

28 Astrology and the Senet Board

In very ancient times before the advent of writing there were no books, so tradition was passed on orally. However, mankind knew that, wherever he was, the sky was always above him. The sun during the day provided information about the time of day and the seasons as well as being a direction finder. The moon was the brightest object in the sky at night and also served as a simple calendar as it moved through its phases.

The stars at night were reliable for navigation on land and sea, and many of them also easily formed into constellations that people could imagine represented animals or people. In the evening after meals the elders would tell stories to the young people and could weave these constellations as characters into myths about cultural information that they felt was important for people to remember. The sky was like a very reliable book that was available to everyone everywhere, and it was completely portable, because it seemed to “follow” you wherever you went (within a reasonable distance).

Our knowledge of ancient Egyptian astrology is quite sketchy, but we have some star charts found in tombs and the Hathor temple at Denderah has both a circular star chart and a much larger linear star chart on the temple ceiling. That temple dates from the late Ptolemaic period when there was a strong Greek influence on Egypt, so the Denderah chart can not be taken as representative of the ancient native Egyptian tradition. It contains what we can recognize as the traditional 12 houses of the zodiac in a very recognizable form, and that traces back to Mesopotamia. On the other hand it also has the 36 dekans of the Egyptian solar calendar and traditional Egyptian constellations around the polar region.

In the Tarot tradition it is common to associate the 22 Trump cards to astrological symbols and many decks actually print these symbols on the cards. Astrology is a tradition of interpreting a person’s life situations in terms of the positions of the stars and planets at birth or at some time during life. However, I find that there is no standard agreement as to the assignments of the Trump cards to the astrological signs.

Certain cards, such as Sun ☉, Moon ☾, and World ⊕, clearly refer to components of our solar system. In spite of that some people insist on assigning Moon to the High Priestess. Notice the crescent Moon at the feet of the High Priestess in the Waite deck.



From our Senet Oracle Board viewpoint we can see that the position of Moon on the board is below and to the right of the High Priestess, Isis .



A Zodiac Trump that is pretty standard is recognition that the Scales of Justice go with Libra ♎, and many recognize that the lioness goes with Leo ♌. I agree with those two assignments. For the rest, what follows are my assignments based on the evidence in the Trumps and in the ancient Hebrew letters. You may decide what you will about my assignments. In any case there is a tradition that they are somehow assigned, and so I made my assignments.

Then I will add some discussion of how each zodiac sign represents a mode of survival and conclude with some pictures and diagrams from the Denderah temple constellation charts and some other traditional Egyptian charts. Study of the dekan stars is difficult, because we have names and symbols for them but lack definite determination of which stars the ancient Egyptians sighted at heliacal rising to define each dekan.

I have already discussed how Hanged Man represents man dangling from the Pole Star by his “navel cord” tied to his “ankle” as he enters Earth’s space for his descent into an incarnation. In traditional Tarot cards he is surrounded by the 12 zodiac signs, and wears the Sun, Moon, and planets. In the next article I will explore the role of another special Trump -- The Fool. He transcends any specific star, constellation, or planet. Tarot experts for centuries have recognized the Fool as a very special Trump. I will present some theories about why this is so.

Tower

Based on the Hebrew letter “tzad” צ , which means to shoot and is drawn as a tower being struck by lightning (or possibly issuing a bolt of lightning) I assign Tower to Sagittarius, the archer ♐ who shoots arrows.

Emperor

In the Greco-Roman tradition the king of the gods is Zeus/Jupiter. This is the largest planet in our solar system, is visible with the naked eye, and is a gaseous planet and probably a proto-star so that our system was almost a binary star system. The Egyptians had separate gods for the planets, but they can be thought of as vehicles for the Trumps. So I assign the Emperor to Jupiter ♃ .

Strength

As I mentioned above, I accept that the lioness is Leo ♌ . On European Tarot cards the lion is male and is tamed by a woman’s gentle touch.

World

This is our current home planet Earth ♁ .

Star

The Star Trump is about the countless stars in the sky that make up our Milky Way. This was the Nile in the Sky for Egyptians. The Nile was filled with countless fish as was the Mediterranean and Red Sea they knew. This abundance of life in the waters of Earth was like the abundance of stars in the sky. In Genesis God promises the old and childless Abraham that his descendants will be like the stars in the sky. I assign this to Pisces ♓ , whose sign itself resembles a star.

