas (air), and plasma (fire). These states became known as the classical four elements and are still recognized today by modern physicists. Life (consciousness) is the ineffable fifth element that interpenetrates all four material states and is granted default recognition because people resist the idea that they might be dead, but has not yet received proper definition and acceptance into their disciplines by "objective" scientists. The directions in space also tend to form a natural set of four because of the revolution of the earth on its axis and the convenience of building quadrilateral architectural structures. Those who enjoy life within these spaces form the fifth element.

Therefore we should not be surprised to find the emergence of games based on four and ten in ancient China, India, and the Middle East. Indeed we find evidence of the ancient Chinese playing games such as Mahjong that use representations of money such as nine tiles with coin-like disks and nine tiles with bamboo staffs (representing strings of coins plus a bonus tile for each suit). Chinese game tokens were drawn or incised on various media such as bamboo strips, wooden slips, and ivory tiles, or printed on paper. We also find the Indians celebrating in card designs the ten avatars of Vishnu and his human form with four arms, each hand wielding a symbolic implement (lotus, mace, conch, and discus). In the Middle East we find the ancient Qabalistic tradition of the Tree of Life unfolds in ten major stages with four traditional levels of creation (Atziluth, Beriah, Yetzirah, and Assiyah). The Tree of Life thus can be treated as a game board. We also find in ancient Egypt that the four sons of Horus represent the four classical elements (fire, water, air, and earth) and are commonly depicted on a table before Osiris, the god of the mature intuition. The symbolic Djed tree amulet represents the "Tree of Life" in which the body of Osiris

was found entombed. Traditionally it has four parallel branches along the upper portion of its trunk that also suggest the four elements. The Egyptian solar calendar was organized into a system of 36 dekan weeks of 10 days each, with a final half-dekan five-day week at the end of the year. Thus we find that the Tarot system with four sets of ten Pip Cards could have arisen independently in many different cultures. In this book we will follow one particular story and allow that other cultural streams may have influenced it.

### The Origin of “Paper”

The practice of using paper cards of course depends on the invention and availability of paper. The ancient Egyptians developed a primitive form of paper made from the papyrus reed that grew along the banks of the Nile and there is evidence of its use as early as the first dynasty. The English word "paper" derives from "papyrus", a Greek word. The word Bible is derived from “biblios”, the Greek word for book and a variant spelling of “papyrus”. Notice the “b” and “p” alternation and the “r” and “l” alternation in the spellings, the latter being especially common because Egyptian lacked a clearly differentiated “l” sound.

Since the Egyptians invented papyrus paper as a product of the papyrus plant that grew along the Nile, we naturally would expect that this word would come from their language. However, none of the several words used for the papyrus plant in Egyptian suggest the words “papyrus” or “biblios”. The usual word for book in Egyptian was **mejat**, and a term for a library was **per mejat** (House of Books). Although the word **per** resembles the second part of “pa-per”, the gloss does not resolve the question of how the word “paper” arose.

One theory is that the word comes from “pa-per”, a purported idiom with the sense “that which belongs to the royal palace” -- that is, the records of the Egyptian royal bureaucracy. “Pa” is a masculine demonstrative pronoun or has the notion of belonging to and “per” is a masculine noun meaning a temple or palace. Egyptian libraries of spiritual and literary works were usually housed in temples, whereas documents and records would be stored in a dedicated room of the palace.

Another possibility is that the word “papyrus” derives from the expression “Baba-red” or “Baby-ret” or “Bebe-reth” (with several variant spellings). “Ba” is another word for book in Egyptian, and Baba is the name of Thoth’s transcendental aspect as well as his avatar as the baboon totem tutelary deity of scribes, ☐ the eldest son of Osiris, and as the traditional master of yoga in ancient Egypt. “Ba” also

stands for the leopard skin worn by initiatory priests and is an important totem animal symbol for *Baba*.

The letter “b” in Egyptian is a pictograph of a leg and foot in standing position. *Baba*’s name was often simply symbolized with two such leg glyphs. “Ret” or “red” or “reth” also means a human leg and by extension came to stand for mankind, the creature that walks upright on two legs. (A nasal “m” was sometimes infixed between the “r” and the “t” when the word meant mankind [e.g., **remeth**].) “Redwy” two legs in motion came to signify a staircase. The staircase was the means of ascending to Heaven, and its two leg glyphs were bent into a walking posture. The two legs of “redwy” often served as code for *Baba*’s name, and this code is frequently seen in the **Pyramid Texts**. *Baba*, as the master of the yoga tradition was the staircase to Heaven.

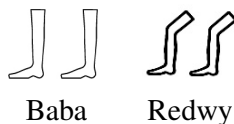
The “ba” leopard skin totem of *Baba* is remarkable for the orderly rows of dots that form the markings on its pelt. Before the discovery of papyrus paper, people wrote or incised primitive glyphs on other media such as stone, bone, wood, and so on. The closest medium to paper in ancient times was an animal skin. It is even very possible that the original inspiration for humans to create artistic drawings and glyphs that eventually became writing was by observing the markings on animals that appeared decorative or served some protective or communicative purpose – such as for camouflage or to attract a mate. The rows of dots on a leopard skin resemble rows of glyphs written in a book.

Down through the Middle Ages until modern paper making was introduced into Europe the literati routinely wrote books manually on vellum or parchment sheets that were prepared from the skins of lambs, calves, and goats. This technology was refined during the last two centuries BCE and early CE, but no doubt had some use in primitive form at much earlier times. This may be the origin of the word “ba” used for a book as well as a sheep, or a leopard skin in Egyptian.

Thus our word for paper may derive from a very ancient Egyptian tradition that the first books were written on animal skins prior to the development of paper that used the vegetable matter of the papyrus plant.

The Greeks routinely transliterated Egyptian words into their language by replacing final “t” with a final “s”. Thus we would get “babylus” or “papyrus” from the hypothetical Egyptian phrase **Babyret**. Unfortunately, I have not been able to

document any occurrence of this phrase in extant texts. However, we can infer the code link between **red** and Baba's name, because his sacred site in Egypt was a district of Heliopolis (old Cairo). This district consisted of two components called "North **W@ret**" and "South **W@ret**". The word **W@ret** (read Wa'aret) is another word for leg in Egyptian and also came to mean a sacred district in a town, probably from the connection to the Heliopolitan site. The name was written with the same leg glyph as **red**. The two districts combined meant two legs (**redwy**), and spelled the name Baba in the code – since this was his sacred site in Northern Egypt. Later the area came to be known as "Babylon", and this reinforces the connection with the Lord of Yoga, Baba. The name **Wa-@ret** analyzes into "Cobra [**@ret**] Meditation [**Wa**]", the specialty of Baba. The name Babylon may be a Greek rendering of **Beby-ren** (The Name of Baba). As we shall see, this site was at the geographical location of the throat chakra in Egypt's geo-physiological map. So we could translate the name **Beby-ren** as "The Throat Chakra of Baba." There was another special **W@ret** site at Abydos, the sacred town of Osiris in the south. This site may have been dedicated to Baba as the first son of Osiris, whereas the site in Heliopolis connected him to Ra.



In general the entrances to sacred temples had grand gateways with pylons and an obelisk or stele on each side. You ritually walked between the legs of Baba as you entered the sacred space. Semitic languages then borrowed the term "Baba" to mean a gate, and thence "Babylon" became adopted as the name for the well-known great city in Mesopotamia.

A third theory is that the word "paper" derives from **Pa @per** or **Ba @per**. The deity **@per Pehwy** is identified as a hawk-god, a patron of learning and letters, who is one of the seven wise sons (**Jaasu**) of **Meh Weret** (Great Fullness = a Cosmic Cow form of Hathor, Goddess of Love and Light) that brought about literature. Together with Thoth (the Intellect) these seven wise ones planned the world. They came from the pupil of Ra's Eye (the womb of Sekhmet Hathor, the Eye of Ra, the Viewpoint of the Higher Self), and flew upward as hawks with **Asden** (another epithet of Thoth's baboon scribe = the writer who conveys the Higher Self and beyond).

**Chakra Ten: Jehuty** (Cosmic Intelligence)

**Chakra Nine: Aryt R@** (The Focused Intent of the Higher Self)

**Chakra Eight: Asden** (Baba the Baboon, the Scribe with a Sense of Humor)

**Chakra Seven: San** (Fragrant Rubbing Ointment = Content to Think About)

**Chakra Six: Neb Desheru** (Lord of Red Ones = Eye-catching Rubrics, good titles)

**Chakra Five: Khekh** (Throat = Rhetorical Expressiveness)

**Chakra Four: Nefer-Haty** (Beautiful Heart = Ability to Touch the Feelings),

**Chakra Three: Ba-k** (Hawk = Your Personal Divine Soul, What You Want to Say)

**Chakra Two: Ka** (Creative Energy, Vivacity, Sexiness)

**Chakra One: @per Pehwy** (Obelisk Base, Foundation for Ornamentation)

Written expression requires the eight qualities expressed by the seven hawks plus **Asden-Baba** the scribe, the Higher Self Source, and the organizing power of Intelligence. The **@per Pehwy** is the papyrus on which the scribe records his literary creations. **Pehwy** can also be read as **Pehety**, the Mighty One, which is an epithet of **Hew**, a special avatar of **Baba** who initiates into the secret and sacred most powerful mantras.

**Baba** takes the form of **Ptah (Peteh)** to carry out the cosmic designs of Thoth and his seven Wise Ones. The consort of **Ptah** is **Sekhemet** (also called **Tefnut**), the lioness goddess – the Eye of Ra. From this we know that Baba is both Ra and Thoth. Thoth conceives an idea, and Ra embodies that idea as a dynamic plan. Baba-Peteh carries the plan into physical form. Baba also takes the form of **Bes (Bas)**, the playful dwarf god who likes to wear a leopard skin, and then his consort is **Baset**, the cat goddess). Sekhemet, Tefnut, and Baset, are all variations of Hathor, the Mother Goddess. (See Budge, **The Gods of the Egyptians**, Volume 1, p. 526.).

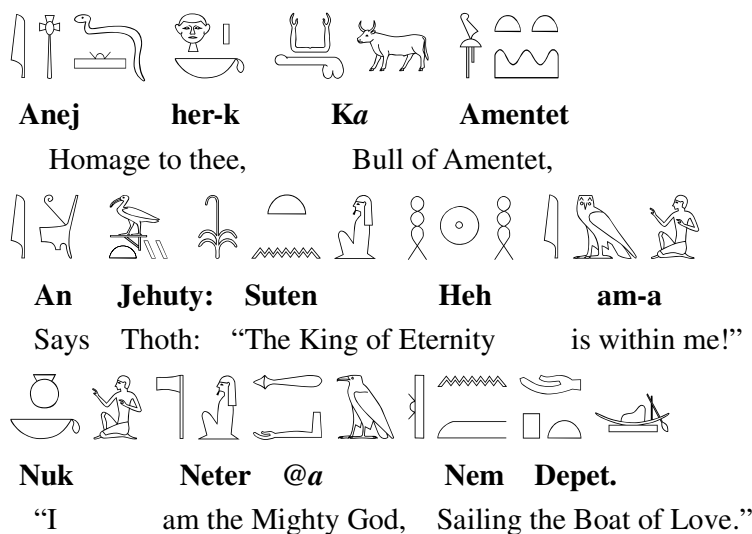
**Ba @per\*** (the fully ornamented, documented, furnished book) or **Pa @per\*** (that which is fully ornamented, documented, furnished) would be excellent hypothetical epithets for the paper on which books were written. (The star indicates that these are hypothetical reconstructions.) Egyptians loved to fully ornament their potential formal writing spaces with hieroglyphs. This is obvious when you look at the walls and pillars of temples and tombs where every available space is filled with text or decorative motifs and illustrations.

Of the three theories, I like the third one best, but will await further research that reveals textual examples of these theoretical expressions or other confirming evidence before giving any strong opinion on the matter of this interesting question of the

etymology of “paper”, “papyrus”, and “biblios”.

## The Book of the Dead and the Tarot Trumps

One of the oldest books in the world is the Egyptian “Book of the Dead”. Papyrus scrolls with its text go back to the golden age of Thebes during the New Kingdom (around 1550 BC). Its real title is **Pert em Heru**, which we may translate as “Coming Forth into the Daylight” or more freely as “Ascension into Enlightenment”. The work served not only as a guidebook intended to assist the dead, but also to enlighten the living. “*Heru*” is a close homophone for the name Heru (Horus), the Sun God. What is it that comes forth into the Light? What gets enlightened? Of course we know that the sun rises into the sky each dawn and brings a new day. Metaphorically speaking the conscious mind ascends into the light of awareness. Indeed the book speaks in detail about how the **ba** harnesses the bull-like creative **ka** energy and “rides it” to enlightenment and freedom. The resurrected (spiritually reborn) person becomes Osiris and praises the secret **ka** energy (Papyrus of Ani, Plate V).



This is a phrase to be uttered by the reader during initiation and is also used during the funeral rites to be said for the deceased. “Amen” means west and hidden. “Amentet” is a name for the Astral Realm, the land of the setting sun when we go to sleep, die, or enter deep meditation. The Lady of Amentet is Hathor, the Goddess of Love and Light. Her ancient name is Amenet, the consort of Amen, the Hidden One. During the night she transforms into Newet (Nut), the goddess of the night sky. The Bull of Amentet is Osiris, Lord of Amentet. During the night the sun god Ra passes through the underworld and Osiris recognizes that Ra is his true identity. Thoth

declares that he is Ra. Thoth is Intelligence, and Ra is the Higher Self – the expression of Intelligence as a Plan for the Evolution of the Cosmos. The true identity of Ra is Amen (not the visible sun, but the invisible sun of the Higher Self). The Bull is an icon for the creative power of the sun. The Egyptian word **ka** also means the living energy that earth receives from the sun. Its most powerful form in a human is male sexual energy, but all forms of life energy are variations of electromagnetic energy. The initiate identifies with Osiris, and Osiris identifies with Ra and thereby becomes Amen, the spouse of Amenet. This tells us that the true identity of Isis, the consort of Osiris, is Hathor-Amenet. Osiris is the ability of awareness to witness phenomena, and Isis is the ability to feel experiences. Hathor-Amenet is the Invisible Awareness that manifests as light and love, the essential material out of which all creations and experiences are made.

Thoth is the archetype of the highest intelligence and wisdom. He says that the King of Eternity is found in himself – the Highest Intelligence – which is Thoth’s identity. He also says that the King of Eternity is within you, the reader, and becomes your reality whenever you utter that statement with belief. The word **Suten** survives as the word sultan, an ancient title for a king. **Heh** is another of the Eight Primordials created by Thoth along with Amen and Amenet. He represents Eternal Time.

The third phrase is a great mantra in which the initiate declares his divine power. **Nem Depet** has several meanings. **Nem** is to travel by Boat (**Depet**). However, **nem** also can mean to sleep, which suggests the idea of becoming the Boat of Sleep. **Depet** is an epithet of Hathor, the Love Goddess. It also means the sense of taste. Dep-Pe was a twin city in northern Egypt that represented the crown chakra. Another word for boat (**waa**) was often used as a punning code for meditation (**waa**). Sleep and meditation are very similar, except that during sleep alert awareness is lost, but during meditation wakeful awareness remains.

We discover from this brief passage at the beginning of the first chapter of the “Book of Enlightenment” a multi-layered symbolic code that evolved in Egypt over several thousand years from at least as early as the Pyramid Texts that survive from the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> dynasties. These few words encapsulate the entire core teachings of ancient Egypt once we are able to enter into the elaborate hieroglyphic communication system. Here is a sentence that summarizes the Book of Enlightenment in a few words.



**H@ em sethesu s-aakhu**

Begin with exaltations and glorifications

**Peret hayt em Kheret Neteret Aakhut em Amenetet Neferet**

Ascending and descending in the Enlightened Netherworld and the Beautiful Hidden Realm.

**Peret em Hru em kheperu neb[u] mery-f,**

Ascending into the Daylight in any forms that he prefers,

**Heb@ er Senet, hemes em Seh.**

Playing at Senet while sitting in a [divination] booth

**Peret em Ba @nekhy.**

And going forth as a living soul.

(Plate VII, Chapter 17, Rubric; Budge page 27-28.)

The words exaltation and glorification are in the causative mode, and the hieroglyph for glorification and glorious is a pictograph of a bird similar to the ibis totem of Thoth, but with a special crest that resembles a head scarf. The **Aakhu** are Great Immortal Light Beings who live and love forever. **Khu** is one of the secret epithets of Jehuty (Thoth), the creator of the Tarot. Amentet is the invisible Astral Realm. The Light Beings exist forever as immortals in the paradise of Undefined Awareness. Their bodies are pure light and light never decays. By the daylight of consciousness the gods and Light Beings come forth and assume various forms of existence as creations (**kheperu**). The root **mer** means to love someone or something. **Mery-f** means whatever a person prefers. Our word **amorous** comes from this ancient Egyptian word. The gods come forth as living souls and sit in a special booth or tabernacle (**seh**) and play a game called **Senet**.

**The Ancient Egyptian Game of Senet**

**Senet**, like Mancala, is one of the oldest games in the world. People have played such games for thousands of years in Africa. However, Mancala is merely an amusing game played with pebbles or seeds dropped into little cups or holes in the



ground, while Senet has a much deeper significance and came to be used for divination. In this respect it caught my eye as a candidate for the original game from which the Tarot evolved.

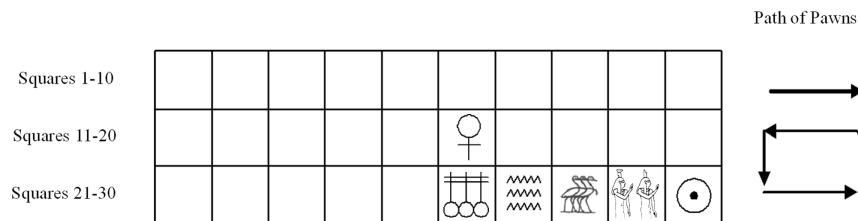


The hieroglyph for Senet looks like a long playing card with two little slanted lines on it to show that the game involved two players. The glyph has the meaning of to pass, a model, a copy, a likeness, or an archetype. With it is the glyph for walking, and the combination means to pass, to go beyond, or transcend, which was a key element of the game. Unfortunately we do not have detailed rules for how the Egyptians played, but there are many illustrations of people playing and a text survives that describes the game board layout (See my book, [The Senet Game Text of Ancient Egypt](#)).

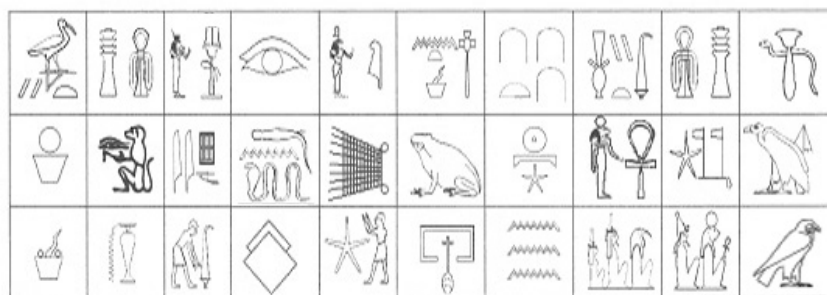
The game of **Senet** is the ancestor of many chessboard games and card games played throughout the world. The glyph for the “Passing Game” also looks a lot like the cartouche in which Egyptians wrote the names of pharaohs. The cartouche is a glyph that resembles the ancient seal stamp. During pre-dynastic times and the early dynasties Egyptians used cylinder or stamp seals to impress the hieroglyphic names or images of gods, pharaohs, personal names, and designs onto clay and other soft media. Cylinder seals were rolled on wet clay or mud to impress the images carved around the cylinder. Stamp seals and signet rings were pressed into the soft sealing material. For example, papyrus documents were rolled up and tied with string after which a clay seal was placed over the string and impressed with the owner’s or an official seal. The most popular shape of a stamp seal was that of a scarab beetle. Oddly we do not have evidence that Egyptians made seal imprints with ink directly on papyrus documents; that may have occurred but evidence has not survived.

The Egyptians from early times began to treat the seals as amulets. They often carried them on their persons not only to conduct business, but also to use as a charm. They could collect sets of the amulets and play various games with them or use them for divination. For example, you could have a bag of scarab seals with different gods or amulets incised on them. You would ask a question and then draw a seal from the bag. Whatever god's name or image was on it would be the answer to your question. This is the origin of Tarot divination.

The board game of **Senet** probably goes back to before the first pharaohs. The earliest example of the game we have is from about 3050 B.C. Originally **Senet** was played on a board with 30 squares laid out in three rows of ten squares each.



The squares had a numerical sequence that followed a zigzag path from the top left corner square to the bottom right corner square. The three sets of ten squares or “Houses” as the Egyptians called them immediately bring to mind the Minor Arcana of the Tarot. It is as if the Egyptians had three suits of ten pips each. However, these were not the Pip Cards. They were the Trumps and Courts, because each House was the temple of a god or goddess. It turns out that the game board was a calendar as well as an entertainment device. Most boards had only blank squares, because Egyptians had the names of the squares memorized. Nevertheless, occasionally boards had symbols on a few squares, and from a few examples and a surviving little book about the game and board ([The Senet Game Text](#)) we know that there was a tradition of one or more symbols for each square, and these symbols represented Egyptian nature deities, usually called “gods” in the scholarly and popular literature. In Egyptian a nature deity was called a **neter**. The game board shown above shows an example of what a board with only a few symbols looks like. Below is my tentative reconstruction of a fully illustrated **Senet** Game Board. Squares 4, 5, 24, and 25 are destroyed on remaining examples, but reconstructed based on hints in the game text. Squares 6, 8, 17, 18, 19, 22, and 23 are reconstructed from fragmentary illustrations and evidence in the game text.



## The Symbols on the Senet Game Board

Square	Deity	Totem	Tarot Card
1.	Jehuty (Thoth)	Ibis	High Priest
2.	Asar (Osiris)	Pillar	Magician
3.	Net (Newet)	Altar	Star

4	Maa	Eye (vision)	Queen of Wands (fire)
5.	Ma'at	Ostrich plume	Justice
6.	Nej net Ba?	Counsel (hearing)	Queen of Swords (air)
7.	Ma'bet	Council of 30	Judgment
8.	Senyt Ta?	Smell	Queen of Cups (water)
9.	Thet (Aset)	Knot of Isis	High Priestess
10.	Waj (Khenty-Khard)	Papyrus	Hanged Man
11.	Mut (Hathor)	Vulture	Empress
12.	Sah (Saa?)	Touch	Queen of Coins (earth)
13.	Sekhemet	Lioness Sphinx	Strength
14.	Ra'	Sun in Sky	Sun
15.	Heqet (Resurrection)	Frog	Wheel of Fortune
16.	Aah	Net	Moon
17.	Mehen	Serpent	Devil
18.	Pa Mery	Digging Stick	Lovers
19.	Qeftenew (Baba)	Baboon	Fool
20.	Ta	Bowl of Bread	World
21.	Ba	Incense	Temperance
22.	Qebhu (Qebhusenu-f)	Cooling Libation	King of Swords (Air)
23.	Mes-ta	Start Fire	King of Wands (fire)
24.	Hep?	Hapy	King of Cups (water)
25.	Dewa (Dewamut-f)?	Evening Star	King of Coins (earth)
26.	Per Nefer	Embalming House	Hermit
27.	Mu	Waters	Death
28.	Shewe (Shu)	God with Plume	Emperor
29.	Tem and Ra	White Crown	Tower
30.	Heru	Hawk	Chariot (Warrior)

Note: Some of the assignments may seem strange, but they are based on a reasonable reconstruction. For example, the Council of 30 is the group of judges that consider the judgment of the heart. The vulture is the symbol for Mut-Hathor. The Frog represents resurrection and rebirth. The net represents the moon's control of the tides. The word for bread is a homophone for World. **Per Nefer** (the beautiful house) was the place of mummification where they removed the heart of the deceased and prepared the body for burial. The waters represent a lake of oblivion over which jackals towed the barge with the soul of the deceased.

Egyptians called each square on the **Senet** Game Board a **Het** [House, Mansion, Temple]. Each House represented a day on the calendar. A cycle through the 30

squares on the board represented one month, and there was a deity for each day rather like the saints' days on religious calendars. (There apparently were variant sequences in different places and times.) Egyptians developed a myth to explain how their Senet Game Board Calendar worked.

According to the myth recorded by Plutarch the problem with the calendar arose when the sun god Ra in his transformation as Shu (Shewe; the Breath of Life) discovered that his children Nut (Cosmic Space) and Geb (Earth) whom he had sired with Tefnut/Sekhmet/Hathor/Mut (Love, Light, and Undefined Awareness) were having a secret affair. Shu then stood between them and separated them – forming the earth's atmosphere. He then disallowed Nut from giving birth to children in any month or year. According to the myth in those ancient times the solar month and lunar month were both 30 days and the year was 360 days long. If Geb and Nut could not give birth, then life and civilization could not arise on the planet, for the nature deities necessary to facilitate life could not be born. In Egyptian art we often find Ra in his avatar as Shu depicted in the act of pushing Nut up and away from a reclining Geb. The ironic aspect of this myth is that Shu (the atmosphere) is what connects earth and cosmic space, making life on the planet possible with its insulating buffer from the cold vacuum of outer space.

Thoth (the personification of Cosmic Intelligence) had the clever ability to engineer the evolution of life and civilization on planets with the assistance of his wives Ma'at (Truth) and Seshat (Evolution). To provide the essential Egyptian deities needed to get Egyptian civilization going (plants as a food source, sunlight as an energy source, fertile soil to anchor plants, stone for construction, and irrigation to nourish the plants), Thoth (probably in his disguise as Baba, the playful baboon,) made a bet with the moon that he could beat her at the game of Senet. The stake was  $1/72^{\text{nd}}$  part of the light of the moon (Plutarch in his telling of the tale rounded it off to  $1/70^{\text{th}}$  part, which actually comes closer to the precise fraction needed).

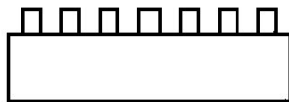
The numbers are important for understanding the story. The story is not myth, but math. The game of Senet was played on a rectangular chessboard with 30 squares arranged in three rows of 10 squares each. Each square represented a day, and each row was an Egyptian solar week, called by the Egyptians a **met** and called by the Greeks a **dekan**. The full set of three rows of ten squares made up a solar month. The twelve months of a year came to 360 days. The point of the myth is to show how Thoth managed to get a year of 365 days and a month of 29.53 days from a calendar board with 30 squares.

Thoth being the most intelligent of all the gods obviously won the game and the moon was forced to give up  $1/72^{\text{nd}}$  of her light to add some extra days to the calendar year so that the five Egyptian national nature deities that made life possible could be born. If we divide 360 by 72, the answer is 5. The last five squares on the right side of the bottom row of the Senet board became five special squares that represented the Epagomenal Days of the short 5-day  $13^{\text{th}}$  month at the end of each solar year. (These are the squares illustrated on the bottom row of the first game board example shown above. This symbol in the middle of the board is Life Renewed and represents the full moon on the  $15^{\text{th}}$  day of the month.) If we divide 30 by 72, we get 0.416666.... We subtract that from the idealized 30-day lunar month and get 29.583333... days, which is very close to the actual lunar month of 29.53059 days. If we divide the actual solar year of 365.2425 days by the actual 5.2425 super-added days needed, then we get 69.6695278969. When we divide 30 by 69.6695278969, we get .43060432452. Subtracting this amount from 30 days gives us 29.5693956755... days, which is even closer to the “exact” lunar month of 29.53059 days than 29.583333.... days.

By this clever trick Thoth tweaked the Senet Game Board’s idealized calendar of 30 days into both a perpetual solar calendar and a perpetual lunar calendar. The Egyptians alternated long and short lunar months of 29 or 30 days, depending on when the crescent of the new moon started to appear, just as, for example, the Chinese and Muslims do today in their lunar calendars.

As the game evolved, it became not just an amusement but a symbolic means of communicating with deceased loved ones, the nature gods, or one’s own Higher Self -- a kind of Ouija board. Instead of two people playing, a single person could play at divination using the Senet Game Board as a Senet Oracle Board. Later still the game became a spiritual initiation into the realms of the **Aakhu** immortal Light Beings (what some might call angelic realms). Each square on the board became associated with an Egyptian deity and various Oracle Board layouts were possible. Thoth was the High Priest, and Horus became the Hero who wins the game or solves your problem in life. The player’s secret guide was **Men**, the Procreator God who personified the entire Senet Board. This deity of fecundity and the technology of the ancient Cobra Breath technique that **Men** created had as the glyph for his name a simplified pictograph of the Senet Board viewed from the side. This tradition apparently went back thousands of years to the very beginning of Egyptian dynastic history, because the first pharaoh of the first dynasty had this deity’s name glyph as one of his titles.

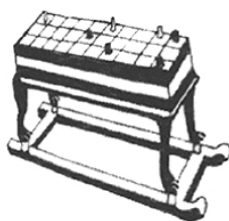
Another of this pharaoh's titles may have been **Kher-@ha (Her @ha)**, an alternate name for the site that was sacred to Baba in the City of the Sun (Heliopolis). The journey through the 30 stages of the Board became the Journey of the Fool, the pawn, through life, through the afterlife, or passing back and forth between the invisible and visible worlds. The glyph for a pawn actually looks very much like the crown of Southern Egypt. **Men** is an autochthonous deity from Southern Egypt. Perhaps in Egyptian chess the pawn can become -- or even inherently is -- the Pharaoh.



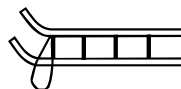
The Glyph **Men** is a stylized drawing of a Senet Game Board with pawns on it and has the root meaning of a foundation or something firmly established.



Pawn



Tutankhamen's Senet Game



Sledge

Above is a drawing of a Senet Game Board used by Pharaoh Tutankhamen (one of four found in his tomb). The pawns are in various positions on the board, and the board itself is mounted on a box with a drawer to hold the pawns and throwing sticks or knucklebones (ancient dice). The box rests on a table made to resemble a sledge such as was used for hauling large stone blocks for pyramids and temples or the heavy stone sarcophagus of a pharaoh. The sledge glyph **tem** means all and suggests in the drawing that the Senet Game Board on the sledge contains the whole universe. The glyph is also the phonetic spelling for the god Tem, symbol of the sudden creation of the whole universe in a single instantaneous Big Bang. The legs that support the box as a table imitate lion paws to suggest the power of a pharaoh and his role as the incarnation of the sun.

## Play of the Game

Senet is a game played between two opponents. The name of the game means to pass. You use knucklebone dice or throwing sticks to generate a number and then maneuver your pawns so they move forward and try to pass your opponent's pawns. With some moves you can even trade places with opponent pawns so that you go forward and they go backward. The ultimate goal of the game appears to be to get all your pawns to pass over all 30 squares and then to bear them off the last square into a transcendental realm that lies beyond the board. Senet may be the origin of popular games such as Pachisi and Backgammon.



Two Men Playing Senet

## Divination with the Senet Oracle

When a person used Senet for divination, the board acted as a bridge between worlds or states of consciousness. The illustrations we have of divination indicate that it was a special ritual. The questioner would set up a special booth made of papyrus reeds or other plant material and sit inside with the Senet Oracle Board on a small table. When a person is divining with the oracle, they are alone or any other people present will sit on the same side of the Senet Board.




\* The **seh** glyph on the left has a papyrus determinative in the middle. This could be a stone pillar with an imitation papyrus capital supporting a large hall, but usually the **seh** glyph stands for a small temporary divination booth made from wood and papyrus reeds. This is the prototype for the tradition of Succoth booths made by Jews on their Holiday of Tabernacles. Succoth is the plural of SVKH, and is probably the same word as the Egyptian **seh**.

\* In the second drawing we see the scribe Ani and his wife sitting in the **seh** booth and divining with the Senet Oracle Board. Outside the booth is a mastaba tomb with the couple's birdlike souls (**ba**) waiting for the outcome of the consultation and their decision. Once Ani and his wife decide what life they will create, their souls will fly off to experience it. (Sketch by author from Papyrus of Ani, Plate 7.)

\* In the third drawing we see Hunefer divining alone in his **seh** booth. (Drawing based on Hunefer Papyrus.)

\* The last example is a portrait of Queen Nefertari, wife of Rameses the Great, from a detail on the wall of her tomb in the Valley of the Queens, Egypt. She is divining her future life. The work of art depicted in this image and the reproduction thereof are in the **public domain** worldwide. The reproduction is part of a collection of reproductions compiled by The Yorck Project. The compilation copyright is held by Zenodot Verlagsgesellschaft mbH and licensed under the GNU Free Documentation License.

## The Weighing of the Heart and Senet Divination

In the illustration for the Weighing of the Heart Ceremony in the Judgment Hall of Osiris (e.g., Papyrus of Ani, Plate 3) we find along the top of the tableau a row of gods witnessing the proceedings. They sit in a row on 10 square thrones, closely resembling a row on the Senet Board. Each throne contains within it the glyph for House (**Het** ) that Egyptians use to refer to squares on the Senet Game Board. These senior gods are part of the Council of 30 judges that witness the Weighing of the Heart. The Weighing of the Heart tableau was depicted with varying amounts of detail in Egyptian art for thousands of years and is the cornerstone of their culture. The first six judges sitting in front are almost always the same in the standard sequence. The judges on the remaining thrones may vary in terms of number, sequence, and identity. Here is how they appear in the Papyrus of Ani. Notice how the colors of the square thrones in the illustration alternate like the squares on a traditional chessboard.



Weighing of the Heart Ceremony, Papyrus of Ani, Plate 3, courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

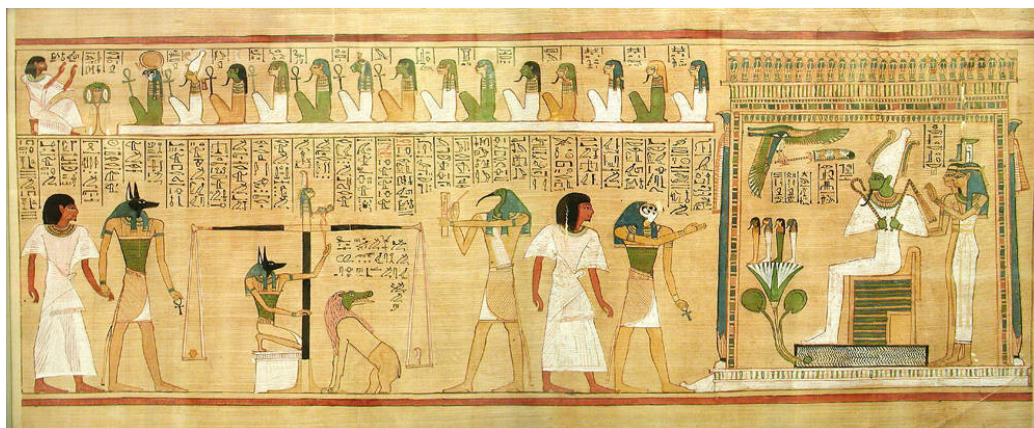


### **Weighing Ceremony "Senet" Witness Gods      Corresponding Tarot Trump**







1. <b>Hor-Aakhety</b> , the Sun God	Sun
2. <b>Temew</b> , (Adam), Lord of Awen, First Man Cosmic Phallus	Tower
3. <b>Shewe</b> (Shu), god of air	Emperor
4. <b>Tefnut</b> , female sphinx (Sekhmet)	Strength
5. <b>Geb</b> , the Earth-god	World
6. <b>Newet</b> (Nut), Galaxy and Cosmic Space	Star
7. <b>Aset</b> (Isis) and <b>Nebet-Het</b> (Nebthys)	Priestess and Temperance
8. <b>Hor</b> (Horus), son of Isis	Chariot (Warrior)
9. <b>Het-Hert</b> (Hathor), wife of Ra	Empress
10. <b>Hew</b> (Taste) and <b>Saa</b> (Feeling)	“Queens” of Cups and Coins

### **Judgement Hall Scene: Weighing of the Heart**

11. <b>Asar</b> (Osiris) with table, 4 sons of Horus	Magician and 4 Kings (cf. pHunefer)
12. <b>Ani</b> brought by Horus to face Osiris	Hanged Man
13. <b>Ammit</b> , Chimera eats dishonest hearts	Devil
14. <b>Jehuty</b> (Thoth) Master of Ceremony	High Priest
15. <b>Ma'at</b> (Feather of Truth in Scales)	Justice
16. <b>Anepew</b> (Anubis) Black Jackal	Death
17. <b>Qefetenew</b> (Baba) Baboon form of Thoth	Fool
18. <b>Shay</b> , God of Fortune	Wheel of Fortune
19. <b>Bennew</b> (Heart of Ani) isolated in the pan	Hermit
20. <b>Mes-Kkhenet</b> (Midwife Birth Goddess)	Judgment
21. <b>Renenet</b> (Nurse goddess) teaches names	Moon
22. <b>Any</b> and <b>Tutu</b> (Self and Spouse)	Lovers



For Comparison, the Judgment Tableau from the [Hunefer Papyrus](#), courtesy Wikimedia Commons

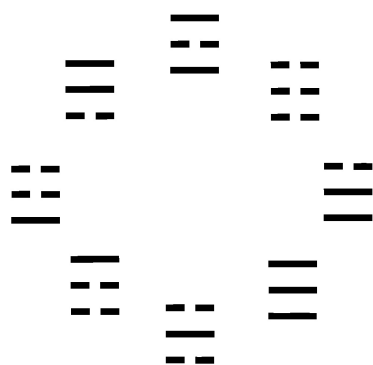
Altogether in the papyrus Ani tableau we find 22 Trumps and 6 Courts. The 4 Kings stand for the four elements of which the body is made. The two “Queens” are handsome young yogis who represent mastery of the senses. Two yogis of the senses – Sight (**Maa**) and Hearing (**Sejem**) – are implied by the appearance of **Hew** and **Saa**, but were not drawn in the tableau by the artist. The 30 Senior Judges were called the **Ma@biu** , and the court was known by its cleverly punning title as the **Ma@-bet** , Court of Truths. As a group they comprise the 30 thrones on the **Senet** Board and tell the Fortune of the Deceased. The Papyrus Hunefer tableau that I provide for comparison shows Osiris as the President of the Council of 30  (the corresponding portion of the Papyrus Ani illustration is omitted above, but essentially the same.) Another secret encoded in the name of the Council is that the word for harpoon is pronounced **M@ba**   . The more common reading for the harpoon glyph is **w@**, which means “one”. The point is that the Council of 30 functions as a unified whole just like the Senet Board with its 30 squares functions as a unified whole. A temple or pyramid made of many blocks of stone also functions as a unified whole. This was the fundamental concept of Egyptian culture. Diversity is always a unified whole. The various myths of ancient Egypt expressed this message in many different ways, but the **Senet** Board and the Weighing of the Heart Ceremony formed the core of the systematic Egyptian world view.

The name **Senet** means a likeness, copy, duplicate, or archetype. **Senet** and the Judgment Tableau were copied everywhere in Egypt and every Egyptian knew the tableau and the contents of the Game Board by heart. The vision of the 10 senior judges on square House Thrones in the Papyrus of Ani convinced me that these two artifacts of ancient Egypt were intimately connected.

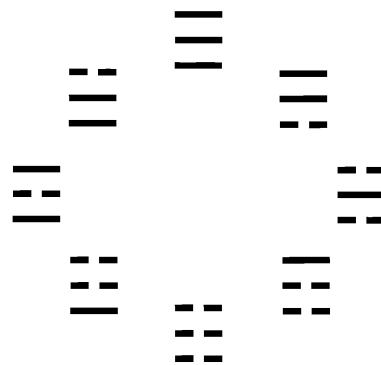
**Senyt** means a second time, or secondly. This connects to the duplication idea in the root **sen**. The notion of copying and images fits nicely with the archetypes of the gods in each square and with the use of papyrus. **Senet** "boards" were drawn on the ground, on papyrus, carved in stone, or made of wood. In his detailed study of the development of **Senet**, Professor Peter Piccione notes evidence in some papyri **Senet** drawings of folding. This suggests that the squares could be treated as "cards".

I decided to explore the sequence of the images in the Judgment Tableau and compare them to the format of 30 squares on the Senet Board to see what a divination layout based on the Judgment Tableau might look like. The Chinese Book of Changes has two preferred layouts of the eight trigrams. The *a priori* layout of Fu Xi shows the

perfectly coherent and balanced static structure of the trigrams as a set. The *a posteriori* layout of King Wen is a dynamic cyclical sequence. The Senet Game Board layout that survives in tattered remnants indicates a dynamic cyclical sequence that expresses the solar and lunar calendar system of ancient Egypt. The Senet Oracle Board layout for divination would seem to be an *a priori* coherent and balanced static structure similar to Fu Xi's trigram layout.



King Wen's Cyclical Diagram



Fu Xi's Structural Diagram

Using the Papyrus of Ani as my starting point, I noted first that there were two rows to the structure: the seated gods above who silently observe the Ceremony, and the tableau of gods below who carry out the Ceremony. Osiris on his special throne with the two sisters, the 4 Sons of Horus and Horus introducing the questioner formed the third major component of the Tableau.

The traditional main principle of Thoth's teaching is "As above, so below". The gods on thrones seemed to represent Heaven, and the gods weighing the heart seemed to represent Earth – that is, the earthly life of the questioner. The first god in the heavenly ensemble was always Ra, so I knew he would be on the upper right hand corner of the divination layout. Just below him was Thoth, whose traditional motto was "As above, so below". (Thoth's name in Hebrew is encoded as TaHaT or TaT, and means "What is Below".) He presides over the Ceremony as High Priest and records the results to report up to Ra.

Tem the Tower sits behind Ra. Below him is the feather that represents Maat. Thus the Truth of the universe is that everything happens in the moment like the flash of an orgasm. Tem is the instantaneous beginning and virtually simultaneous ending of everything. Time is an illusion as we shall learn more clearly as we progress.

Behind **Tem** sits **Shewe** (Shu), the Lord of Air. In the body air plays the role of breath, both the gross air that we breathe and the subtle prana or *qi*. He wears a feather on his head just like Maat does, suggesting that the maintaining of life through the constant flow of the breath is also Truth. Below **Shewe** we find **Anepew** (called Anubis by the Greeks), the Lord of Death, kneeling under the Scales of Judgment to adjust the lead plummet for an accurate weighing of the heart. The plummet is suspended from the tongue of the Scale and is made to resemble the Egyptian glyph for the heart. When a person dies, the breath stops. This shows the subtle link between **Shewe** and **Anepew**. Shewe corresponds to the Indian deity Shiva, and this tells us a great deal about his qualities. The Egyptians did not write vowels, so the common transliteration of **Shewe** as **Shu** is a bit misleading. The “u” is really more like a “w”, although I sometimes acquiesce to using “u”. We do not know the exact values of the vowels to insert between consonants because of dialect differences and the span of several thousand years of Egyptian culture. Shewe is the Emperor Trump, and Anepew is the Death Trump.

Behind **Shewe** sits **Tefenut**. Another name for her is Sekhmet. She is a powerful lioness that represents the strength of the sun’s energy. She is the Strength Trump and represents the *tapas* of Shiva. She is his *Shakti*. How do we know? A common way of writing her name in Egypt was **Sekhet**. Directly below her we discover that sitting right over the fulcrum of the Scale is a little dog-headed baboon. This is Baba-Thoth in his comical aspect as the Fool Trump. Baba sits so that the tongue of the scale, which is the device that gives the readout for the weighing of the heart resembles a large phallus. By sitting in this place Baba controls all the movements of the scale so that he can distort any careful adjustments made by the Death Lord. It turns out that Baba the Baboon is boon friends with Sekhmet and also very intimate with Anepew. Among other things, he has figured out how to allow the breath to stop without dying, so he has no reason to fear death. Later in the book we will discuss his important, if little known role, in detail.

Sitting behind **Tefenut-Sekhmet** we find **Geb**, the World Trump. Just below him is **Shay**, the god of Fortune. He suggests the Wheel of Fortune, but we do not see a wheel. It turns out that the wheel is hidden in the picture, and we will show you how it is hidden when we discuss the Wheel of Fortune Trump in detail. It took me a while to find it, but there are clues. Over **Shay**’s head is a black brick with a human head. It is called **Renenet**. This is the birth brick on which the questioner’s mother squatted when she gave birth to him. The head on top represents the topmost priority in the questioner’s life – his purpose in life. This fired brick is a stand-in for

**Maa**, the Lord of Vision. Since he is right over the head of *Shay*, he represents the ability to see your fortune in terms of your life purpose. However, he belongs in the middle row, so we will come back to him later.

Sitting behind **Geb** is his consort, **Newet**. She is the goddess of Cosmic Space and represents the Star Trump, the Arcana of the Future. Her body often is covered with stars and she arches over the earth like the galaxy with its billions of stars. The pot on her head is the phonetic glyph for her name. Below her we discover the heart sitting in the pan on the left side of the Scale of Justice. The heart stands for the Hermit Trump. Egyptians often decorated amulets of the heart with the **Ben-new** bird, a phoenix that forever periodically dies and resurrects. Between **Newet** and **Ben-new** we find a hawk with a human head. This is another middle row god. It represents your prana-mind (soul). In Egyptian a hawk is **bak**, and this plays on the expression **ba-k**, which means “your prana-mind soul”. Here it stands in for Sejem, Lord of Hearing. You must listen to your heart to hear its advice for your future. The human head again represents your life purpose.

Behind **Newet** sit her two daughters, Aset (Isis) and Nebet Het (Nephthys). Below them we find **Renenet** and **Mes-Khenet**. Isis is the High Priestess Trump, and Nephthys is the Temperance Trump. **Renenet** is the Moon Trump, and represents your past, your subconscious, and your dreams. In Egyptian lore she is the nanny who cares for you when you are an infant (**renenew**) and teaches you the names of things (**ren**). **Mes-Khenet** is the midwife goddess who brings you into the world. **Renenet** goes with Isis, the mother of Horus, and **Mes-Khenet** goes with Nephthys who assists at the birth of Horus. **Mes-Khenet** is the Judgment Trump, because she brings you into this world so you may experience what you have decided to experience by your choice of when, where, and as whom to be born. That is the judgment meted out on the basis of your decisions. By placing the two pairs of women right over each other, the artist assists us to understand that the deities in the upper row connect to the deities in the lower row.

Behind the two ladies sits Horus, the son of Isis and heir of Osiris. He is the Chariot (Warrior) Trump. Below him is Ani, the questioner. Horus is most remarkable for his fight against his uncle Set, the Devil Trump. However, in this tableau the artist has placed Set’s representative in the scene, **Am-met**, the Chimera that eats the hearts of dishonest people behind Thoth. This is unusual. In the Hunefer Papyrus we find her under the Scale of Justice, which is her more usual location. On the other hand, if **Am-met** is waiting to devour the heart, her best position would be on either side of

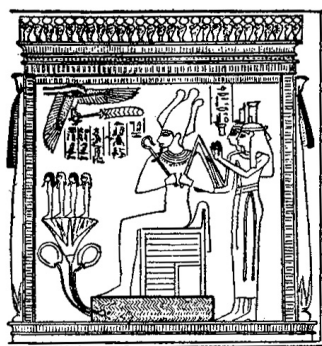
the pan that holds the heart.

Behind Horus sits Hathor, the House of Horus. She is the Empress Trump and represents the love and light that is both the source and expression of Ra. Below her is the wife of Ani who represents the Lover Trump. Actually Hathor sits above and right between Ani and his wife and thus joins them and is like the angel of love and light that often hovers over the two lovers on many versions of that Tarot Trump card.

Behind Hathor sit the other two lords of the senses: **Hew** (taste) and **Saa** (touch). If we put Am-met under Horus, then Hathor is over Ani, and the senses of taste and touch are over Ani's spouse. That makes Ani the Lover Trump, and his wife is his object of love.

Overall the correlation is pretty good, except at the end it gets a little ragged. We noted earlier that the back end of the upper row is not well standardized and apparently had a number of variations, not always even following the Senet Board's regulation of ten squares.

What about the middle row? At this point it seemed to me that the key to the middle row was Osiris, who sits to one side on a throne in a special chapel and is supported from behind by Isis and Nephthys because he is swathed in mummy bandages and can not move.



Detail sketch from Hunefer Papyrus (after Budge BD, p. 260)

Osiris represents the Magician Trump. We know this because in the Weighing of the Heart Tableau he often has before him a lotus-flower table on which the four Sons of Horus stand. These four little figures represent the four elements (earth, air, fire, and water) and correspond to the four kings of the four suits. The Tarot Magician traditionally stands before a little table on which the symbols of the four suits are

placed: a coin for earth, a sword for air, a magic wand for fire, and a cup for water. Before Osiris we find the questioner being brought face to face with Osiris by Horus (See color illustration of Hunefer Papyrus above. Since this is the only remaining Trump not identified, it must be the Hanged Man. Thus we know that the middle row must consist of the Magician, the Hanged Man, the four Kings of the Elements and the four Lords of the Senses. The question is: how should they be arranged on the Senet Oracle Board?

The Egyptian world view consists of three realms that mutually correspond: Heaven, Earth, and the Astral Realm, or **Dewat**. Earth is the realm of daily life. Heaven is the realm of the sun, moon, stars, and planets – a world in which the Milky Way represents the celestial version of the Nile. The **Dewat** is the realm of the subconscious, deep sleep, dreams, meditation, and death. The Nile of the **Dewat** is the stream of consciousness that connects one moment of experience to the next, one day to the next, and one lifetime to the next. The Egyptians thought of it as extending from the Western Horizon where the sun sets around under the world to the Eastern Horizon where the sun rises again at dawn. The sun travels by boat from East to West during the day and from West to East during the night, just as people in Egypt traveled by boat on the Nile downstream from south to north or upstream from north to south. During the night the sun assumed a special form as a somnolent ram called **Awef** (bodily limbs). The ram also is called **ba**, and suggests that the breath and the flow of consciousness continues during this episode. The whole process is described as a voyage through 12 Hours in a book called the **Amy Dewat** (Amduat).

The **Dewat** is usually considered to be the Land of the Dead. It is really the Astral Realm, an intermediate state for those who wish to incarnate as physical avatars that are subject to birth and death or ascend to become immortal Light Beings. There also is a group of deities that choose to stay and serve in the Astral Realm or who must stay there for a while for certain reasons.

This word **Dewat** survives in English slang as the twat of a woman, the curious realm in which the gods play and souls gestate until they are ready to be born. Egyptian stars are five-sided and resemble little stick figures of men. The star inside a circle marks the North Pole, the womb of **Newet**, the symbolic center of the galaxy, and the axis of the earth's rotation. The star is the embryonic man waiting to incarnate. The circle around it stands for the domain of the womb or the Astral Realm. This glyph may be the ancestor of the Magician's Pentacle that I show on the right below in a sketch based on Arthur Waite's rendering of the Tarot suit of pentacles (coins) drawn

for his deck by Pamela Coleman Smith.



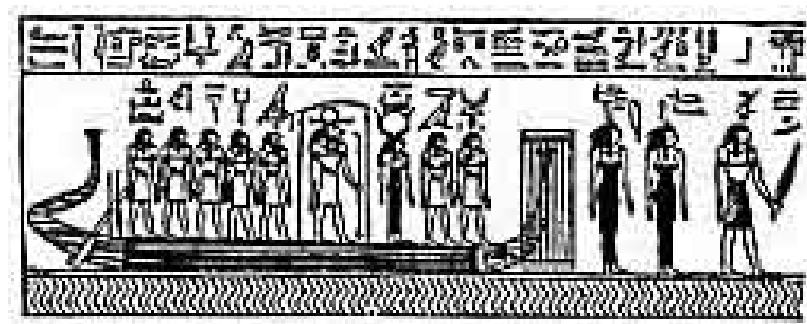
The Magic Circle **Dewat**



The Magician's Pentacle

In the Amduat the Boat of Ra has certain passengers on it in addition to Ra. The usual entourage on the boat is as follows. Standing in front is **Wep-Wawet**, the Opener of Ways (Guide) and brother of Anepew. Behind him stands **Saa**, Lord of Touch. Next we find **Nebet Waa**, the Lady of the Boat. Next is Ra as Awef the somnolent soul in the Astral Realm. He stands slightly forward of the boat's center, usually under a canopy and sometimes under the protection of the serpent Mehen. Behind him stands **Heru Hekenu**, Horus of Praisings. Behind him stands **Ka Shewe**, the Energy of Shiva. (Some interpret this epithet as the Bull of Maat, since the glyphs are ambiguous.) Next we find **Nehes**, Lord of Awakening or Lord of Watching. Behind him stands Hew, Lord of Taste [and Smell]. In the rear Horus the Boat Pilot (**Kherep Waa**) manages the rudder. (Variations: in Hour 2 Isis and Nephthys stand as erect cobras in the front of the boat, in Hour 7 Isis as a woman stands in front touching the prow, and **Hekau Semesu** [First-Born of Mantras] replaces **Nebet Waa**, and in Hour 12 the Scarab **Khepera** is in front of **Wepwawet**.)

