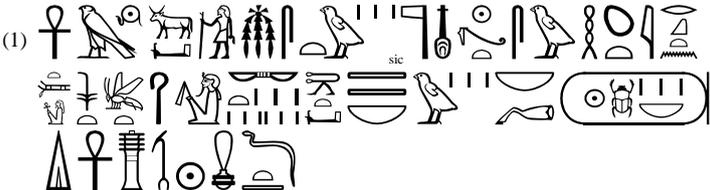


<p><b>Carter Number</b> 345</p>
<p><b>Museum and Accession Number (if available)</b> Egyptian Museum, Cairo: JE62058a-o</p>
<p><b>Name of Object</b> 'Game-box (ebony and ivory)' (Carter: <a href="#">345</a>) 'Brettspiel' [Board game] (Beinlich and Saleh 1989: 171)</p>
<p><b>Location in Tomb</b> This game box was found in the Annex (<a href="#">Griffith Institute</a>). The box itself was found in the left-hand door-jamb of the chamber with the drawer (Carter: <a href="#">383</a>) below it. The stand (Carter: <a href="#">580</a>) on which the game box should stand was found towards the west wall at the south end of the chamber. (See Carter: <a href="#">345</a>).</p> <p style="text-align: right;">GH</p>
<p><b>Measurements</b> L. 44.4 x W. 14.3 x H. 8.1 cm</p> <p style="text-align: right;">GH</p>
<p><b>Translation</b></p> <p><u>Along the left side of the box (where the drawer is the leading face):</u></p> <p>(1) </p> <p>(1) <i>ᵚnh Hr.w k3 nḥt twt ms.wt ntr nfr ti.t Rᵚ swḥ.t iqr.t n (I)tm nsw-bi.t ḥq3 psd.t itt t3(.w) nb.w nb ḥps Nb-ḥpr.w-Rᵚ di ᵚnh w3s dd mi Rᵚ d.t</i></p> <p>(1) Living Horus, strong bull, perfect of births, good god, image of Re, the excellent egg of Atum, King of Upper and Lower Egypt, ruler of the Nine Bows, who takes possession of all lands, lord of strength, Nebkheperure, given life, stability and dominion like Re forever.</p> <p><u>Along the right side of the box (where the drawer is the leading face):</u></p> <p>(2) </p> <p>(2) <i>ᵚnh Hr.w k3 nḥt twt ms.wt nb.ty nfr ḥp.w s:grḥ t3.wy Hr nbw wts ḥᵚ.w s:htp ntr.w nsw-bi.t Šmᵚ.w T3-mḥw s3 Rᵚ Twt-ᵚnh-Imn ḥq3 Twnw-Šmᵚ.w di ᵚnh dd w3s mi Rᵚ d.t</i></p> <p>(2) Living Horus, strong bull, perfect of births, Two Ladies, good of laws, who makes the Two Lands peaceful, Horus of gold, who wears the crowns, who pacifies the gods,</p>



surface consists of ivory overlaid with strips of ebony to form a 30-field *Senet*-board. The underside of the box includes, again, ivory overlaid with strips of wood to form a 20-field game (3 x 4 plus 8 squares) (Carter: [345](#)).

There is one inscribed band along each side continuing onto the back of the box (see translation lines 1, 2). A further line of text surrounds the drawer on the front (see translation lines 3, 4). The text is incised and filled with yellow pigment (Carter: [345](#)). On the 30-field game board remains of hieroglyphic signs can be seen in five fields, while three fields show traces of signs on the twenty-field game (Carter: [345](#)).

GH

#### 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 Nebsemi (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 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> 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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