





<p>Carter Number 393</p>
<p>Museum and Accession Number (if available) Egyptian Museum, Cairo: JE 62061.</p>
<p>Name of Object 'Game-box (ivory)' (Carter: 393) Brettspiel-Kasten ['Board Game Box'] (Beinlich & Saleh 1989: 179)</p>
<p>Location in Tomb The game-box was found broken on the floor, in front of the doorway of the Annex (Griffith Institute) where it was thrown. It was positioned under a portion of box No. 376 (Carter: 393).</p> <p style="text-align: right;">LG</p>
<p>Measurements L. 13.4 x W. 4 x H. 2.8cm</p> <p style="text-align: right;">LG</p>
<p>Translation</p> <p><u>Along the right side of the box (where the drawer is the leading short face):</u></p>  <p>(1) </p> <p>(1) <i>ḥnh Hrw k3 nḥt twt ms.wt nsw-bit ḥq3 pd.t nb t3.wy nb ir(.t) ḥ.t Nb-ḥpr.w-Rḥ mr.y Imn-Rḥ di ḥnh d.t</i></p> <p>(1) Living Horus, strong bull, perfect of births, King of Upper and Lower Egypt, ruler of the 9 Bows, Lord of the Two Lands, Lord of ritual, Nebkheperure, beloved of Amun, given life forever.</p> <p><u>Along the left side of the box (where the drawer is the leading short face):</u></p>  <p>(2) </p> <p>(2) <i>nb.ty nfr ḥp.w s:grḥ t3.wy s3 Rḥ n ḥ.t=f mr=f nb ḥḥ.w Twt-ḥnh-Imn ḥq3 Iwnw-Šm3.w mr.y Pth nb m3ḥ(.t) mi Rḥ d.t</i></p> <p>(2) The Two Ladies, good of laws, one who makes the Two Lands peaceful, his beloved son of Re of his own body, , Lord of appearances, Tutankhamun, ruler of Southern Heliopolis, beloved of Ptah Lord of truth, like Re forever.</p> <p><u>On the top of the box, on the left side of the 20-field board (reading down from the</u></p>

face with the draw):



(3) *ntr nfr hr hr qn ʕ3 ph.ty mi s3 Nw.t nsw-bi.t nb t3.wy Nb-hpr.w-Rʕ di ʕnh*

(3) The good god, one who is pleased with bravery, great of strength like the son of Nut, the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Lord of the Two Lands Nebkheperure, given life.

On the top of the box, on the right side of the 20-field board (reading down from the face with the draw):



(4) *ntr nfr qn mi Mntw s3 Rʕ n h.t=f mr=f nb hʕ.w Twt-ʕnh-Imn hq3 Iwnw-Šm3.w di ʕnh*

(4) The good god, brave like Montu, his beloved son of Re of his own body, Lord of appearances, Tutankhamun ruler of Southern Heliopolis, given life.

LG, GH & ES

Textual notes

Notes on the content of the texts

This is a series of fairly standard titulary. However, the mention of the ‘son of Nut’ (i.e. Osiris, Seth or Horus) in line 3 is slightly unusual in this context. It is possible that the white-fronted goose (*gb*) has been mistaken for the pintail duck (*s3*) (see Gardiner 1957: 471), meaning that the transliteration and translation should read:

ʕ3 ph.ty mi Gb Nw.t
great of strength like Geb and Nut

However, the writing of the god’s name ‘Geb’ would usually be followed by the phonetic complement ‘b’ (Gardiner 1957: 471; Faulkner 1962: 288), which is not the case here. Consequently, the intended reading of this phrase is not clear.

LG

Object description

A small game box carved out of a solid block of ivory with a small drawer at one end for the playing pieces. Carter suggests that nine ivory playing pieces (one assumed to be missing) and one ivory knuckle-bone (one assumed to be missing) found scattered mainly in the Annex, with two in the Antechamber, belong to this box (Carter: 393). The drawer, which is also cut out of a solid piece of ivory, fastened when closed by means of an s-shaped bolt which slotted into small gold staples (Carter: 393).

The top of the box (according to the orientation of the hieroglyphs) has 20 playing squares (3x4 + 8), none of which are specially marked. The underside of the

box has 30 playing squares (3x10) and again none of these are specially marked (Carter: [393](#)).

Lines 1 and 2 are incised horizontally around the two long sides and the solid end, and are filled in with blue pigment. Lines 3 and 4 are incised vertically on the top of the box starting at what Carter referred to as 'the draw end' and are also filled in with blue pigment. (Carter: [393](#)). The two lines take up the equivalent of eight playing squares each.

This game-box is very similar in material and size to no.585r (Carter: [585r](#)) and was probably part of a pair or set.

LG

Notes on the object type

The *senet*-board was one of several games for which we have evidence in Egypt. Others include 'Mehen' ('The Snake Game') and 'Jackals and Hounds' ('The Shield Game' or '58-Field Game') (Decker 1992: 124-135). The main study of the game was conducted in a doctoral thesis by Peter Piccione, studying the development of *senet* and its increasing religious and funerary significance (Piccione 1990).

The earliest-known example of a *senet*-board is known from a First Dynasty mastaba at Abu Rowash, but it is likely that the game was originally formulated in the Pre-Dynastic Period (Piccione 1990: 37, 35-6; 2007: 54). Temporary boards drawn up on the ground or as graffiti on any accessible object or building were probably the earliest incarnations, though the first extant graffiti board in fact dates to the Fifth Dynasty, from the pyramid temple of Userkhaf at Saqqara (Piccione 1990: 10). The Abu Rowash example is, on the other hand, is known as 'slab-style', which are sometimes decorated and occasionally reversible like the game-boxes of the type found in the tomb of Tutankhamun (Piccione 1990: 6). Game-boxes appear to be a development confined to the New Kingdom (Piccione 1990: 10). However, *senet* as a game had an extraordinarily long life, remaining popular until the introduction of Christianity, when it was perhaps forced out of popular use due to its pagan symbolism. The latest boards known are in the form of graffiti from the first century AD on the roof of the temple at Dendera (Piccione 1990: 450-1)).

