

The Semna Stele of Sen-User-t III

* Senusert III (aka Kh@-Kau-Ra) was the fifth pharaoh of the 12th dynasty. Sen means to open, expand, or surpass. User-t means strength, power, might. It also is a code word for Osiris. Sen-User essentially means Zen Wizard. Sen...t is the game of Senet that also became the favorite oracle system of ancient Egypt and evolved into the Tarot trump or power cards. The ruler's name suggests that as pharaoh he embodies all the trump cards on the Senet board, that is, the national gods of Egypt. His second name, which appears in a cartouche on the stele, means "Crown [or Glory] of the Ka's of the Sun". The sun represents the source of life. Its Ka's are the various powers that it bestows. The word Kh@ describes the rising of the sun and the ascendance of a pharaoh to his throne, or his coronation ceremony when the crown is placed on his head bestowing the powers of pharaoh on him. Semna is the name of the place where the stele was found. The translation I provide below is from J. H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt, Part One*, § 652f. Breasted, §640 describes the accomplishments of Sesostris III (Sen-user-t) as the conquest, fortification, and canalization of the region of Nubia between the two cataracts. By his eighth year Sen-User-t had reached what is now Semna above the second cataract and erected a fort on either side of the Nile to control access to Egypt. His grandfather had reached this point before, but now Sen-user-t consolidated the conquest and stabilized it with an administration that became permanent throughout most of the rest of Egypt's ancient history. This allowed Egypt to control its

southern border and to manage the extensive trade that went on with the southern regions. The commentary and interpretation are mine. The stele was found by Lepsius and is now in the Berlin Museum (#14753).

-- Douglass A. White



0. Ba-k Amen

Title: Breasted believed that the glyph that appears alone at the top of the stele means it was erected on the West Bank of the Nile, which it was, and is no doubt the obvious meaning. However, this designation implies that there was one on the East Bank. Unfortunately none has been found there to date. Amen often refers to the west, the right hand side, or the land of the dead, the domain of Osiris. However, the basic meaning of the word is hidden, mysterious, or secret. In Hebrew the word survives in several forms as AMIN, authentic; AMUN, faith, trust; and AMN, amen, so be it. Amin is also the title of R@, the sun god as the un-manifest source of creative intelligence. It is also the first word of the ancient Qabbalistic text, “The Emerald Tablet”. Amen is repeated three times in the opening sentence of that document, suggesting the threefold greatness of Thoth’s teachings. The Semna Stele deals with the south and has nothing to do with the western lands, other than the possibility of a stele copy on each bank of the Nile, so I suspect the title may also tell us that it deals with the hidden secrets of Egyptian yoga. The hawk on the glyph can be read Heru and refers to the Sun god, R@. Thus it makes the glyph equivalent to Amen-Ra. It also means ‘face’ (heru) and hawk (bak) also means ‘your soul’ (ba-k). Thus the title can mean “The Secret Horus”, “The Secret Face”, “Your Hidden Soul”, or “The Secret of Your Soul.”



Ba-k (Your Soul) Amen (Hidden)

Bak-amen (Backgammon) was the game that evolved from Senet, the most popular board game in the Middle East. It has many aspects reminiscent of the way Senet was played. This glyph may represent the original name of the game in ancient Egypt. We’ll come back to that after we examine the text of the stele.

1. Southern boundary, made in the year 8, under the majesty of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Khekuer, who is given life forever

* **Tash** = boundary, frontier. This word often had the semantic for a stone stele. The glyph looks just like the shape of the stele on which the inscription is carved. This later became the traditional tombstone shape in European culture. The word tash is an anagram of the esoteric word **sheta** which refers to mystery or hidden secrets. Sheta was also the name of the Tortoise Constellation, what we call Cancer. The tortoise represents the secret mysteries of Osiris and the Magical Ferryboat in the Sky. It carried you across the boundary between mortality and immortality.

* **resi** = southern. The stone tablet marked the southern boundary of Egypt and its border separating it from the black people who live in central and southern Africa. The southernmost point of the Nile at the border of Egypt forms the Root Chakra of Egypt. Hidden in the root chakra is the eye of the kundalini cobra, which for men is the prostate gland. This eye sends its energy to the brain where it awakens the eye of wisdom in the pineal gland. However, this word **res[i]** also puns on another important meaning: to watch, or a watchman. Of course border guards were posted at the boundary crossings to watch traffic and check identity papers. The esoteric meaning of the word refers to meditations that open the eye of Horus and raise one to the level of an Osirian magus.

* **ari** = made. The surface level sense is that the inscription on the stele tells us when and by whom it was made. However, the word is also the glyph for the eye. Combined with **res** it forms the word for awakening. The stele was made as a wake-up call for anyone who can read it. The “southern eye” lives inside the cave of the anus behind a membrane veil. It is the prostate gland.

* **em** = in. This preposition indicates the location in time.

* **ren-p-t** = year. This word for year puns on the word **ren-pi**, which means to be or become young. The secret of your soul is that it is immortal and thus forever young. The stele contains information on how to realize this condition of eternal youthfulness.

