

The Senet Game Text
of
Ancient Egypt



Hieroglyphic Text, Translation,
Detailed Commentary

Douglass A. White

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of
Ancient Egypt

Including

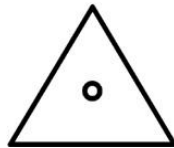
The Hieroglyphic Text,

Plus a Translation, and Commentary by

Douglass A. White

Based on the three surviving versions transcribed in parallel by
Professor Peter Piccione

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Contents

Cover Art

The cover shows a portrait of Queen Nefertari, wife of Rameses the Great, from the wall of her tomb in the Valley of the Queens, Egypt. Nefertari is divining her future with a Senet Game Board. 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 Great Senet Game Text in Egyptian Hieroglyphs.

This text is based on the transcriptions by Professor Peter A. Piccione (made in his 1990 Doctoral Dissertation at the University of Chicago – “The Historical Development of the Game of Senet and Its Significance for Egyptian Religion”) made from photographs of the original copies and is a draft collation by Douglass A. White of the great essay on the Senet Game Board and the art of playing the game that was written during the New Kingdom of Ancient Egypt. The text survives in three versions: a papyrus in the Turin Museum (pTurin 1,755), a papyrus in the Cairo Museum, (pCairo 58037) and a partial wall inscription of the text in Theban Tomb 359. Dr. White also has included a reconstructed ending for the text based on material from the **Book of the Dead** and the **Pyramid Texts**.

The Great Senet Game Text

Dr. White’s translation with a detailed commentary is based on the research of Professor Piccione and various other Egyptologists, plus Dr. White’s own research on the history of Tarot and the ancient games of Egypt. .

Proposed Reconstruction of the Senet Game Board.

Dr. White’s diagram shows an example of the simplified ancient Egyptian icons often used on their Game Boards based on surviving boards that include such icons.

Senet Tarot Game Board

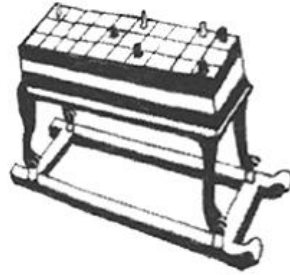
Dr. White uses traditional illustrations of the gods and goddesses from his specially created Oracle Deck *The Senet Tarot of Ancient Egypt* for each of the houses on the Game Board.

The Great Game Text Inscription

A photograph of the inscription on the wall of Inherkhau's tomb (TT 359) has been kindly provided by Thierry Benderitter, the webmaster of Osirisnet.net and a more recent photo was taken at the site by my student Demi Dai. The Osirisnet.net website is an excellent resource on Egyptian tombs and mastabas. Be sure to see his 3D Tours of several important sites in Egypt.

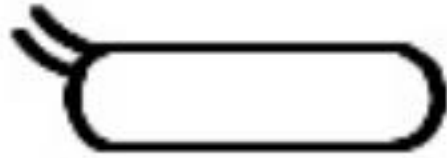
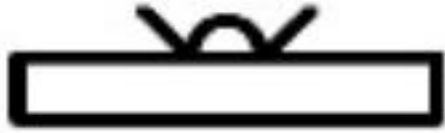
Draft Restoration of the TT 359 inscription by Dr. White.

The Book of Senet



Sketch by Amy Hsiao based on one of four Senet Game Boards found in the tomb of Tutankhamen. The board is the top of a box with a drawer for holding the pawns and counting sticks. The box forms the glyph “men” that means foundation and is mounted on a platform with lion’s legs that stands on a sledge that forms the character used for the name “Tem”. The box is a coffin, the lion is the royal totem for the pharaoh as the sun’s emissary, and the sledge of Tem suggests the [re]birth of the universe.

The Hieroglyphic Text



𐀀𐀁𐀂𐀃𐀄𐀅𐀆𐀇 1

𐀈𐀉𐀊𐀋𐀌𐀍𐀎𐀏𐀐𐀑𐀒

𐀓𐀔𐀕𐀖𐀗𐀘𐀙𐀚𐀛𐀜𐀝𐀞𐀟 2

𐀠𐀡𐀢𐀣𐀤𐀥𐀦𐀧

𐀨𐀩𐀪𐀫𐀬𐀭𐀮𐀯𐀰𐀱𐀲𐀳𐀴 3

𐀵𐀶𐀷𐀸𐀹𐁀𐁁

𐁂𐁃𐁄𐁅𐁆 4

𐁇𐁈𐁉𐁊𐁋𐁌𐁍𐁎𐁏𐁐𐁑

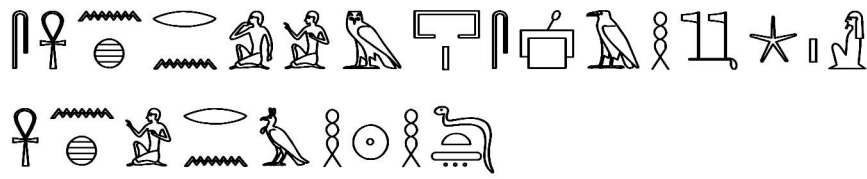
𐁒𐁓𐁔𐁕𐁖𐁗 5

𐁘𐁙𐁚𐁛𐁜𐁝𐁞𐁟

𐁠𐁡𐁢𐁣𐁤𐁥𐁦 6


𐁧𐁨𐁩𐁪𐁫𐁬𐁭𐁮𐁯𐁰𐁱𐁲𐁳

13

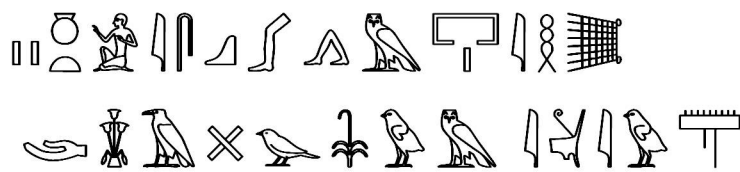


Line 13 consists of two rows of hieroglyphs. The first row contains: a female symbol, a circle with a horizontal line, a wavy line, a seated figure, a standing figure, a falcon, a T-shaped symbol, a vertical bar, a seated figure, a vertical bar, a vertical bar, a vertical bar, a star, and a vertical bar. The second row contains: a female symbol, a circle with a horizontal line, a seated figure, a wavy line, a standing figure, a vertical bar, a circle, a vertical bar, and a seated figure.

14

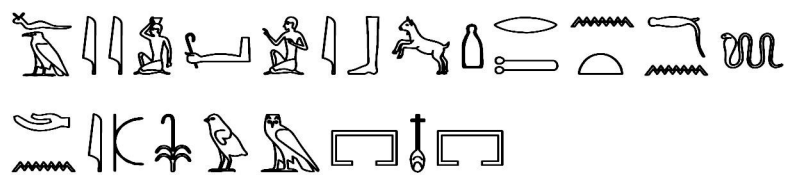


Line 14 consists of two rows of hieroglyphs. The first row contains: a vertical bar, a vertical bar, a vertical bar, a triangle, a seated figure, a falcon, a vertical bar, a vertical bar, and a vertical bar. The second row contains: a vertical bar, a wavy line, a vertical bar, a circle, a seated figure, a wavy line, a T-shaped symbol, a vertical bar, a falcon, a female symbol, a circle with a horizontal line, and a seated figure.



Line 14 (continued) consists of two rows of hieroglyphs. The first row contains: a vertical bar, a vertical bar, a seated figure, a vertical bar, a vertical bar, a triangle, a falcon, a T-shaped symbol, a vertical bar, and a vertical bar. The second row contains: a hand, a vertical bar, a falcon, a vertical bar, a vertical bar, a vertical bar, a vertical bar, a vertical bar, a vertical bar, a vertical bar, and a T-shaped symbol.

15



Line 15 consists of two rows of hieroglyphs. The first row contains: a seated figure, a vertical bar, a seated figure, a vertical bar, a seated figure, a vertical bar, a vertical bar, a horse, a vertical bar, a vertical bar, a wavy line, a vertical bar, and a vertical bar. The second row contains: a hand, a vertical bar, a vertical bar, a vertical bar, a falcon, a falcon, a vertical bar, a vertical bar, and a vertical bar.

16

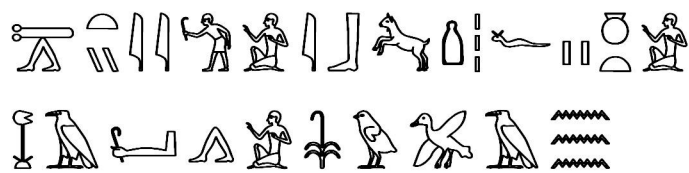


Line 16 consists of two rows of hieroglyphs. The first row contains: a seated figure, a vertical bar, a seated figure, a vertical bar, a seated figure, a vertical bar, a vertical bar, a horse, a vertical bar, a vertical bar, a vertical bar, and a seated figure. The second row contains: a falcon, a falcon, a vertical bar, a seated figure, a vertical bar, and a vertical bar.

