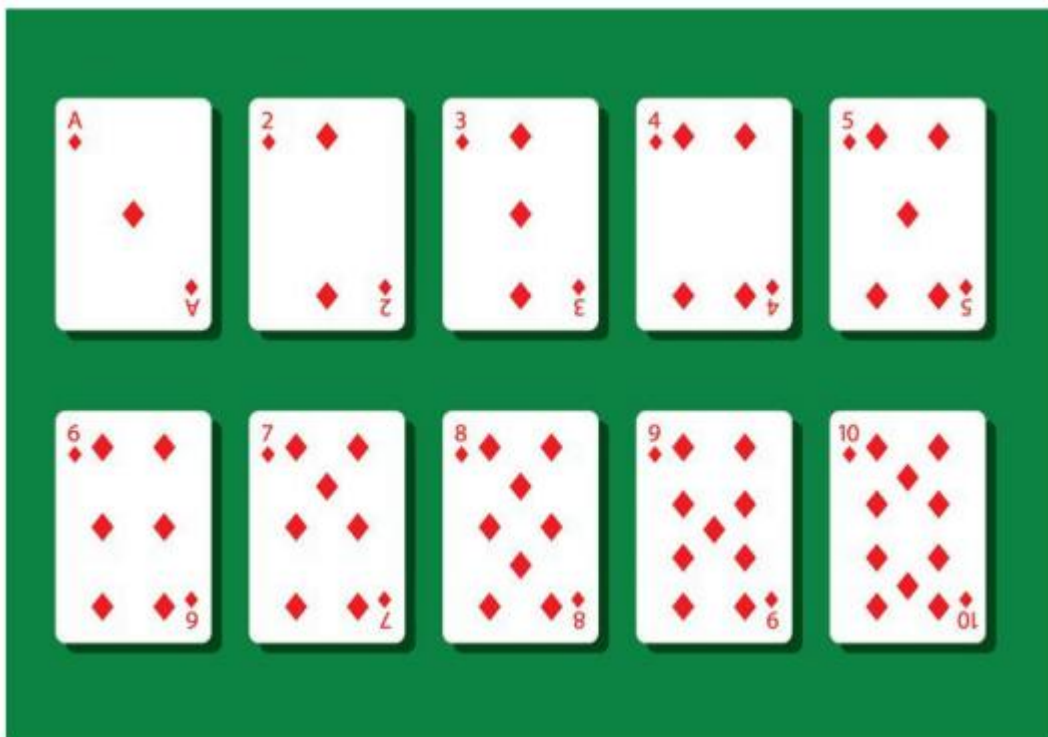


36 The Process Cards Introduction

We will now introduce the 40 “Process” cards of the Senet Tarot deck. Sometimes these cards are called the “Minor Arcana”. Arcana are mysteries. Actually these cards are not mysterious. They each have a precise number on them and a suit symbol. So there is nothing mysterious about them. Sometimes these cards are called “pips”, because the “number” on the card is usually represented by repeating the suit sign a certain number of times. However, a “pip” is a small seed or pebble used in ancient times as a counting device. The suit signs on Tarot cards do not look like little seeds. They are clear images. The French stylized the suit signs on playing cards (what we now call poker decks) into small symbols that are usually either red or black and can be put on the edge of the card along with an Arabic numeral to indicate the card suit and number. This facilitates holding a group of cards closely together in the hand so that other players do not see what the cards are. They also made the playing cards almost symmetrical so that a player can easily recognize a Court card or a Pip card regardless of whether it is upside down or not. These little signs are the “pips”.



Here are the “diamond” pips of a standard poker deck. Notice the Arabic numeral and small suit sign in the upper left corner (also mirrored upside down in the lower right corner) so that cards can be held closely

by a player with only the little corner space showing the card's identity. The "pips" are symmetrical diamond shapes and represent the suit of "Values", since real diamonds have a high market value. Study the ingenious layout of the pips on the card, and study how the process develops as the number grows higher and the pip arrangement gets more complex.