* **khemenu** = 8. This particular number is very special in ancient Egyptian tradition. It represents the eight primordial energies at the beginning of creation. It refers to what the Chinese call the 8 trigrams. These eight primordial deities

formed the company of Jehuti (Thoth): Nu, Nunut, Heh, Hehit, Kek, Kekit, Amen, Amenit. They correspond respectively to the Chinese trigrams: *zhen, xun, kan, li, gen, dui, qian, kun*. The root khem means unknown, and is the sign of the Tarot Trump of the Fool, or Know-Nothing. The Fool embodies all of the eight trigram energies together, which is why he sits just above the Tekhi (*Taiji*) at the center of the cosmic scale used to weigh the heart. Nu is the first of the primordials and represents the waters or energies of chaos from which creation arises. The Temple of Thoth where the High Priest of Intelligence is joined by his eight primordial companions and the Immortal Monkey Fool was at Hermopolis (Khemenu), the Heart Chakra of Egypt. The eight primordials are from the youthful age of the universe and remain perpetually young. In your human body they are the first eight cells that formed from the fertilized egg at your conception. They form a star tetrahedron cluster. The number eight also refers to the eight “souls” or subtle bodies that the Egyptians related to the eight major chakras.

* **kher hem en** = under the majesty of. The word hem written as the upright glyph of a club means a servant. The pharaoh is the highest civil servant in the land. The phrase should really be rendered “during the service of”.

* **nesu baty** = pharaoh of south and north Egypt. **Nesu** is really the same as **resu** and refers to southern Egypt. **Baty** (the bee) is the emblem of northern Egypt. The two emblems include a flower and a bee. This suggests the life force of plants and animals and their mutual interdependence.

* **Kha-Kau-R@** = Rising Ka’s of R@. This is a title of Sen-user-t. It is written in a cartouche to tell us it is his name. Breasted transliterates it as Khekuer. The Ka is the electro-magnetic energy that runs in the nervous system and has its hyper-drive switch in the second chakra. The plural of Ka means that there is an electromagnetic component for each of the 8 chakra energies. The ‘rising’ refers to the rising of the cosmic kundalini energy from its home in the base chakra to illuminate and activate all the higher chakras. The sun is the source of all these energies. The ‘hidden source’ is transcendental and immortal.

* **da @n-kh jet-ta** = May he be given life eternal. This is a standard formula of respect for the pharaoh equivalent to “Long Live the King”, but it also states the purpose of the stele and forms a perfect ending for the first line of the text.

2. and ever. In order to prevent that any Negro should cross it, by water,

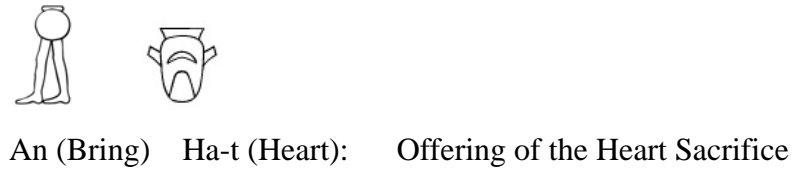
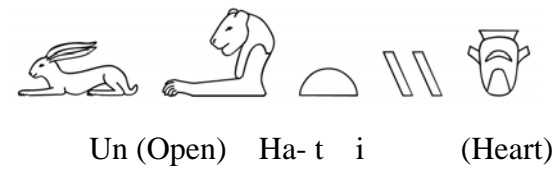
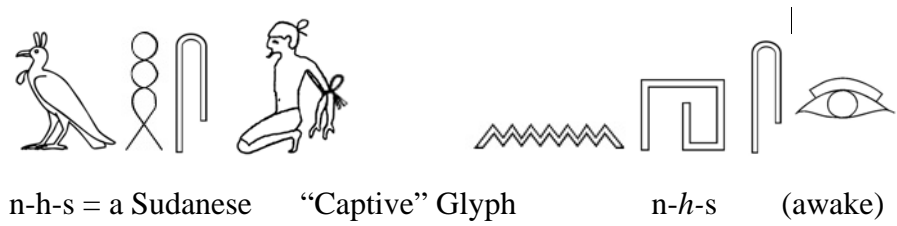
* **Er neheh** = to eternity. **Er** means going on toward. **Neheh** is eternity. **Ren** also means “name”, but also refers to the childhood time when we learn the names of things and receive our own names. Hence it also means “young” and recalls the word **ren-p-t** from the first line. **Pe-t** means “heaven”, so a **ren-pe-t** is a name from heaven or heavenly name. Heh is the Time Lord and rules eternity.

* **er tem erd@** = to not permit or allow. This phrase can link back with the beginning of this line: “to never permit”. The word tem is also the name of the god Temu. He represents the cosmic orgasm of Amen R@. This simultaneously activates all the Ka’s in the body. We could read the first two phrases of line 2 as “the name of Heh goes to Tem”. Among the primordial energies Tem corresponds to the activation of Nu (trigram *zhen*). When this activation becomes a continuous flow, Nu transforms into Heh (trigram *kan*) and becomes the flow of time. Once the flow is continuous, this grants a possibility as follows.

* **sen-su** = to pass beyond it, to transcend it. This is the code word for the game of Senet, the game of “passing”. On the exoteric level it refers to crossing the frontier border and to the ordinary competitions of human life. On the esoteric spiritual level it refers to the passage of energy through the various chakras and the rising of consciousness to its infinite, transcendental birthright. On the surface the text seems to prohibit passing of the border, and indeed the frontier border was closely guarded. Also the kundalini energy is locked up in the root chakra. The secret is that this is a passport to transcend such boundaries, just like you can jump forward in the game of Senet and achieve immortality and godhood. “It” refers back to the border mentioned in the first line. The issue is how and when to pass through boundary conditions and shift domains. This stele contains very high magic. **Sen** also means to sniff or to kiss. The Egyptians had rituals where they kissed the ground. The Islamic practice of bowing while facing Mecca during prayers recalls this ancient tradition. For Egyptians the direction toward Mecca was to the east where the sun rose. The great sphinx at Giza echoes this tradition of facing east to greet the sun. In yoga this is the Sun Salutation mudra. The Senet Game Board in square 8 refers to the rite of kissing the ground (**sen-ta**). This was a pun on the name of the game itself, Senet.