Chariot

The Chariot is the symbol of a high military officer. He carries weapons and wears armor, but inside he is soft and compassionate and really just

wants to protect his country and people. So I assign the Chariot to Cancer the crab ♋. His sign suggests the inner contradictions that he faces as a compassionate person who sometimes must engage in warfare and conflict.

Empress

The Empress is the Emperor's queen. The Emperor's true identity is the Sun. The planet that heralds the arrival of the Sun and also shines at its departure is Venus ♀. The sign closely resembles the mirror of Hathor, so I assign Venus to the Empress. She is associated with love and light.

High Priestess

In ancient temples the priestesses were often required to be virgins, so I assign the Priestess Trump to Virgo ♍.

Temperance

The Lady of the Temple is in charge of the food, incense, essential oils, purification bathing, and libations used in the rituals. She also is in charge of the ritual incantations and songs used in the ceremonies. Her sign is the Water Carrier, Aquarius ♒.

Lovers

The most intimate relationship possible is that of twins who even share the same DNA, live together in the womb, and usually grow up together. So I believe the Lovers Trump has the sign of Gemini ♊.

Judgment

Some believe that the Emperor belongs to Aries, because of the ram's head on some Emperor Trump cards. However, the traditional Judgment Trump usually shows an angel blowing a horn that is probably meant to be a shofar ram's horn. It serves as a wake-up call. Making a decision and engaging in the life experience of that decision is the essence of being alive. There is plenty of time after you are dead to postpone decisions and experiences. So I select Judgment for the stubborn and sometimes rash judgments we take upon ourselves. This is the spirit of Aries, the Ram ♈.

Moon

The Moon Trump is just what its name says: The Moon ☾.

Devil

The Devil Trump is a chimera monster made of several animals fused together. The sign for this is clearly Capricorn ♑. You can see the ram's horns and a snake's tail fused into the sign itself.

Hermit

The Hermit Trump is a puzzle for many. Careful study shows that it is about exploring the heart. The color of the heart and the blood it pumps is red. The planet that is famous for being red is Mars ♂. The problem with the heart is that it often harbors secret angers and frustrations. It is a special challenge for men to learn the lessons of the heart.

Wheel of Fortune

The obvious choice for the Wheel of Fortune is Saturn, which is famous for its rings. We do not know whether the ancient Egyptians were aware of Saturn's rings, but it is possible there was a legacy from an earlier higher level of their civilization. In any case my choice was for Saturn ♄, because it belongs to the element of earth which is where we perform our careers.

Fool

The Trump card of the Fool goes with Heaven and is not assigned to any particular constellation or planet.

Death

The sign for the Death Trump is Scorpio ♏ with his deadly tail.

Justice

The Scales of Justice mark her as belonging to Libra ♎.

High Priest

Thoth is the High Priest. He takes a low position, but he is actually running the show, coordinating communications and making sure that education carries on tradition. His sign is Taurus, the Bull ♉. Taurus is right next to Orion, the constellation of Osiris, in a position where he can keep an eye on him. Isis is below Orion and to the left. This is a special star called Sirius that is located in Canis Major.

Hanged Man

Hanged Man represents man “hanging” from the Pole Star as he enters Earth’s biosphere for incarnation.

Magician

The Magician is associated in Greco-Roman myths with Hermes/Mercury and the planet Mercury ♿. He is the swiftest of the gods, because Mercury is closest to the Sun and has a very short orbit. Osiris, though seldom visible, is closest to Ra.

Brief Notes on Zodiac Lifestyles

Aries is stubborn and decisive. He butts his way out of a problem into a new experience.

Taurus is a great manager. He handles complexity with ease.

Gemini uses the power of close partnership to achieve goals and protect his space.

Cancer prefers protective armor, but that also limits his growth, and he must take care when shedding his armor for a new and better suit.

Leo pounces on his prey with speed and agility.

Virgo is coy and attractive and uses her feminine wiles to make her way.

Libra is all about balance and fairness. Truth is a powerful life force.