17



Line 17 consists of two rows of hieroglyphs. The first row contains: a vertical bar, a seated figure, a vertical bar, a vertical bar, a seated figure, a vertical bar, a vertical bar, a seated figure, and a vertical bar. The second row contains: a seated figure, a vertical bar, a seated figure, a vertical bar, a seated figure, a vertical bar, a vertical bar, a horse, a vertical bar, a seated figure, a vertical bar, a vertical bar, a vertical bar, a seated figure, and a seated figure.



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Reconstructed Ending



26b



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The Senet Game Text of Ancient Egypt

Translation and Commentary by Douglass A. White

Based on the three surviving copies
transcribed and collated by Prof. P. Piccione

Among the surviving documents of ancient Egypt the Illustrated Senet Playing Board and an accompanying poetic text about it that we shall call **The Senet Game Text** was drawn on papyrus [pTurin 1.775]. A second probably earlier papyrus edition of the **Senet Game Text** is in the Cairo Museum [pCairo 58037], and a third partial copy of the **Senet Game Text** is inscribed on the wall of the Theban Tomb of Inherkhau [TT 359].

The iconic illustrations on the 30 squares of the Game Board symbolically represent deities of ancient Egypt. However, they are badly damaged, and many are illegible or destroyed. About 22 out of 30 can be recognized from the two boards drawn on the papyrus. Professor Piccione has recognized 2 more from the Game Text and other sources. Dr. White now has made a tentative restoration of the complete board based on the research done by Piccione and his predecessors, a study of the **Senet Game Text**, the **Book of the Dead** text with its Judgment Scene Tableau, the **Pyramid Texts**, and the Tarot Trump and Court Cards. Below is his translation of the **Senet Game Text**. Using Piccione's collation of the three surviving versions, Dr. White has produced a tentative conflated text that includes a transliterated version and commentary with the translation. Since all surviving versions are missing the final few lines, Dr. White has also reconstructed a possible ending for the text based on material from the **Book of the Dead** and the **Pyramid Texts**.

**01. Hetep da su[ten] R@, Temu, Jehuty,
Wenen-nefer neb ma@-kheru, M@bayu, Heru, Anepu,**

01. [I make] a royal offering to Ra, Atum, Jehuty,
Un-nefer, Lord of Truth Speaking, the Court of 30, Horus, Anubis,

* I use a modified transliteration system, because the one used by Egyptologists is unreadable for most people. I use the @ symbol to represent the deep laryngeal “grunting A” sound in ancient Egyptian. The default vowel is a short “e” sound. “Kh” and “th” are unvoiced fricative consonants. I sometimes use a hyphen “-“ to separate syllables and letters. This distinguishes “ma@-kheru” from being read as “ma@k-heru”. An italicized “a” represents the glottal stop usually written with an eagle glyph in Egyptian.

* This phrase is the beginning of the text. All three versions are different and variously garbled or damaged at the beginning, but this opening passage was a standard formula used for offering texts on funerary steles, so we understand the basic contents. It connects the text to that tradition and further reminds us that the **Book of**

the Dead Judgment Scene Tableau is the “a priori” layout of the Senet Oracle Game Board when used as an oracle. I call the “Book of the Dead” the “Book of Enlightenment” because its true title is “Coming Forth into Daylight [or Enlightenment]” and its purpose is to describe the freedom of consciousness to come and go in the universe, entering and leaving forms at will. The most suitable extant text for studying the “a priori” arrangement of the Game Board is the Theban version known as the Papyrus of Ani (BM #10470.) This document contains in its illustrations all the Tarot Trump cards, Court Cards, and most of the Pip Cards as well. The Witnessing Gods in the Judgment Scene clearly form a Senet Oracle Board layout, even to the extent of showing the proper number of alternating checkerboard squares. In my book **Thoth and the Tarot: the Amazing Secrets** (see also the more recent Chinese language edition published as the **Senet Tarot of Ancient Egypt**) I present a layout that is closely based on that Tableau while also drawing on some other sources and making a few simple refinements based on the ancient traditions.

* From the Pyramid Texts we can already see the expression “A royal offering” used as an opening phrase for dedications. “Su[ten]” usually refers to the pharaoh, but in this formula it comes to mean “Performed in the manner of a pharaoh”. Scholars often read “su[ten]” as “nesu”. The latter refers to the “throne”. However, I believe that this ancient Egyptian word corresponds to our modern word “sultan” and is a traditional title for a royal personage. Medial liquids (l-r) and nasals (m-n) were often not spelled out in written Egyptian texts.

* The traditional “a posteriori” Senet Oracle Game Board layout used for gaming and described in the Senet Game Text proper usually names the final five squares as follows: The House of Beauty [Heart of Osiris, the Hermit]; Dissolution [An-pu, Death]; The Three Honored Ones [Thoth, Emperor Shu, and Ma@t]; The Two Honored Ones [Tower Temu and Ra Horakhty]; and Horus [the Chariot]. This list is very close to the order in the Book of Enlightenment in reverse sequence with Horus the Younger in the 30th square rising to identify with Amen Ra Horakhty [Horus the Elder] as he leaves the board and transcends from the Lower Self to the Higher Self. The “a posteriori” Senet Game Board layout represents the journey of an aspirant through the Labyrinth of Mehen. The goal of the game is for the aspirant to become a full-fledged “Magician” and identify with the ideal of Osiris. Winning the game symbolized magical assimilation of the entire culture of ancient Egypt and the attainment thereby of immortality.

02. Shewe, Ma@t, Asyu-t Weryu nu Per-Nefer, Hew Peh-ty Hekaut, Saa,

02. Shu, Ma’at, the Crew of Great Ones of the House of Beauty, Hu the Mighty One of Magic Spells, and Saa.

* This line continues the list of major gods who appear on the Senet Board. * Shewe [The Emperor Trump, Shu] is the prototype for India’s Shiva. He represents the primordial material of the universe from which the Breath of Life arises. As such he represents the pathway back to Source. Thus he sits above Dissolution [the Death Trump, Anubis] on the “a priori” ancient Egyptian Oracle Board.

* Ma’at is the consort of Thoth and represents Truth. She is the Justice Trump in the Tarot. Shu and Ma’at both wear ostrich feathers on their heads as a sign of the mind

being attuned to truth and intelligence through awareness of the Breath of Life. Osiris wears both feathers on his crown.

* The Asyu-t is a group of light angels, but this term also often refers euphemistically to the crew of workers who professionally prepare the royal mummies. The House of Beauty [square 26] is the place where one gains immortality and is also the funeral home where the deceased is mummified. On a deeper level it refers to the purification of the aspirant's heart so that he may identify with Osiris the Magician and become an immortal Trump.

* Hu [Hew] is the Master of Taste and Smell. He has a special title "Power of the Hekau" because the priest who administers mantra initiations with the "Wer Hekau" magic wand embodies him. He is a transformation of the Transcendental Yogi, Baba. Here he plays the role of the Initiator. In the Tarot he becomes the Yoga Master of Lotuses. In European decks this becomes the Queen of Cups.

* Saa is the Master of Touch and a twin brother with Hu. As another transformation of Yogi Baba, he represents the Wisdom of being in intimate touch with the values of the physical world. He is the Yoga Master of Towns in the Tarot. This is the prototype of the Queen of Coins.

03. Da-sen @q-a er Seh en M@bayt, Kheper-a er neter em m@bat-k.

03. That they might permit me to enter into the Court of the 30, so I may become your 31st god.

* Before you either play the Senet Game or consult the Oracle, you should request permission from the gods of the 30 Houses on the board and state clearly your purpose. The highest purpose is to become a full-fledged member of the company of immortals. This was the symbolic purpose of the Senet Game and of all Egyptian culture. "M@ba" means 30, but was also a homophone for a harpoon, so Egyptians sometimes wrote the word for the council or the council hall using the harpoon glyph. That glyph also had a reading "W@" and was used for the number one. This suggests that the Council of Thirty are in Truth a single Unity. Pharaoh often was shown carrying a harpoon to suggest how he unifies the country as well as protects it from the crocodiles and hippos that infested the Nile.

04. Teken-a Mehen Fay-a en-f abu.

04. I have entered the [Labyrinth of] Mehen, And lift my pawns onto it.

* Mehen represents the Devil Trump. Mehen is the great python that surrounds the universe. He represents the boundary that defines any creation. He protectively surrounds the Higher Self [Sun] during the dark night of ignorance. He is also the sometimes scary labyrinth that we wander about in as we journey through life. This is symbolized on the Senet Game Board by the zig-zag path that the pawns follow. In the human body Mehen is the digestive system with its labyrinth of intestines that form a meandering pathway through the belly. Early Mehen Game Boards were circular and showed the serpent coiled with its head in the middle. Sometime before the First Dynasty the Egyptians developed the rectangular Senet Board that they

identified with Min, the god of procreation. Min was also one of the names of the first pharaoh of the First Dynasty. The Senet Game Board came to represent all of Egyptian culture in a single package, and so this format gradually replaced the circular boards in popularity. It beautifully combined the myth of Mehen's mysterious labyrinth [the Devil] with the creative intelligence of Amen Ra [the Sun] and the transcendental magical journey of Osiris [the Magician].