* **Nehes neb** = any Negro. Neb written after a noun means all or any. When written before a noun it means “lord” or “master”. Here it refers to any Negro, that is, any one of the black-skinned people, living in the southern part of Africa. On the

surface this looks like racial discrimination. In fact, the characters show something quite different. The phonetic glyphs spell out **n-h-s**. This simply means “black people” and is not meant to be pejorative. Black is the color of night and the hidden, secret teachings of Amen R@. The first semantic glyph shows a kind of hawk that is often especially written with heh to spell **Ne-heh**, Eternity. Heh is the ancient name of Semna, the location of the stele. The nehesu are really the immortals who live with Heh, Lord of Time, in eternity. Nehes is a pun on *Nehes*, which means a watcher, awakened or wakeful person, or a meditating person. **Neheh** [eternal] is also a pun on **Nehes**. Furthermore, **nekhekh** means old and also is a name for the flail of Min (Amin R@) and means to copulate. This refers to the tantric copulators who make love in eternity. The second semantic glyph is the glyph for captives or prisoners. It shows a man kneeling with his hands tied behind his back. The glyph below is not Negroid. Some men shown in the captive pose are Semitic or other nationalities. The esoteric meaning of this glyph is that the gesture with the hands behind the back pulls the shoulders back and opens the heart chakra. This is a yogic posture for meditation. The commonly shown kneeling position with the toes tucked in also opens certain energy channels. I call the hand position with the shoulders pulled back Anahata Mudra. The word Anahata (used for the Heart Chakra) is glossed as ‘unbeaten’ in Sanskrit. Actually it means ‘opening the heart’ in ancient Egyptian (**un-hati**). This gesture is a very powerful yogic mudra and is performed deliberately by a yogi, not just by a prisoner bound against his will. The meditation was also known as **An-Hat**, the bringing of the heart as an offering. Another version uses An, the name of Heliopolis, Sun City; hence the phrase may mean The Heart of Sun City. This corresponds to the third ventricle of the brain, the Palace of Osiris and Isis.



* **em khed** = by boat. Traveling by waterways in ancient Egypt usually meant going up and down the Nile River (including its natural offshoots and canals), or sailing in the Red Sea, or the Mediterranean. The expression **khed** refers specifically to going downstream on the Nile. This did not require a sail. This effortless travel corresponds to the effortless rising of kundalini energy in the body when appropriate conditions occur.

Or by land, with a ship, (or) any herds of

* **em her-t** = by caravan march. This refers to the transportation of goods on camels or asses over land. Esoterically this refers to energy traveling along nerve fibers.

* **em kaa[-t]** = in a boat, especially a boat for transporting cattle. The word for cattle in Egyptian is ka, and this is the same as the word for the electromagnetic energy in the body. The Nile was the main highway of ancient Egypt and corresponded to the spinal cord. This refers to the movement of Ka electrical signals up and down the spinal cord.

* **men-men-t neb-t** = flocks and herds of livestock in general, and specifically cattle. Men-men is also a code word for ‘Amin, the bull of his mother’, and refers to the generative power of Amin. **Neb-t** means ‘any’ or ‘all’ as it does above in line 2. However, if we take it with what follows, it becomes ‘Lord’.

* **en-t** = among, belonging to, of. This refers to the ownership of the livestock by the Negroes. However, we can also read the phrase **Neb-t en-t Nehesu** as “Mistress of the Open-Hearted Immortals”. In this case it refers to **Kaa-t** as the Mistress of Kundalini, Nebt-het.

4. The Negroes; except a Negro who shall come to do trading in Iken,

* **Nehesu** = Negroes. As pointed out in line 2 the Negroes are really Immortal Yogis that have opened their Heart Chakras. When they have mastered the art of Kundalini yoga, they are permitted to travel freely up and down the Nile.

* **upu her** = except. **Uput** is a decree, and **uputi** are messengers. **Upu** are also judges. Up also means to open, and thus echoes the theme of opening the heart.

* **Nehesu utef er arites unutes em Aqen** = Negroes who tarry on business in Aqen. **Utef** or **udef** or **ujef** is to tarry or delay. **Er** is the purpose for the tarrying. **Arites** is doing something, and **unutes** is service or business. Aqen is thought to be a district near the second cataract on the Nile, but the exact location is unknown. (See my notes in the next main section of this article.) This is a code word for **aqer**, which means perfection. This describes immortal adepts who tarry in the body even after they are perfected siddhas. They do this in order to perform certain services on earth. The location at the Nile cataract suggests that a constant gentle presence of mulabandha maintains the awareness in a gentle background bathed in bliss as the kundalini flows upward along the spinal cord into the brain. This sensation is heightened when the anahata heart-opening mudra accompanies mulabandha.