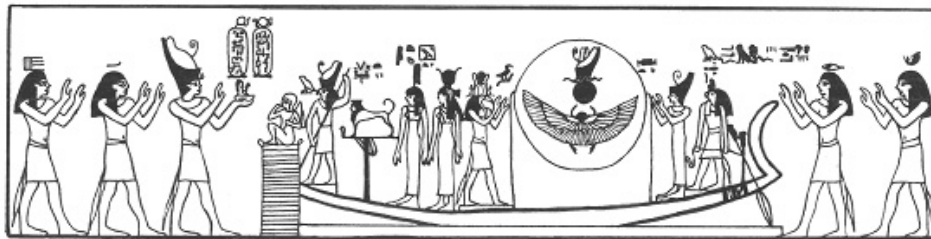
What particularly struck me about this entourage on the boat was that, in spite of occasional variations, it always includes **Hew** and **Saa**. In Hour 1 a second boat appears side by side with the Night Boat of Ra. In the center of the boat is **Khepera**, the daytime form of Ra, and on each side is an image of Osiris in a curious twisted adoration pose. The point of this is that Osiris, Lord of the Night and the Dead, will identify with Ra, the creative Higher Self Lord of Light and Life. Below is the Solar Boat during Hour 1 with the two Maats standing in front of it.



On page 297 of Budge's Gods of the Egyptians, Vol. 2, I came across an interesting



version of the solar boat.



Solar Boat by Ptolemy IV at Edfu

Although this is a drawing from a very late period, it gives us excellent information in a clear format. Pharaoh stands in front of the boat offering a little statue of Maat. On the prow of the boat is a shroud (same as in Hour 1) and on top of the shroud sits **Heru Pa Khared**, the Hero as a child sucking his thumb. He is the Hanged Man Trump, and represents the future incarnation of the pharaoh. Behind him we see Heru Merety (Horus of the Two Eyes – Sun and Moon), Wepwawet, Maat, and Hathor (Lady of the Boat). Then comes Thoth adoring the solar disk on the horizon, the Egyptian symbol of Samadhi. In the solar disk we see the scarab Khepera spreading his wings. On the other side of the disk Net adores the Samadhi symbol. She is the female deity that corresponds to Osiris and also represents his mother, Newet, and here seems to take the role of Horus of Praisings. In the rear of the boat is **Heru Khenety-khat**, Horus Chief of the Womb, in the role of the pilot..

On the far left behind Pharaoh we see **Hew** and **Saa**. On the far right side of the tableau we find **Maa** and **Sejem**. This suggests the layout of the middle row. Between Heaven and Earth lies the Astral Realm through which the Boat of Ra travels along the magical stream of consciousness. Osiris the Magician rules this realm and governs the transition from life to death. His companion and successor is Horus the Infant Child who governs the transition from death to life. In the middle are the four Kings of the Elements who provide the materials of creation. On either side bracketing the realm are the four Lords of the Senses that make it possible to experience the various creations compounded from the elements. In the Amduat entourage **Nehes** stands for **Maa**, and **Ka Shewe** stands for **Sejem**. (Shewe embodies the prana-atmosphere of the cosmos. His **Ka**-energy is the way we sense the air, which is primarily through the organ of hearing and secondarily through the sense of touch.)

The right side of the top and bottom rows of the Oracle Board is pretty standard, and

we surmise that the middle row focuses on Osiris (the Magician), Newborn or Soon-to-be-Reborn Horus (the Hanged Man), the four elements, and the four senses. I decided to design an Oracle Board as balanced and coherent as possible. Here is my version.



In the following list the board is rotated 90 degrees anti-clockwise.

<u>Top Row</u>	<u>Middle Row</u>	<u>Bottom Row</u>
Ra (Sun)	Sejem (Hearing)	Jehuty (High Priest)
Tem (Tower)	Asar (Magician)	Ma'at (Justice)
Shewe (Emperor)	Maa (Vision)	Anepew (Death)
Tefenut (Strength)	Mes-ta (Fire)	Baba (Fool)
Geb (World)	Dewa-Mut-f (Earth)	Shay (Wheel of Fortune)
Newet (Stars)	Hepy (Water)	Ben-new (Hermit)
Heru (Chariot Warrior)	Qebehu-Senu-f (Air)	Am-met (Devil)
Het Heru (Empress)	Saa (Touch)	Renenet/Sereqet (Moon)
Aset (High Priestess)	Heru Pa Khared (Hanged Man)	Mes-Khenet (Judgment)
Nebet Het (Temperance)	Hew (Taste-Smell)	Merut (Lover)

The lotus flower on which Infant Horus sits and on which the four Sons of Horus stand is the esoteric Egyptian symbol for yoga (**nehebet**). **Nehebet** means yoke and lotus in Egyptian. It also stands for the placenta in the womb, and is the name for the Kundalini life force energy. The middle row is the realm of magic that begins with the opening of the Eye of Wisdom facilitated by the mastery of Kundalini yoga, and extends to mastery of the four senses and the four elements. Mastery of the middle row gives freedom to move at will throughout all the realms.

The top row Realm of Heaven begins at Source. Ra is the Higher Self that emerges from all possibilities to create an evolving universe. Tem, Shewe, and Tefenut represent the three basic instincts of a sentient being: reproduction (sex and breeding), breathing (staying alive), and growing (ego, enhancement of self). Geb is the World of Now, what you have at this moment that is real. Newet is your future filled with a vast cosmos of possibilities. Heru, Hathor, and Aset represent the three aspects of your self that enable you to evolve: Will-power, Awareness, and Mission. Will-power enables you to make decisions and carry them through to realization of your goals. Awareness is your ability to observe, appreciate, love, and accept what already exists. Mission is your purpose in life that guides all your goals and actions. It is your secret reason for choosing to incarnate as a living being. Nebet Het is the transformation of Ra into the blissful current of life that moves deep within you.

The Infant Horus is the child of Isis (Aset), and is the body you prepare to carry out your mission in life.

The bottom row traces a person's life in the Realm of Earth. Your opportunity to be born comes when your parents become Lovers. Mes-Khenet is the midwife who delivers you. Renenet is the nurse who feeds you, changes your diapers, and teaches you to walk and talk. Am-met is the monster you become as a confused teen-ager, full of contradictions, wanting to be independent but still needing parental support. Ben-new is the maturity you gain when you learn to be honest and responsible. Shay is the fortune you create as you pursue your career and unfold your purpose in life. Baba the Baboon is the fun you have when you take a vacation or retire. Anepew is the death that awaits you at the end of your life. Maat is the truth you must abide by that everything comes into perfect balance and nothing can be left out. Jehuty is the karmic memory that reports back to the Higher Self all achievements and unfinished business of the lower self. Osiris is the passage through the Astral Realm back to Source and identification with Ra, the Higher Self. The cycle goes around the board in an anti-clockwise direction until a person completes his or her Cosmic Mission and graduates to become a Wizard just as Osiris does.

The right half and the left half of the Oracle Board is perfectly balanced. The top row right side has four gods and one goddess. The left side has four goddesses and one god. The Trumps also form mirror image pairs: Geb and Newet, Tefenut-Sekhmet and Heru, Shewe and Hathor, Tem and Aset (Isis), Ra and Nebet Het.

Each column on the Oracle Board is aligned. Study the Oracle Board from the

standpoint of the Egyptian **neter** archetypes and as Tarot Trumps and Court Cards. Consider the horizontal and vertical relationships, and all the myths of the neters and the correlations of the Tarot cards that I will provide in the data on the cards. Then study the Game Board layout in terms of the adventure of an evolving hero and as a traditional Egyptian lunar calendar.

Once you are familiar with the correspondence of the Trumps and Higher Court Cards to the Egyptian **neter** archetypes, you will discover that Tarot Layouts are everywhere in Egyptian art. You also will notice, as I did, that the **neter** archetypes have with them many amulets that carry symbolic meaning. The Papyrus of Ani is an excellent example that contains a rich collection of these amulets. I selected the 8 that describe the “chakra energies” of an individual to represent the lower Court Cards, and then added an additional 40 to represent the Pip Cards.

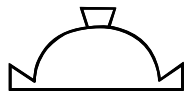
### The 8 Chakra Energies

#	English Name	Energy Type	Egyptian	Place
8.	Aura Chakra	Light Body	<b>Aakh</b>	<b>Waj Wer</b>
7.	Crown Chakra	Shadow Mind to Bindu Point	<b>Khaybet</b>	<b>Pe</b>
6.	Brow Chakra	Consciousness, Thoughts, Breath	<b>Ba</b>	<b>Awen</b>
5.	Throat Chakra	Name (Expressive Ability)	<b>Ren</b>	<b>HetKaPtah</b>
4.	Heart Chakra	Heart (Conscience)	<b>Ab</b>	<b>Khemenu</b>
3.	Belly Chakra	Will Power	<b>Sekhem</b>	<b>Qaw</b>
2.	Sex Chakra	Love/Life Energy	<b>Ka</b>	<b>Ab-Dew</b>
1.	Root Chakra	Physical Body	<b>Khat</b>	<b>Abew</b>

### The Geo-Physiology of Ancient Egypt

The geography of ancient Egypt vaguely resembled the physiology of an androgynous human. The Nile represented the spinal cord and the delta represented the head, but also inescapably resembled the female vulva. Throughout the country Egyptians from the earliest times founded sacred sites and erected temples at places that matched key energy spots in the human body. Elephantine (Abew) was known as the Land of the Bow. This seemed to refer to the Nubian archers who lived south of this point, but esoterically signified the perineum muscles at the root chakra. The Root Chakra region extended from the place where the Nile entered Egypt up through Kom Ombo, and Hierakonpolis where Horus the Elder was born from his Cosmic Mother Mut Hathor (Upper Nomes 1-3). The Sex Chakra was very elaborate and extended from Thebes to Akhmim (nomes 4-9), including the great Karnak-Luxor temple complex with the Valleys of the Kings and Queens, Hathor’s womb at Dendera, the

Osirian love nest at Abydos, and **Men**'s great temple in Akhmim. The Belly Chakra extended from Antaeopolis (**Qaw**) to Cusae (nomes 10-14) and covered the contradictory struggles that the will must deal with, commemorated in the fight between Horus and Set. The Heart Chakra included Baba Thoth's spiritual center at Khemenu (nome 15), the administrative centers at Herakleopolis, and the Fayum (nomes 16-20). The Throat Chakra covered the pyramid region from Meydum and Dahshur to Memphis (Giza) and Saqqara (southern nomos 21 and 22 belonging to Sebek and Hathor, and northern nome 1 sacred to Ptah.) The Brow Chakra was at Heliopolis (modern Cairo) and its sister city to the west Khem (Letopolis) up as far as Bubastis and extended upward and westward in an arch through the pineal and optic chiasm complex at Busiris and Sais to the optic center in the hind brain (Hermopolis Parva?). The Crown Chakra was centered at the Bindu Point with its sacred site at the twin city **Pe** and **Dep**, with a temple for each lobe of the brain that coalesced there. The fortified region from Tanis to Pelusium was the skull on the upper brow protecting the brain. The Aura Chakra was the Mediterranean into which the Nile flowed and that joined the light of Egypt to the rest of the world through commerce and tourism. Once we understand the map of Egypt, the archaeological significance of her sacred sites becomes more easy to comprehend and we may discover many new insights, such as why such an apparently obscure place as Pe was so important even from pre-dynastic times. Each chakra was symbolized by a "mound" (**aat**).



The Book of the Dead (Chapters 149 "Chapter of the Aats" and 150 "Summary List of the Aats") describes 14 and 15 such chakra mounds. From the side these look like mounds, but from above they are round and resemble the glyph for Ra, the sun god. Each is a transformation of Ra, and some editions of the Book of the Dead depict the mounds with special sigils. Unfortunately the titles and descriptions are all written in esoteric code, so we can only guess at the intended locations. A series of strange mounds exists in Egypt, and this whole problem requires more research. Here are the two lists with a mapping between the two lists and a guess at the sites they represent. I suspect that the sites also map to the 14 pieces into which Set cut the body of Osiris and the 14 basic **Ka** energies of Ra.

# in Ch. 150 Short List	Chapter 149	Chakra Region
01. Sun at Horizon, Reed Field	02. Ra Horakhty	Brow Chakra
02. Lighting Fire, lifting Braziers	05. Baboon holds Eye	Heart Chakra
03. <b>Dew Qa</b> (High Double Mound)	04. Double Mound	Belly Chakra
04. Mound of <b>Aakhu Light Beings</b>	03. Light Beings	Aura Chakra
05. Cavern of Fish Feller	06. He Makes fish Fall	Sex Chakra?
06. <b>Aseset</b>	07. <b>Rerek</b> Snake of <b>Ases</b>	Belly Chakra?
07. <i>Has-ret</i> (Measures Heaven)	08. <i>Ha</i> -Hetep, Tem	Crown Chakra
08. Opening of <b>Qahew</b>	10. Plateau of <b>Qahew</b>	Belly Chakra
09. <b>Adew</b> , home of Sopedet (Sothis)	11. <b>Adew</b> , Sothis, Set	Belly Chakra
10. <b>Wenet</b> , Thoughts Destroyed There	12. <b>Wenet, As-jedet</b>	Heart Chakra
11. Opening of Waters, Great Powers	?? (Missing)	Crown Chakra
12. <b>Kher-@ha, H@p</b> (Nile Branches)	14. <b>Kher-@ha</b>	Throat Chakra
13. Channels of Fire	13. Channels of Fire	Sex Chakra
14. Akesy, Seeing and Taking	09. Akesy, Eye, World Egg	Root Chakra
15. <b>Amenet Neferet (Hathor)</b>	01. <b>Amenet, Men</b>	Root/Sex Chakra?

There are many questions about the mounds and their exact locations, and future research should uncover the deeper meaning to this system. At this point I have not taken it any further than this brief sketch.

### The Amulets are the Pips

About fifteen years ago I bought The Egyptian Oracle by Maya Heath (Bear & Co., 1994). This work was an inspiration that began to reveal the Egyptian origins of the Tarot. Heath created a beautifully designed Oracle Board with an Ankh symbol on one side and a columnar grid on the other side. On the two sides of her Oracle Board she placed the images of 12 senior Neter Archetypes: Geb, Nut, Osiris, Set, Isis, Nephthys, Horus, Sekhmet, Anubis (Anepew), Hathor, Thoth, and Maat. For divining the oracle she then created a set of 28 plastic tiles in cartouche shape and divided into four suits governed by the four elements and their “Kings”, the four Sons of Horus. Each plastic tile had an Egyptian amulet engraved on it, with a number from one to seven and the hieroglyphic suit sign. I immediately knew that Heath was on the right track and had produced a true Egyptian Oracle. Her basic approach was correct. I saw that the deities are the Trumps and the amulets are the Pips. The Sons of Horus are the key to the Courts. She simply made a reduced version of the Egyptian Tarot, not realizing that they are one and the same. She had no reason based on Egyptian tradition for choosing 7 amulets for each suit. I also disagreed with her assignment of the Kings to the Elements. She assigns Hapy to

Air (I say Water), Qebusenuf to Fire (I say Air), Imset (Mesta) to Water (I say Fire), and Duamutef to Earth (we agree on that one). That is not a serious issue, because even the Egyptians were confused at times as to which son went with which name, not to speak of which element (for example see the tomb of Nefertari where the names for Duamutef and Qebusenuf are switched from their usual assignments).

Sometime later I came across the Sacred Scarabs for Divination and Personal Power by de Traci Regula (art by Kerigwen) published by Llewellyn (2001). This work consists of 30 little blue plastic scarabs. On the bottom of each is incised an amulet hieroglyph. The set includes a 240 page book introducing the amulets. I knew at a glance that this was another true Egyptian Oracle based on the ancient tradition of Egyptian Scarab Seals. The number 30 matched an Egyptian solar month, approximate lunar month, and the number of squares on a Senet Board. This was an example of a compact set of Senet cards. Papyrus was too perishable to use as cards, so the Egyptians used little scarab tokens instead. Regula describes how she received the idea for her scarab oracle in a dream that she was a young priestess trainee in a temple. The trainer one night held a scarab game in which she wrapped a large collection of scarab amulets in a piece of cloth, swung the cloth about her head and then released the scarabs to fly about the room. If a scarab touched a person as it fell, the inscription on it would be that person's oracle.

### **Picking the Pips and Creating an Egyptian Tarot Deck**

I decided to select 40 amulets to represent the Pip Cards. Browsing the Papyrus of Ani I discovered more than 30 in the hands of the Neter deities or functioning as symbolic accessories. I chose a few more that figure prominently in other papyri and sacred art of Egypt. Then I grouped them according to the four elements and the numbers from one to ten and completed a deck of Egyptian Tarot cards.

The next step was to find an artist to paint the cards. After a bit of searching I found that Amy Hsiao, a young Taiwanese artist had the touch I was looking for. She could capture the traditional Egyptian style very well and with just a touch of the subtle humor that underlies the formal images. We originally wanted to paint directly on the real papyrus, but had some trouble controlling the pigments. This was due to our inability to match the quality of papyrus and pigments used by the ancients. So she finally painted on paper and then we photographed the papyrus and overlaid the images by computer. Although we made use of some modern technology, after surveying the Egyptian decks produced over more than a century, I felt that we had achieved the best Egyptian Tarot deck to date.

## A Survey of Egyptian Style Tarot Decks

Antoine Court de Gebelin (1725-1784), a French esoterist, was the first person on record to claim that the Tarot derived from Egypt. Gebelin believed that the Tarot was an allegory originally in Egyptian hieroglyphics to express the essence of Egyptian culture, philosophy, and religion. He also considered that it may encode the creation of the world in three stages that began with Mercury. The four suits were the four classes of society, and the deck was structured in multiples of seven, with the Fool representing zero, a character beyond the numbers. He felt that the presence of the High Priestess was evidence that the deck derived from the ancient Egyptians rather than European society. He attributed the spread of Tarot in Europe to the gypsies who he thought were bands of Egyptians roaming about Europe promoting the Tarot. He thought that the word Tarot came from *tar* (road) plus *ro* (royal) and therefore meant the “royal road”.

Unfortunately, Gebelin lived before the time of Napoleon when hieroglyphs first began to be deciphered by Champollion, so his etymology was sheer guess work. Despite the lack of any Egyptology to back up his assertions, and his error with regard to the origins of the gypsies (who came from India), his bold theory was romantic, mysterious, and turns out to be close to the mark in many ways.

Etteilla was the pen name of one of Gebelin’s followers. His real name was Jean François Alliette (ca 1724 – 1792), and he had access to many members of high society through his profession as a wigmaker. He may also have claimed to be a Professor of Algebra and was definitely very interested in Pythagorean numerology. In any case he began to promote Gebelin’s ideas about the Tarot. Under his pen name he wrote a treatise in 1783 on the Tarot: *Manière de se récréer avec le Jeu de Cartes nommées Tarot* in which he asserted that the Tarot was devised in 2170 BC – 171 years after the Biblical Flood – at a temple of Amen in Memphis! (According to modern Egyptologists this would be during the Old Kingdom, perhaps in the 6<sup>th</sup> dynasty.) He went on to declare that the Tarot was devised by 17 Magi including Athotis, a descendant of Tri-Mercury (Hermes Trismegistus?) who was a grandson of Cham (Ham) and a great grandson of Noah. So he called the Tarot The Book of Thoth and designed his own deck to express his vision of what Thoth intended. The titles on his Trump cards as well as some of the images were quite different in many cases from the traditional titles, but still corresponded fairly well. Only a few cards from the first edition (1789) survive, but in 1804 one of his students, Melchior Montmignon D’Oudouet had a complete version printed as *Le Grande Etteilla*. At



least two other versions appeared later.

<b>Number</b>	<b>Traditional French</b>	<b>Etteilla Version</b>
I	<i>le Bateleur</i>	<i>Magicien ou le Bateleur</i>
II	<i>la Papesse</i>	<i>la Prudence</i>
III	<i>l'Impératrice</i>	<i>Repos, la Questionnante</i>
IIII	<i>l'Empereur</i>	<i>Air, le Ciel</i>
V	<i>le Pape</i>	<i>Protection, les Oiseaux et les Poissons</i>
VI	<i>l'Amoureux</i>	<i>Mariage, Union</i>
VII	<i>le Chariot</i>	<i>Dissension, Arrogance, le Despote Africain</i>
VIII	<i>la Justice</i>	<i>la Justice</i>
VIII	<i>l'Ermite</i>	<i>le Capuchin</i>
X	<i>la Roue de Fortune</i>	<i>la Roue de Fortune</i>
XI	<i>la Force</i>	<i>la Force</i>
XII	<i>le Pendu</i>	<i>le Questionnant, le Chaos</i>
XIII	<i>(la Mort)</i>	<i>la Mort</i>
XIII	<i>la Tempérance</i>	<i>la Tempérance</i>
XV	<i>le Diable</i>	<i>le Diable</i>
XVI	<i>la Maison Dieu</i>	<i>le Temple Foudroyé</i>
XVII	<i>les Etoiles</i>	<i>la Nuit, les Astres</i>
XVIII	<i>la Lune</i>	<i>Propos, Eau</i>
XVIII	<i>le Soleil</i>	<i>Éclaircissement, la Lumière, Feu</i>
XX	<i>le Jugement</i>	<i>le Jugement (Dernier)</i>
XXI	<i>le Monde</i>	<i>Terre, Voyage</i>
--	<i>le Fou</i>	<i>la Folie ou l'Alchimiste</i>

In the above table I matched Wirth's Trumps to those of Etteilla (Grande Etteilla, version III 1870 edition, reprinted by Lo Scarabeo). I used the images as well as the titles. Wirth gives the Fool no number and Death has no title by taboo. The Priestess (II) becomes Prudence, the Empress (III) becomes Repose or the Female Questioner (and depicts Eve with the apple next to the Tree enwrapped by the serpent), the Emperor (IIII) becomes Air or Sky (the role of Shewe), the Pope (V) becomes Protection (Support) and strangely depicts Birds and Fishes, the Chariot (VII) becomes Dissension, the Hanged Man (XII) becomes the Male Questioner or Chaos, and the Moon (XVIII) becomes Intention or Water (and has a large moon image). Etteilla also indicates the four elements in his Trumps: Sun is fire, Moon is water, Emperor is air, and World is earth.

Etteilla's deck appeared in several editions, and then in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Alphonse Louis Constant under the Hebrew pen name Eliphas Levy Zahed wrote *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* (Dogma and Ritual of High Magic, translated by Arthur E. Waite as The Ritual of Transcendental Magic, originally published in 1896 by Rider & Co. and transcribed by Benjamin Rowe into PDF format in 2002 and made available on the Internet) in which he asserted the theory that the 22 Trumps derived from the Hebrew alphabet and was a product of the Qabalists. The sequence in which he treats the Trumps basically follows the traditional one but does not agree at all with the Hebrew alphabet. Of interest, however, is that he includes a picture of the Chariot Trump with sphinxes drawing the chariot instead of horses (Part 2, p. 136). This image definitely became the model for Waite's design for the Chariot Trump. Thus some Egyptian influence continued in Levy's Tarot and found its way into the decks designed later by Waite and Crowley.

The first truly "Egyptian" Tarot deck was designed by La Comédie Française actor, R. Falconnier with the images produced by Maurice Otto Wegener in 1896 with a book called *Les XXII lames hermétiques du tarot divinatoire exactement reconstituées d'après les textes sacrés et selon la tradition des mages de l'ancienne Égypte*. (*The XXII Hermitic Cards of the Divinatory Tarot Precisely Restored Following the Sacred Texts and According to the Tradition of Ancient Egyptian Magicians* available in a scanned copy as Scribd document 37450136 and reprinted in 1976 by Collection Bellisane, Nice, France). The reader was supposed to cut out the illustrations, paste them on stiff paper, and then color them by hand. Unlike the Etteilla deck, Falconnier's deck was definitely Egyptian in style, but reflected the as yet still immature state of Egyptology at the time. Nevertheless, this deck became the model for a series of subsequent very similar Egyptian decks: Comte C. Saint-Germain (pseudonym of Edgar de Valcourt-Vermont, 1901), C.C. Zain (Elbert Benjamine, 1936, Church of Light Tarot, with drawings redone by Gloria Beresford), and the Ibis Tarot by Josef Machynka (1991, AGM Agmueller) are examples.

Silvana Alasia created several versions of her Egyptian Tarot that departed from the Falconnier model and were published by Lo Scarabeo (Egyptian Tarots [1996 close to Falconnier] followed by Tarot of the Sphinxes and Tarocchi di Nefertari with more authentic Egyptian images.

Mark Filipas has provided a good overview of Egyptian-style Tarot decks. (<http://www.spiritone.com/~mfilipas/Masquerade/Reviews/historye.html>) and includes many sample illustrations. The Encyclopedia of Tarot by Stuart Kaplan (3

Vols.) also contains descriptions and illustrations from many of the more obscure Egyptian Tarot decks.

In my personal collection I have the Tarot of Transition (Carta Mundi, reprinted by U.S. Games), The Book of Doors Divination Deck by Athon Veggi and Alison Davidson (Destiny, 1995) a set of 64 Egyptian cards organized in the manner of the Book of Changes (8 sets of families of 8 – Primordial Beings, Heavenly Beings, Fire (Light) Beings, Moon Beings, Sun Beings, Wind Beings, Earth Beings, and Duat (Astral) Beings and The Ancient Egyptian Oracle: the Cards of Ra-Maat by Norman Plaskett that contains a nonstandard deck of 72 cards consisting of 21 Pylons, 7 Arits, 28 Cubits, and 16 Deities.

All in all Egyptian-style Tarot decks comprise a major stream in the flood of Tarot decks that have inundated the world in the past century.

### **The Ancient Egyptian Spiritual Books**

As part of my research into the historical development of the Tarot in ancient Egypt I decided I would have to learn Egyptian and not only read the Book of the Dead, but also read the other great spiritual books of ancient Egypt. I identified five works that I wanted to read in detail, and began translating them in order to put close attention on the material. The books I selected varied greatly in size, but all seemed to have seminal bearing on the essentials of Egyptian culture. The books I selected to focus on were as follows:

The Pyramid Texts

The Litany of Ra

The Amduat

The Senet Game Text

The Story of Ra and Isis.

As I began writing out my translations, I found that my interpretations of the texts often differed significantly from the versions produced by the Egyptologists, so I made copious commentaries on my insights and the reasons for my translations. I soon found that there was a system behind the plethora of nature deities that integrated them into the psycho-physiology of man. The myths describe a profound technology of enlightenment and spiritual immortality that underlay the material culture of ancient Egypt.

I recommend that anyone interested in deeper study of the spiritual aspects of ancient Egyptian culture read my translations and commentaries. My translations may not be literary masterpieces, but I provide a wealth of background information that is missing from almost all the work of the Egyptologists. Because of their requirement to transcribe, decipher, and document the data of the material there was little time for gaining a global or deeper interpretation.

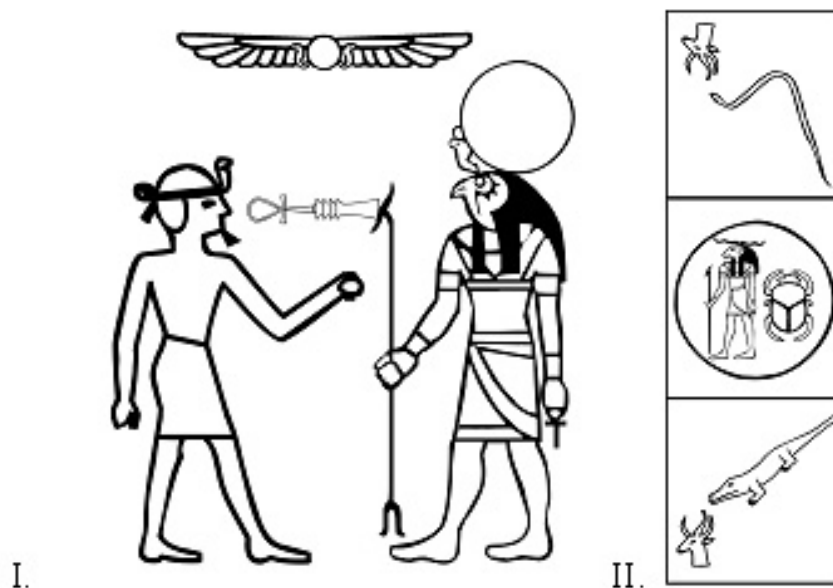
Professor Peter Piccione's important study of the Senet Game Text, illustrated Senet game boards, and associated graffiti (The Historical Development of the Game of Senet and Its Significance for Egyptian Religion, University of Chicago doctoral dissertation, 2 Vols., 1990) together with my knowledge of the Tarot enabled me to complete a draft reconstruction of the entire **Senet** Game Board, correlating the cards to the sequence of Houses on the board. Once I understood the contents of the Game Board, I discovered that this knowledge illuminated many obscure passages in the Pyramid Texts. Thus although the Senet Game Text was a product of the New Kingdom, I realized that the structure and contents of the game went back at least to the Old Kingdom and at least 4 boards went back as far as the Archaic Period. Illustrations of people playing **Senet** already are found from the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> dynasties.

The surviving copies of the Senet Game Text probably date from the 20<sup>th</sup> dynasty. We know from the illustrations and text cited from the Book of the Dead that Senet was already used in the context of divination from the time the Book of the Dead appeared (early New Kingdom, ca. 1550 BC). We also know from the tomb art and placing of **Senet** Game Boards in tombs that it was somehow also a means of communicating with the Astral Realm of the dead. Piccione believes that there was a tradition of playing Senet in or near the tombs, and of playing **Senet** with the spirits of deceased relatives and friends. Illustrations in tombs and the Book of the Dead clearly show the deceased using the Senet Board as an oracle to divine future life. I wanted to know how the Egyptians used the Senet Board for divination and whether there was further evidence of the evolution of Senet divination into something closer to our modern Tarot divination.

### **The Litany of Ra and the Tarot**

The next link in the chain of discovery occurred when I obtained Erik Hornung's masterful synoptic transcription of all extant copies of the Litany of Ra together with a translation into German and copious footnotes. Although Professor Hornung's interpretation understandably treated the text primarily as funereal material, one major insight stood out above all else. The Litany of Ra is a list of divine figures, all of

whom were considered by the author of the Litany to be emanations or avatars of Ra. When I counted all the figures listed in the Litany, I found there were 75. This number is quite close to the number of cards in a traditional Tarot deck. So I looked again and realized that I had to count Ra as well, since he is the sun god and the Sun is one of the Tarot Trumps. When I looked at the art work in the royal tombs, I found that Ra Horakhty almost always would be shown as the frontispiece of the document in the act of initiating the pharaoh into the mysteries of the Litany. Then I found that just after the frontispiece would be a solar disk containing within it the daytime form of Ra as Khepera the Industrious Scarab and the nighttime form of Ra as Awef the Somnolent Ram. In a square above the disk appears a serpent, and in the square below the disk appears a crocodile.



I. Ra Horakhty Initiates Pharaoh      II. Solar Disk Card with Serpent and Crocodile Cards

If we count these three cards (solar disk, serpent, and crocodile) as additions to the 75 avatars of Ra we reach a total of 78 avatars. A second major insight was that each figure in the Litany has an illustration presented as if on a rectangular card. The puzzling thing is that many of the card illustrations correspond to standard Egyptian neter archetypes, but they often have been drawn in ways that differ radically from the standard iconography.

## The 78 Avatars of Ra

Below is a list of the 78 avatars of Ra with my tentative mapping to the Egyptian deities and amulets, as well as the 78 traditional Tarot cards. The four suits that I

(somewhat arbitrarily but with a reasonable logic) chose to represent the Tarot suits in Egyptian are Plumes (Swords), Fire Sticks (Wands), Lotuses (Cups), and Towns (Coins).

#	Egyptian Title	Meaning	Tarot Card
1.	<b>Deba Jemej</b>	Integrator	<b>Khened</b> , Plumes 3
2.	<b>Hetep-f em Dewat Khepery</b>	Creator Rests in Twat	<b>Khenty-Khat</b> , Hanged Man
3.	<b>Mes Neteru-f Khenet Qereret-f</b>	Births His Gods, Chief of his Source	<b>Mes-Khenet</b> , Judgment
4.	<b>R@ Ateny</b>	Solar Flying Globe	<b>Aten</b> , Fire Sticks 9
5.	<b>Medu Ba Nej Bayu</b>	Mental Speech, Thoughtful Advice	<b>Ren</b> , Lotuses Name (Knight)
6.	<b>Sekhem Ab</b>	Heart's Power	<b>Ab</b> , Fire Sticks Heart (Knight)
7.	<b>Nef em Bayu</b>	Breath in Thoughts	<b>Nef</b> , Will, Plumes Ace
8.	<b>Nakyu Menat</b>	Execution Stake for the Dead	<b>Qebehusenu-f</b> , Plumes King
9.	<b>Seneky Ba R@,</b> <b>wej-f Kekut-f em Qereret</b>	Ray, the Mind of Ra Commands his Darkness at Source	<b>Ben-nu</b> , Hermit
10.	<b>Sehej Khatu</b>	Enlightens Bodies	<b>Aakhet</b> , Plumes 4
11.	<b>Tem</b>	Tem	<b>Tem</b> , Tower
12.	<b>Khepera</b>	Creator	<b>Anepew</b> , Death
13.	<b>Shewe</b>	Air	<b>Shewe</b> , Emperor
14.	<b>Tefenut</b>	Spitter Goddess	<b>Tefenut/Sekhemet</b> , Strength
15.	<b>Geb</b>	World	<b>Geb</b> , World
16.	<b>Newet</b>	Cosmic Space	<b>Newet</b> , Stars
17.	<b>Aset</b>	Isis, Seat	<b>Aset</b> , High Priestess
18.	<b>Nebet Het</b>	Nephthys, Lady of Temple	<b>Nebet Het</b> , Temperance
19.	<b>Heru</b>	Horus	<b>Heru</b> , Chariot (Warrior)
20.	<b>New</b>	Cosmic Urge	<b>Wenew</b> , Plumes 6
21.	<b>Remy</b>	Tear of Isis (starts flood)	<b>Mu</b> , Lotuses Ace
22.	<b>A@retyu Hewaayty</b>	Purifying Cobras	<b>A@ret</b> , Fire Sticks 8
23.	<b>@dyu</b>	Yellow Ones	<b>Semen</b> , Towns 8
24.	<b>Netheret</b>	Incense	<b>Seneter</b> , Fire Sticks 4
25.	<b>Netuty</b>	Divine Being	<b>Nefer</b> , Plumes 7
26.	<b>Ba</b>	Ram of Mendes	<b>Jed</b> , Towns 3
27.	<b>Khenet Ageret Amenet</b>	Chief of Western Silence	<b>Was</b> , Fire Sticks 5
28.	<b>Peter Ba, Qererety</b>	Mind that Sees, Double Source	<b>Petera</b> , Fire Sticks 2
29.	<b>Aakeby</b>	Weeper	<b>Seped</b> , Plumes 5
30.	<b>Bes @ Amen H@u</b>	Hand of the Teacher with Hidden Limbs	<b>Aag</b> , Plumes 6
31.	<b>Khenety Amenety</b>	Chief of Hidden Realm	<b>Asar</b> , Magician

32. <b>Kheperer</b>	Continuous Production	<b>Khepera</b> , Towns 7
33. <b>Mauty</b>	Co-worker, Companion	<b>Men</b> , Towns 6
34. <b>@@y</b>	Procreator	<b>@@y</b> , Lover
35. <b>Debaty Hetet</b>	Requirer Scorpion	<b>Sereqet</b> , Moon
36. <b>Sereqy</b>	Scorpy	<b>Sereq</b> , Fire Sticks 7
37. <b>Shay</b>	Fortune	<b>Shay</b> , Wheel of Fortune
38. <b>Sekhen Dewat</b>	Amniotic Waters	<b>Hepy</b> , Lotuses King
39. <b>Amen Khat</b>	Hidden of Body	<b>Saa</b> , Towns Lord
40. <b>Rekehy</b>	Fiery One	<b>Rekeh</b> , Fire Sticks 3
41. <b>Dewaty</b>	Master of the Womb	<b>Mer</b> , Towns 2
42. <b>Khenety Nut-f, Shesepy</b>	Receiver, Chief of his Tending	<b>Shenu</b> , Plumes 8
43. <b>Seneth amy Ta, Jemej H@u</b>	Fragrant in his Land	<b>Khawet</b> , Towns 5
	Integrator of Limbs	
44. <b>Seshetay</b>	Secretive One	<b>Khaybet</b> , Towns Knight
45. <b>@per Ta</b>	Equipped Land	<b>Het</b> , Towns 4
46. <b>Wa-Sha Ba H@y</b>	Ocean Meditation Mind Enjoyer	<b>Wa-Sha</b> , Lotuses 4
47. <b>Wejat Thenety</b>	Throne of the Eye	<b>Waj</b> , Lotuses 8
48. <b>Ma@ Wawet</b>	Straight Ways	<b>Ma@t</b> , Justice
49. <b>Khepy</b>	Mover	<b>Ka</b> , Fire Sticks Page
50. <b>Hejuty</b>	Illuminating Mace	<b>Heqa</b> , Lotuses 9
51. <b>Sekheper Khatu</b>	Generator of Bodies	<b>Khat</b> , Towns Ace
52. <b>Ameny</b>	Hidden One	<b>@nekh</b> , Plumes 9
53. <b>Weben An</b>	Rising Light Tower	<b>Hew</b> , Lotuses Lord
54. <b>Then Aru</b>	Counter of Forms	<b>Dewa-Mut-f</b> , Towns King
55. <b>Amenet Neferet</b>	Beautiful Amenet	<b>Het Heru</b> , Empress
56. <b>Mau @a</b>	Great Cat	<b>Sekhem</b> , Lotuses Page
57. <b>Medu Aakh-f</b>	Words of his Light Being	<b>Maa</b> , Fire Sticks Lord
58. <b>Her(-Wa[t]) Ba</b>	Mind of the High Way	<b>Pet</b> , Plumes 10
59. <b>Qa Ba</b>	High Mind	<b>Ba</b> , Plumes Knight
60. <b>Away</b>	Pledge Token (of Isis)	<b>Theta</b> , Plumes 2
61. <b>Sejety</b>	The Two Children (ears?)	<b>Sejem</b> , Plumes Lord
62. <b>Senek Her</b>	Suckle Face	<b>Menat</b> , Lotuses 5
63. <b>Am amy Ta</b>	Grace on Earth	<b>Pawet</b> , Fire Sticks 10
64. <b>Hery Gefetu, Anethety</b>	Master of the Apes, The Double Roper	<b>Jehuty</b> , High Priest
65. <b>Ketwyty</b>	Kettle Man (Chef)	<b>Mes-ta</b> , Fire Sticks King
66. <b>Ta-Thenen</b>	Uplifter of Earth	<b>Ta</b> , Towns Ace
67. <b>Wereshyu</b>	Watchers	<b>Weres</b> , Towns 9

68. <b>Besy</b>	Dwarfie (Swelling One)	<b>Adeh</b> , Lotuses 10
69. <b>A@n @ Dewaty</b>	Baboon, Astral Hand	<b>Qefetenew</b> , Fool
70. <b>Sema Ta[wy]</b>	United Land	<b>Sema</b> , Lotuses 2
71. <b>Neh[t]y</b>	Believer	<b>Ja</b> , Fire Sticks Ace
72. <b>Shemety, @p Aakh</b>	Mover, Traveling Light Beings	<b>Aakh</b> , Plumes, Page
73. <b>Neb Bayu amy Ben-ben-f</b>	Lord of Thoughts on his Pyramidion	<b>Ben-ben</b> , Lotuses 3
74. <b>Hutyu</b>	Sphinx Pair	<b>Shesep</b> , Fire Sticks 6
75. <b>Neb Seneku</b>	Lord of Brightnesses	Neweb, Towns 10
76. <b>@apep</b>	Monster Python	<b>Am-met (Set)</b> , Devil
77. <b>R@ Af Khepera</b>	The Sun Night and Day	<b>R@</b> , Sun
78. <b>Sebek</b>	Crocodile God	<b>Sebek</b> , Lotuses 7

All of the Trumps match the names given in the Litany either as the exact name, a well-known epithet (e.g., **Amenet Neferet [Hathor]**, **Khenety Amenety [Osiris]**, **Hery Gefetu [Thoth]**), or a coded name (**Mes Neteru-f Khenet Qereret-f = Mes Khenet**). As for the names of the two Trumps (Hanged Man [2] and Hermit [9]) that are not clearly labeled in the **Litany**, I have made tentative identifications.

Regarding the Court and Pip cards, about 17 out of 56 are mentioned by the amulet names that I assign them in my Senet Tarot book and deck. Another 10 have alternate names that are quite recognizable as indicating the amulets I have chosen for my deck. That leaves 29 with alternate names that are not so recognizable. I have made a first pass at identifying them with the cards in my deck. However, there is no certainty that the amulets I chose are equivalent to the ones intended by the author[s] of the Litany of Ra. Furthermore, the text that we have is often vague or repetitious, leaving us the task of trying to distinguish the exact qualities of Ra's creative intelligence that the author intended to portray in his primitive deck. Therefore the interpretations I give are tentative and intended to stimulate further research and insights. The Egyptians had many important amulets, and the ones selected for the Litany may just represent one accepted set. At different times and places during Egypt's long history there may have been local variations just as today we find many variations in the presentation of the Tarot deck, especially with regard to the Pip cards.

The Court Cards (elements, senses, soul-energy modes) and Pip Cards (amulets) sometimes have an alternative image or a word play (for example the Ram of Mendes



for the **Jed** Pillar, the Watchers (**wereshu**) for the Pillow (**weres**), and the mace of illumination for the shepherd's crook of leadership). Sometimes we find the traditional bearer of an amulet (e.g. **Men** as the bearer of the flail) or performer of an action (**Ketwyty** the Kitchen God as the Lighter of Fires, **Mes-ta**).

The illustrations for the Litany "cards" are sometimes very vivid, but just as often do not seem to match the names at all. I get the impression that Thutmose III rushed the scribes to produce something for the tomb decoration, so what ended up being drawn was a rough draft. The text then was ignored throughout the rest of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty until Sety I in the 19<sup>th</sup> dynasty decided to revive it. The revival in the Ramesside period was started by Sety I and Rameses II who picked up the text with its illustrations as Thutmose III had left it and did not refine it any further.

Another curious feature about the Litany is that the earliest version appears in the tomb (TT61) of a non-royal personage named Weser Amen who served as Grand Vizier during the reigns of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III (18<sup>th</sup> dynasty, approximately 1500 BC) for about 30 years. Weser-Amen was the son of Amenthu, also called Ahmose, who was Vizier under Thutmose II, and Weser-Amen was succeeded in his office by his nephew Rekh-ma-Ra. This suggests the powerful influence this noble family must have had in the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty royal court. Weser-Amen's name means "The Invisible One's Wizard", and he must have been very literate and well educated in order to hold such a high position for so long under one of Egypt's most powerful pharaohs, renowned for expanding the influence of Egypt in the ancient world and for major additions to the Great Temple at Thebes. Weser-Amen is the only commoner with the Litany in his tomb. He also has the earliest extant version. All other fairly complete copies were found in the tombs of pharaohs.

During the New Kingdom the only copies of the Litany (that survive) were placed by the pharaohs, beginning with Weser Amen's boss, Thutmose III (2 copies, one in his tomb KV34 and one on his shroud CG 40001 dedicated to him by his father Amenhotep II), and then continued in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> dynasties with the tombs of Sety I (KV17), Rameses II (KV7 plus a copy in his temple at Abydos), Merenptah (KV8), Sety II (KV15), Siptah (KV47), Rameses III (KV11), Rameses IV (KV2), and Rameses IX (KV6). (There is a brief extract in the tomb of Rameses X [KV18], and Amenmesse [KV10] the Theban usurper who followed Merenptah had a copy, but Sety II hacked it off because he did not consider Amenmesse qualified to possess it in his tomb. After the New Kingdom some portions of the Litany occasionally appeared in non-royal tombs and other sites.) Perhaps Weser Amen received the

special privilege of having a copy in his tomb because he was the author of the text, or at least the official in charge of the creation of the text and artwork.

An even stranger coincidence is that the mummies of all nine of the pharaohs in the list of those who inscribed the Litany in their tombs survive to this day and are housed in the Cairo Museum. No other culture has preserved the physical bodies of their royalty from several thousand years ago. Furthermore, to have a perfect match of nine out of nine between mummies and texts when so few mummies of pharaohs survived really boggles the mind and strengthens my suspicion that a special cult was involved.

The mummies of these pharaohs were not found in their original tombs, but had been moved to special secret cache locations (Deir el Bahri DB320 and side chambers of Amenhotep II's King's Valley tomb KV35) when the tombs began to be plundered. The funerary riches were appropriated by the priests and their friends and have since almost all disappeared and what remains are the tombs themselves and the caches of mummies.

The Egyptians had a system for placing the amulets on the mummy to protect the deceased. Some were placed on the neck, and others were on the chest. Some amulets were even placed inside the wrappings or inside the body. The insensitive looters often damaged the mummies as they retrieved the amulets and precious objects placed on the bodies. The body amulet tradition continues today in the game where a person lies down and a diviner places Tarot cards on various organs and limbs of the body to divine the condition of the body part or its use in some intended task.

Another strange coincidence was that the only New Kingdom non-royal copy of the Amduat text and illustrations appears in the tomb of Weser Amen according to Erik Hornung (The Egyptian Amduat: the Book of the Hidden Chamber, Introduction, p. 7). The earliest complete copy is in the tomb of Thutmose III (KV34). Aleksandre Piankoff says (The Tomb of Ramesses VI, Bollingen Series XL, Vol. 1, p. 227) that a very fragmentary copy from the tomb of Thutmose I is now in the Cairo Museum, suggesting that at least some portion if not all of the text existed during the third reign of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty. But it is suspicious that Weser Amen is once again involved with Thutmose III in making the text available even though we may not attribute authorship to him. In his translation of the Amduat Hornung uses photographs of the illustrations of Thutmose III and generally follows the text of Amenhotep II. The

Ramesses VI copy is a very poor edition.

During the late 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty only Tutankhamen and Ay had small portions of the Amduat in their tombs. However, from the 19<sup>th</sup> dynasty interest in the text reappears and we find it in the tombs of Sety I, Rameses II, Merneptah, Seti II, Tausert-Setnakht, Rameses III, Rameses VI, and Rameses IX, the best version among these being that of Seti I. Notice the overlap of this list with that of the Litany pharaohs.

The Amduat contributes to the Senet Tarot tradition by giving us the Boat of Ra with the lords of the four senses as passengers (**Hew, Saa, Heru Hekenu, and Nehes**) and the identification of Osiris with Ra-Awef. The role of the Boat of Ra turns out to be of great significance for our understanding of how the Senet Oracle Board diviners practiced their divination skills so as to tap into the subconscious Astral Realm and gain access to any knowledge that they needed.

### **The Tarot Deck of the Pharaohs**

Recently as I was starting a student off in the study of ancient Egyptian I leafed through my copy of How to Read Egyptian by Collier and Manley (University of California [Berkeley] Press, 1998). I like this text because the authors teach you in a few lessons how to read real Egyptian artifacts using lots of excellent sample artifacts from the British Museum as reading material. When I reached page 30, my eye was caught by two sentences introducing a photograph of BM EA 117 (the Abydos King-List of Rameses II), an artifact that Rameses modeled on a list that was carved in his father Sety I's mortuary temple, which is also at Abydos and is in a much better state of preservation.

“Originally there were 78 cartouches in the upper registers (the 76 found in the Seti I list plus the two cartouche names of Ramesses II). This number probably reflects cultic tradition, the space available on the wall, and possibly the 76 forms of the sun-god enumerated in the religious text known as the Litany of Re.”

When I saw the numbers and the reference to the Litany of Ra, I knew that “space available on the wall” was the least probable explanation, since Rameses II was famous as the most extravagant pharaoh throughout several thousand years of Egyptian history in terms of willingness to devote space to carved rock. Khufu may have piled more rocks in one place, but Rameses populated the entire Egyptian landscape with his colossal statues and inscriptions. The most likely explanation for the number Rameses chose was cultic tradition and the forms of the sun-god

enumerated in the Litany of Ra.

The king lists prepared by Sety and Rameses specifically included only the pharaohs whom they considered to be fully legitimate. Kings who only ruled a portion of Egypt, all kings of dynasties 9-10, as well as dynasties 13-17 (local rulers during the first and second intermediate periods when Egypt was fragmented) were excluded. The “heretical” pharaohs such as Akhenaten, Smenkhare, Ay, and even Tutankhamen were also deliberately left out. Hatshepsut was omitted in spite of the fact that she was an extremely competent ruler because Sety and Rameses considered her to be only the regent for Thutmose III. Thutmose III appears in the list and plays a vital role in the development of the cultic kings list promoted by Sety and Rameses.

Below are drawings of the complete lists prepared by Sety and Rameses.


### Sety’s List of 76 Royal Names



(Source: Wikimedia Commons; figures from *Encyclopedia Biblica*, 1903; cartouches prepared by PLstrom)

This list survives in Sety’s mortuary temple at Abydos. The upper two registers of the list contain 38 kings each, to be read from left to right. Sety is the last king in the list on the far right of the second register. The third register consists of alternating iterations of Sety’s **Suten Baty** (**Nesu Baty** or prenomen) and **Sa R@** (nomen) cartouches, suggesting that Sety is the embodiment of all the kings. Thus there are 76 different kings on the list and 77 different cartouches.

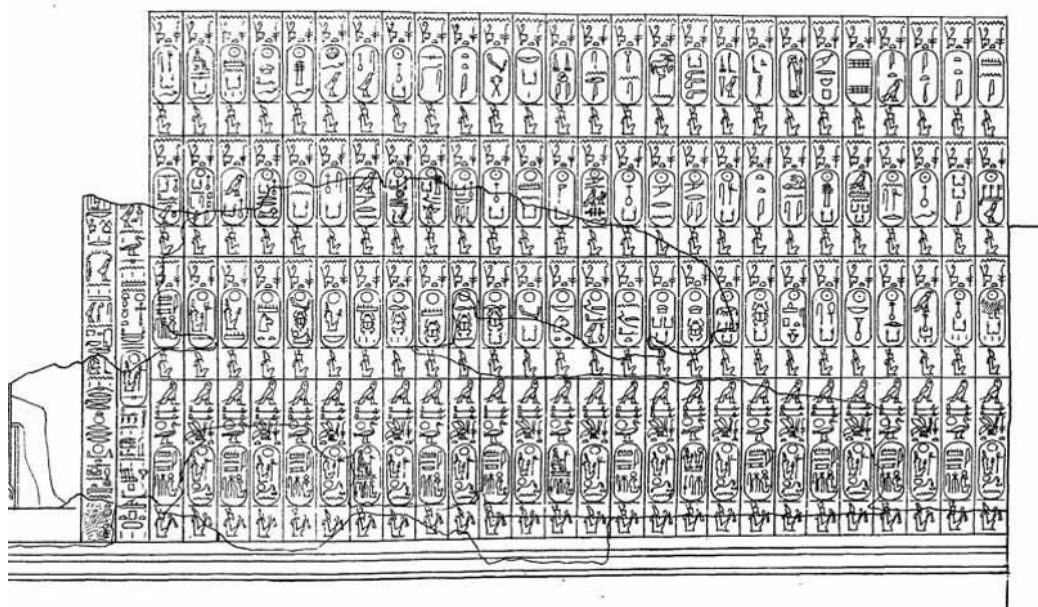
The persons standing next to the kings list are Sety I together with his young son and heir Rameses. They are making a ritual offering to the list of kings and reciting the list as a ritual litany similar to and perhaps even parallel to the Litany of Ra. If we include Rameses, the prince who succeeded Sety to the throne and probably ruled Egypt longer than any other pharaoh, then we have a total of 77 kings.