* The pawn is called "ab" and often looks very much like a modern chess pawn. The name puns on the word "ab" which means the heart. Each pawn represents an aspect of the heart of a person. The Egyptians believed that a person has eight primary energies that integrate to form an individual. The point of the game is for the seven "mortal" energies to realize their "immortal" light body nature [the eighth energy] by passing through the labyrinth of the physical body and into the light of the transcendent being of Amen Ra. Light Beings then joined the Higher Self and lived, worked, and played in immortal freedom with the other immortals. Thus, the eight aspects of the individual do not appear as "gods" with Houses on the board, but rather serve as the seven pawns that a player uses. The eighth energy is the player himself moving the pawns. He is the Aakh, or Immortal Light Being. When a person achieved the Light Body, he was called S@hu (a seal bearer). In India such people were called Siddhas or Sadhus. The 30 Houses on the Senet Board include only the 22 Trumps and the 8 higher Court Cards [Kings and "Masters"]. The Tarot queens (originally Yoga Masters) as well as the knights and pages as we know them were developed during the Middle Ages by Europeans to represent their feudal society. In ancient Egypt the "kings" are the four elements, and the "queens" are the senses (Yoga Masters) that correlate to those elements. The knights and pages are the pawns and represent the energies of the individual: physical body, electrical body, chemical body, heart body, name body, prana body, and shadow body. The latter, known as the khaybet, is the integrative aspect of the brain activated by deep meditation. All seven are expressions of the immortal light body – YOU as the player.

05. Wah-a er set ab-a, ary-a set-a em Per-Jehuty.

05. I set my heart [on the game], and take my place in the House of Thoth.

* In the illustrated Senet Game Board that comes with the Game Text we find that the first square at the entrance to the Labyrinth is the House of Thoth. The Egyptians draw Thoth with the icon of an ibis bird. As the High Priest Grand Master of the Tarot Trumps he sees off his aspiring student on the adventurous journey through the Labyrinth. For ancient Egyptians Thoth also represented the beginning of the New Year and the beginning of the month. Thoth is the Higher Intelligence and the master of transformations. As such he naturally becomes supervisor of the Moon and companion of the Sun. His purpose is to raise the consciousness of the individual from the ever-changing relative world to the immortal world of the Higher Self. Thus he becomes the High Priest Trump to the Higher Self Sun Trump, Amen Ra.

* The First House on the journey to the Higher Self is the Temple of the High Priest. He is the Teacher of the aspiring Magician and gives a blessing and then instructions to aid the aspirant on his adventure. The heart "ab" must decide with determination to complete the journey. The aspirant is the "Heart of Osiris" that becomes immortal when his last pawn leaves the board. "Set" refers to Set the Devil, the Illusion of the

Labyrinth. It also refers to Aset, the Egyptian spelling for Isis, the beloved sister of Osiris who will become the devoted wife of the aspiring Magician. Isis represents the Mission of Love that the aspirant fulfills. This Mission is completed when the heart is fully purified in the House of Beauty, and then the aspirant passes beyond Death and even beyond the Labyrinth to attain transcendental immortality.

* The Second House is the aspirant himself identifying with the ideal Magician, Osiris, as he sets out on his adventure. He is symbolized on the Game Board by the icon of the Jed Pillar, the backbone of Osiris. This represents the stability the Magician has to stay the course. Isis, the wife and sister of Osiris, is represented with her Thet knot right next to the Jed Pillar on the same square. This is the Magician's ability to make tough decisions and stick to his Mission the way Isis sticks by Osiris. Her square is on the opposite side of the Board, but the two are soul mates right from the start.

06. @ha-a me Neter er-hen@-f; maa-a Net @wyt-s her Khau-t (Ab-t)

06. I fight as a god with him (my opponent); and I see Net (Nut) with her two arms above the altar.

* The Third House according to the Senet Game Text and its illustrated board is the House of Net (sometimes spelled "Neith") in the Temple of Abydos. Abydos was the sacred site for Osiris. Every year there was a special celebration of the resurrection of Osiris during which a procession of priests and adepts wound its way through the sacred site re-enacting aspects of the life of Osiris. Osiris represents the opening of the Eye of Wisdom, the Eye of Horus. Net's symbol is a pair of crossed arrows or a criss-cross. This is the optic chiasm that connects the eyes to the visual cortex and passes by the Third Eye pineal of Osiris. Net is a special form of Nut, the goddess of Cosmic Space and the mother of Osiris. It is fitting that the aspirant gets the blessing of his mother as he sets out on his journey. Net sometimes stands in for Osiris as the perceptive faculty. She represents the neural network of the cortex that spreads over the brain. The optic chiasm has her two arms spread over the "altar" of Osiris – that is, in the temple cavern of the third ventricle – "blessing" him on his journey. The altar also is the Senet Board. As Nut she is the Star Trump. She gives a vision of the future and thus embraces the entire Game Board. Her son, Osiris, becomes the constellation Orion when he achieves his ascension. The Cairo version has the Abydos Nome symbol stand in for the altar.

* The word for "fight" [@ha] is a subtle reference to the Horus name of Min, the "founder" of a united Egypt and first pharaoh of the first dynasty. This foreshadows the future when the aspirant identifies with Min :, whose glyph name stands for the whole Senet Game Board, and rises to the level of Amen Ra. The fighting also refers to the struggle of Horus the Younger [the Chariot Trump of the Will] with Set [the Devil Trump of Illusion]. The "Game" of Senet is a contest between two players, and the opponent represents the Illusion of the Devil. By an odd "coincidence" the Game Board has 30 squares, and classical Egypt spans 30 dynasties. At the end of 30 dynasties the Greeks and Romans followed by Arabs and Turks permanently occupy the country and the age of the Egyptian pharaohs passes away into the realm of myth and fantasy.

* The Fourth House on the illustrated Game Board is lost, but the Game Text has the word “**maa**” written with an eye glyph. *Maa* is the name of the Yoga Master of Vision, one of the four senses who appear on the Senet Game Board. He is what the Tarot now calls the “Queen of Wands” [Firesticks in ancient Egypt]. Good vision is necessary for the aspirant to find his way through the Labyrinth. Vision is also the specialty of Osiris as the Eye of Wisdom, the perceptive faculty. So this is the first sense that he activates. He opens his eyes and starts his journey through the Labyrinth of Life.

07. Wen-a Per-Nefer khery Ma@-t, athety-a neter er Per Neter-M@byt (30)

07. I open the House of Beauty governed by Ma’at, that she might take me as a god to the House of the 30 Gods.

* The Fifth House on the Journey is the House of Ma’at, the Goddess of Justice, Truth, and Honesty. Although the illustration is missing from the papyrus drawing, she is clearly mentioned here in the Senet Game Text. She is the beloved consort of Thoth. Intelligence loves Truth. She gives the aspirant her charge to purify his heart in the House of Beauty with Honesty and Truth so he will successfully pass the tests presented by the Council of 30 Judges. The Council’s official Court of Judgment is Square 7, but the 30 Judges on the Council are the gods of the 30 Houses on the whole Senet Board. Justice fittingly introduces the aspirant to the Court. The House of Beauty is square 26 at the end of the journey. Thus, her support ensures that he can succeed in his journey. Her square is called the House of Beauty, so it is as if he gets a preview of his future success. He opens his eyes and sees Truth. Truth indeed is Beauty, and the greatest Truth is Integrity. This means that what you believe is what you experience. Conversely, what you experience tells you what you believe. To change your experience, you must change your belief system. Some people like to talk about how things should be. This is a lie. How things are is how things are. If you want something different, you must believe something different. If you want something different, you probably have not fully appreciated what you already have. Thus, Ma’at hints to Osiris that he is already in the House of Beauty, if he can only open his eyes to see the Truth.

* The Sixth House is lost from one illustrated board and severely damaged on the other surviving illustrated board. This square probably belongs to Sejem, the Yoga Master of Hearing. In the traditional Tarot this is the Queen of Swords. In ancient Egypt his suit is the ostrich plume of subtle thought. As the aspirant prepares to enter the Court of Judgment he must first learn to listen well, for the judges will interrogate him with probing questions. He therefore “hires” legal counsel to help him understand the proceedings. This ancient Egyptian legal counsel is the “netebe nej”.