5. Or with a commission. Every good thing shall be done with them, but without allowing

* **em uptu** = for envoys. Uptu are messengers or envoys. In the Qabbalah and Christian traditions such messengers are known as angels and represent those who are engaged in service to mankind and the planet.

* **er pu** = for them, toward them. This refers to the treatment accorded to such envoys.

* **aritetu neb-t nefer-t hen@-sen** = shall be done all beautiful with them. Shall be done (**aritetu**) all (**neb-t**) beauty (**nefer-t**) with them (**hen@-sen**). Another subtle meaning of this passage is that they spontaneously experience beauty in all aspects of life. This sentence refers to the **per-nefer**, or House of Beauty. This is square number 26 on the Senet board and represents the stage in which the heart of a person is fully purified so that every aspect of creation appears beautiful. This is “paradise”. In Egyptian culture this term was used as a euphemism for the undertaker’s house where the mummies were prepared for burial. An immortal is as if dead and yet still lives. This enables him to perceive objectively and without any fear overshadowing things with bias.

* **n-n su-t erd@-t** = not allowing them. **N-n** is not. **Su-t** is a particle, but also can mean a captive. It also puns on the name of Set, the Egyptian arch “devil”, whose name is sometimes written as Sut and lives in the root chakra. **Erd@-t** is to let or allow.

6. A ship of the Negroes to pass Heh, going downstream, forever.”

* **S-uaa kaa en nehesu** = for a boat of the Negroes to pass. **S-uaa** is to pass. The initial “s” is the sign of the causative. **Uaa** is a boat, and its causative verbal form means to pass, pass beyond, or even pass away. The **Uaa Heh** is the Boat of Time. **Uaa** also means to meditate. **Kaa** is a boat, but it puns on the **Ka** energy. **Nehesu** are Negroes. The border acts as a filter. Goods may pass, but not foreigners. This refers to the sanctity of the individual identity. Each identity is a viewpoint that remains separate from every other viewpoint. Matter and energy may pass in and out of the body, but the individual’s viewpoint retains its identity. The phrase also means that the Ka energy passes up the spine to awaken the brain.

* **em khed her Heh er Ne-Heh** = on the downstream journey beyond Heh forever. **Em khed** is to travel downstream by boat. **Her** means over, but here means going beyond. Heh was a town in the district of Semna by the second cataract on the Nile. The esoteric meaning is “to pass (**sua**) beyond time (**her Heh**).” **Er Ne-Heh** means something goes on toward eternity or continues without end in time. The edict portion of the stele begins with **Er Ne-Heh** and ends with **Er Ne-Heh**. This clearly sets the edict into the realm of eternity. It is a permanent principle, not just a temporary regulation. This phrase also contains a pun on youthfulness lasting forever. **Re** (**Er** pronounced a bit differently) is also a portal or entrance. Thus the second cataract on the Nile represented a portal from the transcendental beyond into the timeless world of immortal Egypt. The Root Chakra is just such a portal. The anus is the portal, and the practice includes keeping the anus tightly closed in what is called Mula-bandha, or the root lock.

When the energy of the Nile rises in its flood, this represents the rising of kundalini energy from the root chakra up to the brain. This completes the energy circuit in the body and opens the way to immortality. The boats proceeded down the Nile to On, the great Sun City of Heliopolis and the Northern home of Osiris at Pe (Busiris). The esoteric interpretation of this passage is made clear by the obvious word play between the name of the place and the notion of forever, or at least extreme longevity on the level of millions of years. Both are spelled and pronounced Heh. This is also the name of the primordial god of Time. He is one of the original council of eight immortals under the guidance of Thoth and represents the Chinese trigram *kan* whose element is flowing water, the immortal flow of the Nile. The rise and fall of the Nile formed an infallible clock for the civilization of ancient Egypt.

The country as a whole was seen as a magical giant called Osiris. His counterpart in the sky was the constellation of Orion. The stellar counterpart of the Nile was the Milky Way galaxy. The southernmost border of Egypt was the root chakra, and the flow of the Nile into the Mediterranean was the crown chakra. Giza was the throat chakra, and Heliopolis was the brow chakra. Busiris (northern home of Osiris) was the pineal gland, and Sais (home of Net of the crossed arrows) was the optic chiasm. Pe was the crown chakra. Hermopolis was the heart chakra. Abydos was the belly chakra and the womb penetrated by Osiris embodied in the glans. Denderah was the ovary nest. The great temple of Min at what is now Akhmim represented the generative force entering the body. Thebes, with the great temples of Luxor and Karnak, Esna and Edfu were aspects of the genital chakra. That is why we also find numerous drawings of Min with his erect phallus on the walls of the inner sanctum of Luxor. Going further south we enter the Root Chakra and encounter Kom Ombos home of Sobek, minion of Set, and then Elephantine and Philae, the home of Khnemu and the southern gate of Isis, the vagina. The deepest part of the root chakra, the boundary between self and non-self was at Heh, which is why this special stele was placed there. The Egyptians cleverly designed it so that it fulfilled the practical function of setting border policy while at the same time teaching profound esoteric practices. You will not be able to appreciate the subtle message of the stele unless you practice the technique that it teaches. Then it becomes obvious.

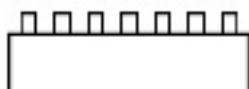
The Bak-Amen Stele and the Games of Senet and Backgammon

At the beginning of this article I suggested that there might also be a connection to board games in the stele. How is it possible that this ancient border marker has something to do with ancient Egyptian board games? Let's examine the evidence and do some exploring.