Sety’s **Sa-R@** cartouche is spelled in an unusual way. Instead of the glyph for Set, Sety substitutes the glyph “Thet”  which stands for the knot of Isis, and is code for

her name. He thus spelled his name with a lisp: “Thety Mer-en-Peteh”. This identification with Isis rather than Set was probably in deference to the location of his temple in Abydos, the traditional site where Set murdered Osiris, husband of Isis, according to the ancient myth. On the old Senet Game Boards and in other contexts the Thet knot coded for Isis, and the Jed pillar 𓆎 stood for Osiris. By building his temple in Abydos, Sety was consciously aligning himself with the orthodox Osirian tradition to distinguish himself from the unorthodox Atenistic bias of the Amarna period. Sety’s temple contains chapels to Osiris, Isis, and Horus, the Osirian triad as well as the Amen, Ra-Horakhty, Peteh triad that was emphasized by the Ramesside era pharaohs. Sety may have chosen the unusual name that he took because his family came from humble origins, and he wanted to assert that Set also was a Son of the Sun, or at least a grandson of the sun.

### The Rameses II List of 78 Cartouches

Below is a drawing made by Mariette to reconstruct the damaged list of Rameses II. The jagged black line indicates the edges of the surviving artifact. The rest of the list has been restored from earlier drawings and the matching list in Sety’s temple.



The list of Rameses has four registers, and reads from right to left. On the far left the illustration is lost, but we can still see the leg of a seated person – probably Rameses. Each register has 26 royal cartouches, and the fourth register (bottom row) contains the **Suten Baty** (**Nesu Baty**) and **Sa-R@** names of Rameses alternating. The total number of cartouches in the top three registers is 78, but the last two on the far left of the third register both belong to Rameses, so there are really only 77 individual kings in the list. The **Suten Baty** name of Rameses is **Weser Ma@t R@**

**Setep en R@** (The Wizard of the Truth of the Higher Self Sun Who is Chosen by the Higher Self Sun). The **Sa-R@** name (given name) is **R@-meses Mery-Amen** (The Higher Self Sun is Reborn Again and Again, Beloved of the Invisible One). Alternatively we can read the royal given name as “The Ever-Reborn [Avatar], Beloved of the Invisible Higher Self Sun”. Here is another strange “coincidence”. The name **Weser Amen** appears encoded in the pronomen and nomen of Rameses II as the first word of the pronomen and the last word of the nomen.

The **Sa-R@** name of Rameses is the final one on the list in both the third and fourth registers. From this we know that the 78<sup>th</sup> name on the list is to be understood as Ra, the Higher Self Sun, in his avatar embodiment as Rameses. In Sety’s list Rameses plays the same role, but appears as a young prince wearing the braid that identifies him with Ahy, the son of Hathor and young Avatar of the Higher Self Sun. Usually Ahy holds the sistrum of Hathor to indicate he is her son and devotee. In the illustration Sety carries an incense holder and young Rameses holds what appears to be a papyrus scroll from which he chants the litany of royal kings as an offering to their ancestor avatars as Sons of the Sun.



Ahy holding up a sistrum of Hathor

The text next to the young Rameses as he stands in front of Sety I states: “A laudatory invocation by the prince, the honorable Rameses, the royal son, first-born to his beloved body.”



Sety initiates the Litany with the following words:

*Words spoken by King Menmaetre (Sety I). Bringing the god to his food offering, the making of offerings for the kings of Upper and Lower Egypt. Greetings to thee, Ptah Sokar [Osiris], who is South-of-His Wall! Come, that I may make for thee these [things] which Horus made for his father Osiris.*

(translation by Thomas F. Mudloff, “The Royal Tradition in Upper Egypt from Menes to Sety I”)



(Detail from Sety I Kings List; at the bottom of the detail Sety's left hand points at his speech. Each of the six lines begins with the "jed medu" formula, indicating that this is mantra recitation. Note the writing of Sety's name as "Thety" in the **Sa R@** cartouche on the far left.)

Sety seems to have originated the creative idea of identifying the divine archetypes of the Litany of Ra with the historical kings of Egypt. He probably was motivated to do this because his father, Rameses I had been a commoner handpicked by the heirless final king of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty, Horemheb, to begin a new dynasty. He wanted to demonstrate that he was a legitimate ruler according to the ancient way of the kings that united Egypt and to distance himself from the Amarna troubles that had torn the later portion of 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty into disarray even in the name of Akhenaten's attempts to unify the country under his monolithic cult of "Atenism".

Sety decided to link his reign to that of Thutmose III, the greatest leader at the height of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty by reviving the Litany of Ra that was introduced by Thutmose and applying it specifically to the theme of the great pharaohs who had united Egypt, kept her united, and maintained her ancient traditions. He chose the ancient cult site of Abydos for his great temple because pharaohs from the beginning of the first dynasty had come there to identify with Osiris as the spiritual patriarch of ancient Egypt. He recognized how **Weser-Amen** and Thutmose had expanded the archetypal **Senet** Oracle Game Board of 30 "temples" into the 78 Tarok avatars of Ra when they created the Litany. Sety then evolved and applied the Tarok system developed by **Weser-Amen** and Thutmose by connecting the 78 archetypes to 78 of the greatest pharaohs who had led Egypt up to his time. This idea of theme-based correspondences to the Tarok has persisted even to our own day so that we now have decks that correlate to various mythologies, historical figures, movie characters, and any number of other fanciful themes.

Sety's idea definitely was not far fetched, because the pharaohs already had elevated themselves to the status of gods and particularly saw themselves as Sons of Ra.

Linking the history of Egypt and its most august rulers to the Tarok Litany of Ra and displaying them publicly in the holy site of Abydos also served as an excellent propaganda device for the royal family and for preserving the national culture of Egypt.

### **Cultic Tradition of the Litany of Ra**

Collier and Manley mentioned in the sentences I quoted from their book that the Kings List of Sety and Rameses may reflect “cultic tradition”. Other writers on Egypt, such as Mudloff and the source that he cites, have also suspected a special cult status was coming into play. As I mulled the implications of these two words with respect to the Litany of Ra, the Abydos Kings List, and the development of the Tarot – suddenly I realized that perhaps there not only was a “cultic tradition” but an extremely powerful and magical organization of wizards maintaining the cult tradition quietly in the background of history.

The cult originally began to take shape when Egypt emerged into the New Kingdom after the second Intermediate Period during the 14<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> dynasties when the government was weak, disunified, and partially ruled by a Semitic culture called the Hyksos. The cult combined emphasis on the Amen-Ra traditions and the Osirian traditions and was first consolidated under Thutmose I, Thutmose III, Amenhotep II and Thutmose IV. This trend was interrupted during the Amarna period by the sudden shift toward Atenism that Amenhotep IV (Akhenaten) and his family imposed. Tutankhamen and Horemheb began the shift back to the early 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty ways, but the dynasty was too weakened to continue and the power shifted to the Ramesside pharaohs of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> dynasties. After Rameses I consolidated a fresh start, Sety I and Rameses II took the renaissance to unprecedented new heights, and then continued through the 20<sup>th</sup> dynasty mainly on the momentum of these two pharaohs. From the 21<sup>st</sup> dynasty to the 25<sup>th</sup> Egypt went through its Third Intermediate Period of disunity culminating with a Nubian dynasty. After a brief recovery of self-rule, Egypt then fell under the Persians and had to be rescued by Alexander and the Greeks who were eventually supplanted by the Imperial Romans. Classical Egypt was never again under its own administration.

From earliest times the ancient Egyptians practiced an elaborate cult of ancestor veneration which required that the body of a dear family member must be mummified and then buried with great honor. Egyptian funeral ceremonies were elaborate and the wealthier families constructed special tombs (such as mastabas, pyramids, or cave labyrinths) to house the sarcophagus with its mummy and sumptuous caches of burial



goods. The family then continued to make regular offerings to the deceased as long as the family survived in Egyptian society. The pharaohs and their immediate family of course received the most opulent burial treatment. This tradition so dominated life in Egypt that it was common to greet a person by wishing them “Qereset Neferet” – a beautiful funeral!

The fundamental paradox faced by a people with such an elaborate funereal tradition was that the treasures buried with a wealthy person obviously attracted the attention of grave robbers. The more opulent the funereal trappings, the more attractive the tomb was to the tomb raiders. This led the Egyptians to develop elaborate methods to seal and conceal the tombs of the pharaohs in clever ways. Granite plugs blocked entrances and false doors were supposed to mislead invading looters. Unfortunately the looters simply tunneled around the plugs and inevitably found almost all the buried treasure. By the time the archaeological looters arrived almost all the real treasure had been stolen. What remained were only a few lucky finds that the efficient robbers somehow had missed – and mostly those finds were not of pharaohs. The odds were always heavily stacked against a pharaoh’s tomb surviving intact unless by some accident of fate. Even the mummies of the pharaohs were physically ransacked by looters because of the cultic tradition of placing precious amulets in sacred layouts on (or even inside) the mummy itself and at various key places in or on the wrappings. Once we know that the amulets represented sacred Tarok cards, the mummy amulet placements become obvious Tarok layouts, not done as divination in this case, but as sacred synergetic protection for the mummy of the deceased. However, these layouts can be read just like Tarok readings and interpreted in the light of the feelings of the relatives and friends for the deceased.

We find that of approximately 300 pharaohs who ruled Egypt through a period of over 3000 years only about 42 mummies or parts of mummies of the pharaohs have managed to survive the ravages of the looters. You can find a detailed list of the New Kingdom royal mummies with lots of information at the Theban Royal Mummy Project website. (<http://www.mummytombs.com/egypt/pharaohmummies.htm>.)

Of the 42 survivors, 6 are questionable and 9 survive only as fragments. Both before and after the Litany of Ra period (18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> dynasties) the survival rate of royal mummies is extremely low. Amazingly **all 9** of the pharaohs who put the Litany of Ra in their tombs have survived as mummies. Some had their bodies damaged by the ransacking looters, but an organized team of priests apparently moved the mummies of these special pharaohs along with family members and other pharaohs of

their dynasties to safe cache locations. Thus today you can see all nine of the Litany pharaohs on display in the mummy room of the Cairo museum.

## And Here Are Their Photographic Portraits!

(courtesy of the Theban Royal Mummy Project)



Thutmose III

Founder of the **Litany of Ra** Tradition



Seti I



Ramesses II



Merneptah



Seti II



Siptah



Ramesses III



Ramesses IV



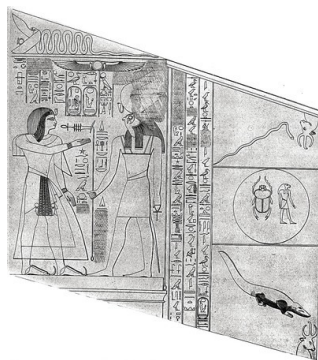
Ramesses IX

This august gallery of pharaohs from over 3000 years ago is absolutely unheard of in world history. The faces of these men (especially **Sety** I and Rameses II) shine with power and intelligence even today in spite of the rough treatment they have received at the hands of brigands. The amazing vitality of **Sety** I is impossible to ignore and shines on today. The nonagenarian Ramesses II is awesome to behold and his colossal granite statues still dominate the land of Egypt.

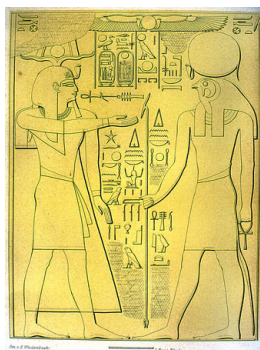
Another interesting detail is that of the Ramesside pharaohs who took the name Rameses, we have Rameses I, II, III, IV, V, VI, and IX. We are missing only the later ones VII, VIII, X, XI, and XII, all of whom lacked the Litany of Ra. We also

have both Sety I and II.

Below are scenes from the tombs showing the various pharaohs being initiated by Ra into the cult tradition of the Litany.



Sety I (KV 17)



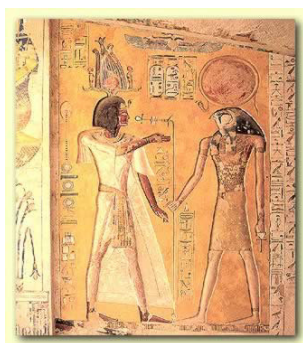
Ramesses II (KV 7)



Merenptah (KV 8)



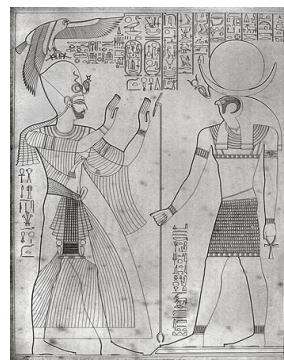
Sety II (KV 15)



Siptah (KV 47)



Ramesses IV (KV 2)



Ramesses IX (KV 6)

### Initiations of Ramesside Pharaohs into the Litany of Ra

In this frontispiece to the Litany Ra Horakhty blesses the pharaohs with the breath of eternal life as his immortal avatars on earth. He holds the **@nkh** in his left hand and **was** in his right hand. Often a **jed** pillar and **@nkh** emanates from the **was** and points at pharaoh's nose to give him a new breath of life. The **jed-@nkh**

combination encodes the **Nen** Winter Solstice sign. From Winter Solstice the sun is reborn and expands again to life.

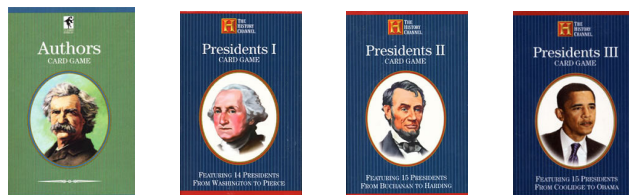
Of the 77 separate pharaohs on the Cult List we have at least some fragments of the mummies of Jer (Djer #3), Jeser (Djoser #16), Seneferu (#20), Menkaure (#24), Shepseskare (between #28 and #29), Djedkare (#32), Wenas (Unas #33), Teta (#34), Pepi (#36), Merenre (#37), Mentuhotep II (#57 and one of his wives, Ashayet), Ahmose I (#66), Amenhotep I (#67), Thutmose I (#68), Thutmose II (#69), Thutmose III (#70), Amenhotep II (#71), Thutmose IV (#72), Amenhotep III (#73), Smenkhare (Amarna figure, not on list), Ramesses I (#75), Seti I (#76), and Ramesses II (#77, #78).

Except for Shepseskare (5<sup>th</sup> dynasty ruler who ruled between A-Kawy [Kakai] and Nefer-f-re, who are both on the list), Hor and Taa II (13<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> dynasty kings respectively), the shadowy short-lived Amarna “king” Smenkhare, and the other short-lived boy king Tutankhamen, all the kings up through Ramesses II whose mummies survive in part or in whole are on the kings list, a total of 21 kings out of the 77 separate kings listed by Ramesses II and a total of 21 out of the 26 up through Ramesses II whose mummies survive at least to some extent to our day. Furthermore, four out of the five pharaohs from the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> dynasties who preserved the Pyramid Texts appear on the list and managed to preserve at least a few of their bones in their thoroughly pillaged pyramids. Some pharaohs such as the mummy of Ramesses I have survived strange journeys. This accounts for over 27% of those on the list. What is it about this particular group of kings that gives them such staying power that is unheard of in human history?

### **The King List Deck and Theme-based Playing Cards**

During childhood one of my favorite past-times with my siblings was the well-known card game Authors. This traditional deck that has been in use for about 130 years consists of one author for each of the 13 cards of an ordinary poker deck: Twain, Dickens, Thackeray, Stevenson, Shakespeare, Cooper, Irving, Hawthorne, Longfellow, Tennyson, Alcott, and Poe. Each of the four poker suits presents one of four important works by the author. Authors is a special theme-based poker deck, and all poker decks are descended from the earlier Tarot decks. Another more recent theme-based deck is Composers with cards for Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Schumann, Liszt, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, and Grieg. There is also a deck of Scientists. Recently we also have the 3-deck President Card Game from the History Channel and published by U.S. Games. Deck

I contains the first 13 presidents from Washington to Pierce. Deck II contains 13 more presidents from Buchanan to Harding. Deck III has 60 cards and currently covers 15 presidents from Coolidge to Obama. The earlier edition only went through George W. Bush. At least two other versions exist: one called The Presidents Playing Cards (by Arcturus, LLC) with all 44 presidents in one deck, and another I have encountered on the Internet called the Presidents Rummy deck. Below are thumbnail images from Internet sellers of Authors and the Presidents series of card games, all published by U.S. Games.



These playing cards – especially the president theme cards -- are direct descendants of the Tarok deck invented by pharaohs Sety and Rameses as a royal spin-off of the “Egyptian Angel and Amulet Tarok” developed by Grand Vizier **Weser-Amen** and pharaoh Thutmose III (**Men-Kheper-R@ Dehuty-Mese**). Of course today there are many popular decks with angel themes, such as Doreen Virtue’s Archangel, Ascended Master, and Fairy decks.

A Deck of Royalty Cards Depicting the Kings and Queens of England



Heritage Toy & Game Company, 1993

“Over a thousand years of English Royal History”

I suspect that there may not be any correlation between the pharaohs on the Kings List and the cards of the Litany for several reasons. First, **Sety** and Rameses lived many years after the time of **Weser-Amen** and Thutmose. More important, the pharaohs of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> dynasties may have known about as much as we do regarding the lives and personalities of the ancient pharaohs of the old kingdom – which is often very little. At best there would only be the general notion that the divine archetypes



of the Litany are expressions of Ra, the pharaohs are also expressions of Ra, and possibly there is some link with the glyphs of the ancient names.

The following clear photographs of the **Sety I** Kings List are from the Wikimedia Commons and were made by Rudolf Ochmann (Ochmann-HH) in 2006. The name in the left-most column is what appears in the cartouche.

#### Dynasty 1



- |    |                     |                 |  |
|----|---------------------|-----------------|--|
| 1. | <b>A-men</b> (Mena) | <b>N@r-mer</b>  | Dear Foundation; Invisible One; Beloved Fool<br>(Menes, Narmer)        |
| 2. | <b>A-tet</b>        | <b>Kher-@ha</b> | Dear Image (Kher-aha)  |
| 3. | <b>Tat</b>          | <b>Jer</b>      | Emanation; All (Djer)  |
| 4. | <b>Ata</b>          | <b>Jet</b>      | The Person (Djet)  |
| 5. | <b>Septy</b>        | <b>Den</b>      | Two Nomes; Distinguished (Den)   |
| 6. | <b>Mery Baa-pe</b>  | <b>@nej Ab</b>  | Baba's Beloved; Beloved of the Strong Place;<br>Bright Heart (Anedjib) |
| 7. | <b>Semesu/Hew</b>   | <b>Smer-kha</b> | First Born / Lord of Taste (Semerkhet)                                 |
| 8. | <b>Qebbeh</b>       | <b>Qe@</b>      | Heaven (Qa'a)  |

#### Dynasty 2



- |     |                      |                       |   |
|-----|----------------------|-----------------------|---|
| 9.  | <b>Bejau</b>         | <b>Hetep-Sekhemuy</b> | Ferrying Place; Experience of 2 Powers<br>(Hotepsekhemwy) |
| 10. | <b>Ka-bahu</b>       | <b>@-Neb</b>          | Virile Energies; *Kakau (Raneb)                           |
| 11. | <b>Ba-[en]-neter</b> | <b>En-Neter</b>       | Divine Mind, (Ninetjer)                                   |
| 12. | <b>Waj-nes</b>       | <b>Weneg</b>          | Immortal Tongue (Wneg)                                    |
| 13. | <b>Sen-da</b>        | <b>Senej</b>          | The Heart of Osiris; Fear (Senedj)                        |
| 14. | <b>Jajay</b>         | <b>(Beby)</b>         | Chief [Beby] (Khasekhemwy)                                |

## Dynasty 3



15. <b>Neb Ka</b>		Lord of Energy	Sanakhte
16. <b>Jeser-Sau</b>	(Jeser I)	Holy Protector; (Netery Khet Jeser)	Djoser
17. <b>A-Tet</b>	<b>Sekhem Khat</b>	Dear Image; Power of Body	Sekhemkhet
18. <b>Sejes</b>	<b>Kh@-Ba</b>	Makes Himself; Rising Mind	Khaba
19. <b>Nefer-Ka-R@ Heweny</b>		Beautiful Ra Energy; Striker	Huni

## Dynasty 4



20. <b>Sneferu</b>		Makes Beautiful Things	Sneferu
21. <b>Khuu-f</b>		His Protections	Cheops
22. <b>Jed-f R@</b>		His Stability is Ra	Djedefre
23. <b>Kh@-f R@</b>		His Rising is Ra	Khafre
24. <b>Men-Kau R@</b>		Foundation of the Energies of Ra	Menkaure
25. <b>Shepeses Ka-f</b>		His Energy is Venerable	Shepseskaf

## Dynasty 5



26. <b>Weser Ka-f</b>		His Energy is a Wizard	Userkaf
27. <b>Sahu R@</b>		The Toes of Ra (Orion)	Sahure
28. <b>Akayu (A-Kaka)</b>		Two Dear Energies	Neferirkare Kakai
29. <b>Nefer-f R@</b>		His Beauty is Ra	Neferefre
30. <b>En Weser R@</b>		Ra is For the Wizard	Nyuserre [Ini]
31. <b>Men Kau Heru</b>		Foundation of Horus Energies	Menkauhor Kaiu
32. <b>Jed Ka R@</b>		Stability of the Energy of Ra	Djedkare Isesi
33. <b>Wenas</b>		As Existence (or As You)	Unas

## Dynasty 6



34. <b>A-Tet</b>	Dear Image	Teti
35. <b>Weser Ka R@</b>	Wizard of the Energy of Ra	Userkare
36. <b>Mery R@ Pepy</b>	Beloved of Ra; Brickmaker; (Traveler)	Pepi I Meryre
37. <b>Mer en R@ Mehty em Sa-f</b>	Beloved of Ra; Caring in His Protection	Merenre Nemtyemsaf
38. <b>Nefer Ka R@ Pepy</b>	Beautiful Energy of Ra	Pepi II Neferkare I
39. <b>Mer en R@ Mehety em Sa-f</b>	Beloved of Ra, Caring in His Protection	Merenre Nemtyemsaf II

## Dynasty 7



40. <b>Neter Ka R@</b>	Divine Energy of Ra	Netjerkare
41. <b>Men Ka R@</b>	Foundation Energy of Ra	Menkare
42. <b>Nefer Ka R@</b>	Beautiful Energy of Ra	Neferkare II
43. <b>Nefer Ka R@ Neby</b>	Beautiful Energy of Ra, All-Inclusive	Neferkare Neby
44. <b>Jed Ka R@ Shemay</b>	Stable Energy of Ra, the Foreigner	Djedkare Shemai
45. <b>Nefer Ka R@ Khenedu</b>	Beautiful Energy of Ra, the Traveler	Neferkare Khendu
46. <b>Mer-en-Heru</b>	Beloved of Horus	Merenhor
47. <b>Se-Nefer Ka</b>	One Who Makes Energy Beautiful	Neferkamin

## Dynasty 8



48. <b>En-Ka R@</b>	For the Energy of Ra	Nikare
49. <b>Nefer-Ka R@ Tererru</b>	Beautiful Energy of Ra, the Worshipful	Neferkare Tereru



50. <b>Nefer-Ka Heru</b>	Beautiful Energy of Horus	Neferkahor
51. <b>Nefer-Ka R@ Pepy Seneb</b>	Beautiful Energy of Ra, the Healthy Brickmaker	Neferkare Pepiseneb
52. <b>Se-Nefer Ka @nu</b>	Beautiful One Who Beautifies the Energy	Neferkamin Anu
53. <b>An Kau R@</b>	Bringer of the Energies of Ra	Qakare Ibi
54. <b>Nefer Kau R@</b>	Beautiful Energies of Ra	Neferkaure II
55. <b>Nefer Kau Heru</b>	Beautiful Energies of Horus	Neferkauhor
56. <b>Nefer Ary Ka R@</b>	Beautiful Action of Ra Energy	Neferirkare

## Dynasty 11



57. <b>Neb Hepet R@ Menthu Hetep</b>	Lord of the Paddle of Ra; Nomad Pacifier	Mentuhotep II
58. <b>Se-@nekh Ka R@ Menthu Hetep</b>	Makes Alive the Ra Energy; Nomad Pacifier	Mentuhotep III

## Dynasty 12



59. <b>Se-Hetep Ab R@</b>	Makes the Heart of Ra Experience	Amenemhat I
60. <b>Kheper Ka R@</b>	The Energy of Ra Creates; Zen Wizard	Senusret I
61. <b>Neweb Kau R@</b>	The Energies of Ra are Golden	Amenemhat II
62. <b>Kh@ Kheper R@</b>	The Creation of Ra Arises; Zen Wizard	Senusret II
63. <b>Kh@ Kau R@</b>	The Energies of Ra Arise	Senusret III
64. <b>En M@at R@</b>	For the Truth of Ra; Hidden in the Heart	Amenemhat III
65. <b>M@a-kheru R@</b>	The Truth Speaking of Ra	Amenemhat IV

## Dynasty 18



66. <b>Neb Pehety R@</b>	Doubly Mighty Lord of Ra; Born of the Moon	Ahmose I
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67. <b>Jeser Ka R@</b>	Sacred Energy of Ra	Amenhotep I
68. <b>@a Kheper Ka R@</b>	Greatly Creates the Energy of Ra	Thutmose I
69. <b>@a Kheper en R@</b>	Creates Greatness for Ra	Thutmose II
70. <b>Men Kheper R@</b>	Creative Foundation of Ra	Thutmose III
71. <b>@a Kheperu R@</b>	Great are the Forms of Ra	Amenhotep II
72. <b>Men Kheperu R@</b>	Stable are the Forms of Ra	Thutmose IV
73. <b>Neb M@at R@</b>	Lord of the Truth of Ra	Amenhotep III
74. <b>Jeser Kheperu R@ Setep-en-R@</b>	Sacred Forms of Ra Chosen by Ra	Horemheb

#### Dynasty 19




75. <b>Men Pehety R@</b>	Doubly Mighty Foundation of Ra	Rameses I
76. <b>Men M@at R@</b>	Foundation for the Truth of Ra	Sety I
77. <b><u>Weser</u> M@at R@</b>	Wizard of the Truth of Ra	Rameses II
78. <b>R@ Meses Mery <u>Amen</u></b>	Ever-Born Ra, Beloved of the Invisible	Rameses II

Note how the first and last portions of the two names of Ramesses II (underlined) fit together to form the name of the suspected author of the Litany of Ra.

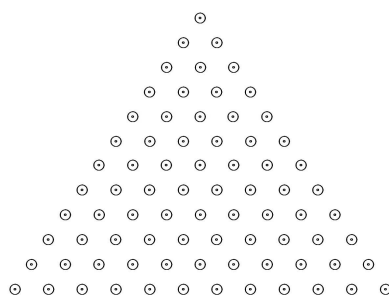
#### The Number 72, the Lunar Fraction 1/72, and 78

Schallwer de Lubicz (The Temple of Man, v. 2, p. 931) points out that the number 72 is encoded in the architectural design of the Holy of Holies at Luxor Temple. The room's width versus its length has the ratio of 9 to 8, whose product is 72. The height of each register relative to the foundation is  $\phi$ , taking the foundation as 1. The three registers plus the foundation give  $3\phi + 1$ , the total forming  $7/8$  of the wall height. "Between the last line of the upper register and the frieze of uraei there is an interval corresponding to the difference between  $1/8^{\text{th}}$  and  $1/9^{\text{th}}$ , or  $1/72^{\text{th}}$  occupied by the standard border that constitutes the frame of the tableau." Schwaller finds that this arrangement is unique to the Inner Sanctum.

Another derivation of 72 comes from the 6 components of the Lunar Eye of Horus  that form the bifurcating fractions:  $1/2$ ,  $1/4$ ,  $1/8$ ,  $1/16$ ,  $1/32$ ,  $1/64$ . These components combine in various ways to generate 64 fractions of unity – the Book of

Changes as it existed in ancient Egypt long before it appeared in China. Thoth showed Horus how to reassemble the fragmented Eye into the wholeness symbolized by the full moon. When we add to that set of 64 fractions Thoth's Ogdoad of Primordial deities, we get the number 72. When we add the four sons of Horus (the four classical elements) plus the principle of binary contrast (**Men** and **Mut**), we get a total of  $64 + 8 + 4 + 2 = 78$ .

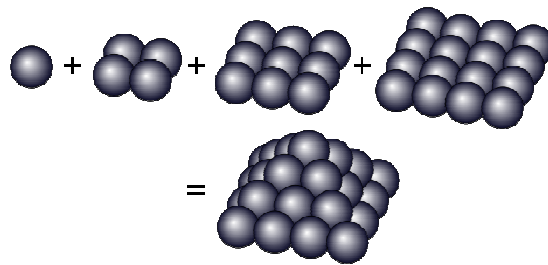
The number 78 is also the 12<sup>th</sup> triangular number, which generates the pattern of a flat pyramid that can represent a year of 12 months in its 12 levels, each level representing the number of the solar month.



The Sun Pyramid with 12 Levels

The square pyramidal number sequence is 1, 5, 14, 30, 55, 91, 140, 204, 285, 385, 506, 650, 819, . . . . The fourth number of the series is 30, the exact number of squares on the Senet Board, showing us how to transform the flat rectangular Senet Board into a 3-dimensional Egyptian-style square pyramid. We thus can obtain a year calendar from 12 Solar Month Senet Pyramids of 30 Solar Sphere days plus a Mini Epagomenal Pyramid made of  $1 + 4 = 5$  Solar Sphere days..

The sixth number in the square pyramidal number series is 91, the number of days in 13 seven-day weeks. Four times 91 equals 364, which is one day short of a solar year of 365 days. This looks very much like code for a poker deck of 4 times 13 = 52 weeks plus a joker for New Year's day. If we add the sun itself as the Eye of Ra as that joker floating above our four pyramids of 91 solar spheres each, then we have a set of 365 suns or earth-days. Each pyramid can represent a cardinal direction and a classical element as well as a suit in our deck of cards.




1 + 4 + 9 + 16 Solar Spheres Stacked to Make a 30 Solar Sphere Square Pyramid

(Public domain graphic by David Eppstein for Wikipedia Commons)

The Temple of **Men** at Luxor may provide further hints at the importance of the number 78 as it was conceived in the Egyptian tradition. The temple begins at the inner sanctum with a naos (inner sanctum) that has four columns, a design echoed again further out in the Offering Hall. Beyond this is a Portico with eight columns. Moving further outward we encounter a Hypostyle Hall with two sets of 16 columns altogether totaling 32 columns. Next we enter the Court of Amenhotep with 64 columns arranged in pairs around the perimeter. From the inner part of the temple to the Court of Amenhotep we have a structure that clearly represents in its architecture the Egyptian Book of Changes with the doubling that proceeds from the union of **Men** and **Mut**. Moving outward beyond the Court of Amenhotep we pass through a Colonnade consisting of seven pairs of colossal columns that represent the seven physical chakras of the human body as well as the thighs of the giant **Men**.

Rameses II then expanded the structure further by adding a large courtyard that he built at a skewed angle in order to include a triple solar bark shrine erected in the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty by Thutmose III to hold the processional boats of **Amen**, **Mut**, and **Khensu** during celebrations. That Rameses went out of his way to integrate the Thutmose III shrine into his courtyard rather than simply moving it or even removing it is significant, because Thutmose III originated the Litany of Ra.

There appear to be 74 large columns in the courtyard plus 4 more that you can see from the aerial photo have been subsumed into the thick walls of the Thutmose boat shrine. Then there are 4 slightly smaller bud columns that grace the porch in front of the Thutmose boat shrine to express in visible form the 4 larger columns hidden in the Thutmose temple walls that demarcate the central room used for housing the boat of Amen during its visits. The four hidden columns represent the four immanent elements. The name Amen means “hidden” and the boat (waa ) that was housed there stands for the meditation that takes attention into the hidden recesses of the mind.

This gives us a grand total of 78 visible columns in the original Rameses II courtyard and beautifully integrates Rameses II with Thutmose III, the Litany of Ra progenitor.






4 Columns at the Entrance to the Thutmose III Sacred Boat Temple in the Rameses II Courtyard, Luxor

Behind the Boat Temple are the Great Pylons of Rameses II.

Two obelisks once straddled the main entrance. The one not visible has been removed to Paris.

Photo from <http://www.ask-aladdin.com/images/Egyptpics/>

The solar boat that would rest in the central room of the Thutmose shrine represents the Amen Meditation (Transcendental Meditation) because of the wordplay between the word for Boat (waa ) and the word for meditation (waa , ). The boat belongs to Amen, the Invisible Reality that hides behind phenomenal reality. The colossal statues of the pharaoh between each pair of columns in the southern half of the courtyard suggest to a perceptive visitor that each column is intended to represent one of the pharaohs on the sacred list of 78 pharaohs selected for special honor by Sety I and Rameses II. At present eleven colossi (some seriously damaged) still stand between the columns and two others are seated on either side of the entrance to the Hypostyle Hall. The connection between statues and columns is clear enough.

As a person enters the temple and moves inward, the columns decrease from 78 to 64 to 32 to 8 to 4 that then splits into two pairs. Ultimately there is only the phallus of **Men** that collapses diversity back into unity. This is the transcending phase of the meditation. On the way out the process reverses and one returns from unity to the world of diversity. The single identity of all the colossi in the Rameses Courtyard suggests a viewpoint of unity within diversity. The mirror reflection of the two Boat Chapels suggests that the outer physical world (Thutmose Boat Chapel) is a reflection of the inner mental world (Alexander's restored inner Boat Chapel).






Colossal Statue of Rameses Standing Between Columns, Luxor

Photo taken by Hajor, Dec.2001 (Wikimedia Commons)



Detail of public domain photo by Blalonde, 10 November, 2009 (Wikimedia Commons)

In this vista of the Luxor Court of Rameses there are standing statues of Rameses between each pair of columns, and a pair of seated colossi on either side of the entrance to the grand colonnade.

Schwaller de Lubicz points out (Temple of Man, v. 2, p. 932) that if the first register on the west wall of the Holy of Holies has a height from the baseline to the boundary of the extended “heaven” glyph  at the top of the register of 100 units, then the distance to the tops of the heads of the kings and images of Amen is 72 units (see his plate 79 in Temple of Man that shows Amenhotep in various stages of making offerings to Amen, and the detail below from a photo showing a portion of a pillar with a similar scene).



In the photo detail you can see the king on the right making an offering to Amen, who wears a crown with tall feather ornaments that extend all the way to the “heaven” glyph at the top of the register. The register is four blocks in height, and each block is the same height. Thus the top of the third block up from the baseline is 75 units if we allow 25 units per block. The top of the king’s head comes right where 72 units would be. The number 72 represents the 64 fractions of a lunar month plus the 8 Primordials of Thoth. It also represents the twice 36 half-dekans that make up the solar year that the physical body experiences. The final half dekan of 5 days takes one out of the crown chakra into the spiritual realm.

The feather is an Egyptian symbol for thought. The icon thus depicts a meditation process in which the thoughts extend from the gross physical body to subtler and subtler, higher and higher levels of consciousness until they reach heaven and merge into pure undefined awareness that is compared to the sky that stretches overhead. The king offers puja to Amen and the kundalini cobra (emerging from the king’s brow) opens his Eye of Wisdom. Amen’s image in the temple is alternately tantric (ithyphallic) and conventional. The photo shows him in conventional mode.

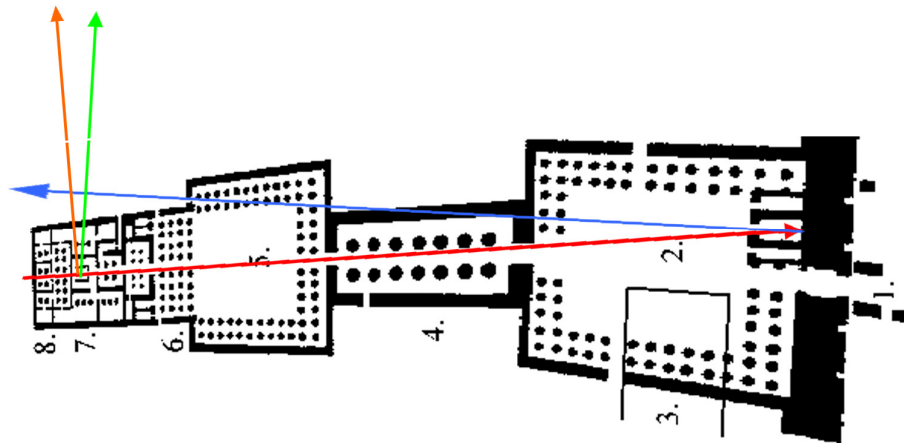
Schwaller further points out (Temple of Man, v. 2, p. 940 et al.) that the central axis of the temple extends from the center of the Inner Sanctum (Room I) and passes:

- Through the center of the Solar Journey room (Room XII with 12 pillars, one for each month);
- Through the center of the Inner Amen Boat chapel (Room VI);
- Through the offering room of the four elements (4 columns as the 4 Sons of Horus);
- Through the room of Thoth’s 8 Primordial Trigram Transformations (8 columns);
- Through the Hypostyle Room XVI with its two sets of 16 columns;
- Through the Peristyle transept court of Amenhotep with its 64 “hexagram” pillars arranged in pairs just like the sequence of hexagrams in the traditional Chinese **Book of Changes**;
- Through the gigantic colonnade (nave) of the 7 chakras;
- Through the Courtyard of Rameses with its 78 Tarok Pillars;
- Through the door of the Temple of Thutmose into the Chapel of Amen’s Boat.

There the Axis of Amen perfectly bisects the inner wall of that chapel. The path in the aerial photo shown above has deviated slightly from the axis in order to parallel the colonnade, which is already slightly skewed and does not show the actual Axis of Amen. If we extend the axis through the Rameses Pylon, it passes through the

interior of the chapel of Isis in the Nectanebo yard to a point where a statue of Isis was recovered in the 1950's.

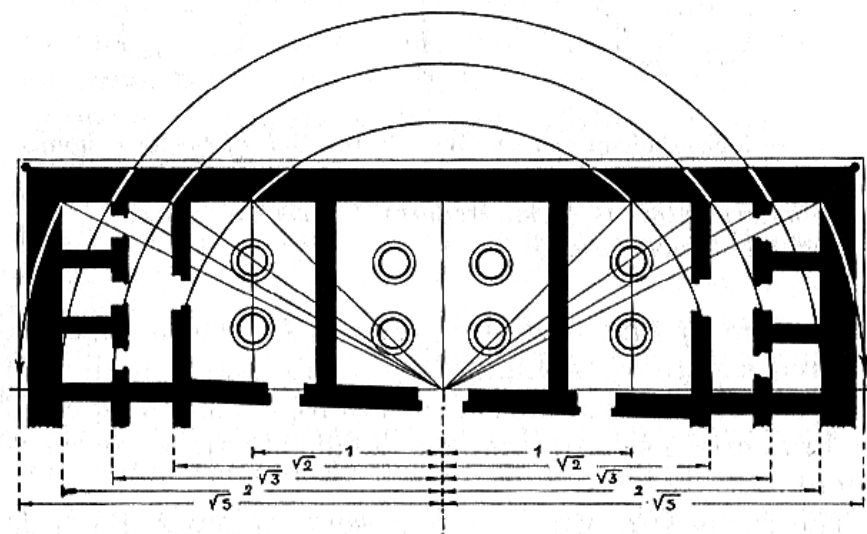
If we reflect the Axis of Amen from the inner wall of the Thutmose Bark Chapel as if from a mirror, then the axis goes right down the skewed center of the Thutmose chapel, out the door, then and along a line diagonal to the main temple. If we extend it in a straight line until it passes outside the Inner Boat Chapel of Amen that was renovated by Alexander, a right angle drawn from the location of the boat in the chapel to the reflected line and a line drawn perpendicular to the main temple Axis of Amen and extended to the point intersected by the perpendicular from the boat to the reflected line, gives us a triangle that is similar to the large triangle formed by the Axis of Amen and its reflection. The ratio of the short leg to the hypotenuse for these triangles is  $1/7$  with an angle of  $8^{\circ} 8'$ .



In this diagram the red arrow proceeds in a straight line from the center of the naos (8) to the center of the Amen Boat Chapel built by Thutmose (upper right corner of 2) and marks the Axis of Amen which was etched by the ancient architects on the floor of the Inner Boat Chapel (7). The Inner Boat Chapel forms a mirror image of the outer Boat Chapel (and vice versa). Thus Thutmose placed his chapel geomantically, and Rameses had to skew his courtyard (2) in order to align it and its entry pylons with the important Thutmose structure that he wished to honor and preserve. The blue arrow is the axis reflecting off the back wall of the Thutmose Boat Chapel. The green arrow connects the red arrow to the blue arrow from the Inner Boat parking spot, perpendicular to the blue arrow. The orange arrow is a perpendicular erected from the Axis of Amen (red arrow) at the same parking spot to intersect the blue arrow. The little right triangle (green/blue/orange) is similar to the big right triangle (blue/green/red), but rotated 90 degrees, like the phallus of Amen. The big right

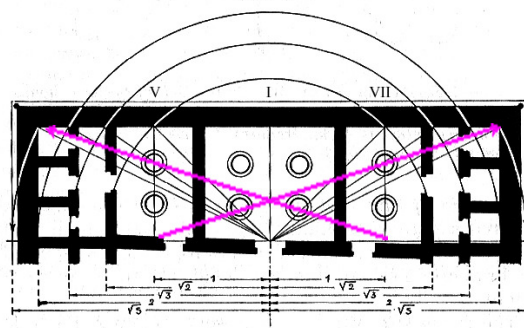


triangle is also similar to another big right triangle (red/orange/blue) but flipped as a mirror image, perhaps to suggest the congress of **A-Men** with his consort, **Mut**. Schwaller describes and includes detailed drawings to illustrate in his monumental work the details of the fascinating long-distance mirror image reflection between the inner and outer Amen Boat Chapels in the iconography.



*Figure J. Harmonic analysis of triple sanctuary. (Lucie Lamy)*

Above is a drawing by Lucie Lamy, who assisted de Lubicz in his analysis of Luxor Temple. Her sketch reveals some of the mathematics of the Naos Inner Shrine.



*Figure J. Harmonic analysis of triple sanctuary. (Lucie Lamy)*

The pink arrows I have added represent the crossed scepters of the shepherd's crook and the farmer's flail in the mind of pharaoh. Each pink arrow is  $\sqrt{10}$  units based on the unit defined by the distance from the center of room I (the central shrine) to the center of room VII (or room V), the two adjacent shrine rooms with pairs of pillars. Of course it is also the product of the diagonals of the two integer length rectangles.

$$\sqrt{2} \times \sqrt{5} = \sqrt{10} = 3.15227766 \dots$$

The square root of 10 is the key to physics and geometry, and of course contains the number *phi* that governs the natural evolution of structures, as  $\sqrt{5}$  does.

$$\phi = [(\sqrt{5} + 1) / 2]$$



In modern science  $\sqrt{10}$  governs the scale at which attention perceives phenomena and is reflected in the product of  $\hbar$  (h-bar, the reduced Planck constant and signature of the very smallest scale) and  $c$  (the speed of light and signature of the very largest scale) – a constant that permeates quantum physics. Scientific notation makes use of powers of 10 as a means of expressing values at very large and very small scales.

$$\hbar c = 3.16227766 \dots \times 10^{-26} \text{ J}\cdot\text{m}$$

(J stands for Joules, a measure of energy – that is, mass times velocity squared; and m stands for meters. Planck's constant is reckoned in terms of kilogram $\times$ meter<sup>2</sup> per second, and light speed is in meters per second.)

I will leave it up to you to decide whether or not the Egyptians knew anything about quantum mechanics, but they certainly understood the very simple geometry of squares and the irrational diagonals they generate.

### The Name of the Game: Where Did “Tarot” Come From?

I theorize that the original name for the Tarot in Europe was Tarok – as it still is called today in many European countries, – and I suspect that Tarok derives from the attested Egyptian expression **da rekh** , which means to enable someone to know something. The other commonly used name is Naïpe[s], and I believe this word derives from the ancient Egyptian **neby**  meaning all. For example, in the “Story of the Eloquent Peasant” (81; 134-5) we find the expression “**rekh** khet en remethet **nebet**” (wisest of all men). In Hebrew NBYA meant a prophet, and the books of the prophets in the Old Testament are called NBYAYM. In Islam *al Nabi* is the Prophet. *Nabi* also means noble and aristocratic in Arabic and derives from the meaning “lord” that also comes from the Egyptian **neb** and **neby**.

The ancient Egyptian system of prophetic divination, whether done with the Senet Oracle Board, a bag of scarab seals, or some other method devised by the cult followers of Amen Ra, certainly could be described in Egyptian as **da rekh neby**, giving one access to all knowledge. This concept evolved into *Tarok Naïpe*. You could use the whole phrase together or either expression separately. The word **nebe** in Egyptian could mean “Lord” or “All” depending on context. In a way one

meaning implies the other. The Spanish picked up the word *naïpe* from the Turks (nebi) and Arabs (nabi). The Italians picked up Tarocchi from the Turks and the Egyptians. Other European spellings are Tarock, Tarokk, and so on. “Tarot” is a French distortion of the word *tarok*. English speakers generally have followed the French version, *tarot*. I can not prove this theory, but no one has been able to prove any other theory for the origin of the name Tarot, so this is my current working hypothesis, and I will stick with it until I or others discover a better one.

### **Evidence in the Litany of Ra**

The Litany of Ra contains a long poetic handbook that discusses the deep meanings of the Litany and its method of use. The handbook emphasizes over and over how important it is to know the essence of all the names of the avatars of Ra in the Litany:

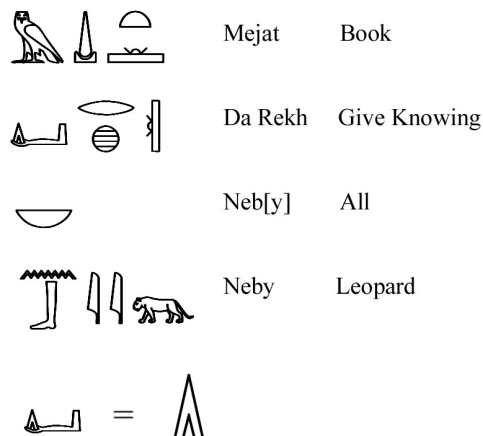
<b>Aw-a rekh seth em renu sen.</b>	I know what is in their names.	
<b>Aw-a rekh-kwa kheperu sen er jer.</b>	I know their forms to the limit.	
<b>Aw-a rekh-kwa amyut <i>khatu</i> sen,</b>	I know their embodiments,	
<b>Aru sen nebu shetau.</b>	And all their secret forms.	(88-89)

<b>Rekh kwa seshetau-k</b>	I know your secrets.	
<b>Sema@-k kheru-a.</b>	You enable me to speak Truth.	
<b>Nuk rekh kheperu-k,</b>	I know your creations,	
<b>Neter @a Shetay.</b>	O Great and Secret God.	(145-146)

<b>Nuk @a hery Aakhu,</b>	I am the Great One above the Light Beings,	
<b>Tut W@, Rekh Sheta Re-f.</b>	One Image Who Knows the Secret beyond Him.	
	(or who knows the secret of his mouth.)	(220-221)

<b>Hetepetyu, da sen en-a @wy sen.</b>	The Experiencers give me their two hands.	
<b>Aw rekhu Reu, seshem sen wa.</b>	Their mouths know, and they guide me.	(230)

<b>Aw-a rekh-kwa then.</b>	I know you,	
<b>Rekh seshemu-th.</b>	I know your guiding images.	
<b>Rekh ren[u] en amyu khet.</b>	And I know the name[s] in sequence.	(257)



Notice how the handbook emphasizes the importance of knowing all the avatars of Ra listed in the Litany, and that this gives knowledge of secrets. “Giving a hand” or “giving two hands” is an idiom that permeates the Pyramid Texts and that expresses the divine spirit of service.

### The Core Concept of the Egyptian Divination System

Before we outline the subsequent evolution of the Tarot after its origins as a divination system in ancient Egypt, we must understand the core concept that was the essence of divination and the essence of all Egyptian culture.

Recall that the core tableau of the Book of the Dead is the weighing of the heart ceremony in the Hall of Judgment. Although we can interpret this as a judgment that occurs after death, the book reminds readers that its contents are also useful during a person’s life. If we expand our viewpoint, we may say that the weighing of the heart is a reference to the inner conscience that each person makes as he or she decides how to direct attention of each succeeding thought.

The essential point of the “weighing of the heart” ceremony is to encourage a person to be honest at every moment. An honest heart reflects integrity. “Honest” means that what you are thinking and intending corresponds to what you are saying, doing, and experiencing. If a person says one thing but means something else, they are either lying or making some kind of joke. Honesty means lack of pretense and willingness to be real. Honesty means to fully experience what is happening rather than pretending things are otherwise or wishing for something else but not having it or doing anything proactive to get it. If the heart is not weighed down with complex schemes to protect unpleasant secrets and hidden agendas, the heart is light and easy. The most important square on the Senet Game Board (#26) was the **Per Nefer**, the

House of the Beautiful [Heart of Osiris] once he had purified it of the secret that brought him to experience death. This square in the middle of the bottom row of both the Game Board (#26) and the Oracle Board (#25) represented the heart of the player or questioner.

Reality is a unified whole, and secrets involve a pretense that separates the knower of the secret from those who do not know the secret, thus fragmenting life. That is why all the supposed great “secrets” of ancient Egypt were not really secret after all and the great Osirian myth taught that death is only a reflection of secrets that a person harbors in his heart. The most important essentials of Egyptian life were completely public and the Egyptians devised brilliant methods to embody their most precious knowledge in a public way so that it would not be lost.

The Senet Game Board was such a method. The Book of the Dead was another method. The tombs of the pharaohs and literati were messages to future generations. The megalithic temples with the essential tableaux carved in deep relief were an effective method both for contemporaries and future generations. The Great Pyramid at Giza was the crowning expression of Egyptian culture that guaranteed millions of visitors over the millennia would come and gasp in awe, and the thoughtful among them would at least intuitively grasp the existence of a profound message in its megalithic perfection.

### **The Great Pyramid and the Meditation of Ra**

There are many theories about what the Great Pyramid is for and why it was built. They are all worth considering. I will now add my theory, which I like because it is so simple and universal and matches what we now know about the pyramid. It is by no means the whole story, but it nevertheless is a wonderful analogy and fits the data.

My theory is that the primary motive for building the pyramid was to remind people to meditate, and to remind them of the technology. The pyramid is a gigantic abstract model of a person sitting crosslegged on the ground practicing yoga.

### **Egyptian Yoga and the Analogy of the Pyramid**

The Egyptians had a huge sense of humor, so they organized tens of thousands of people to cut and move gigantic heavy stones and built the biggest most perfect pyramid in the world to show people how to relax. Even today people can not figure out how the Egyptians managed to cut and move so many millions of huge stones in such a short time as the reign period of a single pharaoh. Theories abound, but the

key is that they knew how to relax, so the result of their effortless work is still there for everyone to behold and marvel at despite the weathering of thousands of years and efforts by many to raid its “treasures” or despoil and destroy it.

The Great Pyramid of Giza is a gigantic analogy that illustrates how to meditate, train the attention, and manage life. The Egyptians left a big clue to their motivation for the vast monument that remained forgotten and hidden for thousands of years until it was recently rediscovered in 1954. The archaeologist Kamal el-Mallakh and inspector Zaki Nur were clearing space at the foot of the pyramid's south side when they encountered a sequence of 41 large slabs of stone between 17 and 20 tons each arranged in an orderly sequence. These stones turned out to be the roof of a large rectangular pit 32.5 meters long. Further investigation revealed not just one, but two identical pits were arranged along the foot of the pyramid. When they managed to insert a cable with a miniature camera into one, they discovered a pile of fragrant cedar wood stacked neatly inside the pit. The second pit contained the same material. They opened the eastern pit and removed the contents. It turned out to be all the components necessary to build a large wooden boat – altogether 1,224 pieces. The cedar wood had been imported from Lebanon, and cartouches of pharaoh **Jed-f R@** (Djedefre son of Cheops) were in the pit suggesting that Djedefre built the boats and pits for his father's funeral at the Great Pyramid. The cartouches and the location of the boat pit date it at no later than the 4<sup>th</sup> dynasty. Master restorer Haj Ahmed Youssef Mustafa spent ten years supervising a team that carefully re-assembled the boat that they had removed and then a special building was erected next to the pyramid to house the boat. The other boat remains sealed in its pit.