A Brief Outline of the Pip Design

One pip (an ace) is the essence of the suit. Two pips indicate a contrast or range within that suit's essence. Three pips indicate a middle range between two extreme conditions that define the suit's essence. Four pips define a space within which the essence of the suit may function. This is a passive stage. Five pips indicate action within the defined space of the suit that dynamically stabilizes the suit's essence within the defined space. Six pips suggest a road or pathway for the expansion of the suit's defined space beyond its original boundaries. Seven pips indicate an active phase along the pathway of growth. Eight pips indicate that growth leads to complexity, traffic, and overlapping on the path of development. This stage requires higher management skills than a simple start-up. Nine pips indicate the stage of success in which the suit has developed to maturity and prosperity within its expanded space. Ten pips represent the fulfillment of the growth process. Two complete five-pip sets now appear side by side. Autonomous and/or independent outcomes of the process may now thrive together. Each is able to reproduce the process for the suit with potentially endless growth and prosperity. Their challenge is that they must avoid conflict and creatively define new spaces for future growth.

Here are the four "pip" symbols developed by the French to conserve space on cards so they could be printed smaller. They are simple and clever. The "spades" are swords with their blades shrunken. The clubs have their handles shrunken with knobby trefoil knots of wood at the top.



Diamonds
Solid



Hearts
Liquid

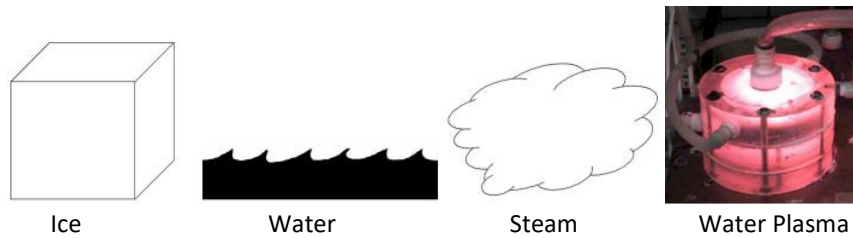


Spades
Gas

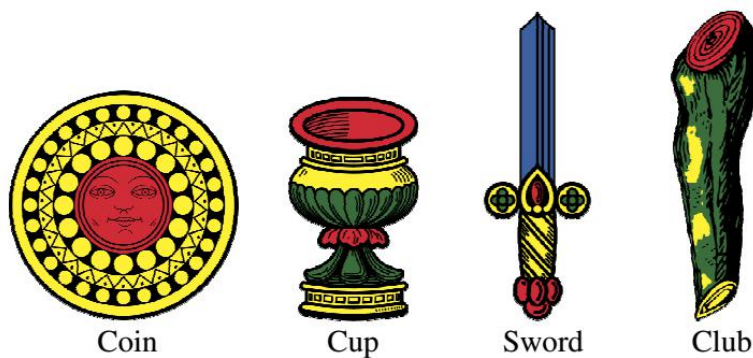


Clubs
Plasma

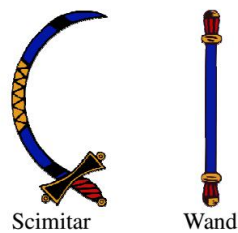
I call the lower suit cards “Process” cards, because the numbers indicate the stages of a process that starts at stage 1 and reaches its maturity at stage 10. The four suits each have a set of qualities that define the type of process they represent. In Europe (and elsewhere) the suit symbols have varied a little bit depending on different cultural regions, but they are all recognizable as the four states of matter: solid, liquid, gas, and a glowing plasma -- each representing a relative condition of energy in a particular material.



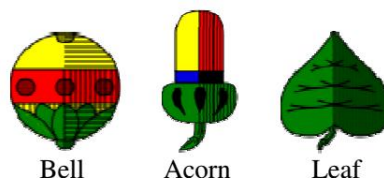
Below are typical Tarot suit signs.



Some decks have a scimitar for “sword” and a wand or baton for “club”.



In Germany Bells replace Discs, Acorns replace Wands, and Leaves replace Swords.



A few attempts were made during the Middle Ages to create illustrations for the Minor Arcana (for example, the Sola Busca deck). However, these did not catch the imagination of the people, because the artist did

not really understand the “processes” in the number cards. It was not until the 20th century that Arthur Waite and his artist Pamela Coleman Smith conceived a set of images that set the standard for many Tarot decks during that century.