The first evidence we have is in the title above the inscription: Bak-Amen. It sounds just like one of the traditional names for the ancient game of points: Backgammon. This game was popular not only in Egypt but all over the Middle East. Boards for this game have been discovered in Iraq and Iran that go back to 3000 B.C.

Right in the middle of the Stele text we find the word **men** repeated: **men-men**. It has the feminine suffix **-t**, and in this form generally refers to herds of livestock, particularly cattle. The root **men** has many meanings and includes a version with a boat semantic that has to do with harbors, quays and the guiding of boats into harbors. Apparently the ancient Egyptians often transported cattle by boats. The root **men** is

a pictograph of a Senet or Backgammon board viewed from the side with the pawns or checkers in profile. That is its original meaning. This glyph was also used to spell the name of the Sun god, Amen-Ra. Thus the mention of the cattle boats refers us to the solar barque and thence back to the title of the stele, the invisible hawk, or Bak-Amen.



Men

The pharaoh's name was Sen-user-t. This sounds like "The Power of the Game of Senet". The name can mean "Wizard of Senet" or "Transcendental Wizard" or "Zen Wizard". Senet was the popular Passing Game of ancient Egypt. The word **sen** (to pass, to transcend) occurs near the middle of line 2 in the edict, and at the beginning of line 6 we find the word **sua**, which also means to pass and is probably the causative (s-) of the verb **ua**, to be distant, away from, to go far off. In the Game of Senet each player tries to get his pawns past those of his opponent. In Backgammon the two players move their pieces in opposite directions, but the goal is still to bear all one's pawns off the board at a destination point. The idea of passing and of bearing pawns off the board is a metaphor for the process of transcending to higher states of consciousness. Bearing a piece off the board is a nice metaphor for the Transcendental Meditation process during which the inward march of the mind's attention leads it to spontaneously leave behind the relative modes of thought and experience pure awareness.

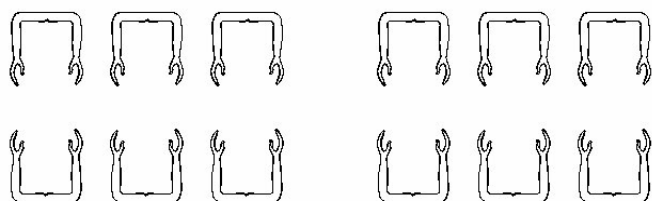


Sen

Sua

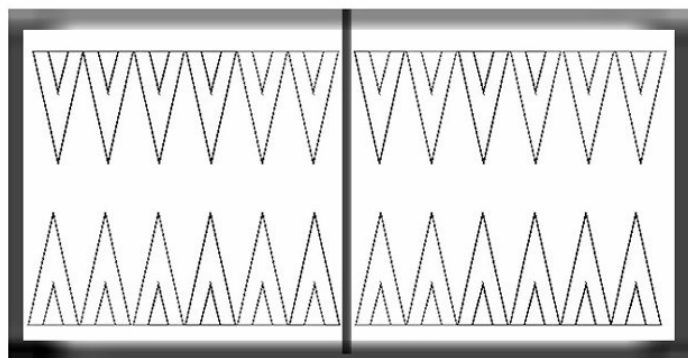
The cartouche with the name Kha-Kau-Ra is a condensed model of the Backgammon board with two types of checkers, Kha's and Ra's. The three Ka's form a set of six points. A set of four such triple Ka's makes a Backgammon board. The triple Ka symbol occurs over and over in the Pyramid Texts, the oldest records of mankind. A triplet of Ka triplets is a Paut of Ka's. The various Ka's all derive from Amen Ra, the source of all creative intelligence. They are various frequencies and configurations of electromagnetic energy. The Backgammon board is therefore like a spectrum chart. Without modern instruments Egyptians could understand spectra by observing the behavior of waves in water. Shifting along the board represents

tuning to various frequencies.



Right after the royal cartouche we find the glyph for **da**, which means “to give” or “bestow”. As a noun it means “a gift”. It can also be reduplicated as **dada**: the giver, the gift, or the act of giving. This glyph looks like a “point” on a Backgammon board. It also resembles Sop-det the triangle of the star Sirius and emblem of Isis/Hathor, giver of love. Inside the triangle is a smaller triangle that looks like a doorway. We can translate the hidden message at the end of line 1 on the stele as “the point lives forever.”

The way the number 8 is written just before the royal cartouche suggests the way the Ka points form opposing rows. Every point on the board repeats the idea of giving. It may be that early Backgammon boards only contained four pairs of dada’s, thus representing the eight primordial gods of Khemenu. The enlightened immortals put their attention on giving rather than taking. When you give, you are the source. When you receive, someone or something else is the source. The standard opening of the offering formula for thousands of years in Egypt was **Hetep da Suten**, which some read as **Hetep da Nesu**. It means a “Royal Peace Offering”. The Egyptians were essentially a peace-loving people and constantly made offerings to bring peace to both the living and the dead. You can not control whether others will give you peace, but you can always control whether you give peace to others. Here is a drawing of a **dada bak-amen** board.