The two boats represent the morning and afternoon phases of the sun's journey across the sky. In Egyptian the generic name for such a vessel is **Waa en R@** (Boat of the Sun). The word **waa** for boat is a pun on the word **waa** for meditation. The idea the ancient Egyptians promoted was that people should meditate for a while each day in the morning at sunrise and in the evening at sunset. The morning boat they called the “Image of Brilliance”. It represented the creation phase of attention in which one defines a creation out of undefined awareness and expresses it by the intensity of action into a reality. The evening boat they called the “Image of Dissolution”. It represented the dissolution of creation during the experience phase of attention that dissolves the defined reality of the creation back into undefined awareness. The pyramid is an abstract model of the human body in sitting posture and uses principles of geometry to tell us how to do the meditation.

See an Internet article at <http://www.touregypt.net/featurestories/greatpyramid5.htm>.

The Great Pyramid is aligned with the four compass points so that each side represents one of the classical elements and the sensory mode that goes with it. We can use any of the sensory modes and work with perception of any of the elements to practice the meditation. We begin at the base of the pyramid. It is big, gross, and solid. As we move up the pyramid, the shape of the structure stays the same, but becomes progressively smaller and smaller. This represents the reduction of the mantra (sound), or the yantra (visual image), or whatever object of perception in whatever mode of perception with which we decide to follow the process of attention. That is our angle of perception.

When we reach the top of the pyramid there is a miniature stone pyramid at the apex that is a tiny replica of the entire great pyramid. The Egyptians called it a Ben-ben Stone. It can be so small that it will fit in a pocket. It even can be just a tiny mental impulse. At the top of this apical “pyramidion” the pyramid shape suddenly collapses into a single point that is the seed state of the pyramid.

All creations start from a seed state. In the seed is the idea of a pyramid. But the actual point has no shape and is the closest we can come to a mathematical point in the real physical world. It becomes a quantum point. All such points become identical no matter what shape they can give birth to, since all shapes are made from collections of points. In the physical world the points are interacting point particles.

Transcending beyond that point at the pyramid’s peak we arrive at the space above the pyramid. This space is completely undefined. In such a space of undefined awareness we can plant any seed we like and allow it to grow as big and as real as we like in our minds or in our physical world or any other dimension within the limits of the laws of physics and chemistry or whatever laws that we may apply to the domain in which we plant the seed.

The creation process is roughly the opposite of the dissolution process. It begins with empty space. We put a point in the space, and that is our seed creation. If we add a second point somewhere else, that defines an imaginary line between the two points. The interaction of the two points generates an imaginary force. These can be as real as we like, depending on the intensity of attention that we apply to them. If we add a third point and let it be non-colinear, we get a triangle and generate an imaginary plane. We also define the skeleton of a circle. If the points are

equidistant, we have an equilateral triangle.

If we add a fourth point and let it be non-coplanar with the other three points, we get a tetrahedron and generate the simplest imaginary 3-dimensional space. If the points are equidistant, we have a regular tetrahedron. Any three points of a tetrahedron are co-planar.

If we add a fifth point, something interesting happens. We create a hyperspatial 4-dimensional structure. However, since our bodies are designed to function in 3-D space, we can not perceive a 4-D object unless the fourth dimension is suppressed into one of the three spatial dimensions. This means that one of the points becomes co-planar with three other points and generates a quadrilateral (4-sided plane figure).

If the quadrilateral forms a square with the fifth point equidistant from the four corners of the square, we have an Egyptian style straight square pyramid. If the distance between any corner and the apex point is always equal and also equal to the distance between any two corners, then we have an equilateral straight square pyramid. It is half a regular octahedron. The angle of a side from the base is  $54.7^\circ$ , slightly more than the Giza Pyramid's almost  $52^\circ$  ( $52^\circ 51'$ ). [This modification was apparently made so that the ratio of a half perimeter of the base to the altitude would be  $\pi$  (3.14), the ratio of the apothem (from corner to apex) to the half base would be  $\phi$  (1.62), and the altitude would be  $4/\pi \approx \sqrt{\phi} \approx 1.27$ . It also made the structure more stable.]

Adding a sixth point opposite the apex of the five-point pyramid generates an octahedron. Continuing in this manner we can construct all the possible abstract crystal forms and generate all possible atomic and molecular structures in our physical world.

So we give our point an intended definition (assign it a shape suggested by an array of points and perhaps other qualities) and then expand the point into a pyramid structure or whatever structure we have chosen. Finally we make the structure as big and as real as we prefer using appropriate materials. We can also replicate the structure and build as many as we like of our creation.

### **The Difference between Creation and Meditation**

A major difference between the creation process and the meditation process is that during the meditation process we do not get involved with the interpretation of the



creation that we use for meditation. We consider only the shape of the creation in whatever dimension it occurs (sight, sound, touch, etc.). On the other hand, in the creation process we usually add to the shape we intend to create an interpretation regarding its use, value, role in the context of other creations, and so on. Another difference between creation and dissolution is that during creation, instead of making the shape of the creation smaller and fainter, we make it bigger and more solid until it reflects the level of reality that we have in mind.

In the creation process we start from a point (the urge to create) and visualize a little pyramid shape (or whatever we intend to create). Then we make a drawing or a tiny model from some material. Then we make a larger model and iron out all the bugs in the design. Once we have a working model we can build a full-scale pyramid and make as many copies as we like. The basic process is the same for any creation in any dimension. For many creations we do not have to go through any of the intermediate stages and can go directly from the original notion that we define to the desired end result.

Just remember that if we want to create, then we must focus attention on defining precisely what we want to create, and then make sure that we have cleared away any other creations that may be impediments to our new intended creation. How efficient our creative energies are depends on these two aspects: how clearly we define the intended creation and how well we clear the path to allow the creation to appear. Another way of describing the process is say there is a sense of certainty that accompanies a clear definition with a clear path.

There are many other interesting details about the Great Pyramid that are worth exploring (and some of which we will discuss later in the book), but this in a nutshell tells the basic story of creation and meditation. The four sides of the pyramid not only symbolize the four elements, they also exemplify the four phases of the attention cycle. Air is the empty state of all possibilities. Fire is the activation of attention to decide and define awareness in some way. Water is the flow of attention as it flows into a defined creation (such as a cup) or relaxes back into the ocean of undefined awareness. Earth is the core identity of hard creations that we generally prefer not to let go of and resist experiencing fully. This gives us the illusion of a solid physical reality in which to live and play and it shapes the pathways of the flow of awareness. However, each particle of solid reality floats in an undefined ocean of empty awareness that we call Cosmic Space, pretending that it is really something “out there” rather than just a lot of possibilities. The best way to convince yourself

something is really way out there is to make it very unavailable to your self, either mentally or physically.

## Technical Terms of Egyptian Yoga

The process of meditation derives from a fundamental attention exercise called in Sanskrit *trataka*. I suspect that this term derives from an Egyptian term **tera da ka**, a period of time for giving energy to something. Another more general name for this discipline is Yoga, an Indian technical term that is a translation into Sanskrit of the ancient Egyptian technical term **nehebet**, the technology of yoking (as when you hitch an ox to a plow or a horse to a wagon). The Egyptians loved puns and used the **nehebet** water lily or lotus flower as their common symbol for the practice of yoga. When you see an Egyptian drawing of a person holding a lotus or with a lotus by them that often tells you they are practicing some form of yoga. Sometimes you see pictures of Egyptians holding lotuses to their noses in a scene that resembles a party. Egyptians knew how to relax in many ways, and often had group meditative rituals that resembled what we today call parties that included music, dance, the drinking of alcoholic beverages, the use of psychotropic herbal foods, incense, and other paraphernalia.

## The Basic Attention Cycle

The essentials of the technique derive from an understanding of how attention cycles through four major phases. The ground state of attention is a restful relaxed alert awareness in which all possibilities present themselves as options. The cycle begins when a person makes a decision to direct attention at a specific possibility. This involves the will focusing awareness into a specific possible configuration and defining it in some way as distinct from other possibilities. The purpose of such a focus of awareness is to generate an experience of that state of awareness represented by the definition you choose. This is the definition phase in the attention cycle. We can also call it the creation phase, since creation is basically a matter of definition. Once the creation is defined, it is just a matter of how much intensity of attention you apply to it that determines how real it seems to become.

Focused direction of attention requires some exertion of effort (mental and physical). You spend some of the energy that is available to you each time you make such a choice to direct attention somewhere. The defined awareness then immediately begins to relax and return to its ground state of undefined awareness. If nothing else exists, then that is what happens right away and the result along the way is that you experience the intended experience. If you want the experience again, then you

direct attention into the same defined form of awareness again. You can repeat this procedure as many times as you like with as much or as little attention as you like and are only limited by the amount of attention energy you allow yourself to have by virtue of the particular vehicle (e.g. body) you choose to experience AS. People usually do not realize that what you experience AS has a lot to do with what and how much you can experience. After directing attention in various ways for a while we all tend to fall asleep because we use up the store of energy available to the particular body we are experiencing as. During sleep our attention relaxes and expands back to its undefined state. Pay attention when you are in deep sleep. Where are you?

If you are like most people when they decide to direct attention somewhere, you have already been busy and directed attention in many other ways prior to that decision. Also, you have not allowed attention to completely relax and experience fully the creations you defined and put attention on. The result is that as your attention relaxes from its defined target, it encounters an environment of pre-existing “un-relaxed” creations that may include physical objects, mental ideas, memories, emotions, and so on. The un-relaxed or partially relaxed creations will interact with the creation just defined by your attention and may align with and support the experience it delivers, or possibly interfere with it, disrupt it, or block it. Another possibility is that the relaxing attention will just encounter them along the way as it expands back to its undefined state and you will notice that they look different from the original intention. They will appear to you as distracting thoughts and experiences.

Your attention will continue to relax and expand until it reaches the core identity that you have chosen to exist as. This is a collection of beliefs about who you think you are and what you think you are doing. At that point you will discover that the intended experience has matched your intention, been blocked or distorted, or simply became diluted by other creations that may not even be relevant to your current intention. This is the discovery phase in the attention cycle. You find out how “you” are doing relative to your intended creation. This discovery phase is a feedback stage. You can usually recognize it by the judgments you make after you arrive there, such as how wonderful things have become, or how not so wonderful things have become, or you may wonder how you got off onto that tangent. If you find yourself making judgments about an experience, that means you have just passed through the discovery phase and already are reacting to it.

Once you pass through the discovery phase you immediately and automatically find

yourself back in undefined awareness. However it usually does not look so inviting because you have made some prior decisions along the way that you are resisting. The resistance to how you discover things will prevent you from relaxing into the undefined state of all possibilities that you have at your disposal. Instead you resist some or all of what has happened and are unwilling to relax and fully experience it. This puts you into unknown territory with a feeling of “what next?” You think, “That was good, but I want more of it.” Or you think, “That was terrible, so I do not want any more of that.” Or maybe you think, “That was pretty boring” or “That was not very relevant.” In any case you feel an urge to do something next to “correct” or “improve” the situation the discovery presented to you as an experience.

From the habit of trying to clear up the unknown, resolve issues, deal with perceived lacks and needs, and perhaps just to understand things better, you then usually make another decision that will define awareness in the same old way as previously (maintain a condition, keep working on an issue) or some different way (try a new approach, go exploring). Even if you do not make a conscious decision regarding attention, it will still tend to be drawn toward pre-existing habits of attention flow as default decisions (such as procrastination, going back to an old addiction, etc.), and the cycle will continue over and over endlessly.

### **The Cycle of Attention Summarized**

1. **Decide** what to direct attention toward as your (next) intended creation. Your decision can be a judgment in reaction to previous creations and discoveries or something completely new.
2. **Do it.** Extend your attention to your intended creation in whatever manner you prefer. Your attention will interact variously with any other existing creations in your world.
3. **Discover** by experience the results of that interaction in terms of how the intended creation feels.
4. **Be in that moment** and enjoy it along with the possibilities of what might be your next intended creation. Then you may decide what to direct attention toward as your next intended creation (i.e. return to step 1 and repeat the cycle.)

There is no way to stop the cycle other than to relax completely into the undefined awareness of all possibilities that always exists in the moment (step 4). The problem with that condition is that all possibilities mutually interfere and cancel out leaving you with nothing to experience other than endless virtual possibilities. So the trick to the game is to learn how to direct attention with minimum effort, create your

intended experience as you prefer it, fully experience it, and relax completely. That way everything stays clean and clear. You also always get exactly what you want. There are no limitations as to what you can create and experience other than limitations you decide to impose on yourself. The only requirement is that whatever you create you must experience and whatever you create will have to align or not align with whatever other creations you already have going on. There is no ducking personal responsibility, so you might as well enjoy it.

If you wish to play with complexity, you can selectively resist experiencing certain creations and generate an environment that is as gnarly as you like. Resisted creations will pile up and hang around mutually interacting and can even get complex to the point that they give the impression of random activity. Each resisted creation requires a certain amount of attention energy to keep it in “reality” mode. So the more creations you have going at once, the more your attention energy is preoccupied at some level of consciousness and the less you have available to focus on new creations. Also any new creations may come into conflict with other creations that you already have going.

Any time you wish to return to simplicity, one ideal technique that quickly takes off the pressure generated by complexity is the Ocean Awareness Meditation (OAM) such as I outlined above. With this simple procedure you remember how to relax effortlessly by reducing the amount of energy you put into your decisions about how and where to direct attention. Since the other three steps are the progressive relaxation of attention from its defined direction(s) back into undefined awareness, that technique is all you need to know in order to get thoroughly relaxed – other than to relax and enjoy the experiences. There are other ways as well, but they are usually just more complex variations of the OAM.

### **Meditation Using Mantras**

The mantras (sacred sounds) can be spoken in various ways, chanted, or sung. There are many ways to utter them, including special harmonic intoning methods used by shamans. Experiment and explore. You can also study with people who have practiced different methods and learn how they like to intone mantras. This is an enjoyable musical art. As with the drawing of yantras (sacred images), the intoning of mantras is a meditative form in its own right.

In my experience, however, the easiest results with mantras come when they are used for silent meditation, because meditation does not require any skills such as are

required for singing, chanting or other forms of intonation. To meditate with a mantra you first sit comfortably and then close the eyes. If you wish you can first intone the mantra out loud a few times just to check the general pronunciation. Then gradually lower the voice until only the mouth moves, but no sound comes out. Then stop moving the mouth and think the mantra mentally. Continue the process of reducing the intensity of the mantra by using less and less energy to think the mantra mentally. We can describe this process as allowing the thought of the mantra in the awareness to become softer and softer, fainter and fainter, subtler and subtler. It is a deliberate process, but one that above all involves progressive relaxation of effort.

Eventually the mantra will become extremely faint and will spontaneously disappear. It simply fades out. Then you will find that after a moment your mind is aware of other thoughts arising and your attention wanders onto other topics than the mantra. When you discover that you are thinking about something else, gently bring the attention back to a faint thought of the mantra. Do not try to think the mantra “loudly and clearly” or with concentration. Also do not try to push other thoughts out, because they are a natural part of the process. Your only concern is to gently shift attention deliberately back to the mantra when you find that your attention is on other thoughts.

You are also not concerned with the meaning of the mantra – just the general pronunciation of the mantra as a thought. Even the pronunciation or pace of mental repetition of the mantra can change as long as you can still recognize it as the intended mantra. The intended pronunciation is just the way you decided to pronounce the mantra that sounded OK for you. Do not worry about the details of correct pronunciation.

Sometimes there will be many random thoughts or thoughts about issues that you are currently concerned about. That is fine. Just remember to shift the attention back to the mantra each time it goes somewhere else, no matter where it goes. Be patient and enjoy the natural process of the attention as it shifts back and forth between deliberate thought (i.e. the mantra during meditation) and spontaneous thoughts about other things.

Spontaneous thoughts are caused by changes in the physiology as it resets systems to their healthy and alert status whenever you begin to relax. Relaxation is the system’s automatic response to any form of effort. This natural tendency is called the relaxation response. Whenever we relax, the body responds by returning toward its

optimal state of readiness and alertness. Thus we know that thoughts in meditation, just like the thoughts during dreams, are almost entirely due to adjustments in the physical body and are a healthy phenomenon. That does not mean we deliberately foster lots of thoughts on different topics during meditation, but that it is normal for thoughts on various topics to arise **spontaneously** during meditation.

During sleep we relax, the body shifts into resting mode and then begins to restore itself to ready-and-alert mode. When that restoration has proceeded for a while we easily awaken refreshed and ready for activity. Sleep is another example of the relaxation response, except that during sleep we do not usually retain any wakefulness. Dreams are spontaneous thoughts that arise during the period of sleep.

While meditating just remember not to **deliberately** think “spontaneous” thoughts. During meditation we reserve deliberate thought for the mantra. During activity we reserve deliberate thought for satisfying our needs and achieving our goals in life.

If you have powerful streams of spontaneously arising thoughts distracting you during meditation, this means your body is doing a lot of adjusting because of stressful activity that was placed on it in the past. Rather than getting all involved in the thoughts and why they come or what they mean, or struggling to get rid of the thoughts so you can go back to the mantra, let your attention notice what is going on in the body. You will usually discover some physical sensations associated with the thoughts or emotions that disturb the meditation. Just observe the physical phenomena with a bit of curious attention without trying to manipulate them in any way. After a few moments or minutes the disturbance will subside and you will return to the usual mental wanderings that will now distract you from observing the body. That is the sign you can come back to gently thinking the mantra you have chosen.

The recommended practice period for mantra meditation is twice daily for a few minutes each time. The ideal duration is 20-30 minutes. You can start off with 10 or 15 minutes until you feel accustomed to the procedure. The best times during the day for practice are in the morning before breakfast and in the evening before dinner. For the ancient Egyptians this was sunrise and sunset. We generally meditate before meals because digestion raises the level of activity in the body and therefore goes counter to the relaxation that meditation is intended to produce. However, in principle you can meditate any time and any place as long as you can find a reasonably comfortable posture to rest in and are able to think a thought.

You do not have to change your lifestyle in any way other than to set aside a few minutes daily for meditation. As you practice over time, you may find that you revise and refine your schedule and lifestyle in ways that you notice make your meditations and your life more and more enjoyable. Those decisions will arise as intuitions that you discover on your own. In general go with whatever tends to make your meditation experiences and daily life more enjoyable and fulfilling.

The main criteria of correct meditation are that it is easy, effortless, and brings about some measure of relaxation. We do not try to DO anything deliberate during meditation or achieve any particular experience other than to think the mantra as effortlessly as possible in the same way we think ordinary thoughts and do many easy and effortless things in our lives. Then we gently come back to the mantra whenever we find ourselves on some other thoughts or other distractions.

Meditation is a technique that helps a person relax and stop active doing for a while. In the state of non-doing we nevertheless usually remain awake and alert. Every benefit from the meditation evolves spontaneously from the relaxed alertness of the process. Often people notice that the breath becomes slower or softer during meditation. This is a physical sign of relaxation.

Sometimes people encounter sleepiness. This is a sure sign of relaxation and should not be resisted. It is fine to sleep during meditation, and you can even lie down if the sleepiness is very strong – how is that for easy? (However we generally do not start meditation lying down unless we are unable to sit up due to injury, illness, or extreme fatigue, because of the habit of sleeping in that posture). Sleep is like meditation **without alertness**, and meditation is like sleep **with alertness**. The main difference between sleep and meditation is that the relaxation of deep meditation is deeper than deep sleep, and meditation generally leads to greater alertness both during and after the process than sleep does. Meditation is like super-efficient sleep, but does not completely replace the body's habitual need for sleep. Thus if you fall asleep during meditation, be sure to sit up and meditate with your mantra in a state of alertness for a few minutes after waking from the period of sleep. Then you will have the best of both types of relaxation.

The benefits of meditation include greater relaxation in life, relief from stress and fatigue, more rapid recovery from injuries and illness, ability to focus attention on projects with a minimum of effort, stronger will power with the ability to live



deliberately, greater patience and tolerance, more expanded viewpoint, appreciation of subtlety, enhanced clarity of perception, and many other interesting results. All of these are natural side effects of regular practice of the technique and are obviously useful in many areas of practical life which is why millions of people throughout the world practice meditation in one form or another.

The benefits of meditation unfold spontaneously over time according to the individual's current condition and activities. Thus we can not predict a particular sequence, timetable, or type of result for an individual other than generalized relaxation and relief from stress and fatigue. Of course it helps if a person adopts a healthy life style that is reasonably balanced and suitable to go along with regular meditation practice. We can not recommend meditation as a cure for any specific problem, but proper practice tends to ameliorate any difficult situation in a person's life over time. In case of medical issues a person is always well advised to consult with an appropriate medical professional. Many studies have been done that validate the benefits of meditation, and these are available in books and on the Internet.

### **Yantra Meditation**

Yantra meditation is another part of the ancient tradition known as *trataka* and is part of the larger discipline the Egyptians referred to as the Ocean Awareness Meditation (*Waa-Sha*). Yantra meditation, like mantra meditation involves the deliberate direction of attention for specific periods of time.

Focus of attention organizes energy and allows it to flow in a specific direction. Regular practice of directing attention in this way develops habitual skills for using attention in powerful ways almost without effort.

If you choose to use yantra images and work through the channel of vision, then you can do *trataka* with eyes open or eyes closed. The easiest way to start is with the eyes open. You choose any object or drawing of an object. Then you sit comfortably with the object or drawing in a position where you can observe it clearly and without any strain. Once you are comfortably prepared, you simply begin to observe the object or drawing by placing attention on it in a gentle manner.

You will find that putting attention on any object makes it appear brighter and clearer. This is a fundamental quality of attention: the closer an object of attention is to the focus of attention, the clearer and brighter it is. The farther away it is, the less clear and bright it becomes. An object too far removed from the focus of attention

becomes invisible to the perception. Managing attention is the key to managing all aspects of life.

Whenever you find that the focus of attention wanders away from your chosen object of attention then gently and patiently bring the focus of attention back to the object. Do not worry about the wandering of attention. Such wandering is a natural phenomenon due to the tendency of the attention to relax. The ground state of attention is undefined awareness. Focus of attention requires some effort to place a defined limit on undefined awareness. As soon as you place any limit or definition on awareness by means of focusing attention, the defined attention begins to relax back to its undefined state. In physics this universal principle is known as entropy. It is like a spring that has been stretched. As soon as you release the tension on it, it returns to its relaxed configuration.

We stretch awareness out as attention to focus on objects of perception in our world. Both the spring and our attention will immediately tend to return to the relaxed state from which they have been stretched.

When you discover that your attention has wandered from the yantra, as effortlessly as you can just bring your attention back to the chosen yantra. You can begin with a minute or two of this observation exercise and gradually work up to longer periods. In the beginning it helps to choose something you are interested in, but then you have to wonder why you are interested in some objects and not interested in certain other objects. (The answer to that question will come to you after you have practiced these exercises for a while.) Ironically this exercise relaxes you when it is done properly. It also energizes you and strengthens your will power by a nearly effortless procedure, develops clarity of perception, and may lead to many interesting insights as well as heightened efficiency of performance in career and daily activities. That sounds pretty good, doesn't it?

### **Yantra After-image Gazing**

If you wish to use the yantras for meditation with the eyes closed, first put gently focused attention on the chosen object or an image of the object and become aware of all its details. Then close your eyes and in a relaxed manner watch the after-image that remains on the retina screen of your eyes. If attention wanders, gently bring it back to the after-image. When the after-image fades completely away, continue to look into the space where the after-image was without any straining and gently imagine the shape that was there. If the mind wanders, simply bring the attention

back to the imagined yantra image without any straining. It will tend to slip away and be replaced by other thoughts and images. Patiently bring your attention back to the image in your mind's eye. After practicing a few times you will be able to simply close the eyes and imagine the virtual yantra in the space before your brow without having to warm up by looking at the actual object or image.

This exercise will strengthen your will power and visualization abilities, enhance your memory, and at the same time relax your mind and body. All these *trataka* exercises are relaxation exercises and are not to be done with any stressful concentration effort. Do not be concerned with the meaning of the yantra glyph, its grand significance in the universe, or any other diversions that the mind introduces to lead the attention elsewhere away from the simple image. This is only an attention exercise, not a philosophy seminar or psycho-analysis. Bring attention gently back to the imagined image each time you find that it has wandered off or become distracted. In the discussion of the various Tarot cards I introduce some ideas associated with the yantras for entertainment purposes and for the benefit of those who are interested in the ancient Egyptian language and culture.

On the other hand, I discuss mantra and yantra meditation practices because this is an important way in which the ancient Egyptians used their **neter** archetypes and sacred amulets. You may wish to use the cards in this manner, and I highly recommend this approach because of the practical benefits it can bring to you through a few minutes of mental and physical relaxation each day without having to decipher a card reading.

### **The Tarok Spreads beyond Egypt**

The invention of papyrus paper by the Egyptians provided a lightweight medium suitable for promoting widespread literacy. This marvelous technology led to the assignment of a particular god as the tutelary deity of writing as well as the arts and sciences that it facilitated. The peculiar god assigned by the Egyptians as the totem for this basic tool of civilization was called **Jehuty** (Thoth), the same god who governed Square 1 on the **Senet** Game Board and was the framer of the calendar. The Egyptians represented their tutelary god of the technology of writing in their iconography with the form of a male human body topped by the head of an ibis (See cover of this book). The choice of the ibis as the animal totem for the technology of writing almost certainly derives from the common occurrence of this bird along the Nile banks, the environment in which the papyrus reeds grew.

**Jehuty** as the spirit of writing also became associated with the rites for the dead. He

became the scribe who records the results of the weighing of the heart in the Hall of Judgment. He is thus associated with the underworld, the calendar, and the ritual use of the **Senet** Game of Passing. [Interestingly the Hebrew word **TaHaT** (or **TeT**) means "under".]

As we mentioned earlier there is no surviving evidence that the ancient Egyptians used decks of cards. Papyrus may not have been very suitable for that use. Tarot in the format of a deck of cards owes its widespread propagation and popularity to the convenience of paper and printing techniques developed by the Chinese, a fundamental technology that has enabled the rapid development of modern science.

Still it is fitting that the god given credit for the invention of papyrus, pen, and the technology of writing and engraving should also be known as the founder of technology in general and is honored by many Tarot occultists as the inventor of the Tarot cards. The development of writing and paper literally underlies all the knowledge of modern technology that we have accumulated and passed on over the past six thousand years.

The Egyptians used papyrus for thousands of years, and then it gradually fell into disuse during the Roman period. By the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> century it was still used for papal bulls and by Merovingian kings, but by the 12<sup>th</sup> century seems to have disappeared. The earliest surviving example of papyrus is from 2400 B.C., but the Egyptians had it long before then. When the Romans incorporated Egypt into their empire as a province the process of wiping out classical Egyptian civilization as a living culture began in earnest. The Romans systematically used Egypt as a resource. They allowed for a time the continuance of the local traditions, but were far too interested in their own Imperial ambitions to pay much attention to Egyptian culture. Nevertheless some Romans continued to play Senet as a game and temples dedicated to Isis found their way into Rome and its provinces. The burning of Aleksander's great library in Alexandria was a watershed event that marked the inexorable trend of Egypt's permanent occupation by foreign cultures that had little serious concern for its native traditions. Julius Caesar burned part of it while besieging the city in 47 BC. More was destroyed during civil wars in the 200's. When the Romans embraced Christianity as the official religion in an effort to re-unify their far-flung empire as it began to falter from its sheer size and diversity the Egyptian temples that maintained libraries and literacy in Egyptian began to be closed down. In 391 Archbishop Theophilus of Antioch had most of the remaining Alexandria library holdings in Egyptian and Greek burned as dangerous heretical materials. By 400 A.D. very little

was left of the papyrus tradition and Europe went back to using animal skins in the form of vellum or parchment. For centuries during the Middle Ages only a few monks or court scribes knew how to read or write and the general population was illiterate.

### **Phoenicians, Hebrews, and Other Semitic Peoples in Egypt**

By the 11<sup>th</sup> dynasty and probably even much earlier Phoenicians, Hebrews, Canaanites, and other Semitic peoples were living in or near Egypt. Semi-nomadic Sinai Canaanites worked in the Egyptian turquoise mines or tended herds in the eastern portion of the delta and were impressed by the superior educational system of the Egyptians. The Egyptians called these Semitic peoples **Heq Khasewet** (𓆎𓅓𓏏𓏏𓏏𓏏) and the Greeks later transliterated the term as Hyksos. (The Greeks habitually transliterated Egyptian final “t” into a Greek final “s”.) The shepherd crook in Egyptian usually meant to rule or govern based on the way a shepherd guides his flock. However, in this case I think it literally means that these people tended livestock such as cattle, sheep, and goats.

Gradually the Semitic peoples of the delta increased in influence to the point where they ruled northern Egypt in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> dynasties around 1500 BC when Egyptian government became weak and fragmented. During the 17<sup>th</sup> dynasty they were gradually expelled from power, but numerous Semites continued to live in Egypt even after the return to a strong unified Egyptian government and the rise of the New Kingdom during the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty.

Some time around 1850 BC early Canaanites living in Sinai developed a set of 22 alphabetic signs based on the Egyptian single phoneme letters to spell words in their own language. Phoenician Semites specialized in sea-faring mercantile ventures, and recognized the superiority of Egyptian writing over the cumbersome cuneiform clay tablets developed by the Mesopotamian cultures. They therefore decided to adapt the phonetic alphabet spelling concept of the Egyptians to their language, but dispensed with the large body of hieroglyphs. They basically followed the Canaanite system, or perhaps the Canaanites followed their system – as more examples emerge from the archaeological record the picture will become clearer. The practical advantages of this system were simplicity and portability. As in Egyptian the symbols represented consonants phonetically but did not encode the vowels. This suited the structure of their Semitic languages that modified vowel sounds to express grammar, but encoded root meanings with the consonants. The alphabet could be adapted easily to their many dialects and languages. The

Proto-Canaanite symbols may have been used only sporadically in the Sinai region initially, but by the 13<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries BC the system had become widely adopted.

At present the oldest known surviving Phoenician inscription dates from about 1200 BC. The Phoenicians apparently made some changes to the names of a few of the letters that differed from the Canaanite names and spread the system over the Mediterranean region. Eventually it was adopted by the Greeks, who added some extra letters and re-assigned some letters to represent vowel phonemes so that the letters suited their very different language. The original Phoenician Semitic alphabet also was extended to 27 or more letters and replaced by revised versions among Semites. The Romans then also adapted the system to write Latin, and the Egyptians modified the Greek alphabet into Coptic for their local writings. Eventually all the alphabetic languages of the world evolved out of the early Proto-Sinaitic and Phoenician alphabet invention.

### Phoinike/Hebrew Alphabet Transcription

(Phoinike is the Greek Term for Phoenician)

Phoinike	a	b	g	d	h	v	z	x	j	y	K
Old Hebrew	𐤀	𐤁	𐤂	𐤃	𐤄	𐤅	𐤆	𐤇	𐤈	𐤉	𐤊
English	A	B	G	D	H	V	Z	H	T	Y	K

Phoinike	l	m	n	S	`	p	}	q	r	\	T
Old Hebrew	𐤌	𐤍	𐤎	𐤏	𐤐	𐤑	𐤒	𐤓	𐤔	𐤕	𐤖
English	L	M	N	S	O	P	Tz	Q	R	S	T

One thing is clear – the Phoenician alphabet glyphs were not based on the Egyptian alphabet glyphs or their phonetic values. The Phoenicians only took the general concept of using a small set of symbols to represent single phonemes rather than syllables and words. On the other hand, the Semitic people in the region (Phoenicians, Hebrews, Canaanites, Syrians, Palestinians, etc.) created a body of 22 glyphs that each had a specific meaning and was originally either pictographic or ideographic. The name of each glyph began with the sound that the letter represented, an excellent mnemonic device. The symbols (described by their names) stood for parts of the body and objects important in the daily life of a semi-nomadic tribe. When the letter names were transferred to Greek, they became meaningless labels in Greek that had to be learned by rote.

**List of Reconstructed Proto-Semitic Alphabet Letter Names**

Sinaitic	Meaning	Phoenician	Meaning
Alpu	Ox (Bull)	‘Alep	Ox (Bull)
Baytu	House	Bet	House
Gamlu	Throwstick?	Gimel	Camel
Daltu	Door	Dalet	Door
(Diggu	Fish)		
Haw	Window?	Hey	Flail*
Hallu	Jubilation?		
Wawu	Hook, Peg	Waw	Hook, Peg
Zaynu	Weapon	Zayin	Weapon, Blade
(Ziqqu	Manacle)		
Haytu	Thread, Rope	Het	Rope
Taytu	Wheel	Teyt	Mud, Clay
Yadu	Arm	Yod	Arm
Kapu	Hand	Kap	Hand
Lamdu	Goad?	Lamed	Teaching
Mayim	Waters	Mem	(Waters)
?	?	Nun (Nanas)	Dwarf, Reduced
Samku	Support	Samek	Support
‘aynu	Eye	‘ayin	Eye
Pu	Mouth	Pe	Mouth
(pi’tu	Corner?)		
Tsadu	?	Tsade	Shoot
Qupu	?	Qoph	Monkey
Ra’su	Head	Resh	Head
Shinnu	Tooth	Shin	Tooth
(Shimsh	Sun?)		
Tawu	Mark	Tav	Signature Mark

I am not convinced by any of the reconstructed Canaanite variant meanings that I marked with a question (?). *Diggu* for fish is an acceptable variant because the fish glyph clearly appears, and the wheel is acceptable as the symbol for *Tet*, but probably stands for the potter’s wheel, because the word means “clay”, and wheels were not made of clay – pots were thrown from clay on a potter’s wheel.

**Qabalah and the Alphabet**

The Qabalah originally was the oral teaching that was passed down by the learned

members of a Semitic community. It consisted of mnemonic techniques for attaining literacy (basic reading, writing, and arithmetic), keys and clues to understanding sacred writings, and essential wisdom teachings. Much has been lost and what comes down to us is mostly what began to accumulate in Jewish writings from the Roman period and down through the Middle Ages as well as a rich oral tradition. Because of social upheaval and the Jewish diaspora, much of the material was passed on from master to disciple in isolated communities that could not always interact on a regular basis. The practice of secrecy to “protect” Qabalistic knowledge also had a debilitating effect on the tradition. Also borrowing and influence among Islamic, Christian, Jewish, Celtic, and other mystical traditions complicated the picture. Thus I will not attempt to treat Qabalah in detail but only point out a few essential details that relate to Egypt, the alphabet, and the evolution of the Tarot.

The great political secret of the Qabalah is that the essential wisdom teachings came from Egypt. This is true for the Phoenicians and the Hebrews, as well as the Greeks and other civilizations – even including the Mesopotamian cultures. Egypt was the only tradition that had a fully coherent and open wisdom tradition – despite the insistence by Herodotus that he learned many secrets that he could not share publicly in his writings. I firmly suspect that all such secret knowledge was mostly in the category of baloney foisted on him by the gargantuan sense of humor practiced as a matter of course by Egyptians and liberally shared with foreigners.

### **Totems and Codes**

The Egyptians used a simple code to represent information. An essential part of this code was the use of totems. Egyptians used the plants and animals of Africa as totems. They also used a complex system of puns to compress information into the hieroglyphic writing system they had developed. By the time of the Pyramid Texts this system had already evolved to a highly sophisticated level. In my various translations of Egyptian spiritual texts I have explained in great detail how the system works, so I will simply mention aspects that are relevant as we discuss the Tarot materials and recommend that readers interested to probe more deeply study my other works.

The more intelligent Semitic people who spent time in Egypt gradually became acquainted with the system and began to incorporate it into their own cultures. However, because the majority of their people were very firmly lodged in their own culture and were convinced (as most people are) that they were the REAL people with the only true tradition, the essential wisdom teachings of ancient Egypt had to be



reorganized and translated into the Semitic cultures. And sometimes it had to be embedded deeply into a covert tradition to avoid negative reactions from uneducated people.

For example, why were the Phoenicians called by that name? Originally the people were called KNON (Canaan), which means trader. The Canaanites were very good business people. However, they also came to be called Phoenicians from a land called by Greeks Phoinike and by Romans Phoenice that was located in the region of modern Lebanon and northern Israel. The name comes from the phoenix, a mythological bird that was a transformation of an ancient Egyptian bird totem called the **Benew**. The Egyptian glyph for the bird resembles a large heron, but the bird was closely associated with the heart of Osiris and symbolized the ability to die and then resurrect from the dead. Often Egyptians would inscribe the image of a **Benew** bird on an amulet of the heart, and the Book of the Dead speaks of the ability of Osiris (and hence of anyone) to transform into a **Benew** bird (e.g. Chapters 17 and 83). The Phoenix code tells us that the Canaanite traders recognized the value of the heart and embraced it as their national totem. Because a major part of their economy depended on trading and commerce, they knew that the essence of success in business was honesty. By choosing the phoenix as their totem they advertised to all their customers that they were honest businessmen. This was a wise and practical policy.

There is a deeper aspect to this Qabalistic totem. According to the Osirian myth the reason Osiris died was because he secretly had a sexual liaison with Nephthys without informing his wife Isis or her husband Set. Set retaliated by cutting Osiris into pieces. When Isis and Nephthys gathered all the pieces of his body back together, they found that one piece was missing – the penis. The word penis is a nasalized form of Latin *pes* which means foot and comes from Egyptian **ped** (foot) via Greek (πεδ, πεζ). The ascended form of Osiris as a constellation in the night sky was called **Sah**, which also means foot or toe. The terms foot and toe are euphemisms for the penis. Phoenix is a disguised variant for penis. The penis is the phoenix that periodically goes into its nest, burns in a brilliant fire of orgasm and then dies, only to be born again from that nest as a baby and as a penis once again ready to stand up straight and firm. The Egyptian myth of Osiris carried the metaphor further to identify the penis phoenix of Osiris with the crop cycle of agriculture. Thus Osiris became the tutelary deity of grain and all aspects of agriculture.

In ancient Egypt's spiritual wisdom tradition the phallus (penis) was considered the key to honesty, because the most fundamental social problem related to honesty arose

primarily from issues involved with managing the penis in society, and social stability – not to speak of personal enlightenment – required a solution to this problem. The myth of Osiris was designed to teach this practical lesson. Honesty in the conduct of business was a secondary and later issue that only arose when mankind evolved to the level of commercial dealings.

The main point was not whether the penis should be used, but whether it would be used in secret to violate the trust in intimate human relationships. Intimacy is recognition of the basic unity that underlies all reality and is a state of bliss. Intimacy kept secret fragments the unity of intimacy and results in a loss of trust and a consequential loss of communication. Fear arises, and the mind shrinks from wholeness to a limited sphere of isolation. If I have a secret that I know but you do not know, then I keep you ignorant. From the perspective of wholeness, you are a projection of my identity. By creating an identity portion that is ignorant and deliberately separating it from myself, I subject myself to a cycle of knowledge followed by ignorance, trust followed by fear, intimacy followed by isolation and abandonment, life followed by death.

### **The Qabalistic Origin of the Alphabet**

We introduced the letters of the earliest true alphabet and their names and showed how the glyphs were common words that indicated important aspects of daily life but also began with the sound that was assigned to the letter glyph. What if there was a deeper Qabalistic mnemonic system that underlay the formation of the various glyphs and unified them. One of the principle wisdom teachings of ancient Egypt as we have seen in our discussion of Egyptian culture was that everything in the diverse universe integrates into a unified whole. Nothing is left out, nothing is separated, and each part of the whole can become aware that its essential nature is the wholeness. It makes sense that the Semitic wise men who understood this principle would incorporate it into the cultural principles that they borrowed from the Egyptians and adapted and improved for their own purposes.

They could not improve on the basic principle. However, they could incorporate it into the alphabet that they created. All written communications would use the letters of the new alphabet. Why not encode this principle of unity into the alphabet right from the start?

We have already explored how the Senet Oracle Board was a highly coherent arrangement of 22 major neter archetypes drawn from the Weighing of the Heart

Ceremony and 8 secondary neter archetypes drawn from the Boat of Osiris-Horus-Ra. Why not use the 22 major neter archetypes as the prototypes for the 22 letters?

The letters had to be encoded so that the connection was subtle enough not to overtly offend those who did not accept the myths and deities of ancient Egypt. On the other hand it had to be tangible enough that a Qabalah initiate immediately could grasp the connections. The Weighing of the Heart Ceremony carried the message that every written communication should express the honest intentions of the author. The author must write from the heart and speak to the heart of his subject matter. The mythological and artistic background provided a deep literary aesthetics that would silently underlie all written communication and could be used by those in the know for very powerful artistic expressions. In the section that discusses the 22 Trump Cards I will indicate the **Senet** House that each card represents.

The 8 secondary archetypes on the Middle Row of the **Senet** Oracle Board relate to the Boat of Ra and the Sarcophagus of the Deceased-Become-Osiris (or the Body of the Living-As-Horus). For this the Phoenician wise men turned to the two great symbols that everyone in the world associates most easily with ancient Egypt: Ra the sun that dominates the sky of Egypt, and the Great Pyramid that dominates the land of Egypt.

The Pyramid Texts dwell at great length on something that they call the Eye of Horus. This represents the globe of the sun as a great powerful eye in the sky. As a wisdom principle it represents the focus of awareness into an intensely energized area called attention. Attention can focus within a small circle or sphere of intense energy and attention can extend outward like a ray of light. The Egyptian glyph for the sun was a circle with a dot in the center. The dot symbolized the small ego self, and the large circle symbolized the large Higher Self that forms the environment in which the ego self identity experiences life. The Egyptian glyph for the eye was a vesica pisces shape for the eyelids with a circle for the iris in the middle. The Proto-Semitic letter O was simply a circle and had (and still has) the name “eye” (OYN).

The Great Pyramid is at the tip of the delta and its angle suggests the angle of the delta as the Nile spreads out. The delta was the sacred land of Isis, and her star sign was the glyph for Sirius, also drawn in the shape of a triangle. The Amduat (Hour 5) clearly depicts Isis as a giant pyramid and the mound of the Osirian phallus hovers over it with the scarab Khepera as Ra’s quickening energy emerges from it to awaken the womb of Isis with her son Horus. The Proto-Semitic letter D was drawn as a

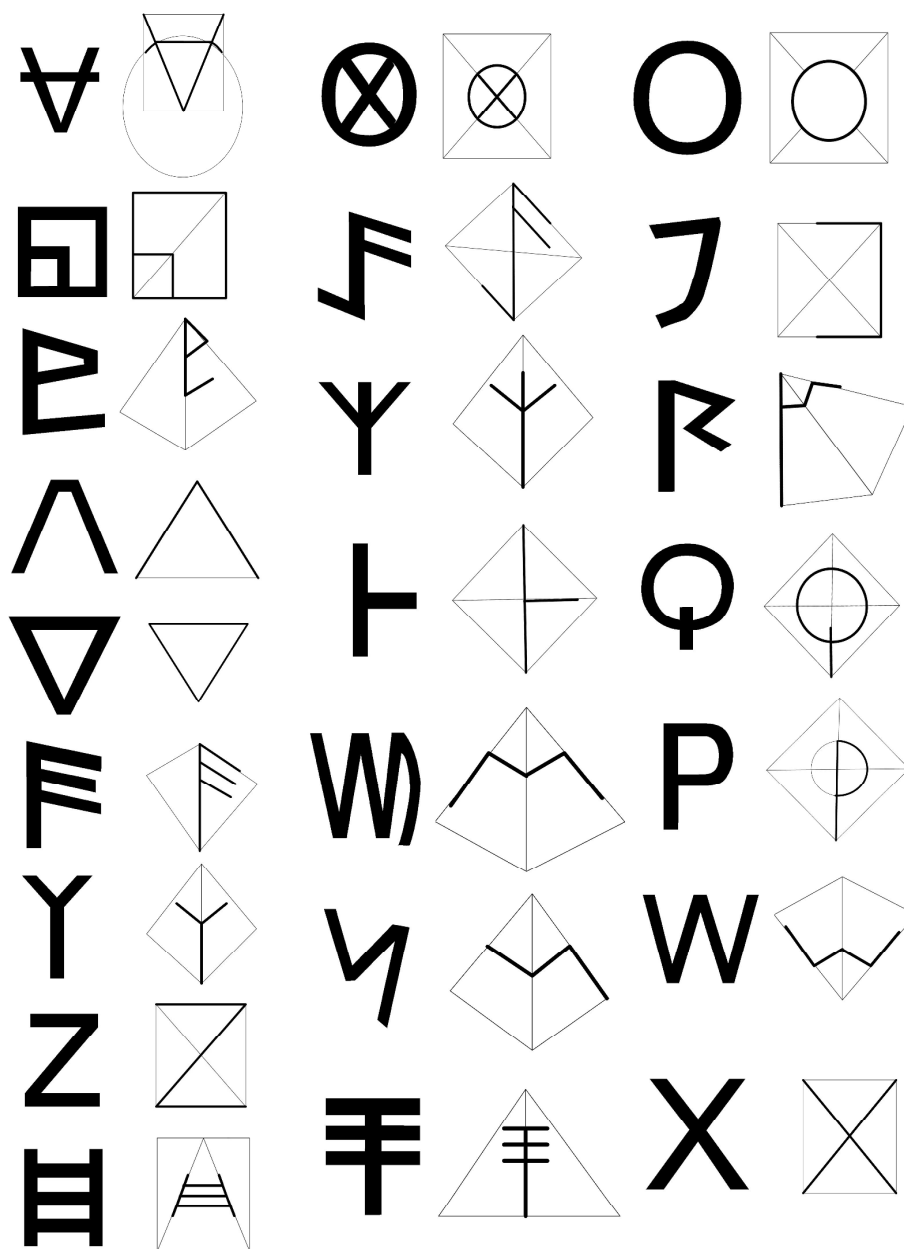
triangle ( $\Delta$ ) and had the name door (DLT). From the symbolism it is clear that the door is not the door to a house, but the door to the temple of life, the female vagina that lies inside a triangle. The two letters taken together in the Semitic language spell  $\Delta O$  (Knowledge). In reverse order they spell  $O\Delta$  (Eternity). The circle and the triangle are the two simplest closed figures in plane geometry and the sphere and the tetrahedron are the two simplest closed figures in solid geometry. These two Egyptian symbols – the sun and the pyramid – encode Eternal Knowledge or the Knowledge of Eternity. This is the essential goal of Egyptian culture: to convey the knowledge of eternity.

We recall that beside the Great Pyramid archaeologists discovered the morning and evening Boats of Ra beautifully preserved for thousands of years – in better shape than the pyramid itself. The boats are the morning and evening meditation process that reveals the Knowledge of Eternity.

What about the other letters? Where are they? It turns out that if you place the solar globe at zenith right over the tip of the pyramid, so that you can read downward the letters  $O\Delta$ , and then observe the combination from various different angles, you can locate all 22 letters. On the next page is a chart that demonstrates where the letters are.

Stan Tenen ("Shadow of Law Tetra-flame", MERU Foundation) and more recently Tony Bushby ([The Secret in the Bible](#), Joshua Books) have previously theorized that a pyramid shape generates the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Tenen uses the regular tetrahedron, and Bushby uses the Giza octahedral pyramid. Their esoteric mathematical derivations are interesting, but they have two disadvantages. First, both researchers use the Hebrew letters as they later evolved with serifs instead of the earliest iconic glyphs. Second, they rely on sophisticated mathematical concepts that would be beyond the grasp of ordinary people even today. I think that the original Hebrew letters came from Phoenician symbols primarily derived from the concepts of Egyptian culture adapted to Semitic culture. These letters were drawn with the simplest, most universal mathematical figures: lines, circles, triangles, and squares. In the chart below there are two forms for "Bet = House" shown, an Egyptian style and a Phoenician adaptation. Both work.

## Chart of the Qabalistic Hebrew Rune Alphabet



I call this the principle of Qabalistic Runes. Guido von List may have been the first in modern times to notice the Qabalistic method for generating the Futhark runes. Guido produced 18 runes from a Star of David. However, all the runes emerge from the old “perfect” Tree of Life diagram that is made of two hexagons that interlock in the same way the two triangles interlock to form the Star of David.



## **The Qabalistic Tree of Life and the Senet Oracle Board**

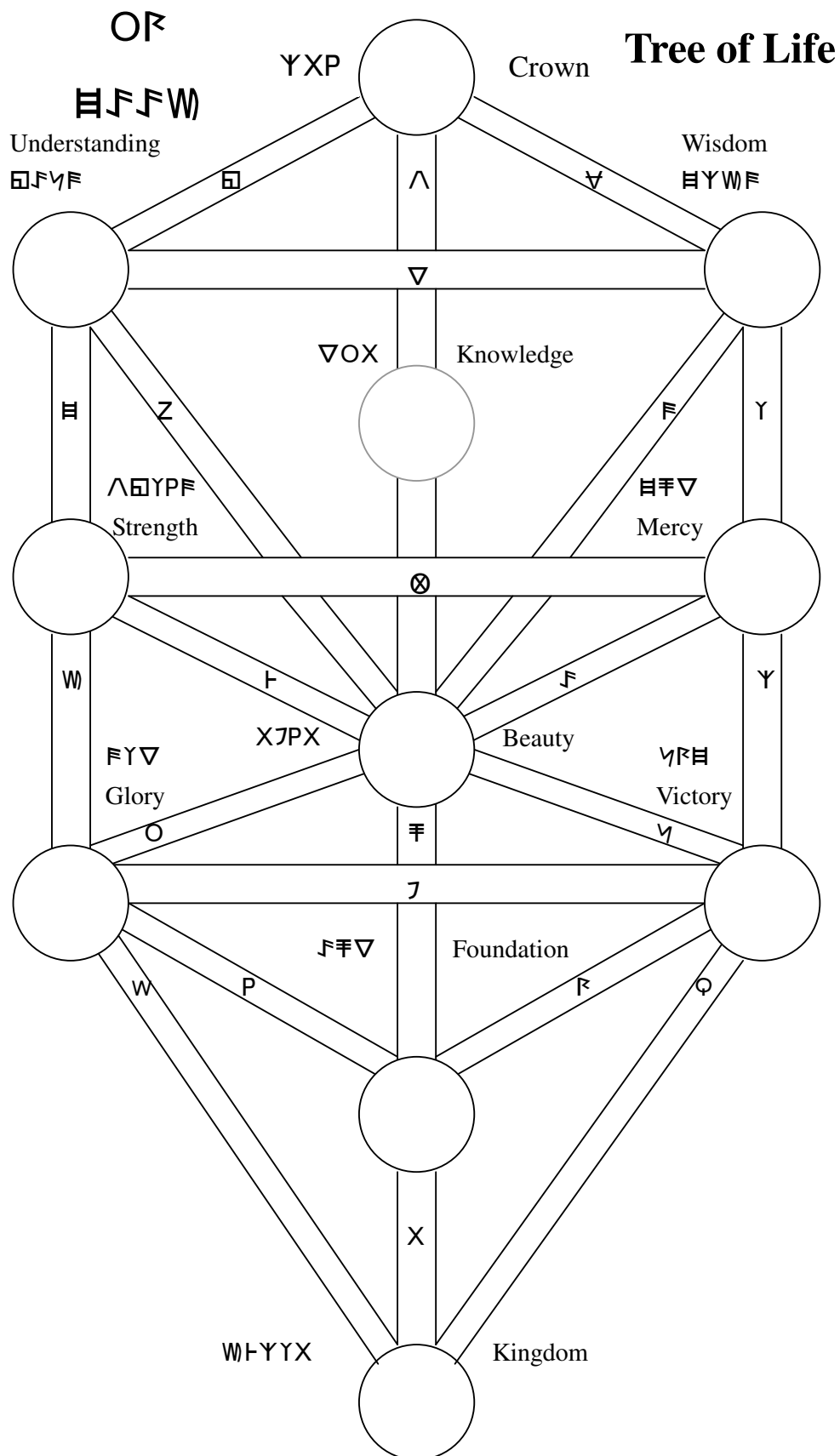
My Qabalist Rune principle simply states that all the letters of the original runic alphabet derive from the sacred geometry of the Tree of Life. This particular design feature happened to be perfect for the Celtic culture that occupied the heavily forested lands of ancient Europe. Long before the invention of paper a person could use a knife or axe to carve runes with minimum effort into natural tree trunks and branches, or refined tool handles. The strokes thus were all straight vertical or slanted lines with no horizontal lines or curves. This fit right into the hexagonal geometry of the Tree of Life.

In classical literature there are many subtle references to this principle that take the form of stories about bees and a bull or bees and a lion. The bees represent the letters of the alphabet, and the bull or lion represent the sun as the source of the alphabet and the first letter of the alphabet (you invert the A to see the bull's head) that stands for the whole sequence. The bees make honey in hexagonal combs.