Scorpio has toxic venoms that say, “don’t tread on me” but has loving care for her offspring.

Sagittarius the Archer uses a missile defense system. He prefers to keep a distance from danger and take out enemies with his arrows.

Capricorn likes to use camouflage and deceit to fool his opponents. He is a shape shifter with many subtle pretenses.

Aquarius is sociable and prefers to handle challenges with good food and beverages as well as charming conversation.

Pisces uses the overwhelm approach by spawning so many copies of himself that he is sure to survive any crisis.

The Denderah Star Charts



Osiris sits in his celestial boat floating in heaven supported by angels. Next to him on the boat sit Isis and Nephthys. His throne looks like a game board. The half brothers Horus and Anubis salute Osiris and their mothers. A young Horus pilots the boat and Baba the baboon sits on the boat's prow. Mut-Hathor delivers a feather of Truth in her flying vulture form.



Thoth welcomes the full Lunar Eye that has ascended 14 days up a ramp to the 15th day of the month. Each day has a name.



Two dekan boats. The one on the right says "Tep 'A", (Top Hand) and marks the beginning of the year. The one on the left is Baba Kenmut sitting in a Full Moon. Below are segments of the ceiling frieze with constellations and the zodiac.





Gods of the North Polar region. Onuris (a form of Horus) harpoons Set as a one legged bull who has usurped the Polar Throne, but is held in check by a hippopotamus minion.



The frieze continues through the zodiac signs. See if you can identify them all.







The sun emerges from the womb of Newet, and Hathor's face appears in the light rays.



Note the tiny half dekan boat next to the emerging solar disk that signifies the 5-day half dekan at the end of the 365-day year.



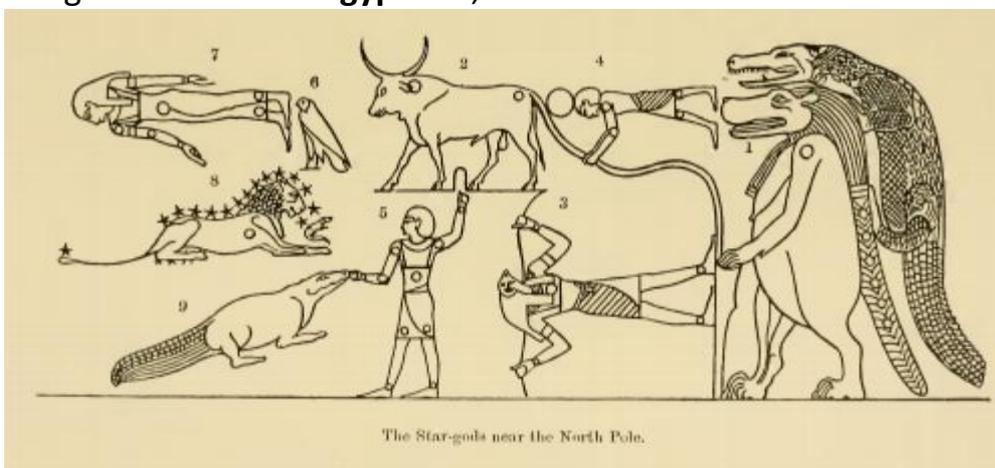
Horus on a papyrus perch is saluted by Osiris (Orion) in his boat.





Newet swallows the sun.

For more details about the dekanas and other celestial figures, see Budge's **Gods of the Egyptians**, Vol. 2.



The Star-gods near the North Pole.

1. Hippo goddess carries crocodile. 2. Meskhenti Bull (Set). 3. Horus as warrior 'An (Onuris) attacks Set-Bull. 7. Serqet.



Drawing of circular star chart in a small chapel at Dendera. See if you can find the zodiac signs in this chart. The dekans are around the outer rim of the circle because they are heliacal risings on the horizon. At 6 o'clock Horus perches on his papyrus watching Osiris (Orion). Taurus is next. The thigh-leg of Set is at the Pole.

Study my assignments of zodiac signs for the Trumps and how they lie on the Senet Oracle Board. They are not in order on the Board. Any insights or ideas?

See if you can identify each of the 12 zodiac signs in the Dendera photos.