The geography of Egypt formed the image of a man. The Nile was his spinal cord, and the major temples marked major energy centers in the body, what nowadays are commonly called chakras. The gods were distributed throughout the land, and the

entire country formed a giant Senet Board. This board was also reflected in the sky as the Milky Way and the constellations. The middle row represented the Nile and the Milky Way. Immortal Osiris in the sky was Orion. His sacred burial site on earth was at Abydos. He also rides on the solar barque each day with the Sun God. This boat also represents the middle row of the board. Ordinarily it is a ferry boat that goes back and forth East and West. But in the higher mythology it moves up and down the Nile. The top and bottom rows on the board are the two banks of the Nile. The kings of the four elements and the masters of the four senses act as divine ferrymen. The East bank represents stages in the world of men, and the West bank represents the cosmic perspective of the higher soul. You must tour both banks for an integrated experience of "Egypt".

The **Kaa** boats are "cattle" boats. They play on the word Ka, the electrical energy in the body. According to the ancient Egyptians all of the eight energy forms involved in human existence are really variations of the Ka. The **Kaa** boat represents the pawn that players use to travel about on the Senet board. In the cartouche we find some pawns are disks like the glyph for the sun high in the sky and some are tapered cones like the glyph for the sun at sunrise. Both are **Kaa** boats because the sun always travels by boat in Egyptian mythology.

The "Negroes" (Nehesu) mentioned in the stele text are immortals. They live in the world of light of the Higher Self. This is beyond the border of Egypt in the South. This land of Sudan and Ethiopia is the birthplace of mankind. The earliest examples of hominid creatures are found in the fossil record of this area. This is where the self-aware light beings entered fleshly bodies to play on the earth. The Nehesu are the pilots of the boats and represent the players moving their pieces about on the board. The Nehesu properly speaking are not allowed onto the board because they are transcendental immortals who live in and beyond Heh. Only their avatars in the form of pawns can enter the game of life. Heh is the border town in the district of Semna by the second cataract that defines the edge of the board. It also is the world of millions of years and time beyond time in eternity. Time in Egypt is recorded by the motions of the Sun, the Moon, and the cyclical flooding of the Nile. In Egyptian mythology these are Ra (Sun), Thoth (Moon), and Khnem in his role as Happy, the Nile god who brought happiness to the people by flooding the land to make it fertile. The Sun and Moon were the eyes of Horus.

The ancient name of the district of Semna was Aqen. The god Aqen was a protector of the dead. His semantic glyph was the **shenu** loop that the Mother Goddess of

Love Mut bestows. The loop represents any repetitive program. We generate the illusion of time by recreating the things we love over and over again. (What passes as love for most people is desire, and desire is a distorted form of hatred. So be careful what you decide to hate.) Aqen ensured that you would be reborn to live again. An **aken** was a metal tool like a pick, hoe, or plow. (The letters **k** and **q** were close enough in Egyptian that they often alternated.) **Aqer** means perfect, so the **aqeru** were the siddhas of Egypt, the perfected ones. The **akeru** were the sphinxes that marked dawn and dusk. The ancient Egyptians symbolized the state of perfected enlightenment (samadhi) as an eternal state of dawn (or dusk) with the sun hovering on the horizon. They chose this symbol because dawn and dusk were the ideal times for meditation.

The **qedu** or **aqedu** were the sailors and the masons. The former manned the **Kaa** boats, symbolic of the solar barque, and the latter built the great pyramids and temples of ancient Egypt. The masons recorded the sacred knowledge of Thoth in these great structures. The tradition of the masons as a professional guild continues to this day as the Masonic orders. The word **mesen** in Egyptian refers particularly to the blacksmith guild, but really means a craftsman or creative person (**mes-en** = ‘one who gives birth’). These masons built the tools (**akenu**) with which the stonecutters (**aqedu**) cut and shaped the stones that gave birth to temples and pyramids. The root **qen** means to make something strong and perfect. That was the agenda of these fine craftsmen. They also worked in decorative materials such as gold and electrum that symbolized the energy of the sun. These craftsmen worked from the level of eternity to build perfect structures that would last close to forever in time. They also made the weapons that protected these structures and the civilization they housed.

The **aqedu** (also called **sahu**, or wise ones) had mastered the art of the loop program. This included the magical ability to automatically resurrect and restore their work when it finally was ravaged to the brink of extinction. They represented this with the **benu** bird, or phoenix. They embodied this bird abstractly as the capstone placed on the pyramids and obelisks. To make sure people got the connection, they created a glyph with the **benu** perched on top of a pyramidion capstone. This glyph was pronounced **b@h** and represented the annual inundation of the Nile. The Nile flood was a repeating program that brought Egypt back to life every year. Using the pyramidion symbol emphasized that this technology of eternal rebirth was the top priority of life. The sun was always there, but if the Nile failed to flood, the lives of the Egyptians were in mortal danger.

The signs of the annual Nile flood always first appeared at the second cataract, the southernmost boundary of Egypt. Khnem controlled the gates that let the water in. Thoth, as the Moon god and lord of tides, controlled the rising and falling of the water. The moon was called **Ah**, and **ah** was also a name for cattle; **@h** meant to raise something on high. Thoth measured the heavens and placed the celestial orbs on high. The **Ba** was the soul sustained on the breath and ultimately was the Ram (**Ba**) of the Sun God. Its symbol was **bak**, the hawk of Horus – ‘your soul’ (**ba-k**). Thus the name **Ba-@h-Amen** or **Ba-Ah-Amen** thus contains both the names Amen-Ra and Thoth-Ah hidden in the sound.