The Judaeo-Christian notion of the Tree of Life was based on the story in Genesis that there were two special trees in the midst of the Garden of Eden (GN ODN = Little Corner of Little Eternity). One tree has fruit that grants knowledge of good and evil. The other tree has fruit that grants immortality. According to the story God created Adam and his consort Eve and put them in the Garden. He gave them freedom to eat any of the edible materials in the Garden, but advised not to eat the fruit of the two trees. Of course this merely piqued the curiosity of the couple and they soon tasted the fruit of the tree of good and evil. God of course became aware of this and expelled them from the Garden and condemned them to toil, suffering, and death.

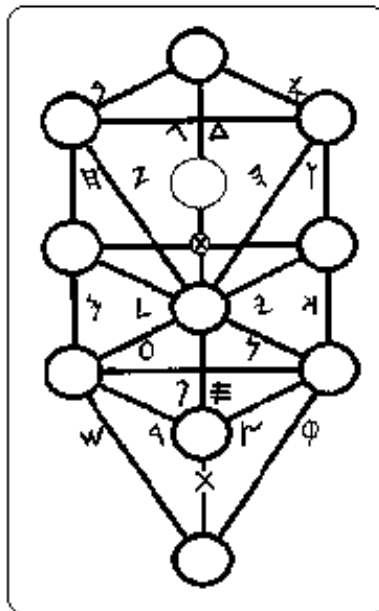
This is not a very uplifting story to put at the beginning of sacred scripture, and the tale became the start of a belief that man somehow suffered from Original Sin. What if Adam and Eve had eaten the fruit from the Tree of Life first? They never got to taste that fruit, because they were expelled and an angel with a fiery sword was placed by the Tree of Life to prevent access.

On the next page is a Qabalistic Tree of Life diagram with spheres that represent the fruits on the tree and letters of the Proto-Semitic alphabet on the various branches of the tree. The ten spheres are also labeled in English and Hebrew.





Note: You can use the Tree of Life diagram in various ways for doing Tarot Readings. You can place a card on each Sephirah, or on the ones that you wish to ask about. You can also place cards on the pathways between the Sephiroth. Below is another drawing of the Tree with the 22 Phoenician letters on the pathways.



Many cultures have a traditional Tree of Life story of some kind, including the ancient Egyptians. Usually the Tree of Life links back to the sun, because plants capture the sun's light and transform it into edible plant matter that supports all the animal life on the planet either directly or indirectly.

The difference between the large Tree of Life diagram shown on the previous page and the one made of interlocking hexagons that generate the runes is that the central fruit sphere in the upper hexagon has fallen out of place and become the “external” world (Kingdom) that seems separate from us. This gives the diagram a shape that more closely resembles a tree, but sacrifices the symmetrical hexagonal geometry. The central sphere in the upper hexagon represents the viewpoint of self. The nine other spheres that surround it in the hexagonal portion are each aspects of the self. Kingdom is the world as we perceive it. The key relationship between the perfect hexagonal Tree and the more traditional Tree with an external Kingdom is that what you see as the world around you is a perfect projection of who you are.

When the sphere of Kingdom is drawn back to its proper place in the hexagonal grid we recognize that the world is a detailed picture of the self. That sphere becomes known as ΔOX (DOT = Knowledge). True knowledge is knowledge of the self.

### **A Link from Egypt to Qabalah: The Emerald Tablet of Hermes**

There is an ancient tradition that sometime during the Ptolemaic Era of Egypt's long decline Thoth appeared as Hermes Trismegistus and inscribed in Phoenician on an emerald tablet (Tabula Smaragdina) a brief summary of Egyptian wisdom that could serve as a bridge into the era of the Qabalah and Christian mysticism after Egypt's wisdom was forgotten and men could no longer read the ancient Egyptian books.

A number of stories are circulated about the Emerald Tablet. One says that when Alexander the Great liberated Egypt from the Persians and arrived in Egypt to become the new pharaoh, he decided to build a great library at the town he would now call Alexandria. He ordered that books from all over Egypt, Greece, and other parts of the known world would be collected for the library. According to one tradition, he saw an inscribed green stone tablet with Thoth's text on it and left a copy of it, but took the original with him. Then he left to continue his empire building and never returned until after his death in Babylon, his generals originally intended to bring his body back to Macedonia for burial, but the Ptolemaic ruler of Egypt waylaid the caravan and brought the sarcophagus and mummy to Memphis believing that it would bring prosperity to Egypt. Soon it was relocated to Alexandria and placed in a mausoleum. Perhaps the tablet was brought back and placed in the mausoleum along with Alexander's mummy and many other special books. Records tell of the many Roman emperors visiting the tomb to see the mummy of Aleksander, but eventually the tomb was closed and after the 4<sup>th</sup> century there are no more records of people seeing the tomb or the mummy. Under the Christians, Arabs, and Turks, the town of Alexandria gradually decreased in influence and a severe earthquake destroyed the great lighthouse of Pharos and many other structures. Today search for the tomb continues.

Regarding the tablet there is a story that Apollonius of Tyana, a 1<sup>st</sup> century wandering philosopher and teacher, travelled around the ancient world lecturing and had a special penchant for visiting the tombs of famous people. Of course he made a point of visiting the tomb of Aleksander the famous pupil of Aristotle, presumably at the tomb in Alexandria where the Roman emperors were wont to visit it, and while there he found the Emerald Tablet that apparently was still in the mausoleum with the mummy of Aleksander. Some say that he managed to take it with him and carried it about, using it as a key part of his teachings. Then he buried it somewhere in Egypt before his death and it was once more lost to the world. More likely, if there is any truth to the story, Apollonius would have been allowed to make a rubbing or tracing of the text to take with him. In any case the Tablet has been lost, but copies of the Phoenician text survive.



### The Emerald Tablet

My Main Theory:

ΔΕΡΨ ΡΩΨ

Hermes Trismegistus

ΗΡΩ ΧΤΧ ΩΗΨΥΧ

...

1. Truly, without deceit, certain, and most veritable,  
 ΑΩΥ ΕΤΨ ΩΩΡ ΑΥΥ Υ ΑΩΥ ΑΩΥ
2. That which is Below corresponds to that which is Above,  
 ΑΩΡ ΧΗΧΨΧ Υ ΑΩΡ ΟΤΨΧ
3. And that which is Above corresponds to that which is Below.  
 Υ ΑΩΡ ΟΤΨΧ Υ ΑΩΡ ΧΗΧ

4. To accomplish the miracle of the One Thing.  
 ተ ዐወሃህ ገተላታ ልዩ ህዘግ
5. As if all day long is the same,  
 ሃ ሃ ህወዋ ሃተ ቱ ታሃወ ህዘጸ
6. (Become absorbed) in one Meditation.  
 ይ ቱ ለቱ ህዘግ
7. And a King his son from this One Thing educates.  
 ሃ ወተሃ ሃተግሃ ወሃ ልዩ ህዘግ ቱ ቱሃ ይወዐየሃ
8. Its Father is the Sun, (Fire)  
 ህይሃ ወወወ
9. Its Mother is the Moon. (Water)  
 ህወሃ ተይሃቱ
10. And the Wind carries it in its belly, (Wind)  
 ሃወህቱ ሃየዘ ይ ይጸሃቱ
11. Its Nurse is the Earth. (Earth)  
 ህወሃሃሃ ቱ ህግወቱ
12. The Father is All, from His All to His All of this Universe  
 ህይ ሃተ ወ ሃተ ተ ሃተ ቱ ዐሃተወ ቱሃ
13. Energies and Wholeness.  
 ህቱሃሃ ሃ ሃወታወቱ
14. The Mother is the Foundation for Earth.  
 ህወ ታወሃግ ተ ህግወቱ
15. Separate the earth from light,  
 ሃገዋታ ቱ ህግወቱ ወ ህሃዋ
16. Subtle from gross,  
 ግፍ ወ ዐይቱ
17. In Sweetness and in Great Power is the Balance  
 ይ ወሃፍ ይ ለግሃተ ቱ ወሃተ
18. Raise Min from the Earth to the Heavens.  
 ዐሃቱ ወሃ ወሃ ቱ ህዋሱ ዐተ ቱ ወወታወ
19. And then the Cobras (Kundalini) will "rose blossom" into the Lion,  
 ሃ ሃሃታሃሃ ታሃግ ህተ ቱ ህዋቱ
20. And store up those energies.  
 ሃ ህሃሱ ህሃ ህቱሃሃ

21. The Above and the Below indeed will become.  
 𐤀 𐤓𐤕𐤙𐤕 𐤕 𐤀 𐤕𐤕𐤙𐤕 𐤕𐤕 𐤀 𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕
22. For you the Glory of the Whole Universe.  
 𐤕𐤕 𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕 𐤕𐤕 𐤀 𐤓𐤕𐤕𐤕
23. Thereupon will be cleared away from you all obscurity.  
 𐤓𐤕 𐤕𐤕 𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕 𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕 𐤕𐤕 𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕
24. This is the greatest power of all powers,  
 𐤕𐤕 𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕 𐤕𐤕 𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕
25. Because it overcomes every stress and every hardness,  
 𐤕𐤕 𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕 𐤕𐤕 𐤕𐤕 𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕 𐤕𐤕 𐤕𐤕 𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕
26. And transforms the Universe into a [new] Creation.  
 𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕 𐤀 𐤓𐤕𐤕𐤕 𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕
27. Indeed, the structure exists,  
 𐤓𐤕 𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕 𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕
28. and for using it there is its proper pathway  
 𐤕 𐤀 𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕 𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕 𐤕𐤕𐤕 𐤀 𐤕𐤕𐤕
29. Therefore I am called "Triple Love" Hermes Trismegistus,  
 𐤕 𐤕𐤕 𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕 𐤕𐤕 𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕 𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕
30. Since I embrace all three parts of the Wisdom of the Whole Universe.  
 𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕 𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕 𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕 𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕 𐤕𐤕 𐤀 𐤓𐤕𐤕𐤕
31. Herein I have completely explained the Operation of the Sun.  
 𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕 𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕 𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕 𐤓𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕 𐤓𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕 𐤀 𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤕 𐤀 𐤕𐤕𐤕

Draft translation, © Douglass A. White, 2003

## Some Notes Concerning the Emerald Tablet

The Emerald Tablet of Hermes Trismegistus is an ancient document that forms one of the foundations of medieval alchemy. According to tradition the text was inscribed on a stone tablet that resembled emerald or at least was green in color. Unfortunately the original tablet is lost, but tracings of the text survive. They reveal a text written in a variant of the old Phoenician/Hebrew alphabet. The text is short and profound and has important bearing on the Qabalah. As I shall demonstrate, it is also very relevant to the transmission of the Tarot from ancient Egypt via the Semitic Phoenicians into the Hebrew tradition and from thence into Arab culture and Europe as a part of the lore of Qabalah and alchemy. It is no doubt a genuine artifact going back at least to the Ptolemaic era and perhaps even earlier, although it is difficult to date it precisely. Many translations exist. In my opinion none of them have

grasped some of the important coded information that is lodged in the text.

The document that survives is probably a translation into Semitic of an original Egyptian document that was written by Thoth. Some believe that the original text by Thoth was formulated back in the times of Atlantis. Since we have no archaeological evidence of such earlier versions, we can only take this as speculation. However, we do have a strong written and archaeologically verified tradition of scarab seals carved from green stone and with text incised on the underside. Particularly popular were certain passages from the Book of the Dead.

### Common Text that Appears on Green Heart Scarabs

from Book of the Dead, Ch. 30



My heart of my mother, my heart of my mother,

My heart of my incarnations.

May I not be held up in the witness stand.

May there be no opposition to me among the divine council.

And may your fiend not be upon me  
in the presence of the Keeper of the Scales.

You are my life energy within my body,

Protecting and strengthening my limbs.

May you ascend to the Place of Happiness.

(After Budge)



A Heart Scarab with a **Benue** Phoenix on its back

### Thoth speaks in Chapter 30



Says Thoth the Judge of Truth

for the Ennead of Great Gods

who are in the presence of Osiris:

“Hear ye this decision that is verily true.

The heart of Osiris \_\_\_\_\_ is weighed

and his mind is found

standing as a witness for him.

His judgment is correct upon the Great Scales.

No wickedness has been found in him,

Nor has he wasted the offerings in the temples,

Nor has he done harmful deeds,

Nor has he set forth evil things with his mouth

While he existed on earth.

(Based on Budge’s translation)

Budge appends a remark regarding chapter 30 found in a Papyrus at Parma (and recorded by Naville, Todtenbuch, Bd. II., Bl. 99): “To be said over a scarab of green stone encircled with smu metal [with] its ring (?) of silver, [and] placed upon the dead person at his neck. This chapter was found in Hermopolis under the feet of the majesty of this god. It [was inscribed] upon a slab of iron of the south in the writing of the god himself in the time of the majesty of the king of the North and South Men-Kau-Ra (5<sup>th</sup> pharaoh of the 4<sup>th</sup> dynasty), true of speech, by the royal son, Heru-dada-f; he found it in his going to make an inspection in the temples.”

Budge also cites another version of this remark found in Naville’s record of a Papyrus from Paris (Todtenbuch, Bd. I., Bl. 167). The text there is said to have been inscribed with lapis-lazuli (**khesebed**) on the same slab of iron found under the feet of Thoth’s statue at Hermopolis. That text also says one should make a scarab of green stone and rimmed with pure gold and place it in the heart of a person. It performs

the opening of the mouth when anointed with myrrh.

This could refer to placing a scarab inside the chest of a mummy where the heart would be, or it can mean a person should wear one inside his clothing over his heart. Anointing it with myrrh will help a person to express himself or herself with truth and sincerity.

I should mention that the specific reference to two feet is code for the baboon form of Thoth. The temple at Hermopolis has been destroyed, but two gigantic stone baboons still remain (one lacks his head).

The Egyptians had a tradition of carving text written by or directed to Thoth on the undersides of green scarab amulets. The Book of the Dead recommends this and scarabs have been found in Egypt that fit this description and bear this text. Perhaps Alexander merely decided to carry with him one of these common scarab tablets carved from green stone or made from green or blue-green faience (Egypt), turquoise (from Sinai) or lapis-lazuli (from Afghanistan) for good luck on his adventures. The Phoenician Tablet starts off with a close echo of Thoth's first words and summarizes the whole Book of Enlightenment and Egyptian culture in a single page.

The name Hermes Trismegistus (HRM TLT MHSVT) appears to be a Phoenician transliteration of a Greek name and title for Thoth. Hermes was the Greek name for Dehuty (Jehuty, Thoth), and Megistos means "Greatest". TLT means three or thrice in Semitic, and in Greek *treis* also means three. (Final "t" of loan words tended to become final "s" in Greek.) In Greek *telos* also refers to the fulfillment or completion of something. So TLT MHSVT sounds like a title: Hermes of the Greatest Fulfillment. However, the meaning of "Thrice Greatest" is definitely in the title, because the text refers to the title at the end of the document and says that Hermes is called "Thrice Greatest" because he "embraces all three parts of the wisdom of the universe." If we accept the idea that this name and title is from Greek, that would put the surviving document into the period when Greek influence dominated the Eastern Mediterranean. On the other hand, it could refer to Hiram, the metallurgist who helped Solomon build the great temple in Jerusalem. We know from the Bible that Hiram was a skilled chemist. Some believe that Hiram was a manifestation of Thoth who helped Solomon to build his temple.

In any case the Phoenician version we have may be the oldest surviving edition of the Emerald Tablet as written for non-Egyptians. We find Arab scholars already



mentioning and quoting the Tablet in their works during the early middle ages (7<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup> centuries). For example, it is included in a book of advice for kings called Kitab Sirr al-Asar. Then Latin translations appeared in Europe from the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries of 10<sup>th</sup> century of Arabic works that contained the text of the tablet. The above-mentioned book became known as Secretum Secretorum (The Secret of Secrets). The text of the tablet also appears in Liber de Causis (The Book of Causes), a book translated into Latin from a work in Arabic popular during the Middle Ages that was variously attributed to Aristotle and Apollonius of Tyana. These attributions tie into the legends about Apollonius and Alexander. If Aristotle had a copy, then Alexander might well have wished to have a copy of the compact classic with him. (See <http://www.sacred-texts.com/alc/emerald.htm> for more historical information and various translations and commentaries.)

The title Sirr al-Asar was translated as Secret of Secrets. However, this name may well be a cover for another secret title that we might translate as “The Bliss of Osiris” or “The Heart of Osiris”. The root **sr** also means king or chief. Thus we might find in the title “The King of Kings”, an ancient Egyptian expression: **Suten em Sutenu** (Sultan among Sultans). The problem Osiris faced was that he became fragmented. However, through the love of Isis and Nephthys he re-integrated into wholeness. If the Tablet teaches anything, it is that life is wholeness, as above, so it is below – Heaven is on Earth and not some far away place.

Sir Isaac Newton was an avid student of Qabalah and alchemy. We find in his papers that he personally prepared his own English translation of the text from one of the Latin translations. For centuries the tablet has been a core text for those interested in alchemy. (For Newton’s version, see the Wikipedia entry. Other versions are available on the Internet.)

What does the Emerald Tablet have to do with Qabalah and the Tarot? I believe it served as a bridge to introduce the core concepts of Egyptian culture to the Greco-Roman culture, the Middle East, and Europe. The core message of the document is that the universe is an integrated wholeness – the fundamental principle of Egyptian culture. There is a clear reference in the text to the four elements of Fire, Water, Wind, and Earth. These form the four Suits of the Minor Arcana and the four tools of the Magician.

The connection to the Qabalah comes in the form of subtle references to the various Sephiroth (the ten fruits on the Tree of Life). Some are very obvious. For example,

in line 14 we find Foundation (YSVD), and in line 30 we find Wisdom (HKMT), and in line 25 we find Victory used as a verb "to overcome" (T-NTzH). Some references are indirect. For example, we have mention of a king (MLK) in line 7. This suggests a Kingdom. Other references are veiled. For example, Beauty (TPRT) occurs as "separate" (TPRYD, line 15), and Glory (*HVD*) shows up as a synonym KBVD (line 22). Strength shows up as "great power" (GDVL) in line 17.

The other three are cleverly hidden in the text. Mercy or Compassion (HSD) occurs in the spelling of the title of Hermes -- M-HSVT (line 29). This could be read as "from or based on compassion". The root is HS. MTQ, "sweetness", is a further explanation of the Sephirah of Mercy, because it is balanced with the Great Power of GDVL in line 17. Understanding (BYNH) is hidden very subtly in the mention (line 7) of the education of the king's son (VLD) in the One Theory (DBR AHD). In Hebrew son is also written as BN or BR. Finally we must find the Crown (KTR), the most subtle and spiritual of all the Sephiroth. This word is beautifully hidden at the end of line 7 and again in line 27 in the word "educates" or "educational structure" (MORKT), an anagram for OM KTR. The Tree of Life is a beautiful educational framework, the outline of all the teachings of Qabalah in a simple picture designed with the essence of sacred geometry. The Crown is the apex of the structure. Line 27 specifically refers to a structure that has pathways. The structure is the Tree of Life, and the Pathways are the 22 paths that form the Major Arcana of the Tarot. MORKT is an anagram for KTR OM. OM means the people, the nation. It refers to the Kingdom -- the Sephirah at the Root of the Tree. KTR is the Crown of the Tree, the Fruit. The great teaching raises the root to become the fruit by watering the root of the Tree with the meditation (*HGH*) mentioned in line 6.

Thus we find all Ten Sephiroth of the Tree of Life mentioned directly or indirectly in the Emerald Tablet. The Tablet specifically mentions in lines 27-28 a structure with a pathway (DRK) for using it. The expression "for using it" also contains the word for "letter" (AVT). The 22 pathways on the Tree diagram are the 22 letters of the alphabet, and, of course, the 22 Trumps of the Tarot.

Can we find the Tarot Trumps in the Emerald Tablet? There are some obvious clues to get us started. Before reading on to see the answers you may want to try your hand with the text and see how many you can find.

For example, the text clearly mentions the Sun (line 8), the Moon (line 9), and the Earth (line 11). That takes care of three Trumps right off the bat. With our

decoding of the Egyptian Senet Board Trumps we may be able to find them all. Let's explore. Some are easy to find, and others are subtle.

Fool = Son, VLD (7); Sun-Fool, HM (31), from Egyptian Khem = Fool, a name of **Men**.  
 Magician = Truly, most veritable, AMN (1); Min (18) (**Men**); Transforms, THLYP (26). The Wizard is the wise Fool, and the Fool is the foolish Wizard.  
 Priestess = Sweetness, MTQ (17); Subtle, DQ (16); 2nd Chakra is "Sweetest"  
 Empress = Mother, AM (9)  
 Emperor = King, MLK (7); Father, AB (8); Wind, RVH (10)  
 Priest = Below, THT (3) (Dehuty)  
 Lovers = Compassionate, M-HSVT (29); Father and Mother, AB, AM (8, 9)  
 Chariot = Great Power, GDVL (17); Energies, AYLVT (13); pathway, DRK (28)  
 Strength = Lion, ARY (19); Sekhmet, HM (31)  
 Hermit = One Meditation, HGH AHD (6); Wholeness, TMYMH (13)  
 Wheel = Belly Button, BTNH (10)  
 Justice = Balance, SQL (17)  
 Hanged Man = Hermes, HRM (29)  
 Death = Obscurity, HSKH (23)  
 Temperance = Separate, TPRYD (15); Store Up, AVTzP (20)  
 Devil = Cobra/Monsters, TNYNVT (19)  
 Tower = Structure, MORKVT (27); Earth, ADMH (11) [as Atum]  
 Star = Above, OLYT (2-3); Universe, OVLM (26, 30)  
 Moon = LBNH (9)  
 Sun = Sun, SMS (8); Sun, HM (31)  
 Judgment = Nurse (midwife), AMNT (11)  
 World = Earth, ADMH (11), ARTz (18)

There are several clues from the Egyptian Trumps that help us complete the list. One is the identification of the Priest with **Dehuty**. The Priest is down below (THT) and communicates and identifies with what is above. **Newet** represents the Heaven above and the Universe of stars and galaxies. **Shewe** is the Wind, or atmosphere. The nurse here is the midwife, **Mes-Khent** (Judgment). She delivers the baby from the hidden world of Amenti into the physical world of Earth. The other Nurse, Rennt, who functions as the nursing mother, is Moon (LBNH). She holds the baby to her Heart (LB). This connects it to the Hermit and the One Meditation.

A major clue to decoding the Tablet is the repetition of the word MN (18). This can not be an accident. A document that is so short and so important would not have a

mistake like that. This is a deliberate wordplay that tells us there is a secret identification between Semitic words and Egyptian deities. **Men** is the hidden (AMN) form of the Magician. The Magician Trump demonstrates this because he traditionally imitates the characteristic pose of **Men** on Tarot cards. This word also occurs at the point in the text where the magical transformation occurs. The child has come from heaven to take a physical form on earth. The Magical transformation raises the Kundalini Energy and the Consciousness of the Fool-Child from Earth to Heaven. This turns him into an immortal hero and restores to him the Glory of the Whole Universe. Everything is purified and the Universe is renewed.

Here is a list of Egyptian deities that appear in the Tablet.

AMN = **Amen**

THT = **Dehuty**

ASR = **Asar**

AB = **Ab** (Father in Semitic becomes Heart in Egyptian.)

ADMH = **Tem**

HUA = **Hew**


MN = **Men** (Also the Senet Board's name)

HM = **Khem** (another name for Men, the Fool), also **Sekhmet**, the Lioness

AMNT = **Amenet** (Hathor)

TNYNVT = **Tenen** (Our number ten comes from this ancient deity.)

The use of the creation root BRA (line 26) specifically alludes to the creation of Heaven and Earth by the Elohim in Genesis I. Line 18 uses the same Genesis terms in reverse (Earth to the Heavens = *H-ARTz OL H-ShMYM*), showing the return of Man to Source. The expression "all day long is the same" (*KL H-YVM AHD*) is another subtle reference to the "Days" of Creation in Genesis. The wordplay between "energies" (*AYLVT*) and *ALHYM* then becomes apparent. The "Song of Solomon" plays this word game even more intricately using identifications with animals and plants to represent divine words. The "energies" become stags (*AYLYM*) and does (*AYLVT*) bounding about in the King's Royal Park. (For a detailed discussion of this intricate wordplay, see "Imagery in the Song of Songs", a paper I presented at the Prairie Writers' Conference, 1994 -- available on request.).

To summarize our findings, the **Da-Rekh**  (Tarok) Egyptian system of education and divination embodied in the Senet Oracle Board revived when the game came into the Middle-East with a new format. The dormant tradition of the Senet

Deck shaped by the influence of Hebrew and Arabic Qabalistic traditions retained some memory of the system and adapted it to the evolving Phoenician/Hebrew alphabet. The Tree of Life became a new Senet Board and the Phoenician Emerald Tablet encoded how all the Trump archetypes and four elements combined with the structure of the ten Sephiroth fruits on the Tree. By the time a technology of cheap, convenient paper and printing arrived in the Middle East and Europe by the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, the stage was set to revive and re-popularize the ancient tradition. However, it no longer looked ancient Egyptian.

### Qabalistic Hebrew from the Roman Era to the Middle Ages

In the meantime Hebrew had evolved, and the formal letters took on fancy serifs and changed until the old glyph pictures were no longer recognizable. Each letter became a number, and the Hebrew number alphabet became another kind of "Senet Board". This Qabalistic arrangement of the Hebrew alphabet divides the letters into three groups according to their numerical values: I arranged the grid with the sequence from left to right so that the decoding below would be more easily legible.

א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט
י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	צ
ק	ר	ש	ת	ך	ם	ן	ף	ץ

1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,

A, B, C, D, E, F, G, *H, T*

10,20,30,40,50,60,70,80,90,

Y, K, L, M, N, *\$, O, P, Tz*

100,200,300,400,500,600,700,800,900,

Q, R, S, T, *K\*, M\*, N\*, P\*, Tz\**.

There are 27 letters in all. They form three rows with 9 letters in each row. However, the numbering system is based on 9 rather than 10. There is no 0. Also, the original Phoenician/Hebrew alphabet had only 22 letters. To fill out the Board and complete the numbering system, five extra letters had to be created. These were variant forms of the letters K, M, N, P, and Tz used to mark the ends of words. In the alphabet list above I mark them with asterisks. The five finals correspond to the final 5 squares on the Senet Board, and the Intercalary Days. Thirteen months of 27 days each comes to 351 days. Another thirteen days, plus one more day, gives a year of 365 days. I do not know if medieval Hebrews played parchisi-like games with such layouts, but the Qabalists definitely played with the alphabet, making all sorts of

elaborate codes with it. Interpreting the numerological codes of Hebrew words came to be a Qabalistic game called Gematria, a game known to the Greeks as isopsephy. This game allowed one to make esoteric, philosophical or merely entertaining connections between any word or phrase whose letters added up to the same number. There came to be many variations of the Gematria game that go way beyond the scope of this book into a realm of all possibilities. Because you could get the same number with any sequence of the same set of letters, this also led to TzRVP (Tzeruph), the method of permutations, which also was practiced to some extent in ancient Egypt. For example **ser** was an elder or chief, and its reverse (**res**) is to awaken. An elder or chief should be a person who is fully awake, and his responsibility is to awaken the younger generation that he leads. **Peteh** was the god of formation and **Hetep** was the complete experience of a formation that brought about a sense of peace and relaxation. With clever use of Gematria techniques one could get almost anything to be equal to anything else. It was mostly a kind of Qabalistic Scrabble playing with words and numbers, but there was a deeper side to it in which Qabalists turned key words into sets of mantras. For example, repetition of the word **ser** as a mantra reveals its permutation **res**. A Qabalist would take, for example, the root KTR (the crown on the Tree of Life), and generate the following set of six mantras: KTR, KRT, TKR, TRK, RKT, RTK.

### The Egyptian Technology Transfer

We mentioned earlier that the Hebrew word Nebi (NBY[A]) refers to a prophet. The Hebrews call the writings of the prophets in the Old Testament "Nebiyim". Similarly the first five books, or Pentateuch, of the Old Testament are called Torah (the "Tour"), possibly referring to these books as a "tour" of ancient history from the beginnings to the time of the ancient Israelite judges, kings, and prophets. The remainder of the Old Testament is called Ketubim, or "(miscellaneous) writings", and includes historical chronicles, poetry, proverbs, and stories. The abbreviation code word for the Hebrew Bible thus became TNK (Torah, Nebiyim, Ketubim). Abbreviation (anciently known as Notarikon) thus became another branch of Qabalistic technology, and also was practiced to some extent in ancient Egypt (see examples in my discussion of the High Priestess Trump).

The Egyptian technology that was transferred into Qabalah and is probably more significant than any of the above-mentioned word and number games is paranomasia, the art of punning. Many important principles as well as the encoding of Egyptian material were carried over into Biblical texts and Qabalistic texts by punning word play. Egyptian material was encoded by means of bilingual puns. The [Emerald](#)

Tablet is an excellent introduction to the technique, and once you understand it from my discussion of the Tablet, you can go reread your Old Testament (in the original Hebrew) and with a little added knowledge of Egyptian plus some common sense and intuition you can discover many enlightening clues.

In my opinion the best starting points for studying Egyptian influence on the composition of the Bible are found in three places:

1. The opening chapters of Genesis are cosmological myths and pseudo-historical symbolic stories of the ancient Hebrews containing lots of borrowed and/or encoded material from Egyptian and Mesopotamian libraries and temples;
2. Exodus is the highly encoded and twisted story of Moses and the Jews in Egypt and how they “left” Egypt;
3. Song of Solomon (Canticles) is the encoded poetic offering of redemption to readers through the Wisdom of Solomon from the apparent fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden story of Genesis.

Much of the rest of the Old Testament is an anthology of Jewish literature, quasi-historical narratives, customs, and indoctrination. Aside from some allegorical stories there is not as much encoding of material and much less influence from basic Egyptian teachings. The world view is quite different and not at all Egyptian.

### **A Peek at the Genesis Egyptian Code**

The original Hebrew scripture did not indicate vowels or have final letters. The text was simply a string of consonant letters that the reader had to parse. For example, look at the first six letters of Genesis. BRASYT. Scholars translate this as “In the beginning” and parse it B-RASYT.

However, we could say that this phrase contains the following Egyptian code: “In Ra is Set”. “B” is the letter that stands for a House, Temple, or Palace. It has the sense of “in”. RA is the sun god of Egypt and represents the Higher Self. In Hebrew the verb RAH means to see, observe, perceive. B-RA thus may mean “in Ra” or “in the act of observing”, or even “insight”.

The Egyptian archetype of Set represents illusion and contradiction. Set also represents the stubborn hardness that generates the stones from which pyramids and temples were built. SYT in Hebrew is a veil or a foundation. The veil obscures vision, and the foundation is solid material that resists transformation. This is

exactly what **Set** is. **Set** is also shit, which is how the letters SYT are usually pronounced. The text says that **Set** is in Ra. The Scarab avatar of the sun specifically plays with shit, and Set, when angry specifically throws shit.

The Litany of Ra says exactly that also: all archetypes are within and emanations of Ra, the Higher Self. The analogy of the sacred scarab – a primary solar image in the Litany – is that the sun's light engenders grass on the earth. The sun (Ra) then incarnates as a bull (Hathor as a cow) and eats the grass. The bull then reduces the grass to bull shit. Ra then incarnates as a lowly scarab beetle and gathers the bull shit into a little ball – yet another incarnation of the sun. It inserts eggs into the dung ball and buries it in the ground. After some time the beetle grubs hatch and eat the bull shit. When they mature, they emerge from the ground and fly up into the sky, “returning” to the sun whence they originally came to earth as light beams. The scarab was a metaphor for the spiritual aspect of the human heart, and Egyptians traditionally wore scarab amulets over their chests.

The next eight letters of Genesis are BRAALHYM. This is usually parsed into BRA + ALHYM and translated as “God created”. However, the usual word for “create” is YTzR. Why use BRA here? The root BR actually means to purify, and as a noun means a son. Does BRA SYT mean the purification of Set, the purification of Shit? Does BR-A mean “Son of a Bull”? Or maybe it again says “In Ra” (B-RA). ALHYM is a strange word. AL is the root word for god. ALH would be a goddess. YM is a male plural ending, and also means day or ocean. Does the phrase say that a group of deities is in Ra, the Higher Self? That is what the Litany of Ra teaches. All 78 archetypes are aspects, emanations, or transformations of Ra. HYM is also a word in Hebrew and means to roar or wail. Oddly, **hem** in Egyptian also means to roar or wail, a word used as early as the Pyramid Texts, and perhaps a form of the mantra “OM” in Egyptian, since the *h* is very lightly aspirated if at all. Is ALHYM the roar of God or the roar of the ocean of gods and goddesses? H-YM can be the day or the ocean, of the day or of the ocean. In Egyptian **ar** or **al** means to embark or go on high (OL in Hebrew?), but was also used to transliterate the Semitic term AL. Remember that Ra (A) and Osiris (O) mutually identify, which suggests code swapping between AL and OL.

We will come back to this word AL when we study the Trumps for the letters A and L. It is curious that in Egyptian **neb** means lord as a noun and also means all when used as an adjective. We now translate the Hebrew word AL as God, and say “all” as the adjective of choice when we mean to include everyone and everything. Ale is a



word we use for beer, but the original word means sorcery, magic, enchantment, and intoxication. Ale was the usual beverage both for drinking and for sacrament offerings in ancient Egypt, and it was sacred to Osiris, the national god of Egypt and incarnation of Ra. At Egyptian New Year time there was a special holiday called Wag that culminated in a feast of drunkenness (**Heb Tekh**) in which people drank lots of beer and made loud raucous jokes. Was that the celebration of the Ale Hymn?

The text then says, *ATHSMYMVATHARTz*, and this is generally taken to be “the Heavens and the Earth” (*AT H-SMYM V AT H-ARTz*) that “God created”. *AT* is a sign of the definite accusative in Hebrew. However, *ATH* happens to be the masculine singular pronoun “you”, and *SM* means “name” in Hebrew, and so “the Heavens” can just as well be the ocean of names. *HSM* is “The Name”, the Hebrew euphemism for God. Perhaps the text says “You are The Name Ocean and you are Earth,” or “You are Heavens and you are Earth”. Such readings present us with quite a different Bible that sounds like it comes straight out of ancient Egypt. By the way, *AT* is the female singular pronoun “you”, and the *H* can just be the article “the”, so the reading works for both men and women.

Using notarikon principles (shorthand) we can find Isis (*ASYT* = **Aset**) in that first string of six letters. Or we can parse the six letters into *BR-ASYT*, which means “the Son of Isis”. Does that mean Horus or her first son Baba? *BR-ASYT* could also mean “The Purity of Isis”. The Elohim (*ALHYM*) that creates Heaven and Earth may be a group of archetypal beings, both male and female that includes Ra, Isis, Set, and Horus. Isis is a transformation of Ra’s consort, Mut-Hathor, and Ra is the Higher Self of Isis’ consort, Osiris. The identification of Ra and Osiris is depicted on Nefertari’s tomb wall with the inscription: **R@ hetep em Asar, Asar hetep em R@** = Ra experiences by means of Osiris, and Osiris experiences by means of Ra. (Ra rests in Osiris, and Osiris rests in Ra.)

What is the first thing that the *ALHYM* group decides to create? Answer: Light (*AVR*). How do they do it? They do not **do** anything. They simply say, “Let it be” (*Y-HY*), and *HY* is simply an exclamation like hey! Hey, man, lo and behold, there it is. *YH* (Yeh), the hey (*HY*) done in reverse, is God, the creator – that’s you – the one who sees what is there. *HY* (hey) gives birth to whatever *YH* intends. If you want to see where things come from, run your perception process in reverse. Instead of asking, “Hey, where did that come from?” say “Yeh, that’s me, all right.”

*A[V]R* (light) is the reverse of *RA*, the act of seeing. *ARY* (the radiant one) is the

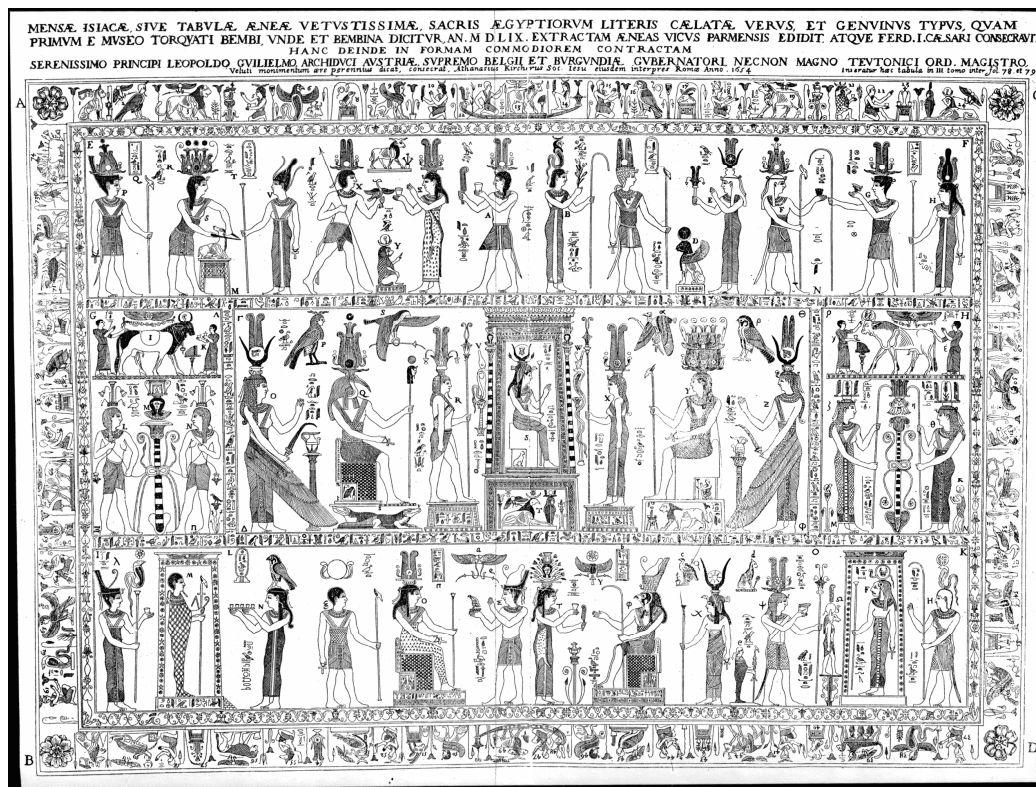
lion, symbol of the sun's radiant light – Sekhmet in Egypt. Sekhmet is the Eye of Ra that extends the Hand of Ra as a ray of light. The name of the letter Y is YD (yad), which means hand. Akhenaten explicitly drew the sun's rays as hands extending from the sun's orb.

Further on down in the text (verses 6-9) we find that Heaven is above, Earth is below, and in the middle is a strange firmament (RQYO) that divides waters above and below. RQ is saliva or something thin. RQO is to beat a metal such as gold or iron into a thin plate or foil. In Egyptian **req** is to fall away from or rebel. In Egyptian cosmology the firmament was made of iron, because they obtained iron from meteorites that fell from the sky. The firmament is an Astral Realm represented by the middle row on the Senet Board and is the space through which the Boat of the Sun travels as it appears to fall away into darkness from the space where it exists as light. "Below" in Hebrew is THT, which encodes the name of Thoth (**Dehuty** = The Master of Lead). Thoth is the alchemist who transforms lead into gold. He is the Guru, the Heavy One who hangs down below in the dark world. He governs the age of darkness through his mastery of the Moon. He activates the intellect to organize the pieces of the world into a coherent whole until the reality of unity returns, first as the full moon that reflects the sun's wholeness, and then as the sun itself returns with the dawn of a new era of enlightenment.

This should get you started. Have fun and see how many Egyptian neter archetypes you can exhume from their burial deep in the first two chapters of Genesis. They may be direct archetypal images or hidden in bilingual puns.

## The Bembine Tablet, the Senet Oracle Board, and the Amduat

The next bridge between ancient Egypt and the medieval period that we want to explore is a fascinating object known as the Bembine Tablet.



The Bembine Tablet, also known as the Mensa Isiaca (Isiac Tablet, or IT for short) is a bronze plaque with silver inlay (50x30 inches in size according to Westcott) that was made some time during the Roman period, perhaps as early as the 1<sup>st</sup> century and is covered with three registers of figures in the Egyptian style within a border decorated with many smaller Egyptian images and a thinner border separating the frame and the registers that is decorated with non-Egyptian floral designs. The registers are separated by thin rows of hieroglyphs, and the left and right sides of the middle register have symmetrical tableaux that are also separated from the center by a column of hieroglyphs on each side. Most of the figures have labels in hieroglyphs, a few in cartouches. The glyphs are often poorly transcribed and may have been poorly executed on the original, but I lack a photograph of the artifact by which to verify the accuracy of the reproduction. The provenance is unknown, but may have been made in Rome for a temple of Isis in that city. High resolution photographs of the artifact would be of extreme value for studying it in more depth. The Egyptian Museum of Turin has kindly provided a thumbnail photo of the artifact (C. 7155) and a detail of the central section on its website:



Mensa Isiaca, thumbnail of the whole tablet (above), and detail (below)

Photos from [www.museoegizio.it/img/pezzi/22.jpg](http://www.museoegizio.it/img/pezzi/22.jpg).

The antiquarian Cardinal Bembo (d. 1547) purchased the tablet from a locksmith or iron worker or soldier after the sack of Rome in 1527. After Bembo's death the artifact was passed on through a series of owners or museums until it ended up in the Turin Museum of Antiquities where it remains today.

The Museum website notes that the cult of Isis was popular in Rome, but after the battle of Actium (31 BCE), it was out of favor for a few decades, but then Caligula (12-41 CE), who was descended from both Augustus and Mark Antony, built a large temple to Isis called the Iseum Campensis in the Campus Martius. The Museum speculates that the tablet derives from the late 1<sup>st</sup> century and comments on the importance of the artifact in metallurgical history because of its skillful use of bronze, silver, gold, gold-copper alloy, and the production of various colors, especially the

black, known to the ancients as Corinthian bronze, which was made by mixing copper and tin with small amounts of gold and silver and then pickling it in organic acid.

Over the ages numerous occultists have studied and commented on it. Athanasius Kircher (1601-1680), Eliphas Levi, W. Wynne Westcott, and Manly P. Hall are among the most famous and Levi, Westcott, and Hall had influence on the evolution of the Tarot and intuitively recognized that it was an important link in its historical development.



P. ATHANASIVS KIRCHERVS FVLIDENSIS  
ē Societ: Iesu Anno artatis LIII.  
*Honorii et Theodorici regi sculpti et D.D. C. Blomqvist Romae a. May A. sculp.*

From the perspective of this author the Isiac Tablet (IT) represents a transitional form of the Senet Oracle Board (not the Game Board). Below I summarize some of my observations gathered from a preliminary study of the IT.

- At first glance I recognize some of the standard figures from the popular Book of the Dead “Judgment Tableau” and with a bit more study I discern aspects of the Amduat.
- The three well-defined registers suggest the structure of the **Senet** Board and the Amduat.
- The Boat of Ra is at the noon position and the midnight position on the decorative frame of the board. This hints that the Boat is an important theme in the design of the board, and may also mean that the meditation techniques associated with the boat were an important part of the cult.
- The portals, chapels, and thrones suggest the houses on the **Senet** Board, and the labels refer explicitly to Houses, Temples, or Mansions (**Per**, **Repa**, and **Het**) as the technical terms were used for the **Senet** Board squares.
- The material has a Roman look and is filled with images that at first glance appear hodge-podge, but that on further study show an overall symmetrical arrangement.

- The material is clearly post-classical Egyptian, made by foreigners (non-Egyptians) who had poor if any knowledge of Egyptian but followed an Egyptian cult and copied material from Egyptian temples and perhaps other documents and artifacts associated with their cult.
- The tablet itself, being made of metal, is of great interest from a standpoint of metallurgical craftsmanship, and the importance of Ptah in this cult as the tutelary deity of metal smiths is clear – he stands out in his special booth in the left side of the lower register.
- The design of the Board clearly follows the symmetry of the Oracle Board tradition that we see in the Book of the Dead rather than the adventure layout of the **Senet** Game Board and Text tradition.
- The design of the Board shows us that there was no standard order for such Oracle Boards. Each local cult could design its own version. This Board is neither the Book of the Dead “Judgment of the Heart Tableau” nor the Amduat “Tour of the Astral Realm”, but combines elements of both.
- The Amduat cleverly combines the two board design traditions (sequential and symmetrical) by dividing the night into 12 hours. The passage of the Boat of Ra through the night hours provides the adventure in phases through time, and the tableaux of each hour have a symmetrical structure that gives us essentially 12 strange Oracle Boards. However, we do not at present have any evidence that the Amduat Hours were used for divination.
- The Amduat maintains the same triple register structure of **Senet** Oracle Game Boards (Hour One is a special case), and suggests a more complex sequence of games that resembles our present-day fascination with dungeon-and-dragon games and video games where players work their way through different “Houses” that represent phases of an adventure game.
- Possible references to the technical term **Ater** (a riparian tract of land) as an equivalent to a “House” in the labels on the Isiac Board suggest that there was a deliberate connection to the Amduat and its “Atlantean” tradition as a meditation in which the adept passes through the Astral Realm in the Solar Barque of his meditation or divination. **Ater** could be rendered here as “Realm”. The Greek word Atlantis derived from a corrupt transliteration of the Egyptian term **Ateru Antet** (The Valley of Riparian Lands). The Greeks habitually changed final “t” to “s” and often transcribed Egyptian “r” as Greek “l”. “Atlantis” was an epithet for the Astral Realm that Egyptians usually called the **Dewat**. The earthly location of the Valley was the Valley of the Kings near Thebes. There they depicted “Atlantis” in great detail as the Amduat and other related texts on the walls of subterranean royal catacombs. The Litany of Ra described the cult

practices popular during the New Kingdom.

- The Mensa Isiaca forms a transitional artifact from classical Egypt and Ptolemaic Egypt to medieval times, showing how Egyptian mystery cults transferred their knowledge and traditions into Europe. At this stage the material is still clearly Egyptian, but is becoming a foreign interpretation of ancient Egyptian traditions with a loss of the classical literacy. The artifact is still completely pre-Christian in content and shows no Semitic influence either.

### Summary of the Isiac Tablet Divination Board

The conclusion after my preliminary analysis of the Mensa Isiaca is that it is a symmetrically designed Divination Tablet that probably was used for divination in a temple of Isis in Rome during the first century. The material is syncretistic and the iconography and especially the labels are somewhat garbled and degenerate, reflecting a gradual loss of the fine details of the classical Egyptian canons of design. On the other hand the Divination Board – which is what I believe it is – still retains a very subtle and profound understanding of the essential ancient Egyptian world view. The sequence of the Tablet is from left to right and from top to bottom. Gods tend to be paired with their consorts, and there is a balance between the sun and the moon, start and finish, visible and invisible. The presence of Isis-Hathor as the centerpiece of the Tablet with a sphinx and mummy below her throne indicates that the central divination message was to discover one's mission in life and to learn how to love all aspects of life and death. The Tablet combines the ideas of the **Senet** Game Board, the Book of the Dead Weighing of the Heart, and the Amduat.

The general impression in the academic world is that the tablet is a hodge-podge. I would argue that the tablet's use as a Divination Board necessitated it to cover a broad range of topics and draw from the entire pantheon of Egypt in order to represent the diversity of her culture and the universality of a Tarot (**Da-Rekh**) Divination System. Just as I discovered a Divination Board system based on the Book of the Dead as its main theme, this Divination Board is based on Isis-Hathor as the main theme and the imagery draws significantly from the Amduat tradition. The tableaux are arranged symmetrically and Isis appears throughout the Tablet in her many transformations, each with a cycle of myths of which we may only retain a partial knowledge. This is a very creative design that allows for a number of different divination procedures.

First, let me give a tentative identification of the main figures in each tableau and the card they may correspond to in my Senet Tarot Oracle Deck of Ancient Egypt. Then I will briefly describe how Isis appears in each tableau and the myth[s] that may

pertain to that tableau.

### **Upper Register (left to right):**

1. Geb, pharaoh making offering, Satet;
2. Onouris (Osiris with Benu), Baba, Seshat, Sebek;
3. Tepet Dewatyu, Amen, Hew, Newet;
4. Aakh, Khemenew, Aset/Asar;

### **My Senet Tarot Deck**

World, Hanged Man, Temperance?  
 Hermit, Fool, Wisdom, 7 cups;  
 Star?, Tarot, 6 wands, Star;  
 Moon, Wheel, Magician;

### **Middle Register (left to right):**

1. Happy (Hathor);
2. Maat-Wajet-Isis, Jehuty;
3. Shewe, Isis-Hathor, Tefenut;
4. Waset, Maat-Nekhebet-Nephthys;
5. Bes and harvest goddesses

K cups  
 Justice, High Priest  
 Emperor, Priestess, Strength  
 5 wands, Temperance  
 10 cups

### **Lower Register (left to right)**

- |   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. Net (Sereqet), Ptah, Theret              | 7 wands, Fool, Judgment        |
| 2. Ra, Nekhebet, Tem;                       | Sun, Empress, Tower            |
| 3. Mut-Hathor, Horus, Mut-Isis;             | 5 cups, Chariot, Empress?      |
| 4. Horus Eye, Anubis, Sekhmet, Nekha (Apep) | 2 wand, Death, Strength, Devil |

The 22 Trumps all appear distributed about in the three registers as well as additional “cards” for a total of 35 Trump (major deity), Court (minor deity), and Amulet figures depending on how you count, since the figures are not set off in precisely defined spaces and the Egyptian tendency to fill available spaces is followed.

## **Tableaus on the Tablet**

### **Upper Register**

1. Pharaoh sacrifices wisdom (gazelle) to start (Satet) the World (Geb). Satet is a tantric goddess of ejaculation (wife of Khenemew) and will release the Nile’s waters. Isis in her tantric mode becomes Satet.
2. Onouris and Seshat rescue the phoenix (Benu) from the jaws of Sebek with the help of Baba (Thoth) and the Ram of Mendes. This plays on the story of the Baboon and Sekhmet, and Onouris (Orion as a hunter warrior) teaming with Horus to defeat Set and his minions at the North Pole (see Senmut’s ceiling).
3. Amen is the sun hidden at night, thus he faces Newet, Isis-Hathor as the stars in the night sky. Amen is accompanied by the goddess in charge of the Astral Realm dwellers – another transformation of Isis. The sphinx calmly awaits the



sun's reappearance, knowing that Amen is Ra.

4. Khenemew is the wheel of time and here represents the full moon (his role on the Senet Game Board) and holds a palm frond of time and the left Eye of Horus that represents the 64 phases of the moon (the Egyptian Book of Changes) and the mathematical steps of the meditation procedure. The God Akh gives him a miniature net (moon symbol) in which to hold the Eye together. Isis wears the crown of Osiris (her dead husband) and holds the papyrus wand to show her intention to bear baby Horus in the delta swamp.

### **Middle Register (Main Theme: Agricultural Cycle, Life Cycle and Immortality)**

1. The Two Happies (Upper and Lower Egypt) work together to bring the Nile waters to all of Egypt so the plants and animals may thrive. This is possible because of Hathor's sacred libations that she prepares by using the energy of the sun's light (the Ka Bull of Ra). This produces the monsoon rains in the African horn that swell the Nile flood. Isis is Hathor, and her tear of compassion starts the flood.
2. Thoth is Tekhy (the Ibis and the Taiji lead plummet on Maat's Scale of Justice). Over his head is Baba Mukhy (Wuji), the crazy transcendental baboon who plays at being his scribe and keeps the lunar Eye of Horus so that we can pretend to keep track of time. Isis becomes one of the two Maaty, and plays the role of Thoth's chief consort, Truth. She controls fire and water with her tantric skills and appears as the Tep-Bak (Hebrew Dybbuk), your "soul" that knows what its primary mission in life is. Living your Truth is to know your mission in life and to consciously and deliberately carry it out.
3. Isis-Hathor sits in the central chapel. This is a cryptic recapitulation of the central tableau of Amduat, Hour 5 where she becomes the pyramid guarded by two sphinxes (Shewe and Tefenut) and transforms Seker into Horus, the heir of Osiris. Wajet and Nekhebet assist.
4. Isis appears as Waset, a lioness in Amduat, Hour 10. To get the whole story, go read my translation and commentary on the middle section of the top register of Hour 10 (available at [www.dpedtech.com/Amduat.htm](http://www.dpedtech.com/Amduat.htm)). Behind her is her sister Nephthys as the second Maaty and as a hawk. She is also in tantric mode and controls fire and water, transforming them into divine spirit.
5. Bes leads the celebration of a successful harvest after the time of the agricultural cycle has passed. Again we see the Ka Bull of Ra provides the solar energy for the crops to grow. Plants and animals flourish. Isis and Nephthys appear as two harvest deities and can be seen in male transformations following Bes in Hour

Two of the Amduat at the far right side of the lower register.