When I designed the Senet Tarot deck from the Egyptian material, at first I was able to only clearly identify the Trumps and the Court cards, and the Court cards differed quite a bit from the Medieval feudal imagery of European Court Cards. There was no clearly defined set of Minor Arcana, nor were there clear suit signs, although it was evident that the Kings of Matter and the Lords of the Senses covered the four classical states of matter. So I assigned symbols for the suits based on my knowledge of Egyptian glyphs and their symbolic uses. The Egyptians had no disc-like coins, but they had a round symbol with a cross road inside it that represented a town. The cross road clearly symbolized a gathering place where people exchanged goods and thus was an excellent symbol for “value”. The Egyptians used the lotus as their symbol for the life-giving aspect of water. They used birds as a symbol of spiritual matters, and the stylized ostrich feather is a distinctive feature of both Maat (Justice) and Shewe (Emperor). It also held a subtle bit of Egyptian ironic humor, since ostriches have beautiful decorative feathers but are unable to fly. For the plasma (fire) state of matter, the obvious symbol was the Egyptian fire stick with which they quickly started fires as needed. This was a perfect symbol for Egyptian technology.



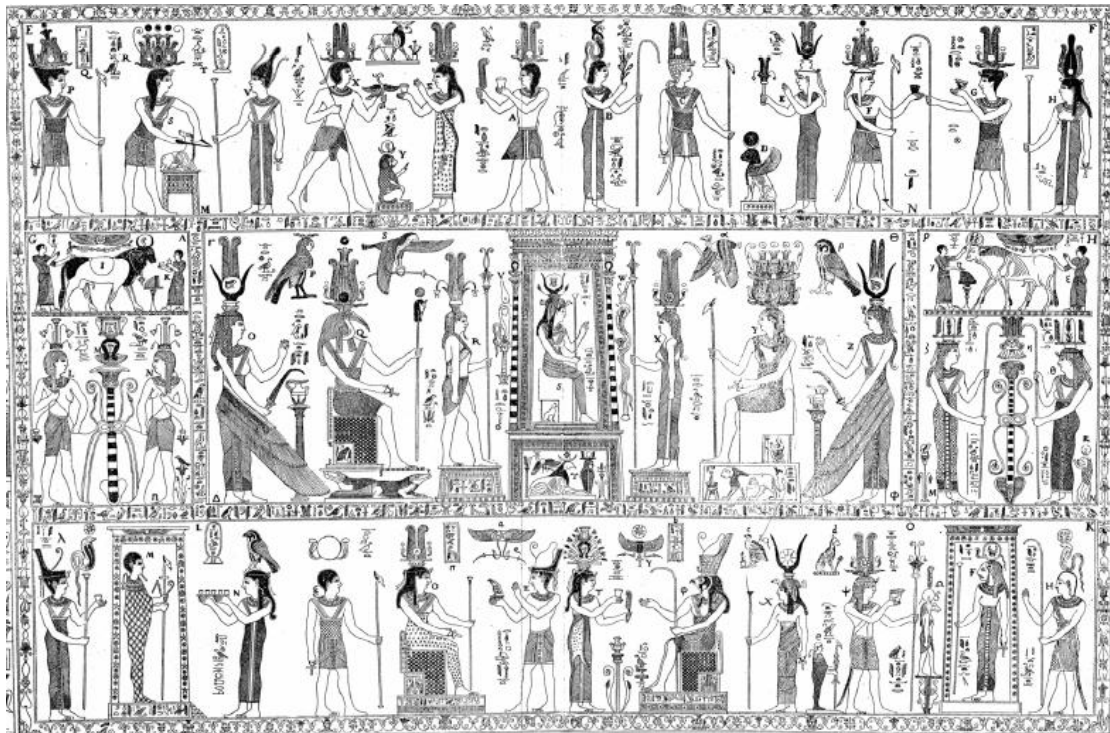
Suit of Towns (Nut) Suit of Lotuses (Nehebet) Suit of Feathers (Shewe) Suit of Fire Sticks (Ja)

As Egypt passed into the period of Greco-Roman influence and into the Middle Ages the lighthearted feather of Egypt eventually turned into a heavy Medieval broadsword or a Saracen scimitar, instruments that administered “justice” by brute force torture, maiming, and killing instead of a spiritual sense of truth. I much preferred the light Egyptian feather.