The craftsmen used three key technologies to loop their creations into eternity. The first was the principle of working with stable materials. In an age that archaeologists claim had only copper and bronze tools at its disposal these craftsmen shaped to their will the hardest stones. The second technology was a way of encoding secret information in public structures using layers of wordplay to encode multiple meanings in the same text and with an extremely subtle and refined iconography. The Semna Stele we are discussing is a prime example of this technique. The Pyramid Texts are unparalleled classics of a style of literary expression that was refined over centuries or even millennia. The third and most amazing technology is the ability for the Craftsmen to retain a certain level of conscious memory after death and bring this with them as purposefulness, skills, and abilities to restore knowledge by rebirthing in other times and places. We witness this ability in our day as so many professional and amateur Egyptologists now contribute their efforts to the restoration of the lost treasures of ancient Egypt.

For almost two thousand years nobody cared about the culture of ancient Egypt. People thoughtlessly or even deliberately destroyed whatever monuments and artifacts they found scattered about in Egypt and treated the superb artifacts as something only to be looted or smashed. Now, in the nick of time before the last vestiges disappear, a team has emerged with both the interest and the tools to restore the lost knowledge. The ancient wisdom of Egypt not only is reviving, but will be shared by millions of people around the world via modern technology. The ancient games of Senet and Bak-Amen survived through the changing ages because they embodied these three remarkable technologies in an extremely compact format. Although these games were usually made of ephemeral material, the feature that ensured the preservation of Bak-Amen or Senet was the stratagem of packaging them as popular games that people would play for thousands of years without even knowing what they had in their hands. In our age we see a global explosion of

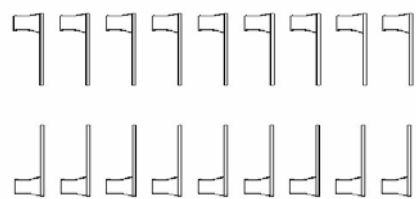
interest in the most accurate transmission of this technology – the Tarot deck. People around the world have continued to play with the cards and consult them as an oracle through successive historical ages in spite of periods of persecution and the almost entire annihilation of ancient Egyptian culture. The Tarot deck is and remains the most compact version of the Pyramid Texts and the Book of the Dead and a summary of the essence of Egyptian culture.

What can we say about the rules of the game? Perhaps we can find at least one form of the game reflected in the Semna text. The basic rule stated in the edict of Sen-user-t is that no Nehes be allowed to cross the border unless he has the proper credentials authorizing him as a messenger or on other accredited business. Such accredited envoys are to be treated well. Presumably, such foreign envoys with proper visas must leave Egypt once they have completed their business.

The play of the game seems to be for the Nehesu to enter Egypt from the south and attempt to cross the land and reach the north and then return back to the south from whence they came. Each player believes that he is an Egyptian and that his opponent is a foreigner. Accredited pawns must be in groups. So when a player lands on a point occupied by a single opposing pawn, he “arrests” that pawn, puts it on a boat (the middle row), and deports it back to Nubia. That opponent pawn must start its journey over again when it is the opponent’s turn. The usual Backgammon rule is that you have to bring the deported piece back onto the board from the Southern boundary before you can move any other pieces. The game may begin with all the pawns already on the board (as in modern Backgammon) or they may be brought on by rolls of the dice. Each point on the board represents a port along the Nile, and the Nile flows between the two sets of points that form the East and West banks of the Nile. The Pyramid Texts contain numerous references to a Double Paut of gods. This is written as follows:

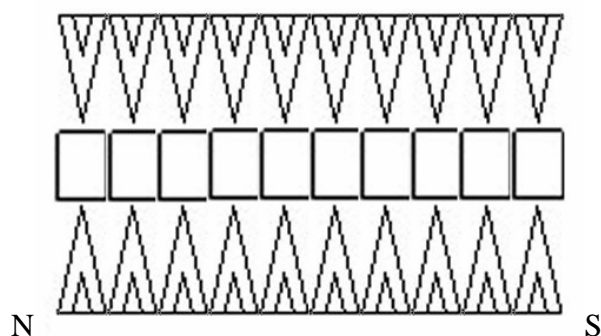


If we invert one of the Paut’s we get a nice Bak-Amen board with eighteen points, nine on each side. If we add Amen-Ra at the end of one row and Thoth at the end of the other row (each as a Lord of an Ennead Paut), we get a total of twenty points. With these corresponding ports along the Nile this gives us a perfect Senet board layout with thirty squares.



N

S



If two pawns of the same player occupy two consecutive points, they protect each other and can not be deported. This rule suits the Senet-type boards with small squares. Boards using the elongated triangular points allow for multiple pawns at a single “port”. The rule then requires more than one pawn in a point in order for it to be protected. This is how modern Backgammon is played.