There is a key initiation here into the technique of subtle hearing, a profound method of deep meditation that enables one to hear the truth. In China Kuan-yin is the personification of this method of sharp hearing. The sixth day of the month was marked by a special celebration in ancient Egypt. We do not know much about the customs involved in this feast day, but there may be subtle reference to it in this square.

* The Seventh House is the Court of Judgment. This is the Tarot Trump of Judgment. The number 30 is its symbol because the Court traditionally had a council of 30 judges. The judges are the divine attributes symbolized by the gods of the 30 squares on the Senet Board. Notice how each House in its own way represents the entire Game Board. Thoth transforms as the phases of the moon to become each House and each god representing a day of the month. The Magician travels through each House. Net embraces the whole board. Enhanced Vision sees the whole board. Justice reveals Truth at each step. Sejem hears the Truth of each lesson and learns it. The Court has a judge for each square.

* The House of Judgment represents the ability of a person to make decisions and assume responsibility. It also means that Osiris will bring forth a baby from his wife Isis. The midwife Meskhent represents the most important decision a person makes in his life: the decision to be born into this world as a Human Being. All other decisions echo this one core choice by either resisting it or developing it.

* The Eighth House seems to spell out the word “senet” or “sen-t a”, and this refers to the whole Game of Passing. Square Eight is the House of Hu, the Yoga Master for the Sense of Taste and Smell. Hu (Hew) is the initiator who opens the mouth. He is also the Tantra Master, Pekhty. Opening the mouth allows the aspirant not only to taste his experiences, but to express himself and thereby answer the questions posed by the judges. Hu becomes the Tarot Queen of Cups – Lotuses in ancient Egypt. Hu reveals the secret mantras (Hekau) that activate the aspirant’s abilities to complete his Mission. He becomes able to “pass” [sen] through the world [ta]. He becomes a companion [sen] with the gods. He also kisses the ground [sen ta]. When he does this he smells [sen] the fragrance of the earth [ta]. The name Abydos [Ab-du] means “Hill of the Heart”. [See square 18.] This suggests love of one’s land, but it also means to understand feelings and is a subtle reference to the phallus of Osiris. The glans of the phallus is the secret “heart” of Osiris. The triangular mound of Isis is its true Temple of Love. When Isis and Thoth restore the body of Osiris to life, his phallus is missing. In order to make Isis pregnant again, the missing phallus has to be restored. The mouth is also an entrance and refers to the entrance to the womb of Isis. The number eight here is significant since it recalls the Eight Primordials by which Thoth [Tekhy, Tehuty, Jehuty] generates the physical universe. These Eight Primordials correspond to the Eight Trigrams in China’s **Book of Changes**.

* The land of Egypt is like a giant person. Hu’s sacred location is the lower lip, which is the horizon in the West. The seventh nome of Lower Egypt is “Sen-ti nefer-t “[Beautiful Foundation]. The eighth nome is sacred to Temu and represents the upper lip, or the horizon in the East. When the Egyptians kiss the ground with their lips, they face east toward the rising sun (nowadays they include Mecca as a target) and the two lips become the Eastern and Western horizons, thereby embracing the whole world. This truly is Opening of the Mouth. The horizon represents enlightenment and immortality. This *sen-ti* endless knot is the symbol of Hu’s sacred land and it has the meaning of founding or foundation. Hu’s initiation is the foundation for enlightenment and begins with knowledge of the root chakra.



08. S-men-a Jed en Thet; maa-a Wajy-t em kheperu-s er-em Per-Mut.

08. I anchor the Djed pillar (of Osiris) to the Thet-girdle (of Isis); I see *Wadjet* in all her transformations beside the House of Mut.

* The Ninth House is the House of Isis, sister, wife, and lover of Osiris. She is symbolized on the Senet Game Board by her red Thet girdle knot the menstrual napkin that is the sign that she maintains her virginity for Osiris. She is the High Priestess Trump, and the secret knower of the personal Mission of Osiris. Each person has his own personal Mission in Life that only he knows. Isis symbolizes that secret inner awareness of the purpose of life. She is Virgo, the pure maiden who guards the temple. Osiris becomes her lover and makes her pregnant with his children, Baba and Horus. These sons will help him fulfill his purpose in life. They represent the introverted and extroverted aspects of an individual. Baba explores the hidden source of life, and Horus acts deliberately with his will to create the manifest world that he prefers. Each is a vital aspect of the integrated person.

* “S-men” is a pun. “Men” refers to Amen, or Min, the Senet Game Board. This is the stable foundation for exploring. The “s” prefix gives the verb “men” a causative sense. The word also refers to the stable relationship between Osiris and Isis and the lasting love between them. “Anchoring” the pillar to the girdle of Isis means that Osiris makes love to Isis and makes her pregnant.

* In Pyramid Text Utterance 4b-c Nut (Newet) says, “I give you your sister Isis, placing her within you, giving you your heart in your body.” Isis is the goddess of feeling. Through her Osiris learns to feel life and, like the tin woodman after meeting Dorothy, he gains a heart. He must have a heart to win the Game and make it to the House of Beauty [i.e., The House of the Heart]. “Sister” in Egyptian is “sen-t”. This is a pun on the name of the Game of Senet. Squares 8 and 9 secretly spell out the Pyramid Text: “Sister Isis”.

* The Tenth House is the House of *Wajet*. The reuniting of Osiris with Isis transforms Isis into *Wajet*, goddess of the papyrus swamps. During her pregnancy and after giving birth to Horus Isis hides in the papyrus swamps of the Delta to avoid Set. The Nile Delta is the geographical icon of Isis. The Great Pyramid at the tip of the Delta is her architectural icon. This period is the time of the fetal and infant Horus. He is the “Hanged Man” of the Tarot Deck because the fetus hangs upside down in the mother’s womb. Horus in the Womb is the future Hero, the new pharaoh-to-be, and heir of Osiris. Baba is a recluse and refuses to become pharaoh so that he can dedicate himself to his spiritual explorations. These are the deep foundations of Egyptian culture. The sign of Baba is two legs, two pillars, or two steles. From the earliest pharaohs we find the practice of placing a pair of steles or obelisks at the entrance to a tomb or temple. The admonition is to stride deeply into the origins of life as you enter the tomb or temple.

* The Eleventh House is the House of Mut. This is the House of Hathor, or Nekhebet, the Empress Trump. When Isis gives birth and begins raising her child, she transforms into a mother. This is the quality of Mut, the Mother Goddess. Her quality is

unconditional love of all the transformations of *Wajet*, who is also a transformation of Mut. Thus, love is always directed toward the Self.

09. Haty-a weh@u, nen m@hy-enef.

09. My heart is clever, and does not hesitate toward him.

* “Weh@ ab” or “weh@ h aty” means to be wise, skillful, and understanding. “Weh@” literally is to let loose binding cords or ropes, as when a boat is unmoored. The Twelfth House on the Senet Board is the sign for Orion. Orion was the constellation of Osiris in the sky. It represents him as an immortal ideal of a great, realized person. The name for Orion in Egyptian is Sah, which forms a pun on *Saa*, the Master of Wisdom and the Sense of Touch. We gain wisdom through a willingness to touch and feel the world that we have chosen to live in. The result of wisdom is an elevation of consciousness. Eventually this results in immortality. This verse and the next few verses develop the theme of Sah. This square represents the education of the young Horus to model himself after the wisdom and goodness of his father. He literally looks up to his father as an image high in the sky. The first property of Sah mentioned here is that of cleverness. It is hard to neglect Orion, because he is a large and bright constellation that dominates the sky. “M@hy” means to forget or to hesitate. “Him” refers to the opponent. The player is confident and skilled in responding to the play of his opponent, both in offence and defense.

10. Ab-a wen her s-met heb@-f er-a; m@sy-a en-f abu-f.

10. My heart opens its examination of his play against me; I move forward against his pawns.

* This verse develops the competitive aspect of the game strategy. The young prince learns how to manage affairs of state by practicing his hand at strategy games. The Turin and Deir el Medina text has (1) “mesenah nef abu-f” [he turns back his pawns]. The Turin text has (2) “mesenuh na abu.”, which apparently means “turning back pawns. The Cairo text has (3) “m@sy-a nef abu-f” [I move forward against his pawns].

(1)

(2)

(3)

Whether the player moves forward attacking the opponent or the opponent moves backward due to the player’s attack, in each case the text is about the player managing the pawns in strategic play against his opponent. The word “heart” emphasizes that the wisdom of Sah develops through feeling of the heart that is actualized in the touch of the hand on the pawns. Thus, we see the heart [ab] playfully touching the pawn [ab]. This is confirmed in the next verse with its focus on the fingers and the heart.