### Lower Register

1. Ptah is the master metallurgist and a major deity in the necropolis of Thebes. His consort appears as Sekhmet on the opposite side of the lower register. Behind him is Net, goddess of nearby Sais. She also seems to double as Sereket. Isis, Nephthys, Net, and Sereket form a set of four guardian angels that protect a pharaoh's mummy. The goddess making offerings to Ptah is perhaps Theret, a willow goddess. She has a hawk on her head that may be a transformation of Isis.
2. The Goddess Nekhebet is the central figure of this tableau. She represents the sacred area of Nekheb-Nekhen in the south, but holds a papyrus wand and has a unity sign on her throne. Behind her is Ra and before her is Tem, and Tem offers her a small vulture image that tells us she is Nekhebet – Mut.
3. The central god of this tableau is Horus the elder (or Ra Horakhty). He is the consort of Mut, and Mut with a Tree of Life emanating from a Hathor mask as her crown offers the feather of Maat to Horus. Ra-Horus wears the double crown that links him to Tem in the previous tableau. Behind him is Isis-Mut-Hathor. The two deities in the central tableaux (Ra-Horus and Mut-Hathor) sit on thrones and face each other. Isis has a close relation to Ra in this tableau.
4. In the final tableau of the lower register we find Sekhmet in a chapel looking across the register to her spouse Ptah. A god who may be a form of Horus offers the Eye of Ra to Sekhmet, who will use it to destroy mankind. In front of her stands Anepew (Anubis), god of death, and behind her is Stinky Face, a form of Apep (Apophis) in the Amduat. Sekhmet manifests the destructive and horrible aspect of Isis. In the Story of Ra and Isis she makes a “model” of Stinky Face Apep to cause Ra severe suffering and threat of death so that she can learn his secret name, which is the King of all Mantras and rescues all mankind from suffering. A little figure of Ptah reminds us of his connection with Sekhmet and hints that he is really Baba the Baboon who gets Sekhmet drunk so that she forgets about destroying mankind. This is a clue that Ptah is really a special form of Baba, who is also described as a master of fire and metallurgy and who forged plowshares and weapons for Egypt as Mesen (the ape-headed masonic craftsman of fire and metals).

Thus we find in the Isiac Tablet a wonderful assortment of Isis transformations with a rich body of mythical stories behind them.

## How Did They Divine on the Oracle Tablet?

We do not have records of how the divination process was carried out, but we can guess at the probable methods. I believe the most common system was one that is still used today at temples in East Asia. The temple prepared a container that held a certain number of wooden (or bamboo) strips, stones, shells, or other inscribed tokens used as labels or tags. Perhaps they used papyrus or vellum in strips with numbers or symbols on them. These were primitive “cards” in a randomized “deck”. In any case the questioner would pose a question and then a priest or priestess or the questioner would select one of the tokens in whatever format they were made, and this would indicate which register, which tableau, and which deity in the tableau would respond to the question. Another similar method could have been to generate a random number using the astragali (knucklebone dice) that had been in wide use since Neolithic times. (See “Money on the hoof” The astragalus bone – religion, gaming and primitive money” by Richard Holmgren *PECUS. Man and animal in antiquity. Proceedings of the conference at the Swedish Institute in Rome, September 9-12, 2002. Ed. Barbro Santillo Frizell (The Swedish Institute in Rome. Projects and Seminars, 1), Rome 2004. [www.svenska-institutet-rom.org/pecus](http://www.svenska-institutet-rom.org/pecus). Holmgren explores the interconnection of these three major interests.)*

In his dissertation on **Senet** Professor Peter Piccione analyzes the use of throwing sticks and astragali in ancient Egypt for playing the game of Senet, where they apparently tended to use 4 throwing sticks or two knucklebones and scored 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 points on a throw. In Greco-Roman circles they used two bones with scores of 1, 3, 4, or 6, which produced nine scores ranging from 2 to 12. Some players used four bones for higher scores and more complex combinations. However, because dice and throwing sticks do not generate even probabilities, I think that for divination the ancients would more likely have used a set of tokens (such as scarab amulets) that were marked so that each one corresponded to a “House” on the Oracle Board and would reserve use of the astragali or throwing sticks for racing games and gambling. Unfortunately, the pictures of Senet divination do not show how the moves or placing of pawns was determined.

The drawing of lot tokens amounted to using two simultaneous decks that would interact. One deck was fixed on the tablet and corresponded to the question chosen by the questioner. The other deck was dynamic, and the outcome was unknown until the questioner selected a lot token at random from the whole collection to reflect the answer. The randomly picked answer would interact with the question, and the subconscious layers of questioner’s awareness would subtly influence the choice of

token. This allowed the conscious mind and the subconscious mind to interact with a visible result that the shaman or shamaness could interpret. The answer would interact not only with the question, but with the Houses on the Board that surrounded the question House. A questioner could also go deeper into the question by drawing several more divination lots and placing them appropriately on the Oracle Board. After the introduction to the various cards, I will include some suggested ways of divining with the **Senet** oracle. The same methods can be adapted to the Isiac Oracle Tablet, and the reader can experiment with this approach. It works quite well on the Isiac Tablet.

### **Materials Related to the Isiac (Bembine) Tablet**

Manly P. Hall, The Secret Teachings of All Ages: An Encyclopedic Outline of Masonic, Hermetic, Qabalistic, and Rosicrucian Symbolical Philosophy, “The Terbembine Table of Isis”, 145-158.

W. Wynne Westcott, Tabula Bembina sive Mensa Isiaca (The Isiac Tablet of Cardinal Bembo: Its History and Occult Significance). Bath: Robt. H. Fryar, 1887.

Herwart von Hohenburg, Johannes Georgius (1553-1622). *Thesaurus Hieroglyphicorum* è Museo Joannis Georgii Herwart ab Hohenburg, utriusque juris doctoris, & ex assessore summi Tribunalia Imperatorii, atque ex Calncellario supremo serenissimi utriusque Bavariae Principis... Munich (Ausberg?): n.p., 1610. This work’s first eleven plates contain the *Mensa Isiaca*, and influenced Kircher to study Coptic and Egyptian. Herwart was a Bavarian statesman and scholar. His mathematical work assisted in the development of logarithms, and he corresponded with Kepler, Brahe, and other eminent scientists.

Kircher, Athanasius. *Prodromus Coptus sive Aegyptiacus* (1636). Kircher argues correctly in this work that Coptic was related to ancient Egyptian. Kircher was the first scientist to earn a living from his publications.

Kircher, Athanasius. *Oedipus Aegyptiaca, hoc est Universalis hieroglyphicae veterum doctrinae, temporum...* (1654).

<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k111866h>

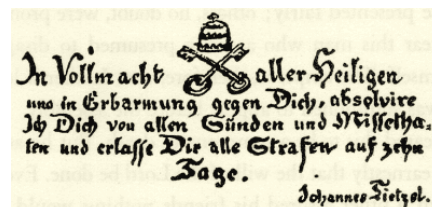
Levi, Eliphas. History of Magic: Including a Clear and Precise Exposition of its Procedure, Rites, and Mysteries. In chapter IV “Hermetic Magic” he discusses the Emerald Tablet, Other Writings of Hermes, Magical interpretation of the geography of Ancient Egypt, Ministry of Joseph, Sacret Alphabet, The Isiac Tablet of Cardinal

Bembo, The tarot explained by the Sepher Yetzirah, the Tarot of Charles VII, and Magical science of Moses.

### Games from Roman Times up to the Time of Paper and Printing

The classical Egyptian tradition gradually decayed, was suppressed, and lost as Greek culture, Roman domination, Christianity, and then Islam appeared on the scene. Senet continued to be played on a reduced scale during Roman imperial times but was generally replaced by newer dice and board games. The Romans loved such games for fun and gambling and had their own favorites such as Tali, Tesserae, Duodecim Scripta, Tabula (a form of Backgammon) and so on, but these games do not appear to have held any esoteric or spiritual content for the Romans the way Senet did for the ancient Egyptians. The games were purely for entertainment and/or gambling, and there is no evidence of divination with such games that I know of. Roman divination was done mainly through an oracular source such as an Etrurian haruspex (professional skryer of livers from sacrificed animals) or the Sybilline female diviners who consulted special secret books of prophecy. In addition there were many superstitions regarding omens, auguries, signs, and portents. These beliefs and practices were quite different from divination with the ancient Egyptian Senet Oracle.

After the Catholic Church became the official religion of the Roman Empire, church leaders began to discourage or actively suppress all “pagan” practices. If a person had a problem in life, the only proper recourse was to turn to the Church. A mechanism was established that involved confession of sins to a priest, absolution by the priest, and the possibility of purchasing a Papal Indulgence that would lessen the penance a person would have to make for the sin. A special group known as Pardoners (Latin: Quaestores) would sell indulgences to people for fees. The availability of printing by the 16<sup>th</sup> century made it possible to mass produce indulgence certificates as a kind of spiritual money that could be purchased in exchange for a donation of secular money to the church (or at least to the Pardoner). The curious situation arose that you could go and commit the “sin” of gambling and then go confess to a pardoner and buy an indulgence certificate that would excuse you from the sin so you could then go play again.



The above papal indulgence was sold by Johannes Tietzel in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century and

states that: "By the authority of all the saints, and in mercy towards you, I absolve you from all sins and misdeeds and remit all punishments for ten days." Notice how the symbols on the indulgence scrip match those on the Pope (High Priest) Trump Card.



Woodblock print of people buying indulgences from the Pope

### **The Invention of Paper and Printing**

At this point in our story we have to consider the invention of paper and printing. In 104 A.D. the Chinese invented the method of making modern paper from wood pulp and rags. Tradition holds that the inventor was a Chinese eunuch named Cai Lun. The new paper technology was superior to papyrus and gradually filtered westward. By 750 it reached Samarkand. By 793 it was in Baghdad. By 950 it got as far as Cairo, and paper had returned to Egypt in a new and improved form. In the 11th century it reached Moorish Spain, and in 1151 it reached Christian Spain. Italy finally found out about paper in the 13th century, establishing its first papermill in 1276. Thus, just as papyrus finally died out as a medium, the new paper technology began to be available.

The Chinese also had developed woodblock printing by 868 (the earliest surviving example), although we know they used it before then. By 1040 they had already begun to develop movable type printing. It wasn't until 1399 that Gutenberg printed his Bible with movable type, and Europe started to emerge slowly from the Dark Ages into the Age of Information. However, woodblock printing on cloth appears quite early in the Byzantine world and by 1000 already was found in Islamic Egypt. Printing on cloth had become widespread in Europe by 1300. Paper was also making inroads and woodblock printing began to be applied to paper by the late 14<sup>th</sup> century. It quickly was applied to religious images, broadsides, and the manufacture of paper playing cards.

The immediate application of the new paper and printing technology to paper playing cards suggests that during the prior centuries of the Middle Ages similar games survived from Roman times that were based on game boards, dice, and token playing pieces. Printing allowed for the spread of games that were inexpensive but included attractive artistic designs on paper cards. Thus the widespread introduction of playing cards to Europe began with the appearance of paper-making technology and woodblock printing and was an important step in the start-up of the popular media that now dominates our age – not to mention the availability of a practical means of reproducing and storing scientific and technological information to promote widespread literacy and an accelerated pace of innovation.

By the 15<sup>th</sup> century woodblock printed books appeared and began to spread rapidly. The main centers for woodblock printing were in Marseilles, Germany, and Holland. For example, the *Biblia Pauperum* (Bible of the Poor), a biblical picture-book was the most popular block book of text and illustrations in those days. Another favorite topic for broadsides was the Dance of Death, an array of Memento Mori (Reminder of Death) images from the devastating years of the Black Death that ravaged Europe during the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Evolution of the Suit Cards (Courts and Pips) in China**

We do not know for sure whether the Minor Arcana of the Tarot as we know it today was developed independently in ancient Egypt or the Middle East, or came from the Far East. However we at present have no clear evidence that the Egyptians organized amulet pips into decades and suits from the surviving Litany and Kings List materials, although we do know that their solar calendar was organized by decans (10-day weeks) and the **Senet** Oracle and Game Boards were also organized by decans (a solar/lunar month of 30 days in 3 sets of 10-day weeks) – but **not** in sets of four decans or any other well-defined subsets of the Egyptian “deck”. Evidence suggests that the beginnings of the Pip Cards and the Suits were in ancient China.

Although no cards survive from the Sung dynasty, Chinese printing of books by the 10<sup>th</sup> century had reached a very high level of technical achievement, and paper playing cards must have been in use, for Chinese had been playing games and gambling for centuries even long before they invented paper. They also had very ancient well-defined methods of divination.

The archaeological record shows that from the late Warring States period and the

early Han dynasty the Book of Changes was available in various editions written on silk or on books made of strips of bamboo strung together and rolled up. Tradition says that the book goes back much earlier to the beginning of the Zhou dynasty, but there is no definite archaeological evidence to substantiate that ancient claim. During the Han period contact increased with the West and there is evidence of trade between the Roman Empire and the Han Empire. Whether there was exchange of game technology in that period is still not clear.

However, it is almost certain that traders, travelers, and soldiers transported versions of early Chinese card games consisting of Pip Cards printed (or painted) on paper westward toward Europe from the rise of the Seljuk Turks in Central Asia (11<sup>th</sup> century) and during and after the period of the Mongol Empire in the 13th century. Subsequently such games became part of the culture of the Ottoman Turkish Empire that arose in Anatolia and stretched across the Middle East and through North Africa. The round cards of the Persian game of Ganjifa also probably came into use among the Mogul leisure class in Persia and India.

Before the Chinese developed paper during the late Han dynasty, game players made "playing cards" by writing symbols with a brush on slips of bamboo. They also used pieces of wood, bone, ivory, stone, bronze, jade, or other materials to make tiles that could be incised with designs. Thus *pai* 牌 (meaning tile) became the generic word for any of these game tokens, **including** paper cards. Ancient forms of Chinese money going back as early as the Zhou dynasty included metal or jade tokens shaped like cowry shells, knives, bells, spades, disks and other symbolic or decorative shapes. Here are some examples of early Chinese bronze artifacts that could have been used as playing tokens. Unfortunately we do not have any detailed written records about the games or the rules by which they were played or proof of the exact ways in which these articles were used.



Spade, Disk, Bell, and Knife



Monetary tokens such as these apparently gave birth to the playing card suits as people used the various shaped hard cash monies for gambling. Thus the Chinese notion of suits in card games seems to derive from denominations of money. With the introduction of paper, the Chinese quickly developed a variety of games adapted to sets of paper slips that were light-weight and convenient, but still continued to play games using tiles as they do today. Some other types of cards were based on *Che-ma-pao*, or Chinese Chess, (probably a later development). Some cards used the pip symbols of dominoes. Others developed a refined and more abstract form of the monetary symbols, usually in three suits: coins (*qian* 錢 or *wen* 文), strings of coins (*suo* 索 or *tiao* 条), and myriads of coins (*wan* 萬 common simplified version 万, sometimes also written as *guan* 貫). Sometimes there was a fourth denomination called tens (*shi* 十). The coins became disk-shaped images. The strings eventually came to look like bamboo tubes, and myriads were written with the Chinese characters for the numerals from one to nine with the myriad symbol standing for the denomination. Some believe that the ten sign became the sword suit, and the myriad sign got turned upside down by foreigners and became a cup suit. This resulted in the four suit signs of cups, coins, staves, and swords.

	TENS (of Myriads) $10 \times 10,000,000$	MYRIADS (of Guan) $10,000 \times 1,000$ wan guan	STRINGS 100	COINS 1
DongGuan CHINA	貫	萬	串	錢
CaoZhou CHINA	萬	并	条	錢
Ceki MALAYSIA	萬	串	串	錢
Mah-Jong CHINA	萬	串	串	錢
Tô Tôm VIETNAM	萬	串	串	錢
Hakka CHINA	拾	貫	索	錢
Bát VIETNAM	子	萬	索	錢

Source: Andy Pollett's website discussion of Chinese Playing Cards

Generally each Chinese suit had nine pip tiles based on money plus honor cards that were more abstract symbols. For example, in Mah-jong (Chinese *Ma-cue* 麻雀 [Sparrow] or *Ma-jiang* 麻將 [a diminutive form of Sparrow]) the tenth tile for disks is *hong-zhung* 紅中 (inner blood for hearts of animals), *Fa-cai* 發財 (green sprouts for plants), and *Bai-pi* 白皮 or *Bai-ban* 白板 (white skin or white board for

spiritual qualities). These honor cards often are known as the red, green, and white dragons. Then there may be various other honors such as the winds of the four directions and bonus tiles such as the four seasons, the four plants (plum, orchid, chrysanthemum and bamboo). The honor and bonus tiles remind one of the Egyptian four elements and four senses "Court" cards. Other Chinese decks include animals or figures from popular novels such as heroes of Water Margin (*Shui-hu chuan* 水湖傳).

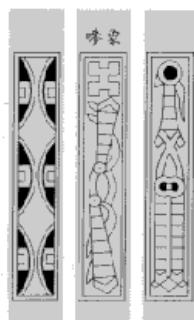
Usually there were several sets of each suit, which meant quite a large number of tiles or cards. The continued use of tiles may have been partly habit and partly because Chinese sometimes played outdoors where wind could be a problem. Also I think the Chinese became attached to the sound of the tiles clicking together and most people lived sedentary lives so storing the tiles was no problem.

The popular Chinese game of Mahjong carries on the ancient tradition of using coin disks and bamboo sticks, the same basic symbols as the Tarot suits of coin disks and wands, but these days the symbols are inscribed on plastic tiles. Even the arrangements of the symbols on Mahjong tiles resemble miniature Tarot Pip Cards. Non-Chinese players who "borrowed" such games from the Chinese could not read the Chinese symbols written on many of the tiles to indicate denominations, so they substituted other symbols.



Domino cards, *che-ma-pao* chess cards

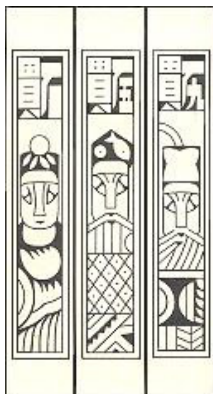
Source: <http://i-p-c-s.org/history.html>



*Chinese money-suited cards, 'Tung Kwan-P'ai'*

Stylized coin (left) and cash string (middle and right) cards

Source: <http://i-p-c-s.org/history.html>



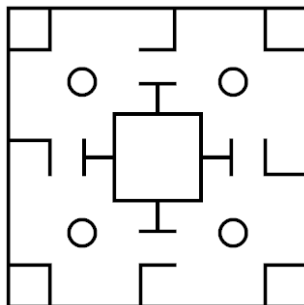
Myriad suit pips 1, 5, and 9 with stylized figures (from Andy Pellott's excellent website article on Chinese cards)



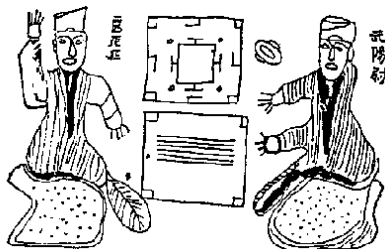
Modern Mah-jong tiles, showing coin disks (top row), "bamboo" cash strings (second row), myriads (third row) and special honor tiles and bonus tiles (bottom row showing from left – 4 winds, 3 dragons, 1 season, 1 flower) that are somewhat like court cards (Source: Wikipedia Mahjong entry)

## A Mysterious Ancient Chinese Board Game

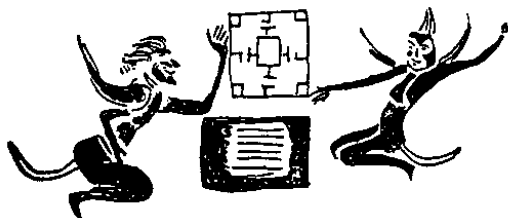
From the Warring States period through the Han dynasty (475 BCE – 220 CE) and perhaps on a lesser scale for about another century after the Han a board game for two players was very popular in China. The Chinese called it Liu-bo 六博 (or 六簫), the Game of Six Sticks. The basic equipment for the game was a square board with a square marked in the center and lines resembling T, L, and V placed at intervals around the space between the central square and the outer edge of the board. There were also knobs, circles, or diagonal lines between the corners of the central square and the smaller V-squares in each corner of the board as a whole.



Each player started with a set of six pawns, usually of an oblong shape. One set was white, and the other set was black. Next to the game board would be another small table or an extension of the game board with six wooden or bamboo rods on it. The bamboo strips would be used as dice and also could be used sometimes for consulting an oracle. Some sets include a die with 18 sides numbered from 1 to 16 with two poles, one labeled “win”, and the other labeled “lose”.



Two men playing the game of *Liu-bo*



Two immortals playing the game of *Liu-bo*



Two players prepare to begin the game. Note the six ribbed sticks placed neatly on

one side and each player's tiles lined up on his side of the game board.



Two players with the game in progress.

Player on the left has thrown the sticks and some of the tiles have been moved out onto the board.

Unfortunately no complete set of rules survives. The best we have are some records of when it was played, some historical figures who played, and some comments about the method of play perhaps drawn from a lost work called the *Gu-bo-jing* (古博經).

During the Jin dynasty (265–420) Zhang Chen 張湛 described some aspects of the game in his commentary to the *Book of Liezi* 列子:

博法：二人相對坐，向局，局分為十二道，兩頭，當中名為水。用棋十二枚，古法六白、六黑。又用魚二枚，置於水中。其擲采以瓊為之。二人互擲彩行棋，棋行到處即豎之，名為驍棋。即入水食魚，亦名牽魚。每牽一魚獲二籌，翻一魚獲三籌。若已牽兩魚而不勝者，名曰被翻雙魚，彼家獲六籌為大勝也。

Method of play: two people sit opposite each other facing the board. The board is divided into 12 pathways and two “heads” (starting points, one for each player?) The middle is called the water. Use 12 pawns. The old method is that six are white and six are black. Also use two “fish” placed in the water. They take up a die and toss it for the number of moves. The two players take turns tossing for the numbers and move their pawns. When a pawn reaches the Place, [the player] stands it on end and calls it a fierce (owl) pawn that can then enter the water and eat fish, which is also called pulling fish. Each time someone pulls a fish [out of the water?], he gets two points. Flipping a fish gets three points. If one has already pulled two fish but does not win, that is called “being flipped a pair of fish”. When a player gets six points that is a great win.

The problem with this passage is that there are many technical terms that the writer does not explain clearly. For example, what are the two “heads”? Where is the Place? Some assume it is in the central water, but that is not certain. The fierce (xiao 驍) pawn seems to be a pun on the pawn that can become an “owl” (xiao 梟) and then fly about preying on fish. Apparently the player stood his tile up on end when it became an owl and this was something like the way a checker becomes a king or a pawn in chess becomes a queen. The owl has greater freedom to roam the board and attack opponent pawns. How do you pull a fish out of the water, and what exactly is “flipping” (*fan* 翻) a fish? What is “being flipped a pair of fish”? It sounds like the fish are different from the player pawns.



Two players with sticks and tiles laid out ready to begin play. Note the two round “fish” in the middle of the board.

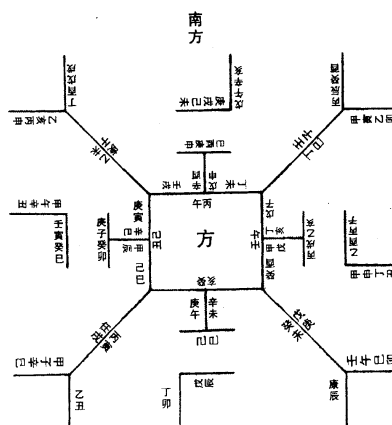
A much earlier text, the *Zhao Hun* 招魂, a poem from a collection of Poems from the South (*Chu-ci* 楚辭) during the late Warring States period, is devoted to summoning the soul of a deceased person back from the land of the dead, perhaps to participate in the funeral rites. After the funerary feast, the guests begin to play *Liu-bo*, presumably because the fun will attract the soul to come back. This sounds very reminiscent of the use of Senet in the funerary rites just as the placing of game boards in tombs matches the ancient Egyptian custom.

菟蔽象碁，有六籜些。  
分曹並進，適相迫些。  
成梟而牟，呼五白些。

Then with *kun-bi* sticks and ivory pawns they have a bit of Liu Bo;  
 Two [players] take their sides and advance, threatening each other.  
 One becomes an owl and doubles [his score] shouting ‘five whites!’

This passage tells us that sometimes the sticks were not made of bamboo, because *kun-bi* is twigs from another kind of plant, possibly twigs of the castor oil plant (*kun-ma* 蓖麻). Pawns could be made of ivory, bone, metal, and so on. Another technical term comes in here: “becoming an owl”. This apparently is a power upgrade to a tile that occurs under certain circumstances. “Five whites” hints at a rule that may be connected to the owner of the “owled” tile, either in his favor or to his dismay if it is a counter move by the opponent.

The role of game boards in funerary rites and placing of them in tombs is indicative that the game was something more than just an amusement. There was a spiritual and divinatory aspect to the game. In the case of *Senet* it was the relation to the calendar and the weighing of the heart ceremony of the Book of the Dead along with the oracular use of the board. In the case of *Liu-bo* the game related closely to the Book of Changes. The six sticks could be used to generate hexagrams, the board could be easily divided into spaces for the 64 hexagrams, and boards survive that have the cycle of 60 combinations of heavenly stems and earthly branches (tian-gan di-zhi 天干地支) written on the surface of the board.



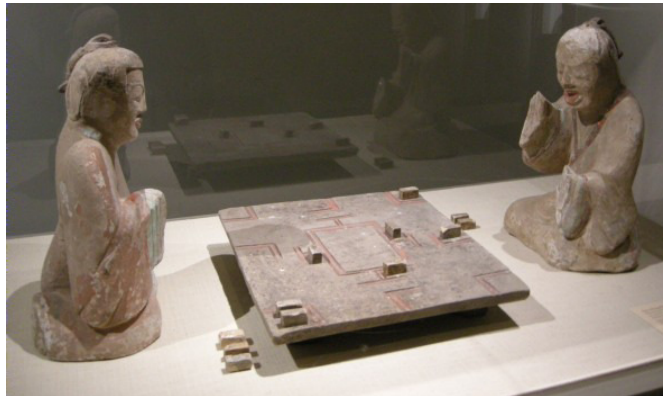
Liu-bo board with the 60 stems and branches

Another phenomenon that further strengthens the case is the existence of a number of Han dynasty bronze mirrors that have a stylized *Liu-bo* board diagram on the back, suggesting the power of the oracle to help a person see himself or herself more clearly.

A number of scholars have attempted to reconstruct the play of the Liu-bo game.



Professor Lien-sheng Yang of Harvard investigated the problem, and more recently Jean-Louis Cazaux has published on the Internet his study of the game and his reconstruction. (For his article and many excellent pictures see <http://history.chess.free.fr/liubo.htm>. For his reconstructed rules of the game, see <http://history.chess.free.fr/liubo-rules.htm>. Another great site with photos, related texts, and archaeological sources of the artifacts is <http://babelstone.blogspot.com/2009/05/lost-game-of-liubo-part-1-funerary.html>.)



A Liubo game in progress. Source : [Wikimedia \(CC BY/SA by Sailko\)](#)

The man on the left looks like he has captured one more pawn than his flustered opponent.

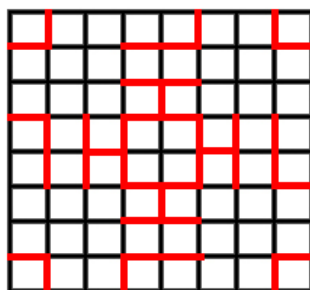
### A Comparison of *Senet* and *Liubo*

Let us now compare *Senet* and *Liubo* as games and as oracles and see whether there are any connections.

- Both are board games.
- Although we do not have exact rules for either game, they both involved throwing sticks used as dice (or carved dice) and pawns that moved about the board in a race game. Both games seem to have involved the capture of opponent pawns and ways of disadvantaging them during the course of play.
- Both boards could be used as calendars. The Senet Game Board encoded both the solar and the lunar month. The Liubo board distributed around the region outside of the central water square the 60 combinations of stems and branches used for Chinese calendars (presumably also mapping them to the hexagrams). The central square contained the final four hexagrams to complete the sixty-four. Thus a Liu-bo calendar board contains the Chinese traditional cyclical calendar that equals exactly two months (or Senet Board circuits) in the Egyptian calendar. The difference is that the Chinese cycle went on and on like the Mayan Tzolkin, whereas the Egyptians eventually tuned their cycles of 30 days to the real cycles of the sun and moon. Here is the cycle of the stems and branches.



1. 甲子 11. 甲戌 21. 甲申 31. 甲午 41. 甲辰 51. 甲寅
2. 乙丑 12. 乙亥 22. 乙酉 32. 乙未 42. 乙巳 52. 乙卯
3. 丙寅 13. 丙子 23. 丙戌 33. 丙申 43. 丙午 53. 丙辰
4. 丁卯 14. 丁丑 24. 丁亥 34. 丁酉 44. 丁未 54. 丁巳
5. 戊辰 15. 戊寅 25. 戊子 35. 戊戌 45. 戊申 55. 戊午
6. 己巳 16. 己卯 26. 己丑 36. 己亥 46. 己酉 56. 己未
7. 庚午 17. 庚辰 27. 庚寅 37. 庚子 47. 庚戌 57. 庚申
8. 辛未 18. 辛巳 28. 辛卯 38. 辛丑 48. 辛亥 58. 辛酉
9. 壬申 19. 壬午 29. 壬辰 39. 壬寅 49. 壬子 59. 壬戌
10. 癸酉 20. 癸未 30. 癸巳 40. 癸卯 50. 癸丑 60. 癸亥



A Liubo Board overlaid on a  $8 \times 8 = 64$ -square hexagram board.

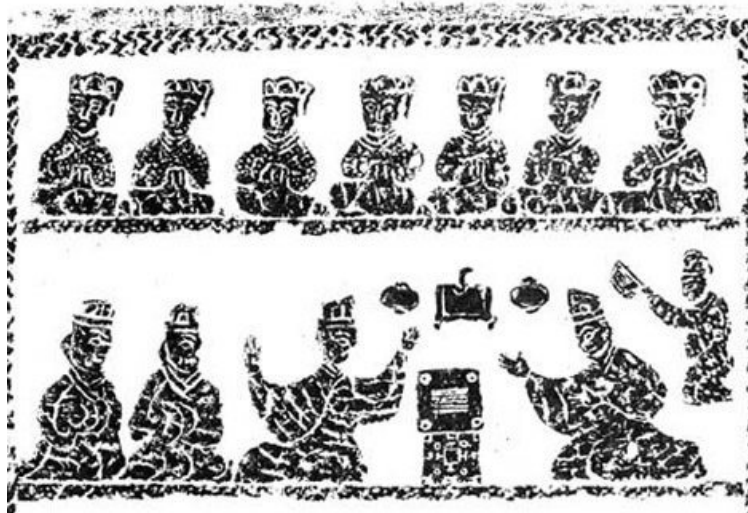
Counting the layers from the center outward we find 4, 12, 20, and 28 squares.

The outer three layers sum to 60 squares, or 30 for each player's side.

The central 4 can represent the four seasons. Two fish (yin and yang) are put in the central square.

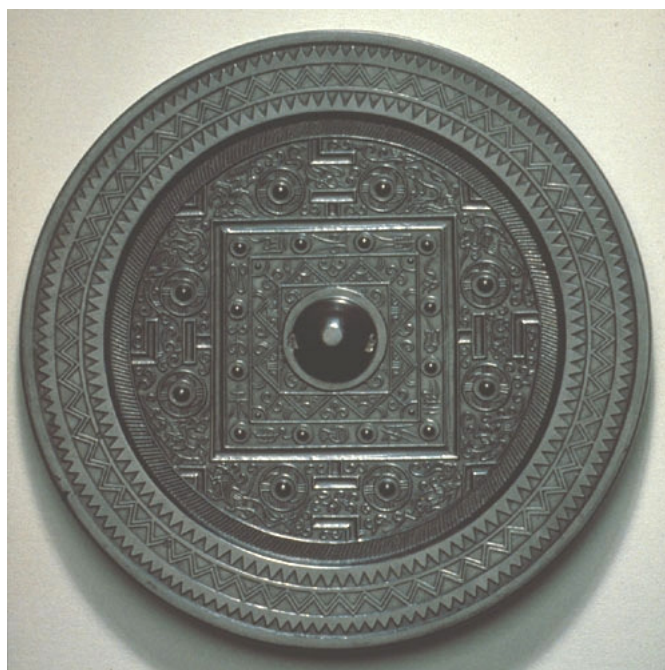
- Both boards tended to embody abstractions of content that expressed the essential message of the culture, but were stylized into a simple format with square houses over which the pawns moved. In the case of Senet the pawns moved through the adventure of life on a calendar. The pathway of the pawns was to become Horus the Elder, personification of **Wat** 𓂏, the Way of the Neter, and then transcend the relative world of the board. The board represented the Weighing of the Heart. In the case of Liubo the pawns moved through the pathway of the Dao 道, the Way of the Natural Cosmos as symbolized by the hexagrams of the Book of Changes.
- Players seemed to be aware of the underlying cosmological symbolism of the boards and other playing pieces and probably knew by heart the cosmic significance of moves on the board.
- The full moon formed the center piece of the Senet Game Board, and the Heart in the balance of the Scale of Justice at the center of the universe formed the

center piece of the Oracle Board layout. The center piece of the Liubo board was the Taiji and expressed the balanced state of all the hexagrams that formed the grid.



This game of *Liubo* has an ensemble of players and onlookers that vaguely resembles the Senet Oracle Board layout.

The Liubo Oracle Game Board is the Cosmic Balance



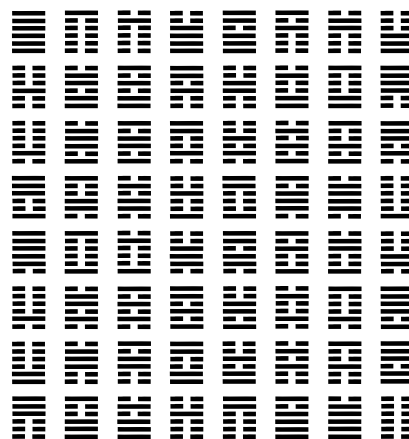
Example of a Han TLV mirror

The small nipples in the square are the 12 months of a year or the 12 earthly branches.

The larger nipples in the outer region are the 8 trigrams.

The Taiji knob in the middle has a hole through it for suspending it with a lanyard.

- In Egypt Hathor functioned as a mirror for Ra, and this gave him his power. The Chinese Liubo board was often cast into the backs of bronze mirrors to remind people that the game board was a mirror of the cosmos and a way in which a person could see a true reflection of self.
- Egypt possessed an earlier version of the Book of Changes in the form of a binary code, and by tradition it came from the beginning of creation at the center of the country in Khemenu, Home of the Ogdoad (eight primordial neter archetypes) and under the guidance of *Tekhy (Taiji)*, the balance point, who was also known as Baba. The system consisted of 64 phases of the Lunar Eye of Horus, the Ogdoad, the four sons of Horus, and Men-Mut (the invisible cosmic solar lovers who could also be interpreted as Thoth and Maat the cosmic lunar lovers). The total comes to 78. The Egyptians used the binary system for their weights and measures. The Liubo board has the eight trigrams distributed abstractly around the outer path and encoded by the L's in the middle edges and V's in the corners, and then the four T shapes for the four cardinal directions. In the middle were the two fish. The throw of the sticks could generate any one of the sixty-four hexagrams, and we can fill in the board with an 8x8 grid to make the hexagram positions visible. This also gives us a total of 78. This binary code was central to Chinese thought and permeated all her art and technology.



Square grid of the 64 hexagrams

- The expression for the 64 hexagrams in Chinese traditionally is Ba-ba liu-shi-si gua (八八六十四卦), which happens to exactly spell the name of Thoth in his transcendental identity as a game- and prank-playing baboon and indicate that the 64 hexagrams belong to him. Baba the baboon usually sits right in the middle on top of the Scale of Justice balancing the heart and truth.
- Both boards had a subtle symbolism of water in the middle. Texts tell us that

“water” filled the central square of the Liubo board and from there the owl could “pull” fish, traditional Chinese symbols of abundance. We have evidence of a pun on the term “owl”. In the History of Jin general Xie Ai (謝艾 whose name means “Thanks to the yarrow straws”) reads the omen of an owl roosting among his flag standards before a battle as: “*Xiao* (a fierce one) is to waylay an enemy. In Liubo the one who gets the owl wins. Now an owl hoots among the battle flags – that is an omen of defeating the enemy.” 梟，邀也，六博得梟者勝。今梟鳴牙中，克敵之兆。 He then went on to defeat his enemy. Another word that matches the pun between the owl in Liubo and a fierce opponent is 消 (to dissolve). Perhaps the real secret to Liubo is that *xiao* means to dissolve all difficulties and distinctions by centering in the Taiji and moving with the Dao. Water filled the central row of the Senet Oracle Board, because that row was where the magical boat of Ra-Osiris moved between Heaven and Earth in the mysterious Astral Realm of Wizardry. The boat image punned on the word for meditation, the core teaching of the Litany of Ra.

### **Mamluk Cards in the Middle East**

There were no court cards with royal figures in the Chinese Minor Arcana. Cards introduced to the Middle East via Central Asia apparently were painted with fancy floral decorations since Islam frowned on the representation of human figures. Islamic peoples omitted the Chinese characters since they did not understand them. (We have too few artifacts to generalize very firmly.) Below are some of the 15<sup>th</sup> century “Mamluk” playing cards preserved in the Topkapi Museum, Istanbul. Unfortunately we do not know where they were made and used. Leo Mayer was the first scholar to study them in 1939, and he wrote a book on them called Mamluk Playing Cards (The L.A. Mayer Memorial Studies in Islamic Art and Archaeology). The three decks he found there were all incomplete, but he believed the pack contained 5 suits with ten Pip Cards in each suit. I identified three Court Cards: King (*malik*), Viceroy (*naib malik*), and Second Viceroy (*thani naib*), the latter being a fictitious title. Mayer originally identified two “Helpers” (Pages) also as a fourth type of Court Card, but further study indicates they were probably two missing kings, which means that there were only three Court Cards for each suit, thus suggesting that the Mamluk decks were like modern poker decks with 52 cards.

The suits of the Mamluk cards are as follows:

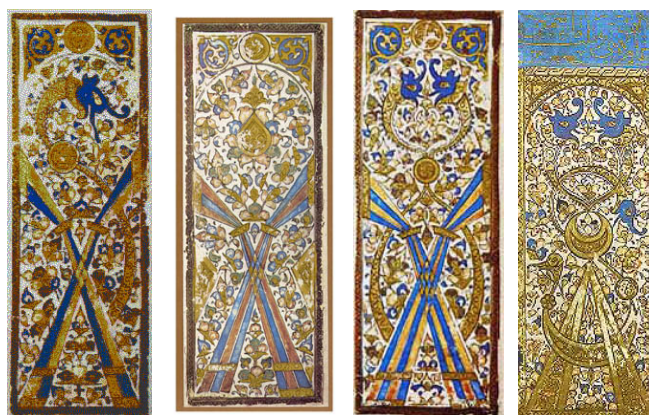
- *Darahim*, which means coins and derives from the Greek coin called the *Drachma*. The word means to grasp.
- *Jawkan*, which is a polo stick. Mamluks did not know what Chinese strings or

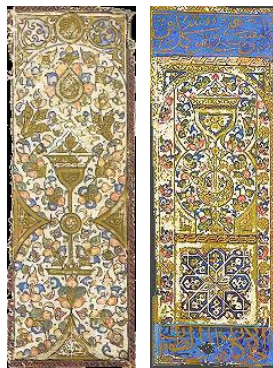
bamboo tubes of cash were, so they interpreted them as the polo sticks they were familiar with. Europeans did not know what a polo stick was, so they interpreted it as a cudgel or a scepter.

- *Suyuf*, which is the Saracen scimitar. A number of early European Tarot decks copied the curved scimitar images (e.g. the Trappoa Pack), and thus we know they learned of the cards from the Turks and Arabs.
- *Tuman*, which means myriad, but was drawn with the symbol of a cup and became the suit of cups in Europe. However, the word Tuman comes from Asia through Turkish and Mongolian and is probably a prefixed borrowing based on Wan or Man, the pronunciations for the myriad symbol in China. The Chinese character for myriad was meaningless to a non-Chinese, but the simplified myriad glyph (万) that was commonly used on tiles or cards when turned upside down looked a bit like a cup and may have been the inspiration for the cup symbol.

There is a special card with a crescent on it and no Court label that Mayer thought might be a Joker. Other scholars discount that idea, believing that the Joker was “invented” in the U.S. a little over a century ago as a special card for the game of Euchre (the supposed origin of the name Joker). Since Euchre is a trick-taking game and thus belongs to the venerable genre of Tarot decks, but is played with 24 court and pip cards (9, 10, J, Q, K, A in four suits), I find the attribution of such a late invention a bit unbelievable and more likely a reinvention, since the Fool traditionally has had a “wild” character and was usually assigned the number 0 or no number at all. Perhaps the Crescent Mamluk card was a “Cover Card” for the whole deck or a type of special “wild” card. The crescent suggests the moon, and we now know that from ancient times the Senet was associated with Thoth and the lunar calendar. The crescent is also an important symbol of Islam and shows up in some of the other Mamluk Court cards. Pollett takes it to be the Second Viceroy of Polo Sticks (see image below), although I do not see a polo stick on that card.



**Mamluk Cards** (*Muluk wa Nuwwab* = Kings and Viceroys)5, 6, 9, 10, and King of *Darahim* (Coins)4, 6, 8, "Second Viceroy" of *Jawkan* (Polo Sticks = Wands)Ace and 7 of *Suyuf* (Scimitars = Swords)



### Ace and King of *Tuman* (Myriads = Cups)

Sources for Mamluk cards: <http://i-p-c-s.org/history.html>, [http://www.tarotpedia.com/wiki/Mamluk\\_deck](http://www.tarotpedia.com/wiki/Mamluk_deck)

See also Andy Pollett's excellent Tarot Website: <http://l-pollett.tripod.com/>

which has a wealth of background information about the Islamic cards and many images based on the reproductions by Aurelia-Carta Mundi of Belgium. The Court Cards are labeled at the bottom and have a saying at the top.

In 1970 Dr. Edmund de Unger, a collector of Islamic art, found among the papers of a Mr. Jean Pozzi a fragment of an earlier and simpler Islamic card belonging to the suit of cups that scholars now date to the late 12<sup>th</sup> or early 13<sup>th</sup> century.



Source: <http://www.manteia-online.dk/deckreviews/dr002.htm>

### Pictures of Royalty on Court Cards

It seems likely that the introduction of the Court Cards with royal figures as we know them occurred after the playing cards had entered Europe during the Middle Ages, since we have no evidence of such standardized images from earlier times other than the Sons of Horus and Lords of Senses that I have identified in Egypt. The people of Islamic countries would not put human images on cards. By the Middle Ages the knowledge of Egyptian meanings of the ancient quasi-court figures had been lost, so figures from the royalty and nobility of medieval feudal society were substituted as special high-value suit cards. The European Court Cards reflect the Medieval interest in hierarchical classes of society and the special privileges of the nobility. In any case each suit acquired picture cards representing a king, queen, knight (or prince) and page (or princess). The knight usually rides on a horse, and each member of the royal entourage usually carries the symbol of his suit or has it nearby on the card.

## **Blood and Paper in the Great Transition**

Merchants in Marseilles began printing cards at least by the middle of the 15th century. However, the gradual awareness of paper as a medium of communication in that area must have already started much earlier as the people in Southern France picked up on the Moorish introduction of paper and printing in Islamic Spain that had already begun in the mid-twelfth century. This was a revolutionary development that would bring an end to the Church-centered culture of the Middle Ages.

This period requires further research (as do all other areas of Tarot history), but it is very probable that under the influence of Turks and Moors in Spain and Northern Africa the Cathars, a group of Christians already not very obedient to the Pope, began to move in directions that constituted a major threat to the Roman Church's monopoly over political power, education, and indoctrination. This may be the real reason why Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) declared an "Albigensian Crusade" not against the occupiers of the Holy Land, or the "heathen" Turks, but against the Cathar Christians living in southern France. To accomplish his crusade the pope enticed greedy knights from Northern France with the notion of grabbing lands and castles from the Cathars. This led to a massive "ethnic cleansing" that continued with varying intensity from 1209 to 1255. By 1307 the Pope's partisans went on to eliminate the powerful and wealthy Templar order that was based in southern France and attempted to annihilate all followers of the Cathar and Templar "heresies". Many tens of thousands of Christians were tortured, burned or simply slaughtered in the bizarre "Crusade" of Christians against Christians. Jacques De Molay, the last Templar Grand Master, was slow-roasted in 1314 after an extended stay in prison.

Numerous conspiracy theories surround the Albigensian Crusade, not the least of which is the "Holy Blood, Holy Grail" hypothesis. (See the popular book by this name.) The essence of the theory is that after the crucifixion of Jesus his immediate family felt that the political climate in the Middle East was very unhealthy for them. So they migrated to southern France, which was at that time a province of the Roman Empire. The disciples of Jesus had wanted Him to establish a new religion, but the family of Jesus had wanted Him to assume his mantle as the heir of King David and King Solomon, to throw off the yoke of Rome, and restore the glory of ancient Israel.

The Grail theory further postulates that Jesus' close friend and faithful follower, Mary Magdalene, was actually either his wife or his mistress. Since Jesus was described in the Gospels as a Rabbi, he must have been married, and Magdalene is the most



likely person to play that role that is recorded in the Gospel narratives of the life of Jesus. This explains her frequent appearance at his side at critical points in his life, including the curious story of how she discovered that his tomb was empty. According to the Bible Jesus was buried in a family cave vault owned by an uncle of Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea. Why was Magdalene alone in Joseph's private family garden by the tomb? Where were the disciples? Magdalene must have had a very special relationship with Jesus to have such access to this private garden. The Grail theory postulates that she was actually part of the family. The "Holy Blood" theorists believe that at the time of the crucifixion Magdalene was either pregnant or already had a child by Jesus. Magdalene, Joseph, and Mother Mary secretly raised the child in the mountainous Languedoc regions of southern France and perhaps other locations as well, since Arimathea was a wealthy and influential merchant.

Family members and close friends formed a secret society of bodyguards with the aim of protecting the child and his heirs from harm and to advance the cause of Zionist restoration. Proponents of the theory suspect involvement of the Merovingian kings, the Templars, and the Cathars in an elaborate secret conspiracy that spanned many centuries.

### **The Word "Cathar" and the Qabalah**

Some scholars believe that the word Cathar came from the Greek *kathar*, which means to clean or purify. In English we say that something that cleanses is "cathartic", a word derived from Greek. That word came to the Greeks from the Hebrew *TeHeR*, which also means to clean or purify. When the Greeks borrowed words from Hebrew, they often metathesized them the same way many foreign (or even native) English speakers say "ax" instead of "ask", or "nucular" instead of "nuclear". The Cathars knew about Qabalah and knew that *KeTheR* is the crown on the Tree of Life. The word Cathar very likely contains a secret pun on "Kether", the crown sephirah of the Qabalistic Tree of Life a fitting title for the hopeful new spiritual and secular leadership of the heir of Jesus' throne. "Caesar" and "czar" or "tsar" are words that also derive from the Hebrew word for crown. *KS* is the Hebrew word for throne. As we shall see, this word goes back to ancient Egyptian. The hieroglyph **AS** 𐩦 means throne, the seat that supports the king. With a feminine ending it also forms the name of the Goddess Isis, the queen of Osiris. *K-* in Hebrew means "as" or "like", but also means an honest heart. *KSR* means fit, honest, to succeed. *SR* is a king. *TR* or *TVR* is the dove of peace, and the spirit of exploration. *TVRH* is the Torah, the law. In some dialects of Hebrew the T's sound like Th's or S's, so these words sometimes get mixed by mistake or by wordplay.

My theory is that the Cathars were a secret royalist (and probably also Qabalistic) faction of Christians who knew or at least imagined that they were descended from the family of Jesus, either by blood relation or by spiritual relation. They were mostly based in southern France with some branches even extending into Italy. They did not like either the Pope or the Greek Orthodox Church very much. They kept to themselves, practiced vegetarianism and followed their own beliefs rather like the later Protestants. To them Jesus was the "crown" sephirah on the Tree of Life. For a while the Merovingian knight-kings with the assistance of the Templar knights were quite successful in carrying on their secret plan for the restoration of the Holy Blood Holy Grail tradition. They managed to capture Jerusalem, secured and excavated the remains of the Temple, and held territory in Israel in the hands of French Kings of Jerusalem for almost 100 years (1099-1191). Fortress cities such as Acre maintained a safe corridor to Jerusalem for Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land. The Templars also became quite wealthy and powerful as protectors of pilgrims to the Holy Land and developed an elaborate banking system for lending funds to travelers in need. Eventually Acre fell to the Arab/Turks in the great siege battle of 1189-1191 and the French were pushed back out of the Holy Land by the Saracens.

The name Magdalene means "of the Tower". This is an interesting hint at the Tarot trump called The Tower. The iconography of that card depicts a castle-like tower with a crown on it being blasted by lightning with people falling from its turret. This may be a veiled reference to the destruction of the Cathar (crownist) castles during the Albigensian Crusade or the fall of citadels like Acre.

The High Priestess trump card depicts a mysterious woman sitting at the doorway to the Temple of Solomon. This may originally be a picture of Mary Magdalene as the "key" to the restoration of the Temple. Although the Roman Church portrayed her as a prostitute, the Cathars may have put her on the same footing as the "Virgin" Mother Mary. In the Languedoc region Mary Magdalene and Mother Mary are especially revered. Thus the High Priestess becomes the proper Trump card for the Sign of Virgo. The Visconti-Sforza deck shows a nun as the High Priestess. Some Christians wanted to elect her as the first female Pope, but the Church poisoned her and outlawed such notions as impossible.

The Death card shows the standard image of the Grim Reaper that emerged as a cultural icon from the horrors of the Black Death that ravaged Europe during the 13th and 14th centuries. The card usually also shows a decapitated head with a crown on

it, suggesting that even kings were not exempt from the Reaper's scythe. However, we can also interpret it as a graphic portrayal of the extermination of the Christian Cathars by the Roman Church. Many tens of thousands were butchered or burned at the stake in this terrible ethnic cleansing. Some versions of this Trump show a bishop pleading in vain for clemency. The card suggests that no such clemency will be shown. With such dangerous political readings for the Trumps possible, we are not surprised that the Church felt threatened by the Tarot, and possession of the cards could get one arrested by the Inquisition and burned at the stake as a heretic or a witch.

Writers often mention the role played by wandering gypsies in the popularization of Tarot cards. Gypsies used the cards as a medium for fortune telling. Many Europeans (including Gebelin) mistakenly assumed that the gypsies came from Egypt (whence their name), when actually they came from India. In any case we know that the cards entered Europe and spread through various levels of society since we have hand-painted versions that were commissioned by noble families in Italy such as the Visconti-Sforza cards. The evidence suggests that the gypsies simply used the cards for fortune telling because they were already popular in Europe.

### The Cards in Moorish Style

"Saracen Cards" appeared in Europe during the late 14<sup>th</sup> century. The oldest deck of medieval cards known at present was printed by woodblocks and then crudely colored by hand around 1400, but we do not know its provenance. It clearly seems to either be an example of "Saracen Cards" or strongly influenced by such cards. This deck is also typical of Spanish decks, containing 48 cards (nine pips of each suit and three court cards for each suit). Four cards are missing from the deck. Notice that the coin pips are drawn and colored as if they are little Taiji diagrams (☯) minus the little dots. The wands resemble polo sticks, but the swords are straight broadswords rather than scimitars.



