

# The Litany of Ra (Tarok Naipa)

The Complete Works of Douglass A. White, Ph.D.

Volume 12

日神的連禱文

白中道博士全集 第十二冊



AWAKENED LIFE 覺醒的生命

SACRED SCARAB INSTITUTE 聖甲蟲學院

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