11. **Jeb@y-f tex-tex, haty-f rua-f su her set-f.**

11. His two fingers are confused, and his heart has removed itself from its place.

* Each player usually uses two fingers to grasp a pawn when he makes a move. Often players used the index and middle finger to move a pawn. The text gives three finger glyphs, but then adds the dual sign. This emphasizes the sense of confusion. The aspirant has a clever strategy, so his opponent becomes confused, his fingers fumble indecisively, and he makes a poor move. The heart is a pun for a pawn. The mention of two fingers is also a classical allusion that refers to the way Baba and Horus help Osiris to climb the ladder to heaven. The Egyptians used the index and middle fingers to symbolize this. The opponent's heart, and his pawn, is apparently sent backward on the board to square 7, the Judgment Hall, to be weighed and judged again. The exact rule is not spelled out. The name for Orion [Sah] means toe in Egyptian, and Saa means touch of the hand. Perhaps, if the opponent is on square 12 [Sah or Saa], and the player brings one of his pawns also to that square, then he can "kick" or remove the opponent's pawn back to square 7. "Rua" is to flee, make away with, remove, steal, or to move from one place to another.

* In the Judgment Scene of the **Book of the Dead** An-pu [Death] places the heart of the "deceased" in one of the pans of the Scales of Justice. In the other pan he places the feather from Ma'at's head-dress. This feather represents Truth. An honest heart is as light, or lighter, than a feather. If the heart is not honest, a person may exhibit anxiety and confusion during the Weighing of the Heart. This is the ancient Egyptian version of a lie detector test.

12. **Khem-f er wesheb-ty-f.**

12. He does not know his [proper] response.

* "Khem" means not to know or to be ignorant. As the prince gains in wisdom, the actions of his opponents appear stupid in contrast. This foreshadows the appearance of the Fool in the Nineteenth House. The Fool is symmetrically placed on the opposite side of the Game Board from the Wise Man. Sah, the wise one, understands how to use people for the benefit of all. The Fool uses people in such a way that he fails, and so do his enterprises. This verse brings out another aspect of wisdom and begins to introduce the character of the Fool. The expression "wesheb-ty" means to answer or reply [in this case the proper counter move], but is also a pun on weshab-ty, a clay model of a person that was placed in the tomb to be a servant for the deceased. The weshab-ty servants represent both the players' pawns and the illiterate peasants who are another kind of "Fool". A Fool is a person who lives only in response to others and is unable to make his own deliberate choices and take responsibility for them.

13. **S-@nekh ren-a em Per-Sah, @nekh-a er neheh-jeta.**

13. I enliven my name in the House of Orion, and I live forever and ever.

* The Twelfth House is the House of Orion, the embodiment of Wisdom. Orion also represents the ideal of immortality that the aspirant strives for. Living forever and ever is a quality attributed to Osiris.

* The Thirteenth House is the House of Life. This refers to Sekh-met, the goddess of Strength. Her primitive form is Tef-nut. She has the body of a woman and the head of a lioness. The Tarot Trump of Strength traditionally shows a woman taming a lion with her bare hands. In Egypt the two are unified as a single goddess. The “@nekh” (ankh) talisman is the Egyptian symbol for life. It is a simple form of the Tree of Life.

14. Seny-a em m@u hen@ Aten er Per-Wehem-@nekh. Sen-nu-t-a aseq em Per-Ah deha su em anau.

14. I pass upon a breeze with Aten to the House of Repeating Life, while my colleague stops in the House of Netting, which sinks him down in fetters.

* The Fourteenth House is the House of the Aten, the flying globe of the Sun. This is the Tarot Trump of the Sun. The usual Sun Trump is the sun early in the morning, or the hidden sun. But here the Aten represents the sun at noon because we approach the middle of the Senet Game Board. The text here alludes to **Book of the Dead**, Chapter XV: “You go forth in your peace in the Sektet boat (Evening Boat), your heart is expanded by the winds in the @d-tet (Morning Boat).”

* The Fifteenth House is the House of Repeating Life or Rebirthing. The Tarot Card for this is the Wheel of Fortune that turns around and around. In Egypt this is the House of Khenemu, the divine potter who shapes creations on his spinning potter’s wheel. The symbol on the illustrated board is a frog. What does a frog have to do with the Wheel of Fortune? It turns out that the ancient Egyptians used a frog to represent the early beginnings of evolution. They often mounted a palm frond on top of a figure of a frog and then cut notches in the frond to represent the passage of time. Thus, the frog suggests cycles of time that continue from a primordial beginning. The Wheel of Fortune is also the Full Moon point on the Senet journey through the lunar month.

* The Sixteenth House is the House of Netting. The symbol for this square is the fisherman’s net. This name for it is a pun on the name for the moon. So this is really the House of the Moon. It occurs on the Senet Game Board at the position that represents the night after the Full Moon and, together with the Sun Trump, forms a pair of “eyes” in the middle of the board. At this point the moon begins the waning phase of its cycle. The moon’s interaction with earth causes the ocean tides. The fishermen schedule their fishing according to the tides. The text here seems to suggest that a person landing on this square gets tangled in the loops of the net and becomes stuck. This delays his progress for an unspecified number of turns, but the exact rule is lost. Such a procedure fits nicely with the common understanding of the Tarot Moon Trump that it represents sub-consciously orchestrated habitual behavior patterns and emotional responses that run on default and may tangle us in difficulties. Thoth as the master of the moon knows how to untangle a person from the nets of karma. The three texts vary here. The Cairo version has “den su shen-nu” (1). “Den” has an ear radical, which makes no sense here. This word is probably a transcription error for (2). This glyph refers to the quarters of the moon, and means literally to cut off. This is also probably a copyist error for the word “dena” as it appears in the next couplet. As it stands, the text suggests that a pawn landing on this square is cut off from progress when he is trapped in the Moon Trump’s net of karma. “Shenu” means a loop. From full moon, the moon begins to wane, and each night a larger piece of its disk appears to be cut off. (However, see the next couplet.) The Deir el Medina

apparently was sequestered for a while and could not move on to the House of Beauty. Unfortunately, we do not know how long the pawn was a prisoner in this square.

16. Fay-a abu-a khemt. Gem-a abwy.

16. I move my 3 pawns, And find two pawns.

* This verse contains a technical expression that comes up frequently in texts related to Senet, but the exact rule is not so clear. One possibility is that if you are in the House of Mehen and you throw a three, your pawn can advance to the House of Bread [the World Trump at square 20]. Then you can move any other two pawns to squares 18 and 19. This way you not only get to square 20 where you can rest and eat, but you get your beloved partner [the Lover of square 18] and some nice amusement [the Fool of square 19]. By occupying the three adjacent squares you temporarily block your opponent from advancing past this point. There is a phrase in the **Pyramid Texts** (T. 344) that refers to having three meals in heaven and two on earth. This also may mean that you are two-thirds of the way to your destination on the journey through the Senet Game Board Labyrinth. Further research may shed more light on this phrase.

17. Aw sen-nu-a her sa-a. Fay-a abu-a er Set Mer en-a.

17. My opponent is behind me. I lift my pawns to the Seat of My Beloved.

* The Eighteenth House is the Seat of Love. The Devil (hate) and Lover (love) Trumps traditionally seem to have a close affinity. The expression “my opponent is behind me” seems to support the idea of blocking the opponent by occupying the squares at the end of the second row. The word “Set” also refers to the name of Isis in Egyptian [Aset] and the Devil, Set. The Seat is another word for House and refers to the square, but it also has sexual connotations. The word “mer” means “love”. The Cairo copy has a variant “athety-[a]” (I grasp or move) instead of the usual verb, lift.

* Piccione believes that this square refers to the sacred site of Peqy (often spelled “Peqer”). This is a special location at Abydos where secret rituals were performed during the Osirian festival. A key operation is the restoration of the phallus of Osiris when he is resurrected. This is a fertility rite to celebrate the agricultural season. Osiris serves as a god of agriculture and is sometimes depicted with plants sprouting from his mummy. This square represents the restoration of his phallus so that the plowing and planting could begin.

* It is possible that the name of the card game of poker comes from the name of this ancient sacred site near Abydos. Card games evolved from Senet, and Senet is a game derived from the rituals of Osiris. Pecker is also a slang term for the phallus. Other names for this square include “Per Apet” (The House for Counting Bones), “Per Heb” (The House of Plowing), and “Pa Mery” (The House of Love). The glyph for “mer” is a digging stick that served as a plow in primitive times. The ancients connected the act of plowing with the act of making love. Both involve the “sowing of seeds”. “Counting Bones” was another segment of the Osirian ritual. Isis, Nephthys, Baba-Thoth, and Anepu count the component fragments of the body of Osiris as they reassemble them. They discover that a very special “love bone”, the phallus, is missing and have to reconstruct a new one or find an alternative method for Osiris to

recover his virility. With some magical medicine from Baba-Thoth and helpful coaxing from Isis and Nephthys Osiris once again stands up.