King of Coins

King of Swords

Cavalier of Cups

Cavalier of Swords



Ace of Coins



6 of Coins



Ace of Cups



9 of Cups



Ace of Swords



6 of Swords



Knave



5 of Polo Sticks

### **Petrarch and the Triumphs**

During the 14<sup>th</sup> century scholars began to seek for ways to popularize some of the ideals of the ancient Greeks and Romans. One of the most famous and influential of these scholars was Francesco Petrarca (Petrarch 1304-1374). His humanistic writings began to open minds and prepare the culture of the Middle Ages for the Renaissance that was about to bloom. In 1341 he became recognized as Poet Laureate and as a “Triumphator” this inspired him to study the Roman practice of Triumphs (Trionfi), great parades that celebrated great imperial or individual successes. He eventually wrote a work in six chapters called Trionfi. Each chapter had an archetypal topic illustrated by an individual riding in a triumphal chariot: Love, Chastity, Death, Fame, Time, and Eternity.





Love



Chastity



Death



Fame



Time



Eternity

The images are from Bernard Quarich's, *Works of The Italian Engravers of the Fifteenth Century*.

In the introduction to that edition G. W. Reid credits the artwork to Fra Filippo Lippi

Both the themes and the images in the pictures begin to suggest the Trumps of the Tarot (e.g. Lovers, Temperance, Death, Emperor, Hermit, and Sun) even though these were illustrations for a book.

Each picture had a chariot – what we would now call a “float” from a triumphal procession. In ancient Rome many of these triumphs celebrated military victories, and there was a “fool” whose job was to ride with the victorious general and whisper in his ear, reminding him that he was not a god. Such events were good political propaganda.



Thumbnails 15<sup>th</sup> century illuminated manuscript on vellum of I Trionfi originally owned by the Visconti family. Note the similarity of the image on the lower left to the World Trump, but with the High Priestess (Laura) in the laurel wreath.

In the early days of the Roman Republic the people lived a simple agrarian lifestyle and emphasized harmony with nature. During imperial times life became much more complex as Rome was now a world power and incorporated many cultures and nationalities into her empire. This made it expedient to encourage people to develop personal and public virtues. As we know from history, the reality often was far from matching the prescribed ideal. Here is a list of Roman Virtues based on the NovaRoma website list ([http://www.novaroma.org/nr/Roman\\_virtues](http://www.novaroma.org/nr/Roman_virtues)).

**Personal Virtues:** [Auctoritas](#) (Spiritual Authority), [Comitas](#) (Friendliness), [Clementia](#) (Mercy), [Dignitas](#) (Dignity), [Firmitas](#) (Tenacity), [Frugalitas](#) (Frugality), [Gravitas](#) (Gravity), [Honestas](#) (Honesty), [Humanitas](#) (Humanity, Culture), [Industria](#) (Industriousness), [Pietas](#) (Dutifulness), [Prudentia](#) (Prudence), [Salubritas](#) (Wholesomeness), [Severitas](#) (Self-control), and [Veritas](#) (Truthfulness).

**Public virtues:** [Abundantia](#) (Abundance), [Aequitas](#) (Equity), [Bonus Eventus](#) (Attention on positive events), [Clementia](#) (Clemency), [Concordia](#) (Concord), [Felicitas](#) (Happiness), [Fides](#) (Trust), [Fortuna](#) (Fortune), [Genius](#) (Spirit of Rome), [Hilaritas](#)

(Mirth), [Iustitia](#) (Justice), [Laetitia](#) (Celebration of Thanksgiving), [Liberalitas](#) (Liberality), [Libertas](#) (Freedom), [Nobilitas](#) (Noble Actions), [Ops](#) (Wealth), [Patientia](#) (Patience), [Pax](#) (Peace), [Pietas](#) (Honoring the Gods), [Providentia](#) (Forethought), [Pudicitia](#) (Modesty), [Salus](#) (Safety), [Securitas](#) (Security), [Spes](#) (Hope), [Uberitas](#) (Fertility), and [Virtus](#) (Courage)

Later, as the empire embraced Christianity there was a trend to encourage moral virtues in elaborate religious processions. Both the celebratory holiday parades and the religious holy day processions continue today.

In the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century Italian cities started to hold Triumphs in imitation of the old Roman tradition. Petrarch's [I Trionfi](#) was presented in 1360 at the court of Giangaleazzo Visconti, father of Filippo Maria Visconti. From 1377 cards called "trionfi" start to appear in Italy, and that becomes a common name for early decks with trumps. Some time between 1428 and 1440 Filippo Maria Visconti, by then duke of Milan, commissioned several decks of painted cards. The name "tarocchi" appears in 1442 (mentioned in Ferrara). During that period in Italy there was great interest in allegorical and mythological images, the Mantegna deck being an excellent expression of this ethos. A manuscript written before 1425 by Martiano da Tortona (1370-ca. 1425) and dedicated to Filippo Maria Visconti, Duke of Milano describes rules for a card game he called *ludus triumphorum* (Game of the Trumps). This text went with the Michelino deck that had 16 trump cards: Jupiter, Juno, Pallas Athena, Venus, Apollo, Neptune, Diana, Bacchus, Mercury, Mars, Vesta, Ceres, Hercules, Aeolus, Daphne, and Cupid. These were Greco-Roman gods and not the traditional Trumps of Tarot, but they do have correspondences with many of the Tarot Trumps. For example, Emperor, Empress, Justice, Temperance(?), Sun, Moon, Star, Fool, High Priest, Chariot, High Priestess, World, Strength, Devil, Hermit(?), and Lovers.

There is some controversy ongoing about the evolution of the Trumps, and the development in Italy may have undergone shifts in the number of Major Arcana before settling at the now traditional 22 Tarot Trumps. The Martiano description and the Mantegna deck amply demonstrate that there were competing versions in the early years as the cards were becoming popular. The evidences from ancient Egypt of the Senet Board and the 78 *netjer* archetypes in the [Litany of Ra](#) do not definitively tell us that there were exactly 22 Trumps. In fact, the evidence is quite to the contrary – that the Egyptians had flexible *netjer* tableaux and a flexible list of amulets that varied according to locality, period, and personal taste. The list of 78 is special to the

Litany and does not clearly demarcate Major and Minor Arcana although there is a sequence (11-19) of clearly labeled neter images that form an Ennead: **Atum, Khepera, Shewe, Tefenut, Geb, Newet, Aset, Nebet Het, and Heru**. This pretty closely matches the traditional top row of the **Senet** Oracle Board (Weighing of the Heart) sequence and lists commonly found in Egyptian art and literature.

Suit decks were often called naibe. The earliest mention of the word Tarot is a game called “*tarau*” mentioned by François Rabelais (1494-1553) in his satirical work Gargantua and Pantagruel (Gargantua, Chap. 20).

For more details on the issues surrounding the Italian *trionfi* and the emergence of Tarot Trumps see the website <http://trionfi.com>. For many other interesting details concerning what is known about the early history of the cards as well as reproductions of many historical cards the reader would do well to consult Stuart R. Kaplan's Encyclopedia of Tarot in 3 volumes. Kaplan, the owner of U.S. Games, has made a hobby of collecting Tarot cards and publishes many decks through his company. He compiled his encyclopedia to share the information he had gathered over the years. It is an excellent resource for information about the Tarot. For more recent editions of the cards the best approach is to browse the web and to look through available catalogs. Much new research and discussion about the history of Tarot is appearing on Internet websites. The Tarot has now become a worldwide phenomenon.

## **Hand Painted Tarot Cards and Early Printed Decks**

Most scholars believe that the Tarot arose in Northern Italy during the late 15<sup>th</sup> century and soon spread throughout Italy and into France. Some early European Tarot cards that survive from the 15<sup>th</sup> century were hand painted by wealthy Italian families such as the Visconti-Sforza clan that dominated the area of Milan from the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Since each card had to be painted individually by an artist, only the richest families could afford such luxuries.

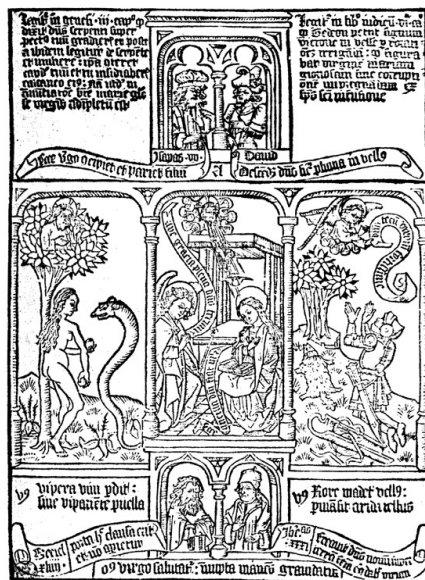
The earliest surviving printed cards are a deck of Moorish cards printed around 1400 at an unknown location. This deck still contains 40 of an original 48 cards and is preserved in the Fournier Playing Card Museum in Alava (Spain). Records indicate that a card game called in Arabic *nayb* was brought to Viterbo in 1379. So some time in the mid-to-late 14<sup>th</sup> century and early 15<sup>th</sup> century playing cards were entering Europe from Islamic regions. The earliest European paper playing cards were mostly made in Italy and France to begin with, but soon spread to Germany, and then



to Eastern Europe and Russia in the East and to England in the West. Marseilles and Lyon were early centers for the printing of playing cards, and the Marseilles style soon became very popular, rapidly spread throughout Europe, and was copied extensively until it became a de facto standard.

Nevertheless, from the beginning decks in Europe showed variety both in the number of cards in a deck and the contents of a deck. For example, the Mantegna Tarot decks had a different number of Trumps. They were not Tarot decks, nor were they really by Mantegna. The deck contained 50 cards arranged in 5 decades, each with a special theme: Conditions of Man (Beggar, Servant, Artisan, Merchant, Gentleman, Knight, Doge, King, Emperor, and Pope); Apollo and the 9 Muses (Calliope, Urania, Terpsichore, Erato, Polyhymnia, Thalia, Melpomene, Euterpe, Clio, and Apollo); Liberal Arts (Grammar, Logic, Rhetoric, Geometry, Arithmetic, Music, Poetry, Philosophy, Astrology, Theology); Cosmic Principles (Genius of the Sun, Genius of Time, Genius of the World, Temperance, Prudence, Fortitude, Justice, Faith, Hope, and Charity); Firmaments of the Universe (Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Eighth Sphere, Prime Mover, and First Cause). The use of decades to organize the deck is very reminiscent of the Senet Oracle Board. The weaknesses of the deck were that it differed too much from the traditional deck, had too many cards that looked basically alike, and was a bit too much pedagogical and moralizing for a game. The German painter Albrecht Dürer prepared a set of paintings for a Mantegna deck in the late 15<sup>th</sup> or early 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Another early nonstandard deck was the Minchiate Tarot of Florence that expanded the “traditional” pack to 97 cards (41 trumps and 56 suit cards). In other words, the suit cards were the same as in Tarot, but 20 new trumps were added. The new trumps included the twelve Houses of the Zodiac, the four elements, and three divine virtue cards (Faith, Hope, Charity), and a cardinal virtue card Prudence. The trumps were numbered with Roman numerals except for the Fool (Excuse) that had no number. The Emperor and Empress became the Western Emperor and the Eastern Emperor. The High Priestess became the Grand Duke. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the Minchiate decks were no longer being used to play that version of the game. I suspect that the deck suffered from too many trumps. Also, if my reconstruction is correct, the zodiac and element additions were redundant, since the Tarot Trumps also covered the zodiac and the four suits governed by the kings already represented the four elements.



Page from the block book Biblia Pauperum



Woodblock Print of Death Meeting the Emperor

### Influence of the Occultists

I shall briefly mention a few of the occultists who became key contributors to the development of Tarot theories and popularity. We already discussed Court de Gebelin (1725-1784) and his follower Alliette (fl. 1783), the earliest persons on record to develop the theory that the Tarot cards originated in ancient Egypt.

In the mid 19th century a priest by the name of Alphonse Louis Constant (using a Hebrew nom de plume, Eliphas Levi Zahed) carried the esoteric theories much further.

Levi believed that the Hebrew Qabalists preserved and transmitted the Trumps from their original designer, Thoth-Hermes. Levi had a powerful influence on occultist thought of the 19th century. In 1853 he visited England and shared some of his ideas with a group of British occultists (including Kenneth Mackenzie, A.F.A. Woodford, Wynn Westcott, and S.L. Mathers) who founded an occult group called the Order of the Golden Dawn. The Golden Dawn members enthusiastically translated Levi's works into English. Arthur Edward Waite (1857-1942), another member of this group, subsequently spent considerable time studying the traditional cards and Levi's interpretations as he worked on translating Levi's work. With the help of artist Pamela Colman Smith, Waite designed his classic Tarot deck. The Rider-Waite deck (so-called because it was designed by Waite and published by Rider and Co. in 1909 and followed in 1910 by Pictorial Key to the Tarot with 78 black and white card illustrations and descriptions) has become a primary model for the 20th century evolution of the Tarot deck. The artwork of Ms. Smith has had a more profound influence on the development of the Tarot representations in the 20th century than any other source.

The modern poker card designs stabilized during the 17th century in France with double-ended symmetry, corner indices, and small pip signs for easier reading of cards. The French developed the modern suit signs of hearts, diamonds, clubs, and spades that are now used around the world. From 1628 the English king Charles I granted a special charter to an organization called the "Company of the Mystery of Makers of Playing Cards of the City of London". From that time on the government banned foreign-made playing cards in England and imposed a tax on the purchase of cards. But English cards eventually followed suit with the French, adopting the court card designs, double-ended figures, and corner indices developed by the French. However, many forms of continental playing cards continue to follow the more traditional designs that are closer to the original Tarot.

Papus (Gerard Encausse 1865-1916) had studied the Kabbalistic writings of Levy. Oswald Wirth (1850-1943), the Swiss occultist student of the Qabalistic poet, Stanislaus de Guaita, also strongly influenced Tarot deck development during the late 19th and early 20th century. Wirth designed an elegantly simple deck that incorporated the key iconography of the trumps and retained the earlier tradition of representing the pip cards (1 through 10 numbered cards) with multiples of the suit pips on each card in the same way as modern poker decks but with the traditional symbols.

Waite, on the other hand, took the liberty of interpreting each of the pip cards with a symbolic picture drawn by Ms. Smith. Waite's illustrations aided the beginner to get a feeling for the cards, but also put a strong Smith-Waite slant on the pip card interpretations. In this book as we discuss the individual cards we will draw the reader back to the original sequence of numbers from one to ten and present a study of their cardinal and ordinal values so it will be possible to use traditional decks or even poker decks for card readings without the aid of a manual.

Another notable member of the Golden Dawn occult group was the eccentric esotericist Aleister Crowley, (1875-1947, also known as Master Therion). Crowley later left Golden Dawn and joined the German sex cult, the Order of Temple of Orient (OTO). While studying magic Crowley became intensely interested in the Tarot. He accepted the Qabalistic origins of the trumps but insisted that the correlation of data in the iconography and the order of the cards were incorrect. After a great deal of "Crowleian" research he published The Book of Thoth: A Short Essay on the Tarot of the Egyptians (1944) based on his theory of the cards and an accompanying deck illustrated with mystical swirling colors and designs painted by Lady Frieda Harris during the years 1938-1943, but that was only published posthumously in 1969 by OTO and then again with better quality reproductions in 1986. The title he bestowed on the Tarot reflects the theories of the French occultists such as Etteilla, and, from what we have discussed above, turns out to be an excellent name for the deck. Crowley's deck and book subsequently had a significant influence on the development and popularization of modern Tarot in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century -- almost as great as that of Waite, although the swirling artwork of Ms. Harris has remained rather inimitable compared to Ms. Smith's simple icons. Nevertheless this author accords Crowley due credit for recognizing that the Qabalistic occultists were on the right track but did not have the assignments right. However, as we shall see, Crowley failed to crack the code properly for a number of simple reasons. In addition, like Etteilla, he arbitrarily altered the names and attributions of some of the traditional trump cards. For example, Strength became Lust, Justice became Adjustment, Judgment became the enigmatic Aeon, and World became Universe. His expansion of the World to the Universe is perhaps acceptable, and many subsequent decks have followed this latter idea.

The American mystic and occultist, Paul Foster Case, (1884-1954) was a member of the Golden Dawn organization in the U.S. during the years 1920-21 and rapidly rose to a position of leadership, but eventually resigned due to differences in approach and founded Builders of the Adytum (BOTA), an organization based in Los Angeles,

California. Case refined the artwork of the Waite-Smith deck and produced one of the best sets of Trump cards this author has ever seen. He printed an edition of his Trumps in an extra large size with no colors so that the owner of the deck could add his own colors and study the dynamics of color in the energy of the Trumps. He also designed an elaborate course in the study of the Tarot and its occult background. You can order this course and the BOTA cards on the Internet at the BOTA website.

C. C. Zain (Elbert Benjamine 1882-1951), a noted astrologer and occult leader of the Church of Light, developed a notable Egyptian style pack. This set a precedent for "Egyptian" decks in the United States. Other occultists who influenced the development of the Tarot include J.A. Knapp and Manly P. Hall. James Wanless designed a very creative deck that he calls the "Voyager Tarot". The Tantra master Shri Bhagwan Rajneesh (Osho) produced a popular deck and book that he called the "Zen Tarot".

### **What is the "Best" Tarot Deck?**

In recent years Tarot has become very popular throughout Europe and the United States. From there it has spread around the world and hundreds of different decks in various styles and with varying levels of quality have appeared. This leads us to the puzzling question of how to pick the best deck. What are the real meanings of the Major and Minor Arcana?

In this book we will present a fully integrated theory of the Tarot Trumps with analysis of the accompanying Courts and Pips. Whether or not our theory is historically correct is not important. We may never know for sure the intent of the original designers. Nevertheless, as Crowley accurately pointed out in his Book of Thoth (p. 4) "The only theory of ultimate interest about the Tarot is that it is an admirable symbolic picture of the Universe, based on the data of the Holy Qabalah." In this book I will present a coherent interpretation of the Tarot along with a practical way of using it for personal development.

### **The Vedas, Vedic Gods, and Vedic Rishis**

In ancient India seers (Rishis) cognized the hymns of the Rig Veda. The pundits passed this wisdom on orally from generation to generation until the time when cultural contact with the Middle East led to the introduction of the alphabet. The pundits then transcribed the Vedic texts onto palm leaves and these texts were also handed down in a written form together with the oral tradition. Over time the original meanings of the Vedas faded from the memories of the pundits. They

venerated the texts as holy writings and eventually raised the preservation of this wisdom to the level of a religious ritual. Eventually all that remained was the texts and the rituals, but the original content was lost. Only a few isolated sages recalled or rediscovered from time to time the true intent of the Vedas.

The Vedic texts present mythical stories and panegyrics devoted to what seem at first glance to be nature gods. In fact, these portrayals are mnemonic literary devices to aid in teaching people about how the body and mind functions. In particular the *Rig Veda* is an anatomy of the human brain with its attendant nervous system. It is a map describing which parts of the brain control which aspects of the physiology and psychology. The Vedas treat each component of the brain as a living being with certain physical attributes and personal characteristics. Each such being, or *deva*, interacts with all the other *deva* beings to form an integrated wholeness of mind and body. The following chart shows the Twelve Houses of the Zodiac as Vedic Gods and lists their names and the portion of the brain that they represent.

Sign	Devata	Organ of Brain	Function
Aries	Rudra (Shiva)	Medulla Oblongata	Primitive Brain, instincts
Taurus	Indra (Bull-like)	Cerebral Cortex	Cognitive function
Gemini	Ashwins (Twins)	Pons	Hemisphere crossover
Cancer	Indra's Chariot	Skull	Protects Brain and transports it
Leo	Savitri/Agni	Corona Radiata	Midbrain signals to cortex
Virgo	Shakti (Parvati)	Pituitary Gland	Controls glandular system
Libra	Pushan	Cerebellum	Controls sense of balance
Scorpio	Shiva's Eye	Pineal Gland	Intuition
Sagit.	Indra/Rudra's Bow	Trigeminal Nerve	Controls facial muscles
Capric.	Vishnu	Spinal Cord and Nerves	Conduit for signals
Aquar.	Soma	Cerebrospinal fluid	Bathes brain in hormones
Pisces	Shiva's Trident	Olfactory lobes	Sense of smell (plus pineal)

Other entities include Hiranyagarbha (the egg cell), Tvastri (the pattern of folding and differentiation of cells to form the foetus), Lotus-Born Brahma (the foetus attached to the placenta), pitris (genetic codes), Narayan (womb), Saraswati (ovaries), Sesha (mother's spine), and so on. The above correspondences are based on a work by Vasant G. Rele, *The Vedic Gods as Figures of Biology* (Cosmo Publications, 2002).

The pantheons of the Zend Avesta, Greeks, Romans, and Northern European tribes --

essentially all the Indo-European mythologies are local variations of the same basic system. All these mythologies have gradually filled with non-essential details over the centuries and the essential meanings have been lost.

### The Sequence of the Trumps

In the European tradition there have been several traditional sequences for the Trumps.

Here are some examples:

<b>Wirth</b>	<b>Crowley</b>	<b>Waite, Case</b>
0. Fool	Fool	Fool
1. Magician (Magus)		
2. Priestess		
3. Empress		
4. Emperor		
5. Pope (High Priest, Hierophant)		
6. Lover(s)		
7. Chariot		
8. Justice	Adjustment	Strength
9. Hermit		
10. Wheel of Fortune		
11. Strength	Lust = Strength	Justice
12. Hanged Man		
13. Death		
14. Temperance	Art	Temperance
15. Devil		
16. Tower		
17. Star		
18. Moon		
19. Sun		
20. Judgment	Aeon	Judgement
21. World	Universe	World
0. Fool		

The Crowley sequence is notable because of the name changes. The Waite/Case sequence is notable because they made Justice and Strength switch places. Most decks follow one of these sequences and stay close to these names. However, these are by no means the only sequences, and the Egyptians had no standard sequence, which makes sense if you are to randomly select a card or a Trump house as your

oracle. The early hand-painted Visconti-Sforza cards were not numbered either. Putting numbers on the Trump cards implies a hierarchy of importance or power being assigned to the cards. This may be appropriate to the design of an Oracle Board, but is not suitable for a deck of cards unless you are playing games in which the Trumps have a gradation of powers assigned to them for trick-taking.

The set of Tarot Trumps is a pantheon similar to the Vedic pantheon, but derives from ancient Egypt. The Tarot system portrays the various organs of the human body along with their respective physiological and psychological functions instead of focusing primarily on the brain and nervous system as the Vedic system does. I will indicate in my discussion of individual cards how the Tarot Trump system works.

Remember these two key principles for understanding the art on the Tarot cards as they evolved in Europe. (1) The iconography of each Trump card is an elaboration of the pictograph of a Hebrew letter. (2) The iconography of each Trump card also derives from the ancient Egyptian icons for their major **neter** deities. To understand the Trumps as we have them we must study Qabalah and the culture of ancient Egypt. The traditional Tarot Trumps are a weaving of these two principles combined with an updating of the art to accord with medieval artistic standards. Card design has continued to evolve from era to era by maintaining the core iconographic principles and constantly updating the graphic techniques to accord with popular taste.

Because the numerical values of the Hebrew letters do **not** follow the sequence of the natural numbers, **therefore all the Tarot editions that put sequential natural numbers on the Trump cards are incorrect (from the Qabalistic viewpoint).** The present-day numbering of course can be an aid in playing games. The Fool is usually assigned the number Zero. The Hebrews used the expression **Ain Soph** (No Limit) to represent Nothingness. So we could say that Magician's Eye (O = OaYN = 70) doubles as Zero.

We have to be careful when criticizing the creators of Tarot decks, because for much of its history over the past nearly two thousand years the Tarot was a dangerous and forbidden subversive tool, and a person found playing with it could be subject to harsh political and religious suppression. Decks survived among the populace as a form of amusement. But in medieval times even playing with cards and gambling were also looked on as frivolous or even degenerate pastimes by the political and religious hierarchy.



Only adepts and occultists had access to deeper understanding of the cards. The occultists formed secret societies to study and share their interpretations. They deliberately scrambled the information printed on the cards so as to keep the "True Meaning" secret. Therefore the presence of Hebrew letters and numbers on the cards tells us these symbols are relevant, but does not guarantee that they are assigned correctly to the Trump images. This is also true of zodiac signs and other esoteric symbols that sometimes appear on cards. Even the published interpretations of the cards may not always be trusted.

Once we understand the proper meaning of each Trump, we will discover a "natural" order behind the sequence of Trumps and the sequence of the Hebrew letters. (This sequence in some ways closely resembles the sequence of the Hexagrams in the text of the Book of Changes as it comes down to us.) The Trumps are a deck of flash cards for the alphabet, and the alphabet letters can be combined in various ways to spell words. In fact one way to divine with the Trumps is to select three cards and study them as spelling Hebrew roots and words.

All possible sequences are viable sequences. This is the principle we use when we shuffle the deck prior to doing a layout. So each sequence of the Trumps is a layout. It provides a viewpoint for studying the cards. I will have more remarks on Trump layouts in a special section devoted to that subject. However, as a general principle, each Trump contains all the other Trumps and the full value of the whole deck. The deck is rather like a hologram, and this is necessary for it to succeed as a medium for divination. You get a valid answer to any question no matter what cards you pick or in what order.

### **The Relation of the Trumps to the Alphabet**

Since the body's organs are all important, we can not assign an absolute hierarchical or sequential order to them. However, since the organs and their icons also represent the letters of the alphabet, and there is a strong tradition of associating the Trumps with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, we can take the traditional sequence of the letters as one appropriate sequence for learning them. I have never seen an analysis of why the letters follow the sequence we find. I guess everyone just assumed it was a historical accident and other cultures that adopted the alphabet system simply more or less followed along. I decided to look into it a bit, and discovered that the Phoenician/Hebrew traditional alphabet sequence provides profound insight into the interpretation of the Trump card icons. However, this sequence by no means vitiates the "traditional" sequence (e.g. Wirth's sequence), for that order also has its value, as

we shall see when we study Trump layouts.

When we relate the Trumps to the alphabet, we do not refer to the English alphabet with its 26 letters, nor do we mean the ordinary Hebrew alphabet as many imagine. The clue to the proper approach is in the number 22. The current Hebrew alphabet contains 27 letters, of which five are actually variations of original letters written in an alternate orthography to be used as finals. Scholars invented the finals for at least two reasons. First, they aided in the scansion of texts by marking word boundaries. The ancient Hebrew texts of the Bible consist simply of arrays of letters. As with ancient Chinese texts the reader must scan and then parse the grammar of the text. This sometimes leads to ambiguities in interpretation as we discussed earlier. Therefore the substitution of a final letter into the orthography may sometimes represent an arbitrary editorial decision made by scribes, but on the other hand it definitely helped in parsing texts (while rendering certain interpretations “invisible” to the reader). Second, the expansion of the alphabet to 27 letters ( $3 \times 3 \times 3 = 27$ ) enriched the numerical interpretations possible with the Qabalistic methods of Gematria adding a whole new galaxy of possible interpretations and allowed for a complete system for writing numbers. I personally do not subscribe to either of these “benefits”, and believe they served to obscure the original purposes of the texts and confuse readers. Other numbering systems were available for Hebrews to use. I believe that Gematria originally only included the idea that words with the same letters had similar meanings, not that all words with the same numerical sums had related meanings. Going down that road leads to everything being equal to everything else, which is fine from a unified viewpoint, but does not yield useful information.

The fact that there are only 22 Trumps in the Tarot tells us that we must refer to the ancient forms of the Hebrew letters that many believe originated with the Phoenicians if we want to link the letters to the Trumps. Currently the decks that are coded with Hebrew letters (except for the Senet Oracle Tarot) make use of the “modern” Hebrew forms. These forms are highly stylized with serifs and often bear little resemblance to the primitive forms of the letters.

The early letters were pictographic signs derived from Egyptian and Sumerian glyphs. Each letter represented a physical object important to the semi-nomadic Semitic peoples who originally selected them to represent their speech. Each symbol also had a name that began with the sound that the pictograph was chosen to represent phonetically. The name of a letter corresponded to the original meaning of the



















pictograph with which it was written. Each pictographic letter symbolized a cluster of meanings that derived from associations with the original object symbolized. Some of the pictographs represented important body parts (such as the eye or hand), and their names are still used today in Hebrew to represent those body parts. This is a clue to the actual intended significance of the letter-map. Other letters represented important items of daily life, such as ox, camel, house, rope, hook, and so on. Below is a chart showing the 22 letters with their names, pronunciations, meanings, and numerical values (each letter is also a number). In the next section of the book I present a detailed description of each Tarot Trump card's iconography and its relation to the particular letter that corresponds to it.

Letter	Sound	Name	Meaning	Number
𐤀	A (silent)	aleph	ox, bull	01, 1000
𐤁	B, v	beth	house	02
𐤂	G, gh	gimel	camel	03
𐤃	D, dh	daleth	door	04
𐤄	H (light h)	hey	flail	05
𐤅	V, w	vav	hook, nail, shepherd's crook	06
𐤆	Z	zain	weapon, knife	07
𐤇	H (heavy h)	heth	rope, net	08
𐤈	T (retroflex)	teth	wheel, nave; teyt = mud, clay	09
𐤉	Y	yod	hand	10
𐤊	K, Kh	kaph	palm of hand, cave	20
𐤋	L	lamed	teaching	30
𐤌	M	mem	waters (mayim)	40
𐤍	N	nun	dwarf	50
𐤎	S (retroflex?)	samekh	aid, staff	60
𐤏	O (laryngeal)	oayn	eye	70
𐤐	P, Ph	peh	mouth	80
𐤑	Tz	tzadde	TzD = to hunt, shoot	90
𐤒	Q (guttural)	qoph	monkey	100
𐤓	R, (?)	resh	head, beginning	200
𐤔	S, Sh	shin	tooth	300
𐤕	T, Th	tav	mark, twins	400

There was no zero in the Hebrew numbering system and the numbers do not correspond to Roman or Arabic numerals, thus all the numerical values assigned on Tarot cards are wrong from the standpoint of Hebrew numerology. Also the

assignment of Hebrew letters is wrong in many cases because the card's image was a more elaborate drawing of the idea depicted by the primitive letter glyph and the meaning that had been assigned to it by its name. The letters later changed so much that the imagery was no longer obvious and students of Tarot could not figure out how the cards matched the letters.

## Encoding of Meaning in Many Hebrew Roots

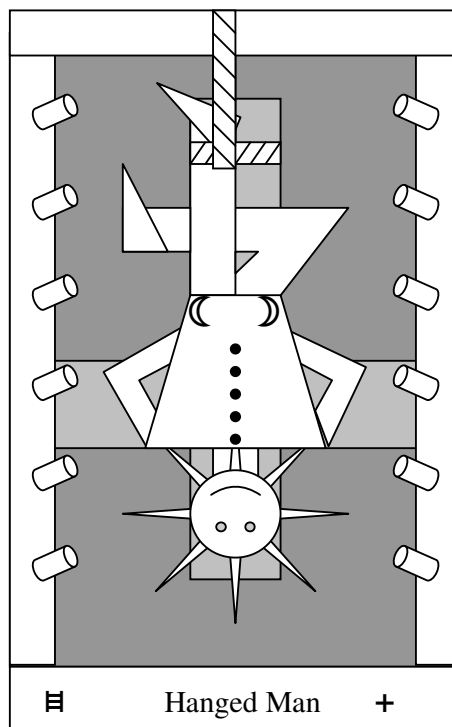
A peculiar feature of the Hebrew language (and other Semitic languages written with this alphabet) is that many words (and perhaps all the words) in the language encode in the sequence of letter-sounds the meanings that they convey. Since such a small set of letters is used, each letter has to carry a considerable variety of associated meanings. The meaning of a word in Hebrew is then derived by a conventional interpretation of the cluster of pictographic and ideographic notions encoded in its spelling. Obviously this means that each word may have a variety of possible meanings of which the Hebrews conventionally chose to use only one or several. It also means that the Qabalistic principle of permutation (TMVRH = temurah) holds to a certain extent. All words containing the same set of letters, regardless of the sequence, will have the same constellation of component ideas. The sequence may give a slant to the meaning, but there will be an ideographic connection akin to an etymological relation. For example,  or  (B) originally is a pictogram of a house. In Hebrew usage the single letter stands for the preposition “in”. The idea derives from the notion that a person lives IN a house. The  (N) has a diminutive sense and usually stands for small things. The word  (BN) means “son” and can be analyzed as the small one of the house, where the house stands for the patri-lineal Jewish family, and the little dwarf is the future father of the house. If we turn it around, NB is the prophet who sees the future and finds inspiration. In a son we may see the future of the house. The letter  (A) stands for the bull, symbol of the sun's creative energy, and  (AB) is “father”, the Sun-Bull Patriarch of the House. Turn it around and you have  (BA), to come or arrive. The father is the one who has already arrived as the head of a family. The son is the future head of a family. The actual usual root for prophecy and inspiration adds the bull letter –  (NBA) and this suggests the little one who will come to be the father. The letter  (L) stands for the “teaching”, and  (AL) is a Hebrew word for God – the Teaching or Teacher of the Sun-Bull. If we turn it around  is the Hebrew for “not”. A reversed spelling of the name “god” signifies the act of denial. As you can see from the above alphabet chart, “god” is an interesting word. We will have a much deeper understanding of it once we explore the Trumps in detail. Maybe God is a concept that exists only in the imagination of man and has no reality to it. Or maybe God is a

concept that one can **not** adequately commit to the symbols of letters. In a sense the latter consideration is true for every idea, experience, or feeling that we try to express with words.

## Zodiac and Planets

Scholars and occultists have noticed a definite correlation between the Trumps and the constellations of the zodiac. The 22 Trumps comprise the 12 zodiac signs, plus the 7 planets, plus 3 others. The three others are sometimes thought to be the “3 Mothers” that go with the 7 doubles and 12 singles, as described in the Sepher Yetzirah, an early Qabalistic text. However the “3 Mothers” system does not gibe with the zodiac/planets system. Therefore either the “3 Mothers” system is wrong or it is just a separate classification. I suspect that it has been scrambled – probably deliberately. Further evidence for this is the lack of any known “double” pronunciations for G and R. Crowley put the Christian Qabalistic Rose-Cross design on the backs of his Tarot cards with its 22-petal rose in petal layers of 3, 7, and 12. However, he strongly suspected that the obvious correlation with the zodiac for some of the Trump cards was evidence of some scrambling of the true sequence by adepts in order to disguise the teaching from non-initiates. I believe his hunch was correct in this respect. But the final list that Crowley produced looks just about as bad as any others. Maybe he too was holding out on the non-initiates.

### The Hanged Man



Here is my suggested "astrological" sequence for the Trumps. I adhere as closely as I can to the traditional order, but there are a few cases that simply must differ. My astrological sequence begins with the Hanged Man – a real surprise – and generates a sequence not seen elsewhere. Man is the Hanged Man, stuck between Heaven and Earth. He enters this world hung upside down for nine months in his mother's womb, and perhaps this is a clue that we are living upside down in our so-called real world.

My Sequence	Planet	B.O.T.A. Sequence	Zodiac
+    𓄐    (Hanged) Man	Man		
-----			
☿    ☿    Fool	Heaven	0.    Fool	
♂    ♂    Magician	Mercury	1.    Magician	
		2.    Priestess	
♀    ♀    Empress	Venus	3.    Empress	
		4.    Emperor	
-----			
♄    ♀    Judgment (Judge)			Aries
♅    ♂    Pope		5.    Pope	Taurus
♊    ♂    Lovers		6.    Lovers	Gemini
♈    ♂    Chariot		7.    Chariot	Cancer
♌    ♂    Strength		8.    Strength	Leo
♍    ♀    Priestess			Virgo
-----			
♂    ♂    Hermit	Mars	9.    Hermit	
♃    ♀    Emperor	Jupiter		
♄    ♂    Wheel of Fortune	Saturn	10.    Wheel of Fortune	
-----			
♎    ♂    Justice		11.    Justice	Libra
		12.    Hanged Man	
♏    ♂    Death		13.    Death	Scorpio
		14.    Temperance	
		15.    Devil	
♐    ♂    Tower		16.    Tower	Sagittarius
♑    ♂    Devil			Capricorn
♒    ♂    Temperance			Aquarius
♓    ♂    Star		17.    Star	Pisces

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☾ • ☿	Moon	Moon	18. Moon
☼ • ♀	Sun	Sun	19. Sun
			20. Judgment
♁ • ♁	Earth	Earth	21. The World

The Planets show the Fool with his head ☼ (the sun glyph) up his ass because he imagines himself upside right when he is really hanging upside down. The Zodiac is the Life Cycle. For more details, see below and also see my discussion of the Hanged Man card in volume two of this work.

My principles in creating this list are to:


- \* List the planets in order from inner to outer, ending with moon, sun, and earth.
- \* Separate the planets into three groups -- inner, outer, "core" (moon, sun, earth).
- \* Put zodiac in order with three planetary groups of three at front, middle, and end.
- \* Follow the traditional Trump sequence as closely as possible.
- \* Parse intelligible Hebrew messages from the sequence.
- \* Use reasonable rules of transposition and grammatical shorthand to read the text.

After allowing for seven classical planets (Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn) and twelve zodiac signs, we have three cards left over. Occultists think of these as the three "Mothers" and associate them with the letters A, M, and S (☿☿☿). This is an interesting triumvirate if we think of it as the Ra, Thoth, and Set or Light, Water, and the Illusion of Life. Alchemists tended to associate the traditional 3 Mothers with Mercury, Sulfur, and Salt. However, I came up with another trio: Earth, Man, and Heaven. According to my assignment of the letters these three Mothers turn out to be B, H, and Q (☿☿☿). **HQ** (☿☿) means limit, custom, or law statute. Hence in Hebrew the three-letter sequence spells **B-HQ** (☿☿☿), which means "within the limit, custom, or statute". Each letter and each word creates a boundary that defines a mental or physical creation. Human life takes place within the boundaries of the universe. All creations are found somewhere in the mind of Man that is bounded between Earth and Heaven. Therefore these three letters are the Core Elements of the Universe and worthy of being called the Mothers.

This layout sequence confirms and expands an idea promoted by Manly Hall – all the Trumps are in the Fool. We accept the idea of putting the Fool at the top. However, he can not be the first card. Comparing our list with the traditional list, the first discrepancy is that the first card in our list becomes the Hanged Man.

We place the Hanged Man first, above the Fool, because he is beyond foolishness. He is the rope. The letter **𐎠** represents a rope or a ladder. The Fool (Heaven) hangs from the rope and the whole Universe hangs from the Heavenly Fool and hangs him as well. Where the rope is tied is an interesting question. Study the structure of the card and formulate your answer before I tell you my idea.

On the Hanged Man card, the Man's outer frame from which he hangs is the zodiac that rotates around the heavens. The Hanged Man hangs from a single rope so that he can rotate and get the foolish impression that the heavens are rotating around him. Count the 12 knots on the wooden frame on the Hanged Man's traditional European card (See Marseilles Tarot, Wirth, et al.) The planets form buttons, or chakras, on his suit (there should be five buttons). The man hangs upside down with the Sun of his head glowing down below as his Root Chakra. Earth becomes the foundation on which the whole frame stands.

The World  supports the frame and is the frame that wraps around the whole of creation. It is the universe. The letter B (**𐎠**) is at the bottom of the list and also wraps around to be the first letter of an endless string. The rope attached to the heel represents Man's status (**𐎠**) hanging out in the universe. The figure dangling from the rope is the Fool. From here we read the list from the top of the Fool down and from the bottom of the list up.

We imagine the Sun placed on the Fool's buttocks between his legs. The Fool has a cerebral rectal inversion (like Jesus and the Mullah Nasruddin his head rides on his ass), so we count backwards. Reading up the list and down the Fool, we find his second chakra is the Moon. In ancient India the Sex Chakra always has the crescent Moon symbol and the buttocks are commonly referred to as the moon. This is the fertile crescent pubic/hip bone that shields the bladder and cushions our interaction with the world. Just above the Moon on the list there follow six zodiac signs that relate to the first and second chakras (the second half of the zodiacal year from 12 to 7) and are distributed on one of the two posts of the frame. Next, at the middle of the list, we encounter the three outer planets -- Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars. Saturn (the Fool's Navel) and Jupiter (the Fool's Diaphragm and Solar Plexus moving up the belly) form the Power Chakra. Red Mars is the Heart Chakra. The complementary color of Martian Blood-Red is Emerald Green, the esoteric color of the Heart Chakra.



We then have the other six signs of the zodiac associated with the upper chakras distributed along the other post of the frame. As we near the top of the list and the neck of the Fool we find the two inner planets, Venus and Mercury. Venus/Juno is the Empress -- love-mate and assistant to the Emperor. She alternates with her mate, Jupiter (Zeus, the Emperor). Venus/Juno is the Throat chakra. Speaking from the diaphragm (Jupiter) we express love through our individuality. Fast moving Mercury is the Eye Chakra, the messenger of the gods in this interpretation, and acts as the Magician, who moves quicker than the eye. The Heavenly (Divine) Fool is the Crown Chakra. He connects us to the Higher Self, and thus is our point that touches Heaven. Christ crucified on the cross personifies the Hanged Man. He is the personification of the Higher Self as YOU. Of course our Fool is upside down so the crown chakra becomes the sun sitting on the root chakra. The rope above the Crown Chakra is Jacob's Ladder, the connection to the Higher Self and Higher States of Consciousness. Jacob's name in Hebrew means "heel", and the Hanged Man hangs by the heel he grabbed onto when he entered the world (Genesis 25:26). A heel is a stubborn and selfish person.

The Foolish Hanged Man's glowing head on his inverted body tells us that the Sun of the Higher Self is placed at the bottom of the list for almost all of mankind. The Highest Source is flipped over and goes into the Root Chakra. This is how we put ourselves into the physical body. We enter through the Root Chakra and are supposed to leave through the Crown Chakra. Unfortunately many denizens of this planet still insist that they are not Fools, so they remain tied upside down to the frame of the universe and learn patience through suffering. So we can begin our work here on Earth and awaken the Solar Life Force deep within us to cleanse and purify our whole being. This card is a powerful meditation.

Aside from putting the Hanged Man at the top of our list, the second major deviation in our list is the Priestess. Many Tarot experts assign her to the Moon, which is ridiculous since there already is a Moon Trump. The female, watery nature of the Priestess definitely gives her a relation with the Moon, as we shall see in our detailed analysis. But that does not make her replace the Moon Trump. She obviously goes with Virgo. Many ancient temple priestesses had vows of celibacy and therefore were virgins. The Vestal Virgins of Rome are famous examples. The Priestess therefore comes at the end of the first sequence of zodiac signs, which is where she is found in the original book that is up in the sky and can not be easily edited. As we shall see in a moment, this is a big joke.

Our third divergence from the usual assignments of the zodiac is the choice of Judgment for Aries rather than the Emperor. Aries is the first sign in the zodiac sequence. The letter R that we will associate with Judgment means “head” or “beginning”. The connection is that the head is the first part of a baby that enters the world, so the real meaning of the letter is “beginning”. This is appropriate for the first sign of the zodiac. Judgment suggests a Judge. According to the Bible, when the Israelites began their national history after the Exodus, their leaders were not actually kings, but judges. The judge’s job was to settle disputes between the clans or between individuals. The spiritual leadership came from the priests, a responsibility traditionally assigned to the tribe of Levi.

In ancient Egypt (where the Israelites sojourned as the Hyksos before forming their national identity) the pharaohs played the dual role of chief judge and chief priest. They symbolized this authority with the flail and crook. The Egyptians characterized them as the people of the shepherd’s crook. These two symbols also covered their responsibilities as head farmer and head shepherd. In my Astrology List the Emperor comes after the Hermit. The Emperor is actually like a Hermit. He isolates himself high above the people and must cultivate himself with spiritual exercises to be worthy of his high responsibilities.

The only other variance of our list with tradition is that the sequence of Temperance, Devil, and Tower must be reversed in order to agree with the order of the zodiac. We can not change the zodiac sequence because it is fixed there in the sky and was there in the oral tradition long before any written records. Therefore it is the Trump sequence that we must change.

All in all we discover that our sequence begins in Heaven, and ends in the World. The whole thing hangs within the body of Man. The list of Trumps literally "Hangs" on the Hanged Man, dangling down from Heaven, just as he hangs suspended by a rope on a frame.

### **Secret Messages in the Alphabet Trumps**

In this section we will play around with three arrangements of the Hebrew letters that we have discussed in the book: the Astrological sequence based on the stars and planets, the traditional alphabetical sequence that children memorize in school, and the layout of letters on the Senet Oracle Board. This is an exploration.

## The Celestial Trump Sequence

Now that we have arranged our list in an order that “hangs” from the Hanged Man and accords with the ancient structure of our solar system and its place in the galaxy, we can examine the sequence of Hebrew letters in our list for messages that it may convey. To our surprise we find it is not random and quite a lot of strange material pops out at us. Since you may think my list is arbitrarily constructed, you do not have to take my analysis of it very seriously. However, you might wonder how it is the sequence of zodiac signs that we have received from the ancients came about.

First, let me introduce a bit about Hebrew alphabet codes. There are many ways of encoding Hebrew, but this one is very simple.

- We forget about vowels and use only the 22 primitive letters.
- A is silent, so it is sometimes omitted and has to be inserted in decoding.
- Medial V and Y function as vowels and may have to be inserted in decoding.
- A and O can sometimes alternate, because they differ only in intensity.
- S and S sound virtually the same, so they are interchangeable.
- The Trump-letter correspondences can help us associate letters and meanings.

As I mentioned above, the first two letters (Hanged Man and Fool) spell the word **HQ** (HQ), which means a rule, statute, or custom. This word suggests the statutes of the Jewish law in the Torah or the customs that people adopt as their conventional way of living. The verbal root of this word is **HQQ**, “to carve”. The opening sentence of the SePheR YeTziRaH says that God (YaH) “engraved **HQQ**. . . and created His universe with 32 mystical paths of Wisdom, forming 3 books (Sepharim) with comprising text (Sepher), number (Sephar), and communication (Sippur).” The 32 paths refer to the 22 letters and 10 numbers of the Tree of Life -- and the Tarot of course with its 22 Trumps and 10 Pip numbers. So the expression in the Sepher Yetzirah **HQQ JF** (God engraved) relates to **HQ OSP** (Osirian Law) which is what our list text declares.

The three letters after **HQ** are **OSP** (OSR). The Hebrew letters **ש** (S) and **ו** (S) stand for the Empress and Devil Trumps. The letters sound almost the same and thus can alternate. The sharp-toothed Devil (**ו**) is one's closest ally (**ש**) who assists you on the fastest path of evolution by challenging your weak spots where you need to develop. This is the lesson of the projection of one's resisted identity. When you no longer accept that a certain quality describes you, you label someone else close at hand with that quality and they become your big headache. The problems are that

person's fault.


The word OWP means "ten" and also suggests wealth and abundance – just what people want but do not have and just what the Devil offers as a challenge. Also SR (WP = Shar = Sir) means King, Ruler, or Leader. The old Babylonian word for King was Osar. The word was widespread in the ancient world. The Law of Abundance is the Law of the King with the Eye of Wisdom.


An important Qabalistic principle that nobody ever bothers to point out is that the names of major Egyptian deities appear as important words in the Hebrew language and also play a key role in the opening verses of Genesis. These Hebrew words connect to the myths of the Egyptian gods. Thus we find a hidden imprint of ancient Egyptian culture in Hebrew and in Genesis. The word for ten (abundance and fullness) in Hebrew corresponds to the Egyptian god Osiris. Osiris embodies in his name and myth the ancient Egyptian Science of abundance and immortality. He represents the material abundance that the Nile flood brought to the people of Egypt and the ability to stand back and watch the pageant of life with equanimity. Another name for Osiris is **Tenen**, and this word gives us the English word ten.








The famous biblical "Ten Commandments" carved on tablets by Moses expound aspects of the esoteric teachings of immortality that Moses mastered in the Temple of Osiris during his sojourn in Egypt. We do not know whether there was an historical leader of Jews in Egypt called Moses. However, Moses means birth in Egyptian, and most of the pharaohs of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> dynasties were called Ra-meses – the continual rebirth of Ra. The 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty had 4 Thut-mese pharaohs (births of Thoth). We also know that the Senet Oracle Game Board was organized in terms of the number 10.

The tantric resonance between the Empress and the Emperor activates secret techniques of breathing that clear out imbalances in the physiology and prepare the body and mind for immortality. So the first two words refer to the Ten Commandments or the Law of Asar, the Lord of Abundance, and the Sepher Yetzirah says that God engraved the laws of his universe. It is ironic that the second of the Ten Commandments forbids the making of **OWF** graven images (Exodus 20: 2-17), while the Torah (Exodus 32:15-16; 34:1, 4, and 28) explicitly describes the ten commandments as images graven on stone by God and at his command and Exodus 28:36 describes God commanding a golden plate to be made with his name engraved on it as a holy icon (⋄▽W ⋈ ⚡⚡⚡). I suppose this means that God specifically

forbids us to take his own commandments too seriously. He does not want us “bowing down unto them and serving them” as to graven images of idols. The verb “to make” (OWF) is a variant of OWP.

Many Tarot artists draw the Emperor with icons suggesting Aries, thus substituting *H* for *R* at this point in the sequence. “Making” OWF is the fourth (and final) stage in the Qabalistic process of creation. It is the crossover where a creation begins to become visible as an objective phenomenon, a denizen of the Kingdom of the World (Malkuth). The Empress is the Emperor's assistant and support, and her Trump Card represents fruition and abundance. The Egyptians write this with the pictograph of a throne and pronounce it **As**. When the female ending '-t' is added we get the name **Aset** (Isis), the Empress consort of Osiris, whose name means “The Seat”. The seat supports the one sitting on it. For example, **Aset** @  is an assistant priest, a supporting hand who helps in the temple.

The next word we find in our message is YX (VT). This is shorthand for the Hebrew word “letter” (AVT, VYX). The Bull's Head first letter of the word (V) has been decapitated because it is silent, but the word is still quite obvious even though the head letter is missing. And the head of our mixed up Fool is missing, and has fallen down below. Apparently the message of the Zodiac Trumps calls to our attention a particular letter of the alphabet. The next three letters tell us the esoteric meaning of that letter. These letters form the word,  (GYD), which means “penis”. As Hanged Man the Fool's head hangs down where his penis would ordinarily be if he were upside right.

Osiris (The Eye on the Throne ) marries Isis (The Throne-Support ) and Set (The Revolter, Satan) marries Nephthys (“The House of All”). The Eye is the eye of Ra-Horus, the Eye of Intuition and Enlightenment. This Eye of Wisdom thrives on the Cobra Life Energy, known to the Egyptians as @r@t and to the Greeks as Uraeus. The @-r@t analyzes as    = The Helping Hand of Ra-et, the Consort of Ra and is often written as . Set can play with all things (Nephthys), but he still is jealous that Osiris has Isis. He is also sterile and sires no offspring in spite of his powerful sexual libido. Coveting Isis, Set murders Osiris and dismembers his corpse. Sorrowful Isis and Nephthys cooperate to recover the scattered body parts and reunite them. Then Thoth uses his Magic Ankh , the Science of Immortality, to restore the corpse of Osiris back to life. However, one piece remains missing from the revitalized mummy – you guessed it -- the penis.

The idea behind this odd incident in the story is that in the evolution of consciousness life energy that usually transmits sexually converts via a tantric awakening of the penis into a higher vibration of spiritual energy. The Aware Will (Horus Awakened) transcends birth and death, and therefore no longer depends on the "penis" as a means of carrying on life from generation to generation once a person has realized his Osirian enlightened nature. Osiris opens his Eye of Horus and becomes a transcendental witness to all that happens. The hidden message of the Zodiac seems to point out specifically this aspect of the story in its starry message. The three Trumps that form the word for "penis" are the Chariot  $\wedge$ , Strength  $\mathfrak{F}$ , and Priestess  $\nabla$ . These three then correlate to Justice  $\mathfrak{I}$ , the Trump that represents the weighing of the penis (I mean "heart") in the Egyptian mythology. The sensitive head of the penis connects directly to the Heart Chakra. Thus we see in the iconography the "heart" placed in the phallic scale of Justice. The heart of Osiris is his true phallus, not the anatomical fixture for begetting children. Osiris as a mummy becomes a fully body erect phallus.

