

The Ancient Egyptian Senet Tarot and The Game of Human Life Part 1

**The Complete Works of Douglass A. White, Ph.D.
Volume 16**

古埃及神圖塔羅與人類生活遊戲（一）

白中道博士全集 第十六冊



AWAKENED LIFE 覺醒的生命
SACRED SCARAB INSTITUTE 聖甲蟲學院

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Enlightenment is a viewpoint every person already has available and always has had. It is our essential nature. No technique, practice, or special life style is necessary.

開悟是一個觀點，每一個人都已經可以利用它，而且每一個人都永遠擁有它，它是我們的本性，不需要任何技術、練習、或特殊的生活方式。



Douglass A. White, Ph.D. 1941~2021

He was born in Chicago in 1941, and he graduated from Harvard University in 1964 with Bachelor of Oriental Languages and Literature, after that he entered Taiwan University and began to study the Chinese literature of the former Qin Dynasty in 1965. In 1968, he completed his master's thesis on "Research on Zuo Chuan Quote Poems". Later he returned to Harvard University in the United States to complete his Ph.D. in Oriental Languages and Ancient Civilizations, and wrote the dissertation the Interpretation of the Central Concept of “The Book of Changer” by Scholars in the Han、Song and Ming Dynasties.

The content of all his works: 1) Research on the wisdom of ancient civilizations, including ancient Egypt, China, Buddhism, Judaism, India, etc., 2) Dialyze the authenticity of physical science from the perspective of an observer to connect with the spiritual, 3) Inspiring spirituality Wisdom to continue earth civilization. There are 24 books in total.

白中道博士於 1941 年出生於美國芝加哥，1964 年完成美國哈佛大學的東方語文學士畢業後，1965 年進入台灣大學開始研究前秦中國文學，於 1968 年完成了“左傳引詩研究”的碩士論文；後來又回到美國哈佛大學完成東方語言與古文明博士，論文寫“漢、宋、明代學者對易經中心觀念的解釋”。他畢生所有著作內容型態：1) 古文明智慧研究，包括古埃及、中國、佛學、猶太、印度..... 等等，2) 以觀察者角度來透析物理科學的真實面貌以與心靈接軌，3) 啟發靈性智慧以延續地球文明。總共著作 24 本。

【The Complete Works Catalogue of Douglass A. White, Ph.D.】

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The Ancient Egyptian Senet Tarot and the Game of Human Life

SERIES OVERVIEW: Benty Light Garden Topics on Civilization by Douglass A. White, Ph.D.

Welcome to Benty Light Garden Topics on Civilization.

this series of talks is “The Ancient Egyptian Senet Tarot and the Game of Human Life.” The entire series includes 53 short articles , The entire set of articles in this series introduces one important viewpoint: This universe is an eternally existing Benty Light Garden whose purpose for existence is to provide an arena in which creators may play games of a nearly infinite variety.

In this series of articles we will explore what I call the Ancient Egyptian game of Senet Tarok (Da-Rekh) civilization and its relation to the eternal overall game of the Benty Light Garden. This civilization developed technologies for passing information packets intact through different phases of space-time and other dimensions. “Senet” means something passes beyond something else or even itself. “Da-Rekh” means to give knowledge.

The basic viewpoint of this series is that you are LIGHT, I am LIGHT, and every person is nothing but LIGHT. The entire environment of the universe (which may consist of multi-verses) is also nothing but LIGHT. Human beings, and all other forms of life, are in the Universal Light Garden to play their games that they have chosen to play.

All the rest is just detail, and there is quite a lot of detail. It is wise to pay attention to the detail in the fine print of any contract or organizational manifesto.

However, since the whole system of reality is based on light/awareness, the more a person understands the nature of light and its behavior, the better equipped the person will be to navigate in the games that the person creates, encounters, or chooses to participate in. In the articles I will introduce details about a very ancient game called Senet that we have learned something about from the ancient Egyptians.

Before you start to read the articles in this Series, you might take a moment to notice: Where are you? What are you looking at? What do you hear? What is your body touching? What are you thinking? What are your feelings and emotions? No matter what your situation, that moment is the Awareness Realm of the Benty Light Garden

that is everywhere. What do you plan to do or not do? That is the possibility of exercising your will.

There is nothing else to do -- only YOU continue forever to enjoy your Basic Substance [LIGHT] and play your chosen Game in the Light Garden -- by yourself or with any number of companions.

Douglass A. White, 2019.01.22

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00 SERIES OVERVIEW:

Benty Light Garden Topics on Civilization

by

Douglass A. White, Ph.D.

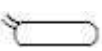

Welcome to Benty Light Garden Topics on Civilization. The subject of this series of talks is “The Ancient Egyptian Senet Tarot and the Game of Human Life.” The entire series includes 53 short articles that are posted on bentlylightgarden.com free of charge for everyone to enjoy and share. For deeper explorations we have a list of translations, commentaries, books, and articles that you can find in our Store Menu or elsewhere on the Internet or in print.

The entire set of articles in this series introduces one important viewpoint: This universe is an eternally existing Benty Light Garden whose purpose for existence is to provide an arena in which creators may play games of a nearly infinite variety. These games have no original purpose or rules, but are mainly for amusement. “Amusement” is whatever suits an individual at any moment. The purposes and rules of a game are set by the participants themselves. Therefore the games and their rules can change in different times and places. Everyone can agree or can agree to disagree. All it takes is for one or several participants to honestly believe what the game is, and for that participant or those participants that is how the game is. An individual or group of individuals can play several different games at the same time. If the several games do not align, then the experiences become complex even to the point of confusion that causes players to feel difficulties and discomfort.

However, the Basic Substance (Benty) of the Light Garden, including the participants, is nothing but different forms of light (electromagnetic self interactions), and light is conservative, which means it exists eternally. No matter what happens in the games, light continues to exist. From the subjective viewpoint of a living being the Basic Substance of the Light is Awareness. Light is the objective form of Awareness. Awareness is pure existence without any opinions. With no opinions Awareness is just a potential energy that exists, and all its possibilities mutually interfere and cancel out leaving nothing to experience. It has no preferred viewpoint or bias. When engaged in playing games, Awareness takes specific biased viewpoints that generate opinions and beliefs that easily become what we call consciousness. That includes

thoughts, emotions, and the experience of various kinds of perceptions. In humans the perceptions impinge on awareness through a nervous system that is a biological electromagnetic device for processing electromagnetic signals in several modes, commonly known as vision, hearing, touch, taste, and smell -- all of which are forms of electromagnetic light self-interactions.. The specialty of human kind is that he (she) not only is animate, but has the option of will, can make decisions, and then may take actions to play interesting self-interactive light games in the various modes of light. By means of these capabilities, human societies may create civilizations to explore group games in various environments and on various scales.

Although the purposes and rules of a game are up to the participants to decide, games of any kind by definition must have defined goals. It turns out that, over an extended period of time only certain outcomes will occur with any game that involves the use of will, attention, priority, and/or a flow of living consciousness in a universe that contains physical material. Article #47 outlines the ultimate outcomes of such games.

