

<p>Carter Number 585r</p>
<p>Museum and Accession Number (if available) Egyptian Museum, Cairo: JE 62060</p>
<p>Name of Object 'Solid ivory gaming-board' (Carter: 585r) 'Brettspiel-Kasten' [Board game box] (Beinlich and Saleh 1989: 208)</p>
<p>Location in Tomb This game-box was discovered, as were the others found in the tomb, in the Annex (Griffith Institute). This particular example was one of a number of small items within a wooden chest, which was in turn, one of the mass of objects approximately 60cm from the south wall of the chamber (Carter: 585).</p> <p style="text-align: right;">LG</p>
<p>Measurements L. 13.5 x W. 4.2 x H. 2.8 cm</p> <p style="text-align: right;">LG</p>
<p>Translation</p> <p><u>Along the left side of the box (where the draw is the leading face):</u></p> <p>(1) </p> <p>(1) <i>ḥnh ntr nfr s3 Imn ms. {tyw} n itn m p.t nsw-bi.t Nb-hpr.w-Rḥ s3 Rḥ Twt-ḥnh-Imn ḥq3 Twnw-Šm3.w ḥnh d.t</i></p> <p>(1) May the good god live, son of Amun, offspring^a of the sun-disc^b in the sky, King of Upper and Lower Egypt Nebkheperure, son of Re, Tutankhamun, ruler of Southern Heliopolis, may he live^c forever.</p> <p><u>Along the right side of the box (where the draw is the leading face):</u></p> <p>(2) </p> <p>(2) <i>ḥnh ntr nfr ti.t Rḥ s3 Imn ḥr{.t} ns.t=f nb ḥpš it t3(.w) nb(.w) nsw-bi.t Nb-hpr.w-Rḥ di ḥnh snb d.t.</i></p> <p>(2) The living good god, image of Re, son of Amun, who is on his throne, lord of strength, one who takes all lands, the King of Upper and Lower Egypt Nebkheperure, given life and health eternally.</p>

Labels referring to the illustration on the ending face of the box (where draw is the leading face):

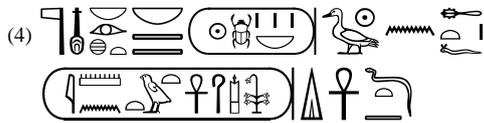
(3)



(3) *Nb-hpr.w-R^c*
di ʕnh
ʕnh=s(-n)-Imn

(3) Nebkheperure
 Given life
 Ankhesenamun

On the left side of the 20-field board (reading down from the face with the draw):



(4) *ntr nfr nb ir(.t) ḥ.t nb t3.wy Nb-hpr.w-R^c s3 R^c n ḥ.t=f Twt-ʕnh-Imn ḥq3 Twnw-Šm3.w*
di ʕnh d.t

(4) The good god, lord of ritual, lord of the Two Lands Nebkheperure, son of Re of his own body, Tutankhamun, ruler of Southern Heliopolis, given life forever.

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



(5) *ntr nfr nb 3w.t[-ib(?)] Nb-hpr.w[-R^c] s3 R^c mr.y=f Twt-ʕnh-Imn ḥq3 Twnw-Šm3.w mi*
R^c d.t

(5) The good god, lord of happiness(?) Nebkheperure, his beloved son of Re, Tutankhamun, ruler of Thebes, like Re forever.

LG, GH & ES

Textual notes

^a Defective writing, with *aleph*-vulture instead of the *tyw*-bird. For the translation as ‘offspring’, see WB II. 151.

^b Whilst the connection of Tutankhamun with the Atenist reign of Akhenaten is inescapable, the translation of ‘sun-disc’ as opposed to ‘Aten’ is preferred here to avoid the tendency to associate the pharaoh with the previous reign and thought and

its potentially negative connotations.

^c It is possible that there was a mistake, and ‘given life’ was intended here.

LG, GH & ES

Notes on the content of the texts

This is a series of fairly standard titulary. It is interesting to note that no two epithets are the same, aside from the ubiquitous ‘good god’ and ‘son of Re/Amun’. Clearly the composer of the text took advantage of the various sides of the box to include as much variety as possible, hence allowing for the greatest number of ideological statements. That way, whichever way the box was turned when in play, a unique text was visible to the reader. However, since this box, like 393 (Carter: [393](#)) has the 20-field side up, when the 30-field side was in use, the inscriptions along the sides of the box would be orientated upside-down (See Object Description).

ES

Object description

Solid ivory, cuboid game-box with a small drawer at one end (here called the front end) for the playing pieces, two of which are knuckle-bones, five of which are red spool-shaped pieces and five of which are almost pawn-shaped, all in ivory and presumably the complete set. The draw itself was fastened with an s-bolt slotted into place with gold staples. The top surface of the box bears a 20-field *senet*-board (3 x 4 plus 8 squares), whilst the bottom bears the 30-field game (3 x 10) (Carter: [585r](#)). Somewhere in the recording process, Carter made a mistake and listed the top side as the 30-field side (Carter: [585r](#)), but a close look at the accompanying photograph suggests different. Incidentally, the photograph also shows that no.393 was upside down when the photograph was taken.

The text runs down the sides of the box (see ‘Translation’ lines 1 and 2), and either side of the 20-field game (‘Translation’ lines 4 and 5). The rear face of the box bears an illustration showing Tutankhamun seated on a throne and his wife Ankhesenamun standing before him offering a lotus-flower (‘Translation’ line 3). The text was incised and filled with blue (now black) pigment. None of the squares of either game retain traces of special hieroglyphic signs (see ‘Notes on object type below’) (Carter: [585r](#)).

It was noted that leather had stuck to the box in the heat, of which only some could be removed (Carter: [585r](#)). It is unclear whether the box was significantly damaged as a result of the leather, the cleaning process or both.

This game-box is very similar in material and size to object 393 (Carter: [393](#)), and was probably part of a pair or set.

ES

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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