In between the Priestess  $\nabla$  (vagina) and Justice  $\mathfrak{I}$  (penis) we find the Hermit Mars, a barren red planet followed by Jupiter  $\mathfrak{F}$  and Saturn  $\otimes$ . The Hermit lives alone and therefore inevitably practices celibacy. His letter is K ( $\Upsilon$ ). This letter stands alone (Hermitlike) in the sequence as a word all by itself in Hebrew that means "is similar to". Syntactically it constructs a simile between the first half of the sequence and the second half of the sequence. So we can say that the first half of the message is "like" the second half. The two halves are mirror images of each other. The Hermit realizes that the whole world is a self reflection. Making love to someone is actually an elaborate form of masturbation. The letter K is a nice pictograph of a hand grasping a staff, just as the Hermit does. The Hermit learns how to grasp his staff properly.

The next two letters of the message are the planets Jupiter and Saturn. They require a secret transposition in order to read them correctly. Recall that the Emperor and Empress form an intimate couple. Therefore we can transpose the Samekh  $\mathfrak{K}$  of the Empress for the Hey  $\mathfrak{H}$  of the Emperor. This gives us the word  $\mathfrak{H}\otimes$ . This word refers to someone who revolts against authority, a Revolter. This is the hidden appellation of Set ( $ST = \mathfrak{H}\otimes$ ), the brother and murderer of Osiris. Set is the prototype of the Biblical Satan, and is also Seth, the son of Adam from whom we are descended. Cain killed Able, and there is no mention of children descending from Cain. But there may be confusion between Cain, the original Biblical fratricide and Set, the archetypal Egyptian fratricide. The third chakra is the seat of the ego power

that dominates the lives of most people on this planet. And this is where the conflict with Set takes place. That conflict is not good for digestion.

Our next word in the message is the letter L ל. This letter represents the Justice Trump and the sign of Libra. It is all about fairness and balance. Turn the Hebrew letter sideways to see the balance. Upright it exhibits a man with an erect phallus. In Hebrew this letter means to or toward. The name Lamed (teaching) is a euphemism for the sacred and secret science of the proper use of the phallus both for sexual activity and for personal evolution. This is the letter to which the first half of the zodiac refers us. Naturally it forms the first letter of the second half of the zodiac sequence. The icon of Justice depicts the ancient Egyptian tradition of the weighing of the heart of the deceased in the Hall of Justice. When we examine the scrolls that portray this event, we find the ritual is overseen by Anubis the Death Lord with Thoth as the High Priest recording the results. Thoth's monkey form often sits on the fulcrum of the scales to fiddle with the accuracy. One pan of the scales holds the heart, and the other pan holds the feather of Maat -- Truth. If the heart drops down, Set's friend **Ammet** (the Ego of the third chakra) will devour it. If it goes up or at least balances, then Horus, the fifth chakra son of Osiris, introduces the initiate to Osiris, the Eye of Wisdom and Intuition in the sixth chakra. The Cobra Eye Energy then fully unfolds in the Crown chakra linking the initiate to the immortal Higher Self. So the scales represent the penis in the second chakra. The fourth chakra heart is balanced with Truth in the sex chakra to validate whether the sexual activity of the initiate is motivated by egotistical lust or by true love. The penis is a waveguide or channel for the flow of Love and Life. The letter L here stands for a direction and can be taken as a preposition. We can translate it as "for the purpose of".

The next word זר is very curious. There is no such word in the dictionary. We must unlock its secret meaning. It must be important, because it carries the two powerful Trumps of Death and Tower. We just mentioned how Death adjusts the Scales of Justice. The Tower (Tz) is clearly a phallic symbol. Its letter name (Tzadde) means to shoot and depicts a penis shooting forth semen. Ejaculation is often called the Little Death since life energy is shot out of the body and the post coital sensation is a polar flip from excitement to relaxation or even stupor. The letter Z has the name Zain, which is a weapon. The penis is sometimes used as a weapon for rape and dishonoring of others. Violence and murder are usually expressions of sexual frustration.

The most remarkable aspect of Set (and Satan, the Devil) is his **irresponsible**

willfulness. He is an irresponsible rebel. Aries, the Ram represents the quality of Awareness that we call the Will. Aries is the first sign in the zodiac sequence. Aries comes first because of his willfulness. The Trump for Aries is Judgment. Aries is quick to judgment, and of course becomes his own harshest judge. Horus the Younger, the son of Osiris and the namesake of Ra, the Elder Horus (The Light within Man's Consciousness), avenges the (attempted) murder of his father by engaging in a great battle with Set. Set wounds Horus in the eye, and Horus wounds Set in the testicles, a fitting payoff for the loss of Osiris' penis. The name for Asar is written in Egyptian with the Eye glyph mounted on a throne. The Hebrew is also written with the Eye glyph. (The phonetics for the Egyptian actually are reversed, Os (**As**) meaning "seat" and **Ar** meaning "eye", but the eye is usually placed above the seat in the hieroglyphs. In any case during the battle an eye is traded for a testicle, and then Horus banishes Set to the desert lands. This is all a misunderstanding, because Osiris is a god and therefore is immortal and can not be killed. Horus also can not kill Set, because he too is immortal. So Horus and Set are wasting their time squabbling instead of working out a solution to their issues.

Using our transposition of the Emperor's ( $\text{⌘}$  *H*) for the Empress's ( $\text{⌘}$  *S*), we discover the son, Hor-us (*HR*) hiding within his father's name (*OSR/OSR*) right along with Set (*S*). Horus succeeds his father as Emperor of Life, the Sun at noonday, whereas Osiris becomes the Lord of the netherworld, the midnight of the Life Energy persisting through Death as the pure witness awareness – which is the essence of Hathor (Empress *S*).

The letter R has a pronunciation very close to Z, especially if we retroflex the Z into Zh. If we substitute the letter R for the letter Z, we start to get some meaning out of the odd combination of letters. RTz is the bishop in chess and has the basic meaning of "running". The root verb R-Tz-*H* is to desire, wish for, or like something. RTz[V]N is the Will. The Will is the feature of Awareness (Asar) that creates definitions. This is why Asar and Set are brothers. Asar is Witness Awareness, and Set is the Stubborn Willfulness. Together they can work together to make the Aware Will function. However, the Will must mature as Horus, a deliberate and responsible Will. Isis is the Throne of the Self-Identity that supports higher states of consciousness such as the Intuition of Osiris. Nephthys (Nebet-Het = Lady of the Temple) is the collection [House] of All Creations that are "Not I". Isis is your Life Mission, what you love and cherish the most. The Empress Hathor (Het-Her = House of Horus) is a similar principle, but represents a more exalted (prior or subtle) level of creation. She is abstract all-embracing subjective love and objective light.



Neb also has the sense of the Owner or Lord (Neb) of the House (Het), and Nebet is a Lady. So she may also represent the Small Self that sees itself as possessing things. She is the fitting consort to Set, the Will. However, there is a connection between the Egyptian **Neb** and the Hebrew Neb (prophet). The Egyptian word also carries the idea of “gold”. She may represent the full experience of the marvelous illusion of the “Set” of Trumps, the Major Arcana that cover all things in the universe. Our English word “set” used mathematically refers to a collection of items that are bound into a unified identity by means of a mental process called definition. All defined sets are illusions. The Set is the Master of the Great Illusion that by mentally separating one group of things from another group of things one creates something real and not just a mental definition in consciousness that one endows with the energy of one’s belief.

The Will makes decisions from a field of possible choices. The imposing of a definition gives a direction (L) to undefined Awareness. The male penis is the primal organ that gives direction to the flow of Life, and Tzadde is its function of ejaculating sperm. Resh is a beginning that starts with taking a decision, a judgment. The letter Nun (N) shows us the small jugs of the testicles (and prostate) that contain the sperm and the essential oils of life. Embedded within the sequence R-Tz-N is the sequence SP. SPN is the rabbit, a nearly universal symbol for fecundity and an esoteric totem animal for the preparation of the elixir of immortality. Osiris was often called the Beautiful Rabbit. (Rabbit is the totem for lively youth embodying the essence of existence.) We know that the S and S can alternate. We already read the Devil for the Empress. So now we read the Empress for the Devil. Making the transposition we get SPN, the process of hiding or covering. Within this hiding lurks SPh (Soph), the sacred wisdom of the Limit. All creations have an End (SPh). That is, by definition, any definition puts a boundary or limit on Undefined Awareness. The word "Undefined" in Hebrew is AYN S[V]Ph, "No End". It also has the idea of infinity – no limit being. So we could interpret the letter sequence SP N as code for S[V]Ph [AY]N along with our shorthand principles that alephs can be omitted because they are silent and Vavs and Yads can be omitted when they come between consonants because they just act like vowels. The Infinite is definitely hidden and secret (Amen in Egyptian), since all tangible and visible creations are finite. The silent, hidden Aleph (𐤀) further emphasizes this idea. Amen, the hidden, esoteric form of Ra, the Higher Self Source, is the primordial creative principle behind the whole Egyptian mythology and continues to this day as the invocation with which we end prayers. The ancient Egyptians drew the icon of **Amen** (or Min) as an ithyphallic male deity with two tall feathers on his crown, one arm raised in the symbol of the ecstatic **Ka**

(the electric orgasmic soul) and holding the Emperor's flail. With his other hand Min grasps his erect penis. The flail and feathers symbolize that the aroused sexual energy is guided to rise upward by a deliberate use of the breath. **Men** is the Egyptian iconographic symbol of the ancient tantric Cobra Breath technique. That is why we find both the gods and the pharaohs wearing headbands with cobras emerging from the brow. The cobra energy shines forth from the Eye Chakra showing that the higher intuition is activated. The same symbolism transfers to the hermetic caduceus of the Greeks that survives today as the universal symbol of the medical profession. Unfortunately most doctors would rather not confront the idea that if people awakened their own innate Life Energy in the manner suggested by their own logo, they would have much less need -- perhaps eventually no need -- for doctors.

So the Will plays with Definitions in the Undefined Realm of Awareness. Set is not SATisfied with seeing only Undefined Awareness. So he exercises Will in order to Define it. This seems to "kill" the Undefined Awareness and cuts it into pieces, but brings forth an abundance of possible creations all of which have an end to them in time, space and other dimensions. In this way Set (the Revolter against pure Undefined Awareness of the Father) seems to hide SPN from his Father. The actuality, of course, is that he experiences self-imposed exile (via Horus the Younger) from his Father Ra-Horus the Elder, who is also known widely among Christians as Amen ("So Be It") Ra. In the desert Set experiences the light and heat of the Sun more than anywhere else. RA in Hebrew means to "See". The mirror image of seeing is of course, A[V]R, or Light. That is why the first words of Ra, the Seer, in the Hebrew Torah are "Let there be Light". (YHY AVR.)

Interestingly, if we fuse the S of the Devil with the Tz of the Tower to give it a long viper-like hissing sound, we get TzPN, or Typhon, an alternate identity of Set that also has the meaning of "hiding" along with another idea of "ambushing". TzPhVN is north, the dark and hidden direction. Typhon/Set is the Egyptian constellation around the North Pole Star, the region seized by Set after overthrowing Osiris from his throne. TzeRVPhH is the Qabalistic acrostic principle and is associated with TzR[V]Ph -- fusion, interchange, and purification. The acrostic principle of permutation allows for the mind to sort through all possibilities.

The next word in our message is the single letter M for the Moon and the Water that is the physical Source of our Life. This word means "from", because Water (plus reflecting Light such as the Moon represents) is where our Life in a physical body comes from.

The last word of the message is AB, the first two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. These two letters spell "Father" in Hebrew. In the Egyptian mythology the father of all the gods is the Ra, the Sun and the Source of Life. The Sun is the icon for the Trump Card of the letter A. B is the Trump for Earth, the physical World we live in. The final B wraps around and forms the first letter of the message as the preposition among or within. We live in the world, in the universe.

At this point we can summarize our parsing, decoding, and translation of the message of our Astrology Trump Alphabet System as follows:

The letters in order:    𐀀𐀁 𐀂𐀃 𐀄𐀅 𐀆𐀇 𐀈𐀉 𐀊𐀋 𐀌𐀍 𐀎𐀏 𐀐𐀑 𐀒𐀓 𐀔𐀕 𐀖𐀗 𐀘𐀙 𐀚𐀛.  
 The letters decoded:    𐀀𐀁 OWP 𐀄𐀅𐀆𐀇 𐀈𐀉𐀊𐀋 𐀌𐀍 𐀎𐀏 𐀐𐀑[𐀒𐀓] 𐀔𐀕-𐀖𐀗 𐀘𐀙 𐀚𐀛.  
 The letters translated: [In] the Tenfold Law [of Osiris]  
                               (10 Commandments and 10 Sephiroth of the Tree of Life)  
                               is the Letter for the Penis (the Teaching of Truth)  
                               which is like Set hiding the Limit to Will  
                               by hiding from his Sun-Temple Father.

We can also make the transposition of the R for Tz rather than Z, which gives us ZR, 'crown', 'wreath', or 'rim'. (KTR K-ZR, the crown is like the crown.) So we get something like "Set, for the sake of a crown, hides [the infinite] from the Father." The crown is the Ouroboros rim that defines creation.

Here is another reading that lets the word VT double as "letter" (AUT) and "with" (AT), switching Q with Tz, and reparsing:

𐀀𐀁 𐀂𐀃 𐀄𐀅 𐀆𐀇 𐀈𐀉 𐀊𐀋 𐀌𐀍 𐀎𐀏 𐀐𐀑 𐀒𐀓 𐀔𐀕 𐀖𐀗 𐀘𐀙[𐀚𐀛] 𐀜𐀝



"The tenth dart which is the penis letter is like [Set] poking the firebrand which is the face of the father."

The Bible suggests that God wrote the Ten Commandments on two tables of stone with his finger (Exodus 31:18 𐀖𐀗𐀛 𐀀𐀁𐀃 𐀀𐀁𐀃𐀄 𐀀𐀁𐀃 𐀚𐀛𐀛𐀛𐀛 𐀚𐀛𐀛𐀛𐀛𐀛). In the movies it is a finger of fire. The tenth letter in the sequence is Daleth (𐀛). This letter is the pictogram of the female cunt, the doorway that the penis dart engraves. The Trump is the High Priestess, the symbol of the mysterious female who holds the secrets of sex, guarding the door to her sacred temple. On the traditional card she holds in her hand a book, the Torah, with the written laws and

customs of the Israelites. Anciently Abraham came from the Sumerian city of Ur (which for Hebrews is a variant spelling that means 'Light') where people traditionally wrote in cuneiform on clay tablets with a stylus. The image suggested is that the stylus poking into the clay to make cuneiform marks is like the penis poking into the cuneiform vulva. The ancient cuneiform character for woman had the shape of Daleth with the urinary slit clearly marked.



*HTL* is to throw (put something into something else). *ZTz* could possibly transpose to *ZQ*, a firebrand and *HQ* into *HTz* a dart. *PNM* is the face or surface.

The whole message of the Astrological Trump Letter System dangles from the Hanged Man and thus deals with experiencing the cycle of Life, Death, and Resurrection. The image on the Judgment Trump that begins the Zodiac sub-sequence (Aries) is the traditional icon of the archangel blowing his shofar trumpet to resurrect the dead from their graves and summon them to the Final Judgment. The reversal principle embodied by the Hanged Man and the Temurah/TzeRUPhaH principle of Qabalah suggest that we may find another message by reading the list backwards, proceeding upward from the bottom. Let's try it.

The final triplet read backwards starts us off with "In the Mother" (B-AM  ). This sounds promising in the light of our forward reading of "from the Father". Life issues from the Father and gestates in the Mother. Reading on backwards we encounter next the word NPS (nephesh), "Soul or Spirit." Thus we find that "In the Mother is a Soul-Spirit." Perhaps that means the Mother is pregnant.

To read the next word, we recall we must switch the letter R (a pregnant womb, the start of Life) into the deadly weapon Z, which is the instrument of the Death Trump. This gives us TzR, a "rock". So within the Mother [Earth?] is a Spiritual Rock. If we put the pregnant R in place of Tz, we get RZ, a secret. So we might also say that in the Mother is a spiritual secret.

The next word L can mean "for the purpose of" or "in order to" just as it did in the other message.

Again we substitute the Empress to assist or stand in for the Emperor. Samekh means assist or stand in for someone. This gives us   (to fly). Within the Mother is a Spiritual Rock or Spiritual Secret for the purpose of flying. We know that both Set and Horus could fly and they did so in their aerial battle. Does this

have to do with the mysterious flying Merkabah chariot of the gods that the Qabalists speak of?

As in the downward oriented message we find K standing alone and setting up a simile or comparison, a mirror image between the two halves of the sequence.

DG is a fish, and DYG is a fisherman or "fishing". TVR is a dove, a bird that flies. We seem to have fowls and fish, possibly an evolutionary step up from the Spirit Rock. Perhaps we have a "fishing dove" a kind of seabird like a gull or albatross. This image reminds us of the Spirit of the Elohim hovering over the waters of the deep like a giant bird during the creation story (Gen. 1:2.) But, when we let the Emperor stand in for the Empress, we find the TVRH, the Torah Book of the Law, the Pentateuch of Moses, the core of the Bible that takes us from Genesis through Deuteronomy. The fish goes down into the waters of the deep, suggesting the lower anatomy, and specifically the phallus for which it is often an image. (Ironically a fish ate the phallus of Osiris, perhaps presaging the Christian age of Pisces during which the sexual freedom of Osirian times was replaced by sexual repression.) The letters DYG (fisher) are the mirror image of GYD, the phallus. The bird hovering above suggests the energy of the higher chakras, specifically the flying solar disc Aten that represents the Intuitive Eye of the visionary sixth chakra. The dove is the traditional symbol of peace and was the bird that flew over the waters to let Noah know that the flood was receding.

The fish is also the symbol of Pisces (Star) the last sign of the zodiac, and the Age of Jesus, the archetypal Hanged Man who starts off our whole sequence. The Fish-Torah may then refer to the Old and New Testaments combined or the Biblical span from the Taurian Age through the Piscean Age.

The final word of the inverted message is OQ, the Magical (O) Fool (Q). These two letters in Hebrew form the core of the word heel (OQB), which is also a result or reward. The Hanged Man dangles by his heel exactly at this point at the top of the list and the top of the card. A "heel" in modern slang is an uncaring, unprincipled, and dishonorable man. Why? The most famous character in the Bible associated with a heel was Jacob (YOQB), a notoriously uncaring man who spawned the 12 Tribes of Israel that became the Jews. Jacob's name refers to the curious event that he was born holding on to the heel of his twin brother Esau as he followed him out from the womb of Rebekah (Gen. 25:26). Jacob literally followed on his brother's heel. The heel is associated with footsteps that one follows, or creating a lineage of

tradition. Unfortunately Jacob, like Cain and Set, succumbed to the old tradition of sibling rivalry and cheated Esau out of his inheritance. With an ironic sense of humor the Lord suggested that Jacob change his name to Israel (YSR = straight, AL = God), a hint that maybe he should straighten out his behavior. (The word YSR comes from the Egyptian word for the straightness of papyrus reeds.) As it happened this suggestion did not work out very well, and most of the sons of Israel (except for Joseph) turned out to be real stinkers. But the name stuck, and the Jewish tribes since then are known as Israelites or Israelies even though they may not be straight with God all the time.


In the name YOQB we find that OQ is between Y and B, the two pillars on the Priestess Trump. YB is the heart in Egyptian. The heel in the heart perhaps should become "feel". BY is "in me" in Hebrew. Study my comments on the Priestess Trump. If we take the first two letters (QO) and read them backwards wrapping our message around to the last letter (skipping the rope that grasps the heel of the Hanged Man), we get OQ[H]B → OQB (heel), the root for the name of Jacob, later called Israel, the namesake of the Jewish nation. The name suggests following in footsteps or following a sequence. The name Israel was meant to guide the Jews into following the right way (YSR) of AL, their god.

Wrapping from the top letter (H) to the last letter (B) "in" gives us HB, the "bosom", which is where the heart is hidden. Including the A that follows, we get HBA, which is yet another word for "hidden". The whole sequence resides in the "bosom". This is Qabalistic notarikon, or shorthand code.

Perhaps we can roughly extract the following message from the reverse reading of our Zodiac sequence:

The letter sequence:

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The Rock is an appellation of God that appears in the Psalms in lines such as: "O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer." We also have to note here the story of Jacob's ladder  (Gen. 28: 10-22) during which Jacob places his head on a stone pillow and enters the Astral World of dreams, where he sees the ancient Egyptian ladder to Heaven (the Senet Board) on which "angels" (neter archetypes) pass up and down. The passage starts from verse 10 (the ten Sephiroth) and ends at verse 22, which is also the end of the chapter and provides a verse for each Trump. In the first ten verses Isaac blesses Jacob and sends him off to find a wife so he can multiply the family and be fruitful according to God's promise to Abraham, which God then gives to Jacob in verse 14. In verse 19 Jacob specifically sets up the stone as a pillar and names the place BeYT AL, which is "House of God", but also is code for the alphabet of 22 letters.

Jacob, the heel, hides his heart from God. On the other hand, OQH is pressure, and BA is come. So the pressure comes from the spirit stone. Writing TzZ instead of TzR for stone suggests that the rock can become a weapon such as the rock Cain used to kill Able. Jesus loved to make puns like this about his disciple Peter, whose name happens to mean Rock in Latin, calling him both a stepping-stone and a stone obstacle blocking the path. Undoubtedly Jesus was also making connections with the Old Testament Hebrew use of the word rock.

We can also read the message as saying,

In (B) the Mother (AM) is a Spirit (NPS) Rock (TzZ = TzR). The Cover (LT) of my Pitcher (H-KD-Y) is the Winepress (GT) of Light ([A]VR) that is (S = S) [Jacob] the Heel (OQ), the Bosom-Beloved (HB) of the Mother/People (AM).

As we parse and scan the message we can interpolate the letter *H*, the breath of "of" where needed to help the grammar. The word AM can also mean the people. Here is another version of this pregnant string of letters.

Coming (BA) from (M) the Spirit (NPS) Rock (TzZ = TzR) to (L) Flying (TS) is like (K) a fishing (DYG) dove (TVR) which is (S) the heel (OQ) of the bosom (HBA) of the mother (AM) of the Spirit (NPS) Rock (TzZ = TzR)."

Further exploration may reveal more levels of meaning to this sequence of letters.

## The Book of Thoth: His 22 Triumphs

In this section I list the 22 Trumps in alphabetical order and suggest mythical support for the role of Thoth in each House.

- ♄ Thoth is the Bull of Maat, archetypal creator, the hidden essence of Amen-Ra.
- ♁ THT is the Lord of the Nether World.
- ♁ Thoth uses his ankh to protect baby Horus from Set's scorpion army as Isis suckles him in the papyrus swamp.
- ♄ Thoth as Hiram, the Master Architect, helps Solomon build the Temple of Jerusalem just as he designed and built the pyramids and temples of Egypt.
- ♁ Thoth uses his ankh to restore breath to Osiris and resurrect him from dead to become the archetypal immortal pharaoh.
- Υ The Pope's staff is another version of the staff of Hermes or Thoth's ankh. Through this he communes with the gods. Thoth in Egypt wields the caduceus serpent staff.
- ♄ Thoth is the master of immortality, liberation from Death, ever reborn anew.
- ♁ HRM is Hermes (Trismegistus) who volunteers to stay down below (THT), bestowing his compassion in all the three realms. He is like Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara.
- ⊗ TYT is another name for Thoth as he goes through many transformations in the Cycles of Nature. As Khenemew he shapes the clay of the world into life forms.
- ♄ In his baboon transformation Thoth tames the wild lioness Sekhmet.
- Υ The Hermit wields the staff of Hermes. As Moses he uses it to liberate Israel from the heavy hand of Pharaoh Ramses and bring the Jews to Freedom. Thoth as Siva is the archetypal hermit. As the barefoot hermit Apollonius of Tyana he recovers the lost Emerald Tablet of Hermes-Trismegistus from a cave and transmits it to the world.
- ♁ Thoth presides as scribe in the Hall of Justice during Weighing of the Heart.
- ♁ In Genesis God divides the waters into those above (OL) and those below (THT). THT takes charge of the nether (Neter) world of the lower waters.
- ♄ Ibis Thoth watches over the fruits on the Tree of Life and the Starry sky of Newet.
- ♁ The Empress Hathor/Isis/Sekhmet wields Thoth's love ankh to bestow life on all creatures.
- Thoth-Hermes is the Master Wizard seeing all with the Eye of Ra-Horus.
- ♄ Hermes is the Master of Alchemy, transforming Mercury into Gold.
- ♁ Ra-Tem as Shewe masturbates to create the universe. Shewe is Maat's male



counterpart, and a hidden transformation of Thoth.

- Q Qoph means monkey. Thoth's foolish baboon transformation plays with himself and controls with the Scales of Justice.
- P Thoth records the Judgment in the Hall of Justice and presides over resurrection of the dead.
- W Thoth-Hermes as the Master Alchemist, is master of the art of shape shifting Illusion and disguise. Thus he is Set's Master and heals him when he seems wounded.
- X Thoth is Science. His consort Maat (Truth) is his One True Love. Thoth gives us the Science of Love and the Love of Science.

### The Secret Message in the Traditional Hebrew Alphabet Sequence

The Hermetic sequence of the Trumps that I reconstructed based on the zodiac, solar system and 3 Mothers is a hypothesis. There may be refinements to that reconstruction and interpretation of the ancient tradition that I have not grasped. On the other hand, the traditional Hebrew Alphabet Sequence is something that everybody agrees on. However, I have never seen any explanation of why the letters follow that sequence. We know that the Greeks based their alphabet on the same sequence, and the Romans also followed suit. The alphabet we use today is still essentially in the same order with a few duplications and modifications that have occurred over time by different eras and cultures. Here is my tentative reading of the alphabet text. We need only a few rules to read the code of the text.

- \* The text is reversible.
- \* We read in letter pairs (as the Tarot Trump sequence suggests.)
- \* We can drop silent finals such as ׀ and ׆.
- \* We can insert the vowel ך if needed.
- \* װ and ן make a secret switch as they do in the other deciphering.
- \* ׆׀ and ׀׆ fuse into ׆׀׆. We can add a ך in front to get ׆׆׀׆, Jehovah.
- \* ׀׆ and ׆׀ fuse into ׀׆׀, the clay on the Potter's Wheel of Fortune.
- \* We use those two fused forms when reading in either direction.
- \* X becomes ׀.

׀׆

Father is

׀[׆]׀, ׀׀[׆]

Penis, Good Fortune, a goat kid.

[׆]׆׀׆

YHVH (Being)

׀׆

Moves.

⊗𐍌⊗; XX	Clay is; Under
𐍎𐍐	All.
𐍌𐍎[𐍌]	Min is; From; Destiny is
WO[𐍌]	Time
𐍎𐍐	Scatters
𐍎𐍐	Springing Forth; Shouting
𐍌⊗	The Rebel, Set

⊗𐍌	Flies
P𐍎	Spit
𐍌𐍎	Flood.
OW	The Great Bear
𐍎𐍌	Sleeps.
𐍐𐍎	For You,
⊗𐍌⊗; XX	Clay; Under
𐍌Z[𐍌]	Prophet-Pact
[𐍌]𐍌𐍎𐍌	Exists; YHVH (Being),
▽^	The Fish
𐍌𐍎	Comes

The above information seems to convey a mixture of Hebrew and Egyptian ideas that relate to cosmic evolution. We find Khnem the Potter shaping the clay of the World on his Wheel of Fortune. We find the Biblical Jehovah playing the role of Dynamic Existence that generates (**Men**) Time (Tem) and from that springs forth Set, the Rebel -- conscious thinking man. The flood of spit that flies forth is a creation act by Tem or his masturbating to spew forth in his semen Shewe and Tefenut, the gases and condensed stars that form the universe. It could also refer to the Biblical flood on Earth as well as the Cosmic Flood. The word TzP (scatter) also recalls Typhon -- Set as Lord of the Pole Star. The Great Bear hibernates in the North at the Pole Star. For the Egyptians this was Set's giant hippopotamus pet. The Prophetic Pact might refer to the covenant with Abraham. Or perhaps it is something else. Jehovah coming as a Fish could mean populating the earth with creatures or the coming of Christ. Or it could refer to the Phoenician Fish God, Dag. The Kid can be a play on SH, Lamb. This might refer to the Sacrificial Lamb given to Abraham or to Christ as a sacrificial victim for all mankind. Our next reading adds support to that idea. But recall that Khenemew is also a Sheep or Goat-like creature. This could be telling us that the Father is Khenemew, the Great Sheep-Goat Potter who fashions the universe.

We can also combine the forward and reversed readings of each word into a text.

The Father comes. The Penis (Good Fortune, or the Goat Kid) is a Fish. Jehovah exists, or is existence. He moves the prophet. Clay is all for you. **Men** sleeps. Time is the Great Bear (Dipper Constellation rotating clock hand). Scatter the flood. Shout and spit (or spring forth spit.) Set, the Rebel, flies.

If we read 𐎢𐎠 as WX, then the Rebel becomes the Basis or the Buttocks, your Seat or Bottom.

We find a few of the same words showing up in the Alphabet Sequence Message that we saw in the Sky Message -- Father, Penis, and Set. So the two messages must be related somehow.

*HV* is a secret name for Thoth in ancient Egypt. It relates to the breath and to the Hebrew root *HVH*, which means "to be" and is the root of God's sacred name as given in the Bible: *YHVH*. In Hebrew *HV* becomes He, The Man (3rd person pronoun). Thoth (Jehuty) and *YHVH* may be the same name in different cultures. The Hebrews simply exercised taboo and removed the two T's adding the *H* in their usual fashion on the end.

There may be other ways to parse the sequence that bring up interesting ideas. For example, toward the end of the Alphabet Sequence we have the curious sequence: 𐎢𐎠𐎢 𐎢𐎠𐎢. The word *SOP* can mean a branch or division. But the word *TzQR* does not occur in Hebrew. Something is going on here. As we saw in the Sky Message, the letters *TzR* spell the hard flint stone, the philosopher's stone or Soul Stone that keeps coming up. Right in the middle of that letter pair is *Q*, the letter of the Fool, and the notarikon for the mischievous Monkey form of Thoth. This may be a hidden reference to Sun Wu-Kung, the foolish magic monkey of the mind in Journey to the West. The monkey is born from a stone, gets imprisoned by Buddha in a stone, and then finally becomes a Buddha himself. It can not be an accident that this same foolish monkey figure shows up as Thoth the baboon, as Hanuman, and Vrisha-kapi in India, and then as Sun Wu-kung in China.

Going back to our word *SOP*, we find something else interesting. *SP* is a goblet, and *O* is the Eye of the Magician. Perhaps this is a glyph of the Holy Grail, the Cup of the Magician. The *O* is the gap within the cup (*SP*). *SP H-HKRH* is the conscience,

or threshold of perception, the intuition. The Eye within the Holy Grail of Conscience is the Eye of Intuition that the Magician opens up. This is the Eye of the Higher Self, the Eye that can see to the End (SVP), the Limits, and beyond into the AYN SVP, the Wisdom (Sophia) of infinite unbounded Awareness. Isn't it odd that the word for none in Hebrew (AYN) is a close homophone with the word for Eye in Hebrew (OaYN). It also means Source, as in a Spring of Living Waters. See Canticles 1:14 OYN GDY: "My beloved is unto me as a cluster of henna in the vineyards of En Gedi." (Spring of My Good Fortune/Goat.) Henna is an herb used for a bright reddish-brown blood-colored dye. In Canticles 7: 5 we find eyes and springs combined in a pun: "Thy neck is as a tower of ivory; thine eyes (OYN) as the pools of Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim." (BRKVT means pools, but B-RKVT means "in tenderness." Heshbon means Restitution or Revival. Bath-rabbim can mean Big Houses or Big Girls.) Putting it all together we have the Fool-o-Sopher's Stone. SP-R is the Book, the Story, and the Number to calculate it with.

Putting the Magician and the Fool together again, we have the first two cards of the Tarot Trumps and our old friend OQ -- Jacob the Awkward Heel -- Upside Down Man. We also have subtle hints of Jacob's blind father, Isaac (TzQ) → [Y]Tz[O]Q (note his eye has been removed) and Jacob's Wisest son, the Diviner of Dreams, Joseph -- [YV]S[O]P (note an extra eye has been added). For good measure we even have an echo of Joseph's eldest son and chief heir -- Manasseh (MNSH). That name means "from the Lamb" (MN SH), or **Men's** Kid. **Men** was the first pharaoh of Egypt and also the Egyptian God of Fertility, the Source of Life Energy in the Body. He is where we come from and has already shown up in the Message. MN is "from" in Hebrew. For thousands of years in ancient Egypt **Men** was the totem for the Secret Technology of the transmutation of sexual life force energy into higher states of consciousness. There is also perfect parallelism in that GaD and MiN both mean fortune in Hebrew, and MeN is the archetypal ithyphallic deity, while G[Y]D is the penis. GD[Y] is a kid, and SH is a lamb. If that is not weird enough for you, then notice that the first phrase neatly says: "The Father is G-D." Contemplate that one. Our English words God and Good almost certainly come from this letter combination that tells us of Good Fortune.

In Gen. 41: 50-52 we find the story of the birth and naming of Joseph's sons. Joseph explains to his Jewish compatriots that the name Manasseh means "From Forgetting" (M-NSH). God has made him forget all his toils and troubles in his father's house. I think this was a true enough gloss, but a cover for the real meaning. NSH also means to demand, especially to demand exact payment. There is

definitely a pun on MN-OSH, from work. But this could also be "From the Great Bear" or "From the Lamb." Joseph was a very high psychic and spiritual person, unlike the rest of his family. He became the Pharaoh of Egypt in all but name. (If he was a Hyksos king, he at least ruled the delta.) He effectively was running the country and was an initiate into the highest secret orders of the Egyptian priesthood. He had to be, because the priesthood would demand close access to the man who held the ear of Pharaoh. Joseph married AS-NT (possibly **A-sen-ta** "Kiss the Ground" and play on **Senet** and the 8<sup>th</sup> square of the **Senet** Game Board?), the daughter of PVTY-PRO, the High Priest (**KHN**) of AVN (Heliopolis). AN or ON is the goddess who brings the Eye of Horus-Ra. It means to turn or return, to paint pictures, a writing tablet, beautiful (written with the Eye glyph), and a well or fountain. Like OYN it also can mean a ring, and extends to mean a seal or signet. The iconic "body of Ra" (with its opened Eye) was kept at ON. This was a place dedicated to the Immortal Light Beings (the Illuminati or AAKHU). Joseph as the Pharaoh's official Dream Diviner was certainly one of the higher members of this Secret Order in Heliopolis. It is hard to tell from the Hebrew transliteration, but Poti-phares's real name in Egyptian was probably something like **Pawety-Per@**, Primordial One of the Great House -- i.e. an advisor or priest serving the royal house of Pharaoh. (Gradually many priests came to use the title **Per-@a**, so the title was not just reserved for The Emperor Pharaoh.) Joseph called his second son Ephraim (APRYM), supposedly because God had made him fruitful in the land of his affliction. There does seem to be some play in the name on the word "ashes" (APRYM) and "fruitful" (PRH). But we should note that PR means Bull, the symbol of the Creative Life Energy from the Sun, and PRA is the wild ass, such as Hagar's son, Ishmael (Joseph's half grand uncle) who was disowned due to jealousy just as he was. OPR was a famous source of gold, but it also means dust. APRYM also sounds close to great grandpa ABRAM's old name, the elder patriarch OBR, and Apis (ABYR), the Almighty Bull God, Lord of Heroes and the Winged Angels. Last, but not least, PROH is pharaoh. So Joseph was honest, but diplomatic. He told the truth, but not quite the whole truth. He was clearly quite assimilated into Egyptian culture.

Joseph was a reader of dreams. In Hebrew dream is **חלום**. This sounds a lot like the name Khenem transliterated into Hebrew letters. Perhaps Khenem fashions the universe as a magnificent dream in the mind of the sleeping **Men**. We already discovered that the Dream of Jacob's Ladder is a secret code in the Bible for the Tarot. Joseph was the most brilliant son of Jacob (Israel). He was his father's dream incarnate. He went to Egypt and mastered all of its secrets. These he then passed on to the Jews during their sojourn. This wisdom gradually matured when Moses

led the Egyptian Jews back to the old lands of Israel.

Time is the Great Bear that sweeps around the Pole Star like a giant clock in the sky. The "Flying Disc" of Set ☱☲ is the Potter's Wheel of Khenem, the Giant Wheel of the Zodiac that spins as it flies through the galaxy, the flood of spit ejaculated by Father Tem to moisten the clay. The Power of the Great Bear is its ability to make artistic Judgments in this setting of Time, even as it sleeps. This is Osiris. (OW-P = 10.) The Ten Judgments of Osiris are the Ten Witness Gods in the Judgment Hall. They form the Ten Commandments of Moses. The Ten plus the Twelve Zodiac Signs make 22 Trumps. (We are not sorting them in order here, just counting noses.)

SeT is the Root Chakra, the basis for the Tree of Life. The Root Chakra is at the base of the spine in the buttocks, the place (ST) where we sit and shit. For millennia people have held Satan responsible when Shit Happens. This shit is good clay for nourishing the Tree of Life.

Since we could read the Sky Message backwards, let's try to read the Alphabet Sequence backwards with some alternate parsing and see what we get.

XWP    ☱☲    O☱☲    W☱☲☱    ☱    HZY[☱]    ☱ ☱[☱]∧    ☱☱.  
 Present   Frothy   Smoke.   My King Thoth's   Prophecy: The Fish   Comes.

There is a gift. The gift is frothy smoke. The universe is an illusion like foam and smoke. My King Thoth (☱☲☱ Clay-man, The Wheel of Fortune) foretells the Coming of the Fish or the Fisherman.

Again this message seems to refer back to our reverse reading of the Sky Message. There seems to be a reference to the coming of Jesus in the Piscean Age. This looks like a prophecy about the Fisher King, which it would have to be if the **sequence** of the alphabet existed before the Christian era – which is not certain. However, the zodiac certainly existed, and astronomers knew of the coming Age of Pisces thousands of years before it arrived, which is a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy, since people dreamed up the names for the constellations in the zodiac.

Play around with this material and see what you come up with. The above exploration is a glimpse into one aspect of the strange and vast world of Qabalistic Tarot. It is filled with the symbols of the ancient Egyptians and the Old Testament. I have barely cracked this code open, and I am sure there is a lot more to discover.

Study of the texts can also reveal to us something about when the sequence of the Hebrew alphabet was fixed, and possibly even a determination of what group of people did it. There are definite cultural ideas expressed and they represent the confluence of Egyptian, Phoenician, and Hebrew cultures that was occurring during the last 600 years before the Christian era began.

### The Senet Oracle Board Hebrew Code

The Sentomancy Oracle Board we laid out has some curious features. One of them is that when you place the proper Hebrew letters in the squares, they spell out key words that relate to the Qabalah. Here is the layout, recording only the Hebrew Letter Trumps.



(The two 's at the top are the two bovine heads that appear on top of the Narmer Palette.)

Starting with Ra's A and Tem's Tz we get ATz, the key to ATzILVT, (emanation) the highest realm of Qabalah that occurs as the AYN SVPh (infinite) starts to express itself. The sequence Shewe-Tefenut spells HY, or being and its reverse sequence spells YH, the short form of YHVH, the tetragrammaton name of God (YH = Yah). If we read upward from Osiris to Tem (The Magic Tower) we get the word OTz, which means Tree. Reading downward gives us TzO[H], to bend. (If we bend back up, we find the H at the Emperor's square.) Since Tem is the Creative Life force emerging, and Osiris is the one who masters the essence of life to gain immortality and is the Egyptian god of vegetation and agriculture, this OTz must be the Tree of Life mentioned in Genesis and the core of the Qabalah. Sure enough, if we do a knight's bend and read on we get OTz HY, Tree of Being. Going one square further gives us OTz H-YB, Tree of the Heart (using the Egyptian word for heart), or the Tree of the Temple of the Torah. (Or maybe it is also the Tree of Weeping, because you ate the fruit from the wrong Tree and got self-awareness but no immortality.) The sequence Tefenut - Geb gives us YB the two letters on the pillars depicted in the High Priestess card and that the Bible tells us were the names of the two pillars at the entrance to the Great Temple ((1 Kings 7:13-22). We can also read them as BY (in me), or as the notarikon for the entire Torah, since the first word of Torah begins with B and the last word of Torah begins with Y. Adding Maat's L guides us to the Tree (L-OTz). If we read downward from the Magician, we get OL,

which means "above". The Magician stands on the symbol of Truth above Justice in a transcendental realm where he identifies with the Tree of Life.

If we continue across the top of the Board we find that BN spells son, and right after it sure enough comes Horus the son of Osiris. NB, of course, is the prophet. Then comes GS, which means "crude" or "coarse". NGS is to bite off or chew. GN is the Garden (GN) of Eden or the Garden of Solomon. But right after that comes SD, which means "secret". So the subtle secret of the Garden of Paradise (Priestess) hides inside the gross outer behavior of the Warrior (Chariot). The two are balanced by the nurturing love of the Empress (S). We need to bite into this and chew it a bit. If we read upward from the Hanged Man, we get HD, which also means "secret" or "riddle". Both these mysterious words, HD and SD, converge on none other than the High Priestess, the holder of secrets. Going from the High Priestess to Temperance we get DP, a page or board. This is the Senet Board, a great secret, sometimes built into a board, and sometimes drawn on a page of papyrus. DH has to do with pushing or falling when we move in the downward direction from the Priestess.

Going down from Temperance to the Lovers we get PT, or bread. This is the nourishment we get from chewing on the Board. Temperance has to do with food and drink. Man does not live by bread alone. He needs love. That is the real bread. Going from Lovers to Judgment we get TR, the dove of peace, symbol of the Torah. From Judgment to the Moon we get RM, the highest. Having a baby is the highest achievement of Life. Ram is bliss in Sanskrit and the name of India's greatest mythological hero. Adding the Hanged Man we get HRM or Hermes, the Network of Love, the Harem, where babies are produced and raised, and Hiram, the architect of Solomon's temple. MR is the Egyptian word for Love and is the sacred Myrrh that Solomon used in his Temple to symbolize that and the Teacher (MVRH). Next to the Moon comes the Devil, giving us MS. This means to throw off or to remove something -- the behavior of a revolutionary. Flipped the other way we get SM, the Name. The Nurse (Renenet "goddess of names" in Egyptian) teaches (MR) baby the name (SM) of each thing and keeps watch over (SMR) the baby. HRT is an inscription, which brings in the writing of names. SM (Ha-Shem, "The Name") in the Qabalah is a primary taboo substitute for God's name (YHVH) which Jews prefer not to pronounce out of respect. The other common taboo name is Adonai (ADNY = My Lord). Here is another secret of the Senet Board. Set (Satan) is God. He only appears to be an adversary, but like all else he is God's creation and therefore must be good. If you turn the Board over, you find YH, the real name of God appears in exactly the same relative position as SM. The two "names" of God -- YH and SM --



(one real and one taboo) are mirror images of each other on the **Senet** Oracle Board. Isn't that magical? Isn't it also ironic that the name people like to use as a taboo name for God actually refers to Satan? In passing we may note that Jews generally pronounce their taboo epithet for God as *H-SM* (The Name). If we read this backwards, it spells *MSH* (Moses). That name is a transliteration into Hebrew of "birth" (𐤌𐤍𐤔𐤌𐤍𐤔). Moses, whether he was a historical man or an ethnic myth, symbolizes the birth of the Jewish people as a cultural entity with laws and customs.

Moving on to the relation between the Devil and the Hermit's Heart we get *SK*, a thorn. It can also be something fenced up or in a pavilion. The Heart is guarded, but thorns pierce it. *KS* (*KSH*) is to become fat or sated, something that the heart continually wants to do -- find satisfaction. I do not find anything for the Hermit's relation to the Wheel (*KT*), although we can read it as "like mud" (Υ ΘϜΘ = *K-T[Y]T*). Perhaps the Hermit Heart should strive to be like Thoth, to be like the Wheel itself rather than roll around on it. *TK* has to do with arranging things. This reflects the Heart's desire for recognition in the order of things.

Now we come to the Fool's relation to the Wheel. *TQS* is a ceremony. *QT* is something small. It can also be a feeling of loathing. The Fool is a small guy who messes up the dignified ceremonial aspects of life. Dignified people loathe such oafish, undisciplined "little people". Next we come to the relation between the Fool and Death -- *ZQ*. This is a spark or a firebrand. I do not find anything for *QZ*. It's off the books. To the Fool Death is just a spark.

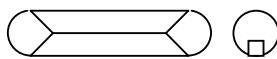
The letters of the alphabet in Qabalah are conceived of as sparks of light. Death (*Z*) is just a letter-spark in the alphabet to the Fool. The relation between Death and Justice is *LZ*. As we discover in the dream of Jacob's Ladder, *LZ* is a gland. This is the prostate gland that you can clearly see Anubis handling as he adjusts the phallic scale of Justice. This gland appears as a little knob for adjusting the tongue on the Scale so that it reads accurately. Anubis adjusts it to get the precisely correct weighing of the Heart. Then the Fool Baboon buggers the tongue and ruins the careful calibration of Death.

This myth is told amusingly in the Chinese tale of Monkey. In that version the crazy Monkey goes down to the halls of the dead, grabs the list of names of all those marked to die from Yama, King of the Dead, and crosses his own name off the list. While he is at it he crosses off all the other monkey names. This means that humans, as members of the ape clan, have the opportunity to achieve immortality. Their

names are not fixed on the Death List. By the way, the tale of Monkey is a popular retelling of many aspects of the Judgment Scene and the old Egyptian myths recast as a Buddhist cautionary tale. These are very ancient teachings that go back way before the time of the historical Buddha.

ZL means to be cheap or worthless. Monkey, with his crazy antics, renders the Judgment of Death totally worthless. If we move diagonally from the Magician to Death, we get OZ – the Magician’s Wizard of OZ power when he meets and conquers Death. ZO is to shake or tremble – a symptom of great power manifesting. Finally we come to the relation between Justice and the Priest. We get LV, “to Him”. The truth takes you to Him. Maat and Thoth form a couple. So when you find the Truth, you find Thoth. And when you find Thoth, you find the way back to Source, and then Come Forth into the World of Enlightenment. By itself the V of the High Priest is a connective, a conjunction that links things together.

If we read around the corner squares on the Board starting with Temperance, we get PAVT. In ancient Egyptian this is immeasurable Time, it is Aeon, the Age of the Universe from its Primordial Emanation. PAVT is also stuff, matter, and especially food. The glyph depicts a round loaf of bread. Recall that PT is bread in Hebrew. P[H] is mouth and PA[H] is a corner, which is where these letters are. AVT is a letter of the alphabet, or a sign, or a proof, or a miracle. So these are in fact the corner letters on the Board, and the Board is like a loaf of bread, especially if it is made into a rectangular wooden box. The pawns in the drawer hold the chakra energies. Open your mouth to speak and the letters will come forth as words. Speech acts as a clock that tells the story of the universe. Hence the Senet Board is also a clock and a calendar for all time. 𐀓𐀕𐀗𐀘



Paut, the Primeval One, who Created himself and All That Is.

Now here is another reading of the Oracle Board that proceeds from right to left and from the bottom upwards.

𐀕 𐀕𐀓 𐀓𐀓 𐀓𐀓 𐀓𐀓[𐀕] 𐀓𐀓 𐀕𐀕 𐀕𐀕[𐀕] 𐀕𐀓𐀓 𐀓𐀓 𐀓𐀓 𐀓𐀓

And AL (𐀕𐀓 = God) is this Tree (𐀓𐀓 𐀓𐀓), that spits forth (𐀓𐀓[𐀕]) Goodness (𐀓𐀓). Yeah (𐀕𐀕), the Apex (𐀓𐀓) prospers (𐀕𐀕[𐀕]) and delivers (𐀕𐀓𐀓) the Drum (𐀓𐀓).



(Drum (TP = 𐀓𐀓) is code for apple (TPH = 𐀓𐀓𐀓).




## Phoinike/Hebrew Alphabet Transcription

(Phoinike is the Greek for Phoenician)

Phoinike	𐤀	𐤁	𐤂	𐤃	𐤄	𐤅	𐤆	𐤇	𐤈	𐤉	𐤊
Old Hebrew	א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ
English	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	C	<u>D</u>	E	F	Gz	<u>H</u>	<u>T</u>	J	<u>K</u>
(Alternate)		W	<u>G</u>		<u>H</u>	V	<u>Z</u>			<u>Y</u>	Kh

Phoinike	𐤌	𐤍	𐤎	𐤏	𐤐	𐤑	𐤒	𐤓	𐤔	𐤕	𐤖
Old Hebrew	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	צ	ק	ר	ש	ת
English	<u>L</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>O</u>	<u>P</u>	<u>Tz</u>	<u>Q</u>	<u>R</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>T</u>
(Alternate)				\$		Ph				Sh	Th


























- B is a building or house. The two Egyptian glyphs are:  .


The first glyph was **het** in Egyptian, which became hut or house in English after the Greeks turned the “t” into an “s”. The second glyph was **per (pa)** or **bet** in Egyptian and became BeYT in Hebrew and Base in English going through Greek *βαθρον* (base, pedestal, foundation, step, ladder). Egyptian: **bet** =  (house, place)  (stepped throne, staircase); **ren** =  (name, i.e. the inscribed name on the throne or pedestal or foundation for the building). *Baθ* evolved into base. In Hebrew B is often pronounced closer to German W or English V. I write B throughout.

- C is usually transcribed as a hard G. I write G in this book.
- E is transcribed as soft *H*. I italicize *H* to distinguish from the raspy H.
- F is usually transcribed by the softer and voiced V and is so in this book.
- Gz is like Z or Zh and is transcribed and pronounced for this book as Z.
- H is raspy with a more breath than English.
- *T*, a soft T, was theta (θ), but was dropped though it is a very common voiced and unvoiced consonant in English. I italicize it as *T* to distinguish from Tav.
- J is the same as Y and I, so I write it as Y to avoid confusion with soft G and to indicate that it is not a true vowel, but a “consonant”.
- K sometimes is pronounced as Kh, at least in Hebrew spoken today.
- The samekh is some form of *S* that I italicize to distinguish from Shin. I also like to write it with the dollar sign (\$).
- P is sometimes pronounced like F, and can be written as Ph to indicate that.
- I use Tz in the book and sounds like hits. Some say it sounds more like “ch”.
- S is often read as Sh and dots are sometimes used to distinguish.
- T is often read as Th and thus got confused with the theta letter θ.
- The dots that now indicate pronunciation change for the 7 doubles (B, D, G, P, T, K, and R) were not written in the primitive alphabet. R’s double is unknown.
- I write caps and underlined the letters I use. Occasionally I add the “h” suffixes

and lower case helping vowels.

### Egyptian Transcription

	<b><i>A, a</i></b>		<b><i>Kh, kh</i></b>
	<b><i>A, a</i></b>		<b><i>Kh, kh</i></b>
	<b><i>Y, y</i></b>		<b><i>S, s</i></b>
	<b><i>@</i></b>		<b><i>S, s</i></b>
	<b><i>W, w/U, u</i></b>		<b><i>Sh, sh</i></b>
	<b><i>B, b</i></b>		<b><i>Q, q</i></b>
	<b><i>P, p</i></b>		<b><i>K, k</i></b>
	<b><i>F, f</i></b>		<b><i>G, g</i></b>
	<b><i>M, m</i></b>		<b><i>T, t/T, t</i></b>
	<b><i>N, n</i></b>		<b><i>Th, th</i></b>
	<b><i>R, r</i></b>		<b><i>D, d</i></b>
	<b><i>H, h</i></b>		<b><i>J, j</i></b>
	<b><i>H, h</i></b>		

You can ignore the difference between *A* and *A*, *S* and *S*, *Kh* and *Kh*, *T* and *T*. They only matter in terms of Egyptian spelling conventions. The @ symbol I sometimes write as  or just as “a” (as in common words such as **ankh** or **Ra**). It is a laryngeal grunt, but softens when sung, chanted, or during meditation. Q is farther back than K. I put “accurate” Egyptian transcriptions in bold face. (I

underline book titles.) *H* is soft like Hebrew  $\aleph$ . *H* is breathier, and *Kh* has more friction. We just estimate the vowels. People argue about the amount of voicing and so forth, but don't worry about it.

## Senet Game Board Tarot Layout

Below is an arrangement of the cards from my Senet Tarot Deck that matches my tentative reconstruction from surviving examples of the Senet Game Board Layout. This Game Board was also a Solar-Lunar calendar. Notice that Day 15 in the middle of the board is the Wheel of Fortune and represents the Earth at the Return of the Full Moon. On either side of it we find the Sun Trump and the Moon Trump, just as they are at opposite sides of the horizon during sunset and sunrise at Full Moon.