Other evidence for the game can be derived from tomb scenes. The tomb of Ankhmere at Giza shows two players sitting on the ground with the board between them, evidently well into play judging from the positions of the game-pieces on the board and in the players' hands (Pusch 1979: T. 2, 3a; Reisner 1942: 352). The Twentieth Dynasty tomb of Tjaynefer (TT158 at Dra Abu el-Naga) also bears a gaming scene (Seele 1959: pl.4), and others can be seen at Saqqara and Beni Hassan, amongst other sites (Piccione 1990: 50-78).

The name '*senet*' is related to the verb 'to pass', which has been suggested to refer to the rules of the game, *passing* the dangerous squares whilst moving (boustrophedon) across the board (Decker 1991: 125). The game is believed to have acquired religious and funerary symbolism from the New Kingdom onwards, whereby moving along the board would represent the journey through, and the challenges of, the next world. Hieroglyphic or pictographic signs appearing in certain fields on the board may have exclusively related to religious and funerary concepts from this time (Piccione 2007: 55). So-called 'religious gaming-texts', such as P.Turin 1.775 and P.Cairo 58037, allow the reconstruction of the rules to a certain extent by referring to the passage through the afterlife as a game of *senet*, shedding some light on the ideas represented by the hieroglyphic signs, and implying that some form of ritual was performed, by both the living and the deceased (Tait 1982: 373-4). For instance, the 30-field board as a whole seems to take on the significance of the 'Hall of Thirty', the judges the deceased must pass in order to be accepted into the afterlife as a justified

spirit, here by landing in the ‘thirty-first’ square (Piccione 1990: 191ff; Decker 1992: 131). Two of Tutankhamun’s boxes bear no special signs in their fields (Carter: 393; 585r), but the third does (Carter: 345). The signs on the 30-field board are paralleled on many other game boxes and have been studied alongside funerary texts. Hence, names have been assigned: square fifteen is ‘The House of Repeating Life’ and square twenty-six is ‘The House of Beauty’ or ‘The House of Rejuvenation’, both bearing positive significance, whereas square twenty-seven, ‘The House of Water’ would, in one interpretation, send you back to square fifteen (Decker 1992: 128). References to various different squares in the gaming-texts suggest that the signs included on the board could vary, or that more could be added to the standard few:

I will pass by as one who sails with the breeze together with the Sun Disk to the House of Repeating Life, while my opponent is stopped in the House of the Netting, which humbles him by means of the meshes (Piccione 1990: 200).

He will pass by the House of Towing...(Piccione 1990: 200).

The playful references to opponents in many of the textual sources of course bear undertones of avoiding the enemies encountered by the deceased in the afterlife.

Further references to *senet* appear in the Coffin Texts (Spell 405 and a unique variation of Spell 335) and the Book of the Dead (Chapter 17), both of which clearly link the game to the funerary sphere. Chapter 17 from the Book of the Dead of Nebseni (pBM 9900) (Neville’s translation, in Piccione 1990: 293) reads:

[Spell for] going forth into the day, assuming any form which he desires, playing *senet* and sitting in a pavilion as a living *b3* by N. after he has moored. It is effective for the one who performs it on earth.

The *b3* of the deceased is described as playing the game in the world of the living; it appears to have been seen as an activity suitable for crossing the boundary between life and death. Many extant boxes show further links to the funerary sphere through their texts and decoration: the box of Taya in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MMA 12.182.72) bears a representation of Taya and his wife sitting opposite her mother with a well-stocked offering table in between (incidentally, this image is orientated correctly when the 20-field board is in play). However, it is certainly not to be assumed that the original functions of *senet* as a means of entertainment were forgotten. Indeed, we might expect some funerary elements to be present on the boards found in the tomb of Tutankhamun, but the inscriptions reveal no references to funerary ritual or offerings. They may represent personal luxury items belonging to the young pharaoh that were then included in his tomb for his continued enjoyment, with the additional, if perhaps secondary, advantages of having funerary relevance.

The name ‘*senet*’ in fact refers only to the 30-field game. The 20-field game appears to have been a cousin of an Asiatic ‘Game of Twenty Squares’ (Piccione 2007: 55). However, game-boards of both types are found in both the ancient and modern Levant. The popular game known as *tab* played in the Middle East today appears to be little changed, at least in physical form, from its ancient counterparts (Sebbane 2001: 225). Various types of 30-field boards from Canaan have been unearthed, incised crudely into stone (Sebbane 2001: figs. 1-5), of which parallels in Egypt can be seen, for example in the 5th to 6th Dynasty tomb of Nefersekhemptah at Saqqara (Decker 1992: 126). None of the Canaanite examples bear signs of any kind

in the fields as seen on some of their Egyptian relatives. Currently only the roughly- and probably hastily-made boards are attested from the Canaanite area; there are none made with the fine materials and care of the boxes found in the tombs of Tutankhamun and others. The earliest Egyptian examples known at the present time are contemporaneous with or slightly earlier than those from Canaan, the latter of which are common from EB II (Sebbane 2001: 224). It remains to be proven with more certainty which version predates the other, and indeed if they are in fact the same game.

ES/GH

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