The next challenge that I faced in designing the Senet Tarot deck was to identify the “Minor Arcana”. It was clear from classical Egyptian art and their sacred texts that the “neter” (nature) archetypes of Egyptian

mythology often carried and used certain symbolic “power accessories”. Egyptian people made clay, metal, or stone amulets from these objects and sometimes would carry them or would have them in their houses or place them in tombs and even on the mummies or tucked inside their wrappings. These symbolic ritual objects represent the functions of the archetypes in life and nature. So I began to collect these as potential “process” cards. There are more than 40, so I had to make choices. I generally went by the importance the object seemed to have in the Egyptian view of the world.

Later, after I had made my selection, I discovered that the **Litany of Ra** contained a list of archetypes and ritual symbols that represented an early version of an Egyptian Ta-rok (Da Rekh) deck. When I compared my list, I found that quite a few of my choices matched those in the Litany deck. I decided that the Litany deck itself was a rough draft, and my version might be just about as good. Many of the Litany descriptions were somewhat vague and left some space for a variety of interpretations. I later found a 1st century Roman era oracle board called the Isiac Tablet (Mensa Isiaca, Tablet of Isis or Bembine Tablet after the antiquarian, Cardinal Bembo who purchased it from a man who found it after the sack of Rome in 1527). It almost certainly came from an Isis temple that was in Rome. The tablet is organized differently than the Senet Game Board or my Oracle Board version which I based on the Book of the Dead tableau and the Solar Boat tableau. It focuses on Isis as the central character, but we can also identify many of the same archetypal “neter” figures on the board as appear in the Litany.



We can recognize that this is an oracle board with three layers, but it is not clearly divided into “Houses”. We do not know how it was used, but it was made with a very complex technology out of several kinds of metals. In the center we find Isis and Hathor. Thoth is obvious with his curved beak. Below we find Peteh (a Memphis form of Baba), as well as Horus and Sekhmet. Hapy as the Nile god in his dual bisexual form and the goddess Neith appear. The figures hold scepters, and we can find the Ka (bull) and the Ba (ram) as well as hawks and vultures, and uraei (cobras). In volume 1 of my book, **The Senet Tarot of Ancient Egypt** pp. 134-144 I present a detailed analysis of this fascinating Tablet with many references. The work is a free download on my website: www.bentylightgarden.com. (The Sacred Scarab Institute).

In the next four articles I will present the Process cards that I selected for the Senet Oracle Tarot Deck. Each is an important symbol in Egyptian civilization and has myths and stories around it that can help you understand its deeper meanings. I encourage serious students of the Tarot and of Egyptian art and civilization to study the **Litany of Ra** collection of archetypes and process symbols. The material in that work had not yet been organized into the four suits or the detailed stages of a process, but much of what we now have we owe to the work of these ancient Egyptian pioneers in the science of consciousness and the art of living a successful and happy life.

36 Study Questions

- * What are “Arcana” (plural of “Arcanum”)?
- * Why do I use the term “Process”?
- * What is a “pip”?
- * Visually understand and be able to explain the symbolic arrangement of pips on playing cards that indicate the stages of a developmental process.
- * Why did the French miniaturize the suit symbols on their playing cards?
- * What do the four suit signs represent, and why are they not really “elements” as some people commonly call them?
- * Become familiar with the suit signs used on various Tarot or Tarok decks and how they relate to the now widely used miniaturized “poker” style suit symbols. You should be able to “read” poker playing cards just like any other Tarot deck, except for the lack of Trumps.
- * Who were the first people to design a Tarot deck with fully illustrated Court and Pip cards that became widely popular?
- * Egypt did not have standardized suit symbols. What are the suit symbols chosen by Dr. White for his Egyptian deck?
- * The Egyptian deities had symbolic “power accessories”, many of which appear in the **Litany of Ra**, but are not organized into a sequential process.
- * How many Trumps and Process symbols can you identify on the Bembine Tablet (Tablet of Isis)? (For detailed assistance you can refer to my article in Volume 1 of my Senet Tarot of Ancient Egypt, pp. 134-144. It is available at www.bentylightgarden.com as a free download.)