18. Tua seshemu-kua em sen-yu; aw-a seshau-k[ua] nety em Per-[Khem.]

18. I guide [my pawns] in passing, and make wise him who is in the House of [the Fool.]

* The Nineteenth House is missing from the Game Text and survives in the illustration as only a tiny fragment of a line. Scholars have tried matching various glyphs to fit the fragment but with little success. My theory is that the Senet Game Text gives lots of clues that help us fill in the lacuna. Once we know that this is the House of the Fool, and realize that the Egyptians use a baboon to represent the Fool, we place a baboon glyph on the square and find that the end of his tail nicely fits to the remaining line fragment.

* At the House of Orion, the Wise, the Senet Game Text mentions that the opponent “does not know” [verse 12]. Here the text has the player guide his pawns in passing and make wise him who is in the House of The obvious answer that fills in the blank is “the Fool”. There also may be reference in the text here to techniques of internal breathing and meditation to raise a person’s IQ.

19. Rekh ren-nu sen, nen khem sesh ap jet-f.

19. I know their names, for a scribe who has opened his warehouse is no Fool.

* The Fool has a number of names in Egyptian. He is “Khem”, the Fool, an ignorant person. He is the baboon of Thoth, “Qef-tenu” of many techniques. He is “Ken-mut” who curses his mother. He is “Ben-ty” who uses tricky curses to trap people in magical nets. He is “Ap-ta” who catches the monster python Aapep in his net. He is “Api-ab-neter”, the ape god who counts hearts. [Ab-t is a net or trap. Ab-d is the moon. Ab is the heart, to dance, and a Senet pawn.]

* The originator of writing is Thoth. The Ape god is a transformation of Thoth and the pawns used in the Game of Senet. The ape as the totem of scribes is a joke about how often the scribes have no idea what they are transcribing and often make errors. In Egyptian art you can often see the baboon form of Thoth watching over a scribe as he writes. And of course the ape shows up sitting on the tongue of the Scales of Justice. This suggests that the results of the Weighing of the Heart Ritual may be quite unreliable.

* The phrase “I know their names” refers to the names of the gods on the Senet Game Board and the self-proclaimed wisdom of the Fool. Usually the Game Board is blank and the players play the squares from memory. Egyptians knew the god for each square by heart. A scribe who is literate knows how to look up words in the dictionary if he is not sure how to write them. Of course, if a scribe has already drunk a few drafts of beer on a hot day, he may easily skip a word or repeat a word – or even get the spelling mixed up. “Ap” means to open and also to judge. “Jet” is a warehouse, but also puns on a word for eternity and a word for the body. It is a warehouse of knowledge. It also can mean a farmer, healthy, an idiot, a boat, or a council of leaders,

to speak, language, or stable. The text clearly calls the Fool “khem”. This word also can mean a servant or slave. He is also the farmer who tends the crops in the field that has been plowed in Square 18.

20. Meteru na Mehen. Da-f tau em Per-Tau, . . .

20. Mehen is my witness[es]. He grants bread in the House of Bread, . . .

* The Twentieth House is the House of Bread. Bread and World are homophones. Thus, bread became the Egyptian simplified symbol for the World Trump Square. In the 18th House the fields are plowed and the seeds are sown with Love. In the 19th House the fields are tended and harvested by the illiterate farmer “Fool”. In the 20th House we have bread in the bakery and on the table. The Fool is not so foolish after all. This is the abundance and fruition of the material world. Smelling the fresh bread reminds us of kissing the ground [sen-ta] in the Eighth House. At square 20 this becomes a physical reality, and it leads to the fragrance of the next square. “Pawet” is a particular kind of bread offering that symbolizes eternity and the existence of all the gods together from primordial time. The whole Senet Game Board is a Pawet, and the World is a giant Loaf of Bread.



* The Twenty-First House is the House of Fragrant Prana [Ba]. This is the Temperance Trump, the square dedicated to Nephthys (Nebet Het), younger sister of Isis (Aset). On the surface Temperance means to be reasonable in matters of food and drink. The Senet Game Text does not discuss this House, but the symbol on the illustrated board looks like a pot of incense. A common reading of this word for incense in Egyptian is “neter-sent” or “sen-neter”. This means divine odor, and puns on the Senet Game of the Gods. The glyph on the Board is also usually pronounced “ba” and refers to the pranic energy. The pot can also contain fragrant essential oil. Nebet Het is the Goddess in charge of the Temple of Immortality. She is the kundalini energy. This energy enters a person while he is in the womb [square 10, *Wajet*]. At square 21 the kundalini rises and transports the person to heaven. This transformation occurs in stages that pass through the Gates of the Chakras and sequentially transcend the Four Elements in a process that mimics death. Thus, the next four squares represent the Kings of the Four Elements [the Four Sons of Horus] in sequential order from subtle to gross: Air, Fire, Water, and Earth. Once the elements are transcended, the heart becomes purified and the realm of immortality is attained. This fulfills the initiation of Sen-ta in square 8. Each element has a sense to perceive it. Thus, there are eight primordial Court Cards, and they correspond to the Ogdoad, or Eight Cosmic Primordials and the Eight Energy Bodies [or Souls] of the individual.

* “Meteru” is awareness that is simply witnessing or observing. This is the essential nature of the “ba” prana that governs the Brow Chakra of Osiris where the Cosmic Cobra [uraeus] appears. It accepts all possibilities and thus passes through the layers of the elements. Mehen becomes a witness to each Element as it passes. The four

classical elements as the Sons of Horus are traditionally shown in the form of mummies because they represent “dead” physical matter.

21. Qebehu, em Per-Setau.

21. And [Qebhu’s] cool libations, and (Mesta’s) House of fiery heat.

* The Twenty-Second House is the House of Coolness. This is dedicated to Qebhusenuf, the King of Air. He is the Tarot King of Swords or Spades and represents the cardinal direction of West. The sun sets there and this brings coolness to the day. It is a time of rest and relaxation. It is time for a shower and a cool beer. The word “cool” [qebehu] in the Senet Game Text tells us who belongs in this square. The glyph is a tall jar with a libation being poured from it. It means coolness and suggests a cool drink or a cooling bath. “Senu-f” means “his shape” or “his companions”. “Qebehu” also means the sky, and this connects it to the element of Air. The King of Air has a hawk’s head, and this shows his direct relationship to Horus the Younger and Horus the Elder.

* The Twenty-Third House is the House of the Fire Stick. It is dedicated to Mest *a* [sometimes pronounced Amset]. This is the Tarot King of Wands. The fire stick is used to start fires (*sta*). Mesta [giving birth to fire] is King of the South and the hot sun at mid-day. He has a human head. The fragmentary illustration on the Game Board can be interpreted as a form of Mesta. The text seems to have “M Per Sta-u”. This may be a scribal metathesis for “Per Mestau” (In the House of Ignitions). “Sta-u” is perhaps the ancestor of our English word “stove”. In Egyptian “tauf” means hot or a stove or a furnace. The initial “s” gives a causative sense. In China he becomes Tsao, the Kitchen God.

* The Twenty-Fourth House is the House of Hep [Hapy]. He is the King of Water and corresponds to the Tarot King of Cups [Lotuses in my deck]. His head resembles a dog-faced baboon. He is also related to Ha-@py, the Nile God. A plentiful supply of water brought happiness to the Egyptians because their land is basically hot and arid desert. Without the Nile’s water they would have been unable to develop a life of wealth and leisure.

* In tomb M1 at Abu Rawash there is a Senet Game Board that appears to have a palm or fig tree on square 24. This may be a reference to the tree of life from which Nut or Mut is often shown dispensing life-giving water with a pitcher. However, part of the decorated tile is broken, so we can not be sure that the water actually pours forth from the tree. It would be nice to find another Senet Game Board that confirms this possibility.

* The Twenty-Fifth House belongs to Duamutef by default. He is King of Earth and East, and his head looks just like that of An-pu, the Death Trump. The icon for Duamutef is missing from the illustrated boards and the text is silent with regard to this square. My guess is that the Senet Game Text briefly suggests the first two Kings and then assumes that the reader knows the others must follow. The four kings of the elements are usually grouped together as the four canopic jars for holding the internal organs of a mummy. They also represent the cardinal directions. Duamutef’s name has a special role here because it means “he honors his mother”. This echoes back to

the appearance of Net/Nut in square 3. There she blesses her son Osiris and sees him off on his journey. The aspirant salutes her as he reaches the House of Beauty (square 26) where he begins his formal induction into the company of immortals.

* During the process of dying the breath [Air] leaves first, then the body heat [Fire] dissipates, then the body fluids [Water] evaporate, and finally the solid matter [Earth] crumbles to dust and returns to the soil. The aspirant must be able to pass through each stage consciously without losing awareness.