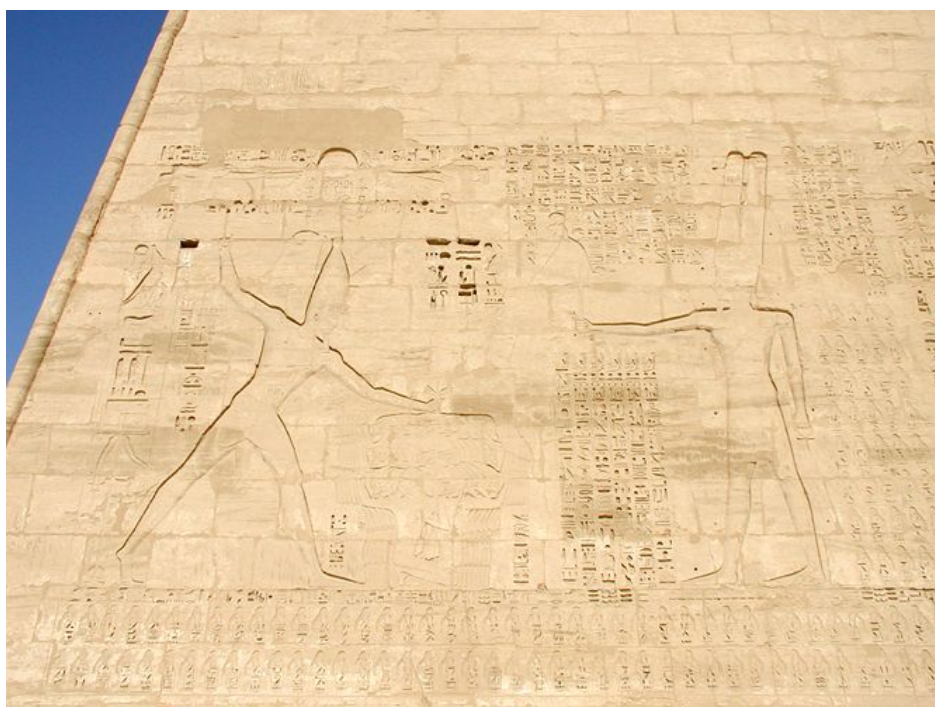
The players move their respective pawns in opposite directions. The bottom row is earthly Egypt, and the top row is celestial Egypt (or vice versa depending on how you orient the board). Or you can think of the rows as the eastern and western banks of the Nile. One player moves his pawns from right to left in the top row and then from left to right in the bottom row. The other player moves his pawns from right to left in the bottom row and from left to right in the top row. Thus each player traverses both top and bottom rows, but in reversed order.

The winner of the game is the player who first manages to get all his pawns to make a tour of all the Egyptian sacred sites and then back to Nubia. The journey back to Nubia is upstream and therefore more difficult. The player’s pawns must pass through the cataract regions near the border and must wait to exit Egypt one at a time. A player may not bear off pawns until all his pieces are on the “upstream” phase of their journey. If any get deported, they must redo the journey to the upstream phase before bearing off may resume.

A player may move any pawn the number of squares indicated by the number on the

dice. With two dice a player may move one piece twice, once for each die number. Or he may move a different piece for each die's number. However, only legal moves are allowed. If only one move is possible or no moves are possible on a throw, then the player must forfeit one or both moves respectively.

These are the basic rules of Backgammon, and they can be played on a traditional Senet board or on a Backgammon board with triangular points. Thus the royal edict proclaiming the southern border of Egypt that is carved on the Semna Stele may also be a beautifully poetic description of this ancient game as well as a brief set of instructions for how to attain enlightenment and immortality.



Detail

The above photos show part of a scene carved on the pylon in front of the mortuary temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu. A similar scene is carved on the seventh pylon in the Temple of Amen-Ra at Karnak. The temple was known as Apet Uret, The Great Initiation Temple, and was used for coronations, major ceremonies and initiation rites. The scene shows a giant form of the pharaoh (Ramesses III in the former case and Tutmoses III in the latter case) grasping the combined hair of a huge crowd of men and appearing to threaten them with a stone mace. Amin stands by watching and blessing. All around the side and below are ranks of men sitting in the “Prisoner” pose. Each man has a label telling where he comes from. Egyptologists interpret this as representing the asserted hegemony of Ramesses and Tutmoses over all these peoples. This interpretation is a nationalistic, political interpretation. At a deeper level of interpretation the pharaoh represents the Son of the Sun, the earthly representative of Amen Ra, the Invisible Higher Self, and the mace (hej) that he wields represents illumination and is a technical term used in the Pyramid Texts to refer to the practice of meditation. The great temple at Karnak was the scene of great meditation gatherings. Participants came from all over the world to join. Each is shown sitting in the Anahata Mudra posture meditating at this great assembly. Pharaoh represents the Higher Self unifying all the diverse nations and cultures into a single entity. The pole down the center of the group represents their coherence. The men in the cluster hold their left hands over their hearts signifying the Heart Chakra meditation and hold their right hands in the Ka gesture to show that Amen Ra is really a form of Min the foundation and creation deity of Egypt. This represents the creative power of Man. The composite crowd of men recalls the description of Krishna’s cosmic form in Chapter 11 of the Bhagavad-Gita. There he reveals that, like Amen Ra, he is all the gods in a single body. As time he devours all creations.



This detail from the Medinet Habu wall carving shows a “captive” sitting in Anahata Mudra. This particular meditator probably came from a part of Syria called Qam@.

The characteristic of the Anahata Mudra meditation pose is that the hands are placed behind the back so that the shoulders are drawn back and the heart chakra is opened. The participants may be kneeling or sitting in a cross-legged pose (easy pose, single lotus, or full lotus). The labels cover this portion of the bodies of the participants, so the leg pose is not clear, but most often the “prisoner” is shown kneeling in the vajra pose.



Detail showing rows of “prisoners” on the pylon at Karnak. Each has a shield-like label with the name of his country. The glyph that looks like an E on its side is the determinative for a “foreign country”.