In this series of articles we will explore what I call the Ancient Egyptian game of Senet  Tarok (Da-Rekh ) civilization and its relation to the eternal overall game of the Benty Light Garden. This civilization developed technologies for passing information packets intact through different phases of space-time and other dimensions. "Senet" means something passes beyond something else or even itself. "Da-Rekh" means to give knowledge.

The basic viewpoint of this series is that you are LIGHT, I am LIGHT, and every person is nothing but LIGHT. The entire environment of the universe (which may consist of multi-verses) is also nothing but LIGHT. Human beings, and all other forms of life, are in the Universal Light Garden to play their games that they have chosen to play. All the rest is just detail, and there is quite a lot of detail. It is wise to pay attention to the detail in the fine print of any contract or organizational manifesto. However, since the whole system of reality is based on light/awareness, the more a person understands the nature of light and its behavior, the better equipped the person will be to navigate in the games that the person creates, encounters, or chooses to participate in. In the articles I will introduce details about a very ancient game called Senet that we have learned something about from the ancient Egyptians.

If you do not understand an article, then reread the article. Explore the study questions. Carefully study the appended images and other materials. Come back and reread this Series Overview article and consider it in the light of the specific article you just read in the series. If you still do not understand something, give me an email and explain your question. Then I will reply as soon as possible with a response that may be helpful. (If you find any errors in the material, please also let me know so we can improve the material.) If you still have trouble understanding the material, go play another game for a while and gather more experience until you start to understand what light is.

Once you understand light, you will have illumination. That is enlightenment. Enlightenment is very simple. It is just being clear about your own thoughts, beliefs, experiences, and the behavior possibilities of light and awareness.

For example, who are you? Where do you live? Why do you do what you do? The whole world is meaningless and just waits for you to decide what you want to play as your life game and for you to decide what its meaning and purpose is. Once your game is over, you will go play another game, or perhaps come play again the game of human life. It all depends on what your real interests are. In any case the light show goes on, and you are part of it, or even all of it, depending on your viewpoint.

OK! Now let's begin to discuss some aspects of Ancient Egyptian Civilization and its Eternal Cosmic Senet Game that transcends space and time. What we know as "ancient Egypt" is only the local remains of a very special legacy civilization that may go back billions of years and is found in various forms throughout the universe. Take your time reading and studying the material. Explore. Use detailed attention and a spirit of serious scholarship. Or you can just relax and browse with a half-awake, half-asleep artistic intuition of spiritual awareness. You can just play with the game until you discover its true flavor. Grasp the core concept: "Coming from the Root there is nothing, so why stir up a lot of dust?" Then stretch your wings and soar into the present moment of Benty Light Garden's secret realm. Lots of good friends await you there to explore the Game of Passing Beyond the Beyond.

Before you start to read the articles in this Series, you might take a moment to notice: Where are you? What are you looking at? What do you hear? What is your body touching? What are you thinking? What are your feelings and emotions? No matter what your situation, that moment is the Awareness Realm of the Benty Light Garden that is everywhere. What do you plan to do or not do? That is the possibility of exercising your will. There is nothing else to do -- only YOU continue forever to enjoy your Basic Substance [LIGHT] and play your chosen Game in the Light Garden -- by yourself or with any number of companions.

Douglass A. White, 2019.01.22

What or Who is Benty?

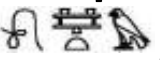

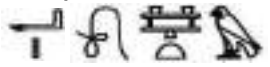
In Chinese Benty literally is “root body” [ben-ti 本体]. The root of a tree is its foundation. It is usually hidden beneath the ground, but it anchors the tree and nourishes it. The “body” implies something with a physical reality. Chinese scholars of the Song Dynasty studied the **Book of Changes** and spoke of Ti 体 and Yong 用 as the passive structural component and the dynamic transformational component of reality: **substance** and **function**.



In ancient Egyptian civilization “Benty” is a mythical playful and mischievous dog-headed baboon with unlimited magical powers. The first three hieroglyphs shown above are the spelling of the name “Benty”, and the last glyph is a pictograph of the baboon. Benty is probably a transformation of The Grand Master Thoth into an animal form that represented the root material of mankind. This root substance transcends all forms of existence, so Benty has many names and transformations in Egyptian Civilization. Sometimes Isis and Nephthys (two ladies in Egyptian mythology) magically took on the form of a pair of such Benty baboons. In the ancient Pyramid Texts (perhaps



5000 years old) we find Benty written as using a bird glyph. This bird glyph pictograph of a lapwing from very ancient times was a symbol for mankind, the people. It can still be seen carved on the remains of the temples of Egypt. The glyph used alone in this sense of mankind was often pronounced “rekhet”, which meant “one who knows”. “Rekh” [know] is possibly the root of our word “reckon” [to

believe, or know, often as a result of calculations and evidence]. In Pyramid Text #363 Benty is said to be the son of Wat-Her (, a personification of the Way of the Will). A follower or “son” of Wat-Her was said to be a “Hand” ( pronounced ‘A, a release of sound deep in the throat like a release of tension.) A Hand was a like a “deck hand” or sailor serving on a ferry boat. His job was to facilitate the arrival of a traveler at his or her intended destination. So these Benty beings show up when someone is striving for a goal that will evolve to a higher state of being and they offer a helping hand. The use of the bird glyph in the Pyramid Text implies that any human can become an ‘A-Wat-Her  and facilitate the growth and evolution of his fellow humans or even any other entity on the “Way of Deliberate Living”.

The above comments about Benty contain a lot of detail. During the series of articles this information will become much clearer, or at least “fleshed out”. How far you want to go with it is up to you.

00 Study Questions

- * What is a Benty Light Garden?
- * What is a game?
- * What is the “basic substance” of the universe?
- * What is awareness?
- * What is light?
- * What is consciousness?
- * What is the basic viewpoint of this series of articles?
- * What is enlightenment?
- * What is a recommended preparation for reading the articles?
- * What is a recommended procedure after you have read an article?

01 Introduction to the Author of the Series

Welcome to the Benty Light Garden. I am Dr. Douglass White. I am an American scholar, but I have lived many years in Asia. Most of the time I lived in Taiwan. Sometimes I have gone to China to tour or to give talks. I have done research for many years. Now I am going to give some short presentations introducing some of my research related to the nature of civilization that I have carried out over many years .

I grew up in the US, but when I entered college I began to study Chinese literature and this included the language and civilization of China. After college I lived in Asia and also spent a lot of time researching civilizations. The main question I asked is what is it that can allow a civilization to become very stable so as to allow a people to develop their own lifestyle and culture over a long period of time?

From that original question my interest further developed into a question about the future of world civilization. Because of developing media, communications, and convenience of travel, our current world is developing a world civilization. The question is whether we will develop into a unified civilization or a diversified civilization? Along the way I will discuss a number of historical issues as well as literature and culture, including science. I will also share some stories from my experiences and research.

As a start I would like to introduce a bit about myself, where I come from, and why I became involved in this research. In recent years I have begun to give lectures and workshops in Asia. Some friends have suggested that I share some of my research and make it more available on the Internet. So let me tell you a bit about how I began this research and series of discoveries.

I was born in Chicago in the Midwest, but when I was quite young our family moved to the East Coast. So I grew up on the East Coast living for some years in Pennsylvania, Maryland, New York and Massachusetts. My father was a railroad executive and so we often moved according to his work. He was an expert on railway freight tariffs. In that period the railroads (together with trucking, shipping, and airfreight operations) were developing the technology of container freight, a fantastic invention that spurred commerce worldwide.

My mother was a house wife, but she was also a musician with a career of many decades as a professional organist, choir director, and music teacher. She was also an artist. All in all though we were a fairly average middle class family.

When my father began his career he was a work-study student at the University of Chicago and was strongly influenced by a Great Books program they offered. He began to share what he had learned, and he really enjoyed reading works on history, literature, and humor together with me and my younger brother. From that experience I began to develop an interest in literature and its relation to history. One work my father introduced to us was by the earliest Greek historian, Herodotus. Later when I studied Chinese I became acquainted with China's first great historian Si-ma Qian and his **Shi-ji (Records of the Grand Historian)**. He was China's Herodotus and was the first to try to write down what in his day was considered a history of the world.

Herodotus traveled around the world of his day visiting many countries to observe their customs, culture, history, their wars, and their governmental systems, and then he recorded much of what he learned into his history. Even today many archaeologists rely on his reports to guide them in reconstructing ancient times.

Another subtle influence on my childhood was my grandfather who was a Mormon. His grandfather was a pioneer who went West with Brigham Young to found Mormon settlements. As my grandfather grew up, the Mormons asked him to serve for a time as a missionary, so he went to Germany. There he met my grandmother and brought her to the US as his bride. When I was young I went to see them, but unfortunately by that time my grandfather could not talk well because of a stroke, but I discovered he had many books about the Inca civilization in South America. The Mormons in their **Book of Mormon** believed that in ancient times there was a high civilization in the Americas and even Europeans came and settled there, but later that was wiped out. When the Mormons discovered there were very ancient ruins in Central and South America they felt that this was beginning to show archaeological evidence supporting their beliefs.

I did not have any strong belief in the Book of Mormon's tales, but I was impressed to see such ancient ruins of a high civilization in Central and

South America. So when I was in Middle School I wrote a paper stating that I wanted to become an archaeologist. All through High School and into College I was strongly interested in archaeology and literature. However, the literature aspect soon dominated and my summer job digging ditches convinced me that I perhaps was not cut out to be a dirt archaeologist.

In High School I studied American History and discovered that the US had less than 200 years of history, and the settling of Europeans in the Americas had only been for about 500 years. Compared to the histories of ancient Greece and ancient Rome, which we also studied in High School, this was really a very short history.

Of course the Americas were already populated by indigenous populations that had been there for thousands of years. They were living in various tribes throughout the continents each with their own languages and cultures. Although they sometimes formed alliances, they really each maintained their own cultural identity. As the modern nation states began to form in North America, and the US and Canada were largely formed of immigrants, I felt that their formation of a culture and civilization really lay more in the future.

So I began to look at other civilizations for contrast and comparison. In my American History class I decided to write a paper about the Treaty of Portsmouth, an event in which President Theodore Roosevelt negotiated a peace treaty between Russian and Japan. The curious thing about this event was that the two antagonists had been fighting in the northeast part of China. I thought it very odd that Russia and Japan were fighting over property and rights that properly belonged to another country. I had been studying Russian culture for a couple of years at that time, but this brought my attention to the situation unfolding in China. The Chinese empire that had lasted more or less for about 4000 years was finally coming to an end with a dynasty run by a foreign occupation (of a people called Manchus). Now two entirely uninvited imperialist powers were meddling in the affairs of "China" and attempting to carve away pieces of China and incorporate them into their own territories, or at least into their spheres of influence. I previously had no prior contact with Chinese or knowledge about China.

As I studied the question I was impressed by how over the centuries certain dominant societies tended to extend their influence and even occupy and annex other societies enforcing their hegemony over them. This came to be known as “imperialism”. The Roman Empire was a famous example. More recently the European powers of England, France, Spain, and Portugal had extended empires into Africa, Asia, and then the Americas. Russia held a sprawling empire from Eastern Europe through Central Asia all the way to the Pacific. China was no exception and practiced imperialism from the Shang dynasty to the Qing dynasty, only periodically being subjected to the imperialism imposed by others. Oddly, when Mao and the Communists took power in China, they declared they were liberating China from imperialism (the annoying attempts of European and Asian imperialists to gnaw away at the Chinese Empire), and yet they simply re-established the old Qing Empire folding the Manchus, Mongols, Tibetans and Islamic tribes as well as many smaller minorities into a hegemony dominated by the majority “Han” Chinese. This is fairly obvious if one simply looks at the flag of the overly insistent country that calls itself “The People’s Republic of China”. There is one big star for the Han and four little stars for the largest minorities. The smaller minorities do not even get stars. “Republic” goes back to the old form of Roman government before it became an “Empire” and means “the thing of the **people**”. Actually China’s empire ended in 1911, long before the Communists arrived on the scene with any noticeable influence. China then disintegrated into warlords jockeying to see who would become the next emperor. Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Tse-tung were only the two warlords who emerged as the strongest contenders and survived while mixing it up with the Japanese imperial ambitions to take advantage of China’s disunity and annex it to its own Empire. These discouraging patterns in world history inspired me to dig deeper into the foundations of civilization to find what really works rather than political shams aimed at bullying less dominant cultures. I saw that my own homeland (the US) was just as much an imperialist power as any others although it posted a facade as a democratic republic. Any exertion of hegemony by a dominant society over less dominant cultures inevitably makes “the natives restless” and ultimately leads to dissatisfaction and disintegration of the “Empire”.

In my first year of college I selected a course on the history of Buddhism in East Asia. The spread of Buddhism from India to all parts of Asia

seemed like a reflection of the way Christianity spread in Europe and beyond as well as the spread of Islam from the Middle East to many parts of the world. These were cosmopolitan religions that in many ways detached themselves from the ties of a local ethnic tradition such as Judaism and Hinduism maintained. Thus they were able to proselytize their teachings into many cultures. The question arose in my mind whether religious fervor was perhaps just a cover for another form of cultural imperialism. History seemed to record lots of religious wars and mutual suppression by competing sects and beliefs.

Seeing all the languages with Oriental characters in the East Asian Library at Harvard inspired me to begin an intensive course in the Chinese language so I could begin to explore a culture with a long tradition that was very different from everything I had been exposed to.

This led me into an ever deeper exploration of Chinese literature and civilization. This course of study had the added advantage that there were only a few students studying with a professor rather than just occasionally meeting with a teaching assistant for a large lecture course with hundreds of students and no personal instruction from the professors.

After graduating I decided to go spend time in Asia to experience the culture first-hand. So I spent four years in Taiwan, a place I previously knew almost nothing about, because my Chinese studies focused on ancient China. In Taiwan I learned to speak Chinese fairly well and studied at Taiwan University to complete a Master's Degree in Chinese Literature. Then I returned to Harvard to continue graduate studies, completing a second Master's Degree and a Ph.D. in East Asian Languages and Civilizations. I also taught there for a couple of years as a teaching assistant and instructor and then also began teaching at other colleges.

During my time in Taiwan I also met a number of very interesting professors. One very special experience was with Nan Huai-jin. He was quite different from other professors. He was very interested in Western culture and science. His knowledge of the traditional Chinese Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist traditions was vast and did not just rest on intellectual knowledge. He practiced what he taught in his every day life. He inspired me also to begin gaining direct experience in

practices such as meditation and Daoist health exercises as well as just absorbing knowledge and information.

Through such practices I began to develop a vision of how a civilization may achieve lasting stability. We must face the decision of what the US, and Europe and Asia, and their various cultures really want for their future. This requires a lot of cultural interaction, but in the end as we evolve a world civilization we face the decision of whether we want a single unified civilization or do we prefer for each local region to have its own special particular flavor of culture.

My personal opinion is that we will head toward a world that is unified in terms of communication, travel and commerce, but remains diversified in terms of local cultures retaining their own autonomy and special characteristics. That way we will have a lot of diversity.

Some say that the course of human civilization is decided by elite groups of influential people. However, I believe this is an issue that we as citizens of the world must each discuss with each other and decide as a group. Our actions will create the reality that emerges. So in these articles I will present a variety of information for everyone to consider with regard to our future evolution of civilization on our planet reflecting the lessons passed on to us from ancient Egypt.

Study Questions

- * What childhood experiences encouraged Dr. White to become interested in the study of civilizations?
- * What can allow a civilization to become very stable so as to allow a society to develop a unique lifestyle and culture over a long period of time?
- * Will human society on our planet develop into a unified civilization or a diversified civilization? What do you think? Give your reasons.
- * What was so unusual about the Treaty of Portsmouth?

- * What is imperialism?
- * Why is imperialism not a recommended recipe for stable civilizations?
- * Are cosmopolitan religious movements a source of long-term stability in a civilization?
- * Is knowledge sufficient in an educational system?
- * Who decides what kind of civilization mankind will have on this planet?
- * What decides a future outcome?

02 Introduction to the Tarot

In this article we will begin to introduce a game that has had a great influence on the course of human civilization. This influence has been rather neglected by scholars because they consider such a game to be no more than a popular amusement and seldom consider the deeper aspects of its influence on the course of human civilization. So I will tell you a little about how I stumbled upon this game and began to investigate its origins and influence on human society.

The game we will explore is a card game known as Tarot. In many parts of Europe it is called by names that generally sound like Tarok. It also has other names that we will introduce later. The game has been around for many centuries. When I first encountered the game, I was fascinated by the many artistic variations the cards had, and I became curious to find out where it originated and how it developed and came to have such a widespread popularity.

First let me explain how I learned about the Tarot, because, at the time I was following a very scholarly pathway, and scholars usually are not interested in card games and see them as merely a social activity mainly for amusement. Card games were something I played with my siblings as a child (Rummy, Go Fish, Old Maid, Authors, Poker, and so on). By the time I reached college I had forgotten about card games and had no interest in joining my bridge-playing classmates.

I spent my time with books, and loved to browse in book stores to find new information and viewpoints. So if I found a new book store or a second-hand book stall, I was drawn to it like a moth to a street lamp.

One time as I walked on a street in our village I noticed a new book store had just opened. On the door of the store was printed "Oracle Tarot Shoppe". Although the spelling was archaic, the atmosphere of the place seemed rather New Age, and the owner was selling incense and other things of interest to spiritually oriented people. There were quite a few books for sale, but along one wall were dozens of different decks of cards all with the word Tarot on them. As I looked closer I found that most of the books were also on the subject of Tarot.

So I asked the proprietor what this Tarot was, and he began to explain how it is a card game that can also be used as an oracle for divination. I had never seen such cards before, and I asked him how a person might begin to learn about the deck and how to use it. Then I asked him, "If I wanted to buy a first deck and a book about it, what should I do?"

He took a deck off the shelf and showed it to me. This deck was quite unusual and unlike the other decks he had for sale. The cards were much larger than the ordinary Tarot decks, and I already had noticed that Tarot decks generally were larger than ordinary playing cards. The second thing I noticed was that there were not as many cards in this deck as in the other decks. The third thing I noticed was that the cards were all printed in black and white on a plain non-glossy stiff paper, whereas the other decks were all brightly colored and glossy.

When I asked him why they were like this, he replied that I must take them home and color them myself. That would guide my attention to noticing the details. He showed me how the book that came with the cards recommended the colors to be used for each card. I thought this was quite amusing, rather like coloring books that we had as children and colored in with crayons. So I bought the deck and the book to go with it and took them home to start exploring.

I soon discovered why there were only 22 cards plus a cover card in this deck. A normal Tarot deck has 78 cards divided into three groups. There are 22 cards that are known as Trumps, then there are 16 Court cards, plus 40 pip cards. The pip cards are like the number cards in a poker deck, except that the symbols used on Tarot decks are different from those used on poker decks -- though they have roughly equivalent values. The word "pips" means small symbolic items such as seeds or pebbles that can be used to represent numbers for groups of things. Children are usually taught numbers by showing them drawings of groups of things. This is the same mnemonic idea. The numbers go from 1 to 10 in four groups. Each group has a special "suit" that is printed in the form of a special symbol that is repeated on a card as many times as needed to represent the number of the card. The Court Cards are the same as the Court Cards in a poker deck, except that there are four knights added to the kings, queens and "jacks". The Court Card figures are based on the royalty of Medieval feudal society. The knight swore fealty to a local king. The "jack" was a page who served

the knight. So a poker deck just has 52 cards (plus two jokers as potential wild cards).

I was already familiar with poker decks and knew about knights from reading the stories about King Arthur and his Round Table team of knights. So my first task was to learn about the Trump cards.

The 22 Trump cards are also called Major Arcana or Majors. The deck I bought just had those Trump cards plus an extra card that had a diagram on it that I recognized as the “Tree of Life”. I wondered what that had to do with a Tarot deck, and we will discuss that question later.

An *arcanum* is something secret or mysterious, and the term is used because most people are not clear what the real significance of a Trump card is. In many games the Trump (trump comes from “triumph”) cards are more powerful than the Court and Pip cards, so that they can help a person win in a card game.

The Trump cards are drawn in greater detail than the other cards, and each one is different. My deck had labels and numbers on each card, and I soon found that this is a common practice, and that the labels are usually pretty standardized, although some deck designers change the labels or even leave them off the cards.

As I studied the cards and colored them in, I decided not always to follow the color code suggested in the book, but tried out my own versions until I found a pleasing color combination. So I made copies of the images, colored them to my taste, and then laminated them so that they would last a long time and not be damaged by dirt or moisture. After many years I still have that original set of Trumps that I colored, and they remain in excellent condition. I recommend this method for beginners to learn about the Tarot Trumps. The deck I used is published by Builders of the Adytum (B.O.T.A.) They are available online: <http://store.bota.org/tarotdecks.html>. Get the digital images for download (\$5.00). Print them out, color them, and laminate them for your own use. Or buy the card stock printed versions for \$6 or \$8.

As I read about and studied the Trump cards, I often went back to the Oracle Tarot Shoppe and began collecting decks of all kinds as well as many books on various aspects of the Tarot. The proprietor also did

card readings. Sometimes with his permission and that of his client, I watched as he laid out cards and discussed them with the client. The deck he used is called the **Voyager Tarot**, and is a very colorful deck in which each card was designed as a computer art collage on the theme of the specific card. I soon realized that this is not a beginner's deck, although it is very attractive. The cards are a little larger than ordinary Tarot cards.

I gradually became more familiar with the cards and began to get a feel for how the shop owner did his readings. I began to do readings for myself, my family, and friends, strictly for entertainment purposes and as a way to practice and learn. I kept a notebook of the questions, the layout I used, the cards that were drawn during the reading, and my interpretations so that I could see over time how accurate my readings were.

As I practiced reading cards I recalled that, when I was just starting 7th grade I had visited my German grandmother. She was living alone, since her husband had passed away from his heart ailment. She often played solitaire with a poker deck, but during that visit I watched her lay out the 52 cards in four rows of 13 each and then proceed to interpret the cards in some way. I did not understand what she said or how she did it, but it was as if she could see a story in the cards that related to some aspect of her life. She was not just an ordinary housewife, but had been a professional musician, a published poet, and was something of a mystic -- all of which was beyond me at that age, except that I knew my mother had become a professional musician inspired by her mother and also had some special psychic abilities. After playing with the Tarot for a while I began to understand what my grandmother had been doing with her ordinary poker cards.

As I read more about the Tarot, I became aware of its history. It seems the decks began to appear in Europe during the Middle Ages. One thing that I discovered was that when the Tarot began to appear, it was already a thoroughly developed system. The Trump cards each had particular features and labels, and over time these changed very little. In our modern era there is great diversity in Tarot decks, but the same basic set of Trumps remains for the most part unchanged and is only influenced by the particular flavor the designer wants to impart to his or her deck.

One thing that struck me was that none of the material about the history of Tarot could precisely determine where the original design for the deck originated, and this stimulated my curiosity. Who invented the deck, and when, and why? It appeared too suddenly in too complete a form to have evolved as a popular pastime.

Some people said that the Tarot was developed by the Gypsies and brought by them into Europe. During the Middle Ages bands of Gypsies roamed about Europe entertaining people with music, special performances, and fortune telling with Tarot cards.

Another theory was that the Tarot was developed by the Jewish people as a part of their Qabbalah tradition. Jews migrated from the Middle East into various parts of the Roman Empire after they rebelled against the Roman occupation of Palestine, and the Roman troops destroyed their temple in Jerusalem. The Jewish settlements and communities maintained their Hebrew language and teachings, and after the Roman dispersion developed a mystical oral tradition that they called Qabbalah (The Oral Tradition). This was originally oral teachings passed down from local rabbis (Jewish religious leaders), but gradually also became a literary tradition and even influenced the Christian mystics so that there arose a form of Christian Qabbalah.

A third theory was that the Tarot came from ancient Egypt. This may have been partly related to the Gypsy theory, because Europeans thought that the Gypsies came from Egypt. It turns out they really migrated Westward into Europe from India and were not from Egypt. However, the idea that the Tarot possibly came from ancient Egypt and the Gypsies were just using it as a fortune telling tool and thereby helping to popularize it in Europe still remain viable.

At the time I had done no prior detailed study of Egypt, but I had some background in Hebrew, because my mother was a music director at a Jewish Temple for many years and often asked me to help out with the choir during the High Holy Days. We were not Jewish, but from this exposure she already knew a lot of Hebrew, and I picked up quite a bit as well, since I had to read the words in Hebrew that they used in the temple and sang in the choir.

Looking at the 15th century during which the Tarot appeared in Europe, I found that this coincided with the early development of paper and printing technology. For playing cards you needed to have paper, and to make the cards widely available you needed to be able to print off many copies of the cards.

It turns out that in those days most of the common people were illiterate (and deliberately kept that way), so the earliest printing was of images, many being themes taken from the Bible. On the other hand, playing cards did not require literacy and quickly became a popular addition to traditional gambling games. So the Church had mixed feelings about the advent of printing. On the one hand it was a tool for spreading imagery about the sacred teachings of the Bible, but on the other hand it promoted gambling that distracted people from attending Church services, so often the Church tried to ban the sale of Tarot cards. Still, the priests could print indulgences so sinners could repent their gambling by making contributions to the Church and receive an indulgence from the Pope. Once literacy began to increase, printing rapidly moved into the spreading of information. This put Bibles into the hands of the people as well as a lot of material that drew people in other directions.

Paper making and printing originated in China during the Han dynasty, but it took quite a few centuries before the technology finally reached Europe. The advent of this technology in Europe and its rapid spread in society there found a great impetus from the popularity of simple mass-produced card games that soon circulated throughout Europe. Although wealthy elite families could hire artists to hand paint their own Tarot decks, it was the printed cards that changed society. The technology rapidly developed from simple black and white woodblock prints, to hand-colored block prints, and soon to multi-color printing.

The rest is history, leading to libraries, literature, literacy, and the rapid growth of education. The simple decks of paper cards spurred a revolution that has sped the development of science and technology throughout the planet and changed our world in many ways, not to speak of the thousands of different Tarot decks and other card games that have arisen so that there even is a huge Encyclopedia of Tarot.

So now we want to look at what is the educational secret in this game, who developed it, and for what broad purpose that to many people remains completely unsuspected.

02 Study Questions

- * Why is the game of Tarot generally ignored by the scholarly world?
- * How did Dr. White first become acquainted with the Tarot?
- * Are you acquainted with the Tarot? If so, how did that happen?
- * What are the three major components of a standard Tarot deck?
- * If I want to buy a first Tarot deck and a book about it, what should I do?
- * Why is it useful to color your own deck of Trump cards?
- * What do the traditional European Tarot Court Cards represent?
- * What are the pip cards?
- * What are the Major Arcana or Trumps?
- * What are three theories about the ancient origins of the Tarot?
- * What technologies evolved in Europe at the time the Tarot appeared?
- * What was the role of the Medieval Church in the development of those technologies?
- * Where did those technologies come from?
- * Why did the Tarot get involved with those technologies?
- * What is the ultimate outcome of that technological development?

* For further discussion: Where is that technological development now headed? What major changes have occurred in the last century to shift the course of that technology?

Suggested Readings:

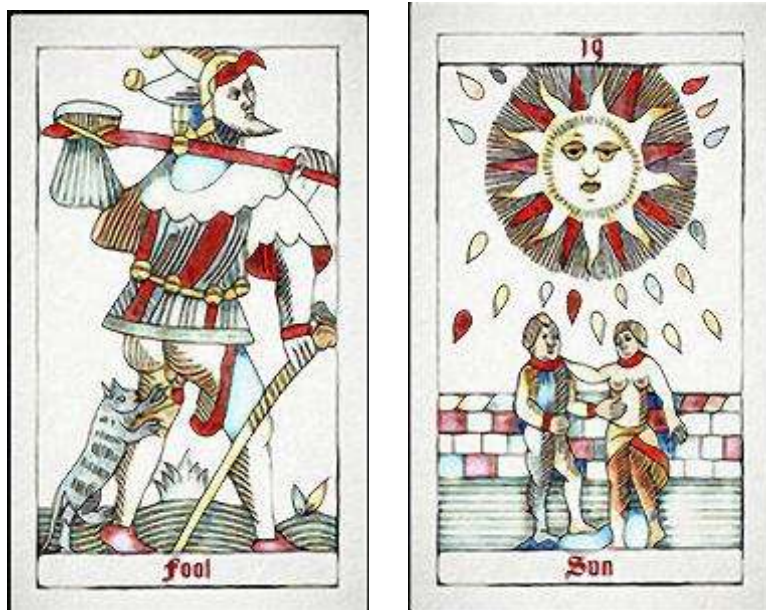
Mystical Origins of the Tarot: From Ancient Roots to Modern Usage

By Paul Huson Available online to read as a Google book.

Douglass A. White. **The Senet Tarot of Ancient Egypt, Part I: A History from Pre-Dynastic Times to the Roman Era.** Available from <http://www.bentylightgarden.com/StoreMenuE.htm> to read or as a free download.



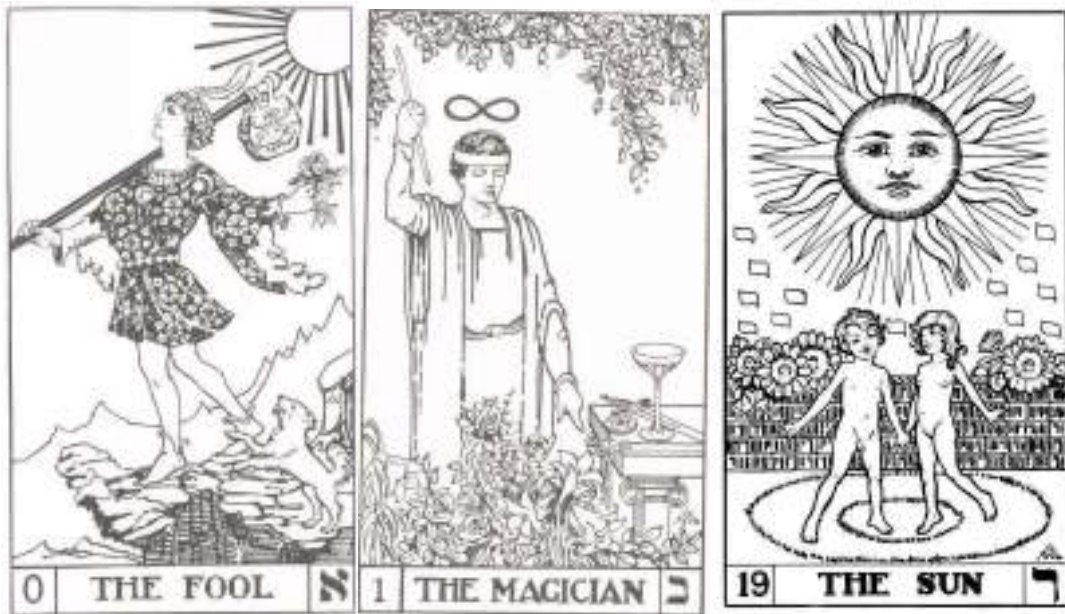
15th Century Italian woodblock printed sheet of Tarot Trumps and Court Cards
Image from Huson's book (see **Suggested Readings** above).



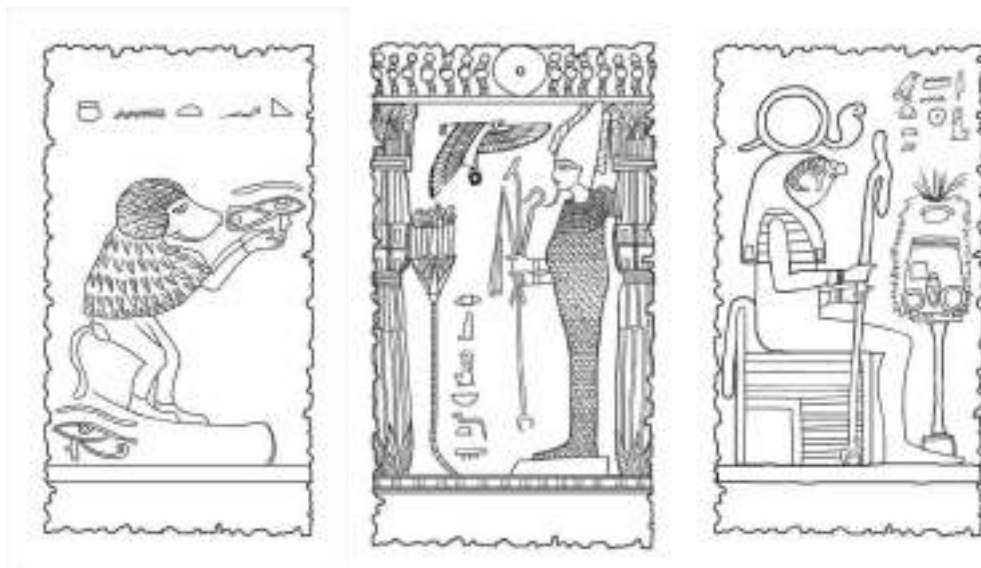
Tarot of Marseilles, What hand colored blockprints might have looked like.



15th century handpainted Visconte Sforza Trumps



Examples of the BOTATarot Trump Images.



Examples of Senet Tarot Trump Images.

A set of 30 digital outline card images including
 22 Trumps, 8 Court Cards, and 2 Transcendental Cards
 Available from bentylightgarden.com/StoreMenuE
 Only \$6.00.

03 Tarot and Qabbalah

What is the Qabbalah? This is a Hebrew word. It means “oral transmission”. In ancient times the media was not advanced and many people could not read or write. There was no paper or printing. The Jewish communities lived in many different countries where they spoke the local languages of the cultural region, but they used the Hebrew language as their cultural foundation and had a few literate scribes who specialized in carefully transcribing in Hebrew the Torah and other biblical writings and teachings of their tradition. The leader in a Jewish community was called a Rabbi. The word “rabbi” means “a great one”, “a master”. He was the person responsible for preserving and transmitting the written and oral traditions of the community. He was also a spiritual and often also administrative leader.

In ancient times the Jewish leaders needed a writing system suitable to record information they considered important for the community to carry on their traditions. Certain Semitic people such as the Canaanite and Phoenician merchants and Jewish tribes are thought to be the first people who developed a writing system that exclusively used an alphabet to record their transactions and traditions. This original alphabet system they devised has become the basis of written languages all over the world with the exception of a few cultures that continue to write in graphic systems such as those used by the Chinese and Japanese. Alphabets have been adapted to the sounds and customs of languages and peoples, but all stem from the original Semitic alphabet. So let us take a little time to understand how the alphabet system evolved. First let's understand the writing that evolved before alphabets were invented.

The earliest writing systems we know of are ancient Sumerian and ancient Egyptian. From my research I found that these Semitic tribes mainly based their invention of an alphabet on a system of writing used by the ancient Egyptians. Ancient Egyptians very early developed a writing system in which they began by drawing simple pictographs and ideographs.

A pictograph is a drawing that graphically represents a physical object. An ideograph is a more abstract drawing that represents an action or an idea. For example, a simple drawing of a hand, eye, or a house is a

pictograph. A drawing of a person walking or just of feet and the posture of walking demonstrates an action and is thus an ideograph. These graphic drawings could then be used in ways that extended their meanings. For example a pictograph of the sun could in some contexts represent a time period when the sun shines (a day). A pictograph of the moon in some contexts could represent a month or even a woman's monthly menstrual period. Sometimes two or more signs were combined to express a more complex idea as a compound sign.

Another development was that signs were associated with words spoken in the language, so the signs became connected to sounds. Eventually certain signs were regularly read by convention with a certain pronunciation. Then these signs could be linked to pictographs and ideograms that indicated objects and concepts and the phonetic component would tell the reader how to pronounce the graphic sign. As a result many different words related to a similar object or idea could be distinguished for subtle differences in meaning.

Eventually certain phonetic signs began to be borrowed and used for expressing ideas totally unrelated to their original meaning. They became purely conventional abstract signs. These phonetic signs could represent whole words, single syllables, or only basic phonemes -- what we call letters. The Egyptians (like the Chinese, who followed the same linguistic evolutionary steps) developed all six of these writing methods.

1. Pictographs
2. Ideographs
3. Compound Signs
4. Extended Signs
5. Phono-Semantic Compounds
6. Borrowed Signs (alphabet letters come from this type of signs)

The systems of writing developed in Egypt and Sumeria were quite complicated, but they had an advantage in that they were very rich visually as well as fully expressing the thoughts people spoke in their language in a permanent recorded form. Later writing conventions made the signs more and more abstract until the original visual impact was lost.

The Phoenician and Hebrew tribes were semi-nomadic, moving with flocks of domesticated animals, traveling as traders in caravans, or sailing long distances in boats. The writing system developed in the Mesopotamian region by the Sumerians and other early Semitic peoples used cuneiform, a system of impressing wedge-like symbols into clay tablets with a stylus. Such records, while excellent for storing archives in a library, were very cumbersome for people who traveled because of the weight of the tablets. The Egyptians from very early times developed a system of writing on papyrus, a paper-like material made from a reed that grew along the Nile. This medium was light-weight and easy to transport rolled up as scrolls. The Egyptians already had many symbols in their writing system that effectively functioned as alphabet letters. So the Semitic people chose to develop their system from the Egyptians.

Now what does all this have to do with the Tarot? We will see that the alphabet is intimately related to the structure and function of the Tarot in civilization. The first major clue that the Tarot is related to the alphabet was noticing that the set of 22 Trump cards matches the number of letters in the original Hebrew Alphabet.

We mentioned that the Hebrew people spread to many regions and also often traveled on business or to move large flocks of animals as part of their livelihood. The rabbis would establish a local temple or synagogue wherever a community gathered, and would train pupils in the reading and writing of the Hebrew script. This practice went back to the ancient traditions of Sumeria and Egypt and continues today.

In addition to the written records the rabbis developed another more secret tradition that was only passed on orally from a master to his disciple. This was the Qabbalah. This included practical information and technology that not only assisted in survival, but also could make life very comfortable, enjoyable, and stable. It gave members of a tribe or community a competitive advantage in eras that were often characterized by uncertainty and conflict. What we now call Tarot was an integral part of this oral transmission. Of course, over time, some of this oral tradition was also transferred into written form or expressed with certain symbols and became less of a “secret”. This had to happen if the “secret” tradition was to maintain its practical application in society and not just be an exclusive club insulated from the world.

Eventually in Europe the Qabbalah tradition began to influence dominant Christian religion, which really was an outgrowth of the traditional Jewish religion but presented it in a much less conservative manner so that people of all cultures might accept it. So we have Christian Qabbalah emerging as an esoteric influence in Christian culture.

Scholars consider that Qabbalah began to develop during the 1st century, which was also the beginning of the rise of Christianity under the Roman Empire. At that time Europe, the Middle East, and Egypt had already been dominated for several centuries by Greek culture. The Greeks and Romans adopted the Hebrew alphabet and modified it for their own purposes, but, as we will see, they did not understand much of the cultural foundation of the alphabet and its central role in what became known as the Qabbalah. The establishment of the Hebrew/Phoenician alphabet was a complex and deep cultural process of “Qabbalah” that preceded by centuries what is known as the emergence of Jewish Qabbalah in the early Christian era (Roman Empire).

The Roman Empire dominated Europe, the Middle East, and Egypt during this period, but the Romans even less than the Greeks understood the cultural process that occurred between the Egyptians and the Semitic peoples (Hebrews and Phoenicians). The Romans even fought a series of horrific wars to suppress the Phoenician culture that had been dominating North Africa (the Punic Wars against Carthage) just as the Greeks earlier fought to suppress the Phoenicians of Troy. They also suppressed the Jewish culture and later for several centuries resisted the Christian culture that arose from it. (Celtic culture also was suppressed.) The Romans as an Empire viewed cultures that resisted assimilation as a threat to their assertion of hegemony.

During the transition between the Roman Republic and the Empire, Julius Caesar was assassinated, partly out of fear he would join with Cleopatra of Egypt to create a different form of Empire. The “Republic” was divided among three contenders: Octavius (grand nephew and adopted son of Julius Caesar), Mark Antony (a politician and former general under Julius Caesar), and a general named Lepidus. The triumvirate degenerated into a civil war and Octavius eventually defeated Mark Antony’s alliance with Cleopatra and became the first

Roman Emperor, known as Augustus Caesar. Egypt lost its status and became only a province of Rome's sprawling hegemony.

Just at this time we have the beginning of Christianity. The story is that Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the Kingdom of Judah, although there is a statement that he at least lived for a time in northern Nazareth. After his birth his mother took him to Egypt, where they lived for some time. So the tradition is that Jesus grew up in Egypt and probably spoke the language, maybe also read Egyptian, and certainly was familiar with the traditional sacred sites in Egypt.

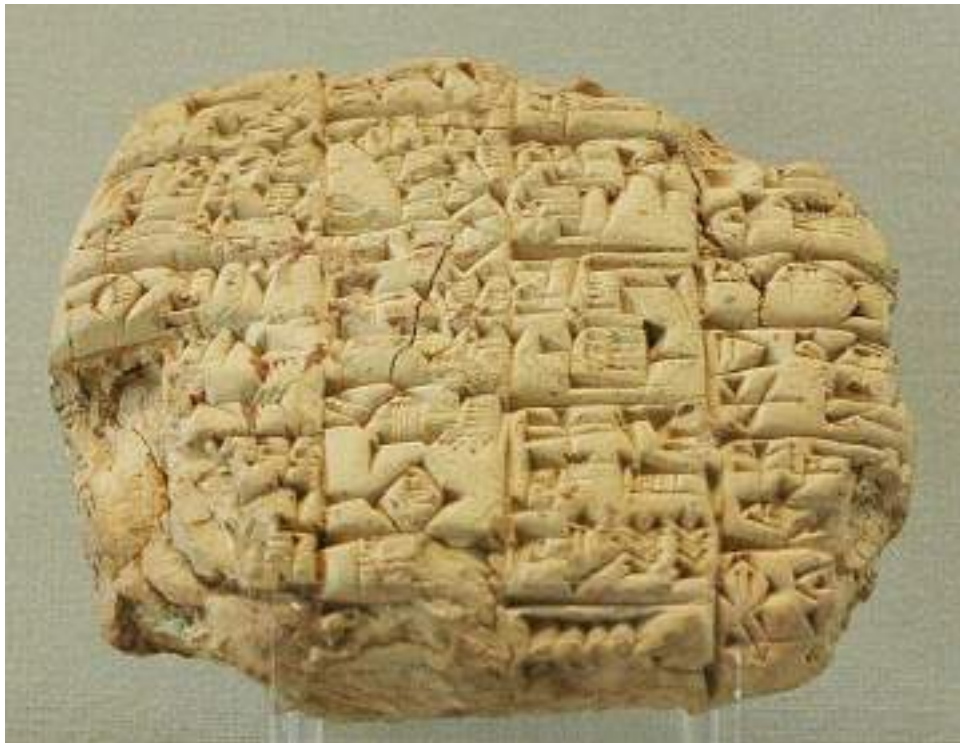
The Roman Empire controlled Egypt and what we now call Israel/Palestine. When the Jewish population revolted against Rome, in 71 A.D. the Roman general Titus conquered Jerusalem and destroyed the Great Temple of Solomon there. From that time the Jewish people were subjugated to Rome's puppet government and had no autonomous administrative center for their culture.

In our next segment we will discover the details of how the Semitic tribes extracted their alphabet from the Egyptian tradition long before the hegemony of the Greeks and the Romans and then encoded its deep spiritual content into Qabbalah and eventually incorporated it into what evolved as our modern Tarot. This is an almost unknown and unreported story that anyone who uses any form of the modern alphabet system or plays with any of the card games that descended from the ancient Tarot should become aware of and understand.

Study Questions:

- * What does the word "Qabbalah" mean, and what language does it come from?
- * Why did Qabbalah develop?
- * Who or what is a rabbi and what is a rabbi's function?
- * Who developed the first writing system that exclusively wrote in alphabet letters?
- * Who developed the earliest writing systems?

- * Describe the six basic types of writing developed by the ancients.
- * Why did the founders of the alphabet writing system choose to work from the Egyptian system?
- * Why was Qabbalah originally a secretive tradition?
- * Scholars place the emergence of Qabbalah during the 1st century A.D. Why does Dr. White propose that it goes back centuries before then?
- * Why did the Roman Empire suppress certain other cultures?
- * Briefly what does the Qabbalah have to do with alphabets? (A fuller answer must await material presented in the next two essays.)
- * Briefly what was the first clue that the original Hebrew alphabet has something to do with the Tarot? (A fuller answer must await material presented the next two essays.)



A cuneiform clay tablet
(Not very portable)

Types of Glyphs in Ancient Egyptian

Pictograph



House



Eye



Hand

Ideograph



Walk



Bring



Give

Extended Meaning



Sun → Day



Head → Top



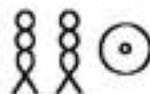
Pillar → Stable

Phono-Ideograph



Pet (Heaven)

Phono-pictograph

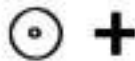


Heh (a very long time)

Compound Pictograph



Sunrise/Sunset



Sun +



Hills

Loan Glyph



Basket → Letter K



A statue of Octavian, Augustus Caesar, first Emperor of Rome

Phoenician		Greek		Phoenician		Greek	
𐤀 aleph	/ʔ/	Α α alpha	/a/, /a.ʔ/	𐤌 samekh	/s/	Ξ ξ xi	/ks/
𐤁 beth	/b/	Β β beta	/b/	𐤎 'ayin	/ʕ/	Ο ο omicron	/o/, /o.ʔ/ (note 1)
𐤂 gimel	/g/	Γ γ gamma	/g/	𐤏 pe	/p/	Π π pi	/p/
𐤃 daleth	/d/	Δ δ delta	/d/	𐤑 sade	/sʔ/	Μ μ (san)	/s/
𐤄 he	/h/	Ε ε epsilon	/e/, /e.ʔ/ (note 1)	𐤒 qoph	/q/	Ϟ ϙ (koppa)	/k/
𐤅 waw	/w/	Ϝ ϝ (digamma)	/w/	𐤓 reš	/r/	Ρ ρ rho	/r/
𐤆 zayin	/z/	Ζ ζ zeta	[zɔ] (?)	𐤔 šin	/ʃ/	Σ σ sigma	/s/
𐤇 heth	/h/	Η η eta	/h/, /e.ʔ/	𐤕 taw	/t/	Τ τ tau	/t/
𐤈 teth	/t/	Θ θ theta	/t/	𐤖 (waw)	/w/	Υ υ upsilon	/u/, /u.ʔ/
𐤉 yodh	/j/	Ι ι iota	/i/, /i.ʔ/	—		Φ φ phi	/pʰ/
𐤊 kaph	/k/	Κ κ kappa	/k/	—		Χ χ chi	/kʰ/
𐤋 lamedh	/l/	Λ λ lamda	/l/	—		Ψ ψ psi	/ps/
𐤌 mem	/m/	Μ μ mu	/m/	—		Ω ω omega	/ɔ.ʔ/
𐤍 nun	/n/	Ν ν nu	/n/				

Chart of the original 22 Phoenician letters and the corresponding letters that the Greeks adopted, adding several new letters and modifying the

pronunciation of some letters to fit their own language. Latin of the Phoenician letters dropped out of Greek usage. The Greeks used the old Phoenician names, often mispronounced. See **Wikipedia** article, "Greek alphabet" for details.

Archaic Latin alphabet

As Old Italic	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	V	X
As Latin	A	B	C	D	E	F	Z	H	I	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	V	X

Old Latin alphabet

Letter	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	V	X
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Classical Latin alphabet

Letter	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	V	X	Y	Z
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The Romans adopted the Greek alphabet, but dropped the old Phoenician names. They changed Z to G, but then later added a Z back in as well as a Y. See **Wikipedia** article, "Latin alphabet" for details.