* When all that is left is pure awareness, then the heart is purified and the aspirant reaches the House of Beauty. Only then can he view things free from thoughts and ideas [Air], reactions and desires [Fire], emotions and feelings [Water], and identification with a physical body [Earth].

22. S-men abu-a em Per-Nefer. Aw meh-a meha Per-Nefer.

22. [I] establish my pawns in the House of Beauty. I fill up the Scales in the Hall of Beauty.

* The Twenty-Sixth House is the House of Beauty. This House represents the Benu Bird, the Heart of Osiris. In the Tarot deck this is the Hermit Trump. It represents the mastery over the self and the opening of the Heart Chakra. At this point the heart of the apparently expired aspirant is removed by the undertakers and placed in the Scales of Judgment [meha should be written mekha[t]; see Budge's **Dictionary**, 320a] to verify his honesty and integrity. The heart must be completely pure before it faces the final test – the transcending of Death. Once the aspirant successfully passes the House of Beauty, he enters the final stages of enlightenment. The House of Beauty is the place for deep An-haty Meditation. “An-hat” is the Heart Sacrifice. The aspirant offers up his heart as a gift to the world. The glyphs show the heart placed in a bowl or a jar and presented as an offering. When the An-hat Meditation is successfully achieved, the Heart Chakra [Anahata] opens and the aspirant attains to the divine Was power scepter of the gods. The eternally resurrecting Benu (Phoenix) symbolizes the immortal heart of Osiris. The heart embraces and accepts all possibilities with unconditional love and then is ready to pass through the Total Void and enter the world of freedom as a Divine Avatar.



An Haty

23. Abu-a sefekh (7) em m@u er-hat jeb@u-a ma sabu her seta Waa.

23. My 7 pawns are in the breeze before my fingers like the jackals that tow the bark.

* The Twenty-Seventh House is the House of Death. The usual symbol on the Senet Game Board is “Mu”, the Pure Awareness Cosmic Energy symbol.



“Mu” represents the Waters of Dissolution, the Egyptian version of the Styx. It is the return to Primordial Chaos. The aspirant must pass over this Underworld Lake or Ocean of Total Dissolution. An-pu is the Lord of Death, and his companion, Wep-Wawet (“Opener of the Ways”) is the guide who leads you through the gap of total Void. The ancient Egyptians knew that this Void is filled with the energy of all possible vibrations. Thus, the entire universe (and the entire Senet Game Board) exists in this Void as a virtual reality or potential. The true Cosmic Comic form of the Void is Thoth the Great Image as Baba the Baboon. This is Tet-Wer-Baba (Tat-Wala-Baba in Sanskrit), the Fool of the Tarot deck that we met in square 19, but now in his mature form. However, the special officiant who carries out the final Weighing of the Heart is Anepu, Lord of Death. Thus, he is the proper Master of this House. The text specifically refers to the jackals Anepu and Wep-wawet guiding the pawns across the “waters” of this square. The wavy lines of “Mu” are often personified as New, the primordial virtual energy of the Ocean of Chaos. The boat is called “Waa”, which puns on the word “Waa” (meditation) and stands for the Ocean Awareness Meditation (Waa-Sha) practiced by the ancient Egyptians.

* In addition to presenting a lunar month, the Game Board also can be a solar month. The first row on the Senet Game Board represents the first decan of an Egyptian solar month; the second row is the second decan; and the third row is the third decan. The rows also represent morning, mid-day, and evening. From square 27 we move into the night. The last five squares also represent the short 5-day decan at the end of the year to complete a 365-day solar year.

24. Thety-a abau-f em Per [Mu]. Tek[-a] sen-nut-a kha@-a su er pa Mu mehy-f hen@ abu-f.

24. I carry his pawns into the House of [Water]. I attack my colleague and I throw him into that Water so he drowns with his pawns.

* This verse continues to describe the passage through square 27 and a special rule with regard to this square. When a player’s pawn has passed beyond this square to the final three squares, if it encounters an opponent’s pawn, it can throw that opponent’s pawn into square 27. The captured pawn then “dies” and is stuck there, “drowning”. This recalls the myth that Set and his minions drowned Osiris in the Nile. There is a procedure for recovering drowned pawns. They must go back to the House of Rebirthing (square 15) and again make their way to the House of Beauty. This resembles the manner in which blots are attacked in Backgammon and forced to start over again and is probably the origin of that rule.

25. “Ma@-kheru-k.” Kher-f n-a em Mehen.

25. “You are a Truth-Speaker,” Mehen says to me.

* The Twenty-Eighth House is the Palace of the Emperor. In this verse the Devil Serpent Lord of the Labyrinth announces the successful passage of the aspirant through the perilous Journey of Life to full maturity and worthiness to accept his

rightful heritage. The standard phrase used throughout the Book of “Enlightenment” is often erroneously translated “Justified”. This leads to the misunderstanding that we can actually justify our actions. Attempts to justify actions as “reasonable” are excuses that people make up in lieu of honesty. Actually, the word means “Speaker of Truth” and means that the aspirant is found to be truthful and honest. His words simply match his deeds. He thus qualifies as a Hero (Heru) and he rises above (heru) others to achieve victory. He becomes Horus the Younger identified with Horus the Elder. He is now the Heir to the Throne and assumes the title of Pharaoh, the Emperor Trump. At this square on the Senet Game Boards we often find the Emperor (Shu) accompanied by Thoth and Ma’at. The High Priest and Justice greet him and salute him as a “Truth-speaking” graduate.

26. Ab-a a . . . sep

26. While my heart . . .

* Unfortunately the **Senet Game Text** abruptly ends here. There should be at least brief comments on the final two squares. But these were apparently already lost when the Cairo version was transcribed in the time of Rameses III (early 20th dynasty, 12th century B.C.), and the Cairo text is the earliest and least corrupt of the three extant versions that all originate in this same period. Thus, unless an earlier version or the original text turns up, the original ending is lost. However, we know what the last two squares are from the surviving Senet Game Board illustrations. Therefore we can surmise the general gist of the verses on the remaining two squares. Below I give comments on the last two squares and then provide a reconstructed ending for the text. It is just a guess, but I believe it reflects the spirit of the original author. Perhaps readers with a deeper knowledge of Egyptian than mine can suggest improvements.

* The Twenty-Ninth House is the House of Tem the Tower. The Tower represents the coronation of the new pharaoh. This initializes a new reign. It is also a recapitulation of the creation of the universe. Tem is the Lord of the Big Bang. He represents the Cosmic Orgasm by which Amen Ra generates the universe. Symbolically this is reenacted in the Coronation Ceremony at the Apet Weret Great Initiation Temple in Karnak and undoubtedly had similar ceremonies at Anu (Heliopolis, modern Cairo). It is a time of national celebration. The new pharaoh arises to represent the Higher Self that unifies and guides the Two Lands of Egypt. Thus, we often find Amen-Ra together with Tem in this square. A-Tem is Adam of Genesis. The aspirant identifies with Primordial Man. He is the first citizen of the land and represents the fertile soil of Egypt. Sometimes Isis and Nephthys stand in for them. Nephthys is the kundalini orgasm energy that enlivens the world of Egypt, and Isis is the unconditional feeling of love expressed by the Higher Self that unifies the people and their culture. But these two goddesses are surrogates for this square, because they already have their own Houses elsewhere on the board.

* The Thirtieth House is the House of Horus. Horus is the Great Warrior who from above protects the timeless land of Egypt from all who would harm it. This square is the Chariot Trump in the Tarot deck. The chariot is the entire Senet Game Board, the Chariot of the Gods. The Senet Game Board in Egyptian is called Menu (Min), the invisible god of generation. It is the Foundation. Horus is the newly crowned pharaoh embodying the spirit of the first pharaoh and all pharaohs. He ascends the

throne and assumes his duties to carry the civilization of Egypt to ever higher realms of fulfillment and happiness. Horus, the Divine Hawk, carries the Foundation Game beyond the universe into the invisible transcendental world. The player's pawn expands and passes from this final square beyond the board into the immortal world of all possibilities. He becomes the Ancient One of the Path of Horus: *Aau-Wat-Her*. When he transforms into the incarnation of Horus the Elder, he becomes a true Avatar, *@-Wat-Her*, a Helper on the Path of the Will. If the board has a drawer underneath, you can pull the drawer open and drop your completed pawn into the drawer. When all your pawns become invisible in this way, you win the game. That is why the game came to be called "Backgammon" (*Bak-Amen* = *Ba-k Amen*; The Invisible Hawk: Your Mind is Invisible.)



Bak Amen

Suggested Ending for the Game Text:

26b. Ab-a! A, aw-a sep sefekh.

26b. My heart! Ah, I expand seven times.

* The expanded heart means joy and gladness. Seven times refers to the seven pawns reaching the end of the journey, and it recalls Sefkhit-@but ("Goddess of the Seven Purified"), a consort of Thoth, and the goddess of writing, mathematics, architecture and civilization. "S-fekh" also means to unloose or set free; "@but" is weaving and also purification. The life energy weaves through the seven chakras. Reaching the eighth chakra of the Higher Self, the fabric of the self becomes a whole garment of light united in joy and living in total freedom. This expresses the rush of bliss brought by Tem, the Tower Trump. The kundalini moves up through the chakras and from the crown chakra joins the Higher Self. "Ab-u" (the pawns, the heart expanded) also means dancing, which is the physical expression of joy through the whole body. This word is often written with the pawn determinative and adds the imagery of the pawns dancing across the Senet Game Board. Several Egyptologists have suspected that "ab-u" is the proper term to appear here. I agree with them.

27. Kh@a, weben-a em khut [me] Tem Her-Aakhety, kheper Aakhu her shenebet.

27. I am crowned and I arise on the horizon As Tem Horakhty, creating light upon the body.

* Kh@ is the rising of the sun at the beginning of a new day and also refers to the coronation of a pharaoh at the beginning of a new reign. Tem's most notable characteristic is his crown. The coronation symbolically re-enacts the creation of the universe by Amen Ra in the form of Tem.

* Horakhty is Horus on the two horizons. This is the dawning of enlightenment and recalls the earlier reference to kissing the ground [sen-ta]. The small self rises to the

status of the Higher Self and embraces the whole world in light. The pharaoh assumes responsibility for the loving care of the whole nation. All the major gods are on the Senet Game Board (overtly or covertly), and Horus now identifies with the whole board. As Horus the aspirant becomes Menu. He becomes Amen Ra. Then he sails forth in his meditation boat as an Avatar to bring light and peace to his world. The word “waa”, to navigate a boat, puns on “waa”, to meditate. So “waa-a en-t pet” refers to celestial meditation as well as celestial navigation.

28. Asar da en-a Aryt Heru. Hetep-a her es.

28. Wizard Osiris, give me the Eye of Horus, so I experience [peace] through it.

* The Wizard (Weser-t, “Empowered One”) is Osiris, the aspirant now rising to the level of a Master Magician. His own perceptive faculty awakens, giving him the Eye of Horus. This is the Will functioning through the clear vision of intuition. This phrase is based on language from the Pyramid Texts (e.g. Utterances 83-85, et al.)

29. Da-a aakh weser em ma@-heru, per-t em ba @nekhy, qemau neteru nebu

29. I gain the wizard’s Light Body by speaking the truth, ascending as a living soul, as creator of all the gods.

* Once he is empowered, he assumes the role of pharaoh and governs the world. “Weser” is the power scepter of a Wizard who has transcended death. It puns on the name Asar (Osiris). The head of Anubis, Lord of Death, tops the scepter. Other cultures place a skull on top of a shaman’s staff. The Wizard goes forth as a Creator, and also ascends to the highest position in the universe.

30. Ja-a em hetep, nefer em kh@a-a em suten neteru. Waa-a en-t pet, satetu-a her b@h tawy.

30. I sail forth in peace, beautiful in my coronation as king of the gods. I sail in Heaven, and my beams from above flood over the two lands.

* Osiris as the Seat of Perception is fully identified with the Will of the Higher Self Sun and sails in the solar barque. He is at peace because he has fully experienced and integrated all his experiences. He is not only king of the world, but also king of the gods.

31. Nuk @a Wat Her, neb heh, s-men em jet-ta.

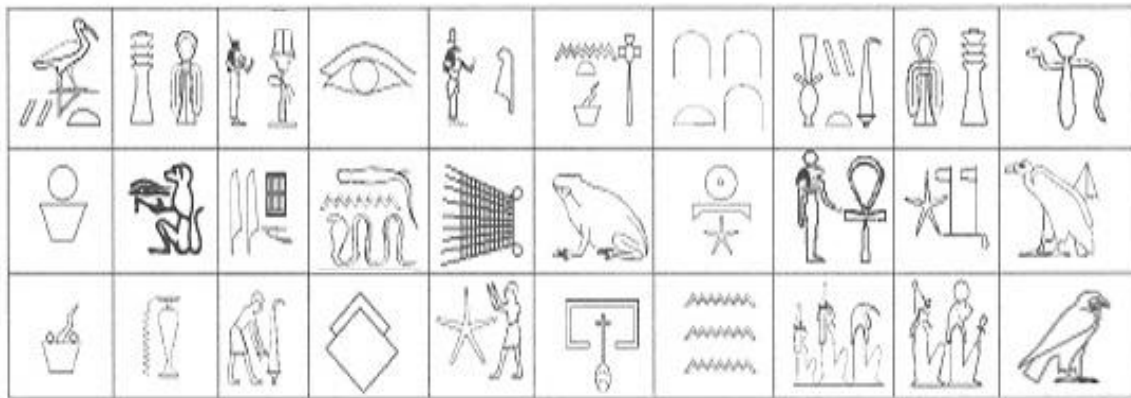
31. I am the Hand [that makes] the Way of the Hero, I am Lord of Eternity, established in the Everlasting.

* As an Avatar he is immortal Orion at night and sails through the heaven of this world by day spreading floods of light wherever he goes on the lands below. This is simply the gaze of his awareness. “Avatar” [@a Wat Her] in ancient Egyptian means a person who identifies with the Ancient One and travels the Path of Horus, the Path of the Higher Will to bring about, manage, and assist [@a] the process of Cosmic Evolution. Horus is the will, and as the son of Osiris, the Seat of Perception, he is heir

to the throne and administers affairs with his will power. As Horus the Elder, the Ancient One, he is the Will of the Higher Self Sun. An avatar lives deliberately. “Her” also means above, suggesting that the avatar prefers to travel the paths of higher consciousness. “Her” is also the face, meaning that a mature will responsibly faces the reality of whatever it creates by its decisions. “Aw” also has the meanings of “expanded” or “long in days”, or “Being”. The avatar lives as pure being, and he follows the path of expansion. He is a “Traveler on the Path of the Ancient One”.

The reconstructed text is based on **Book of the Dead** Hymns to Ra and Osiris, (see Budge 1-5, 123-135 or Faulkner, plates 1-2) plus a key phrase from the **Pyramid Texts** as noted above.)

Reconstructed Senet Game Board



Dr. White’s List of the Gods on the Senet Game Board

(Listed top row left to right, middle row right to left, bottom row left to right.)

Egyptian Deity and Tarot Trump or Court Card.

1. Jehuty (Thoth); **High Priest**
2. Asar (Osiris); **Magician**
3. Net / Newet (Nut); **Star**
4. Maa (Master of Sight); **Queen of Wands**
5. Ma@t (Maat); **Justice**
6. Sejem (Master of Hearing); **Queen of Swords**
7. Council of Thirty Judges; **Judgment**
8. Sen-Ta (Hew, Master of Taste); **Queen of Cups**
9. Aset (Isis); **High Priestess**
10. Wajyt / (KhentyKhaty); **Hanged Man**
11. Mut (Hathor); **Empress**
12. Sah / Saa (Master of Touch); **Queen of Coins**

13. Tefnut / Sekhmet; **Strength**
14. Aten / Ra; **Sun**
15. Heh / Khnemu; **Wheel of Fortune** (House of Repeating Life = Wekhem @nekh)
16. Fishing Net / Ah; **Moon**
17. Mehen (Ammit); **Devil**
18. Peqy Ritual; **Lovers**
19. Api-ab Neter / Khem; **Fool**
20. Bread; (World) **World**
21. Incense of Nebt-het; **Temperance**
22. Qebhusenuf; **King of Swords (Air)**
23. Mesta; **King of Wands (Fire)**
24. Hepy; **King of Cups (Water) (Glyph Uncertain)**
25. Dewamutef; **King of Coins (Earth)**
26. House of Beauty / Phoenix; **Hermit**
27. Anepu and the Jackals; **Death**
28. Shewe (with Ma'at and Thoth); **Emperor**
29. Atum (with Ra); **Tower**
30. Horus; **Chariot**



The above is a layout of the Senet Game Board using Dr. White's Senet Tarot Deck. You can obtain copies of this deck and/or the Game Board or Oracle Board through Dr. White's website (www.bentylightgarden.com) or through several distributors listed on that website.



The Great Game Text Inscription in the tomb of Inherkhau (Theban Tomb 359) is shown in this photograph kindly provided by my student, Demi Dai. The text is badly damaged and in need of restoration. The scribe provided only eleven lines of text and left out the rest.

Handwritten text in an ancient script, likely Cuneiform, arranged in approximately 15 vertical columns. The script is highly stylized and difficult to decipher. The text is written on a light-colored, possibly clay or stone, surface. The columns are roughly parallel to each other, with some minor variations in spacing and alignment. The overall appearance is that of a fragment of an ancient document or tablet.

Draft Restoration of the damaged text by Dr. White from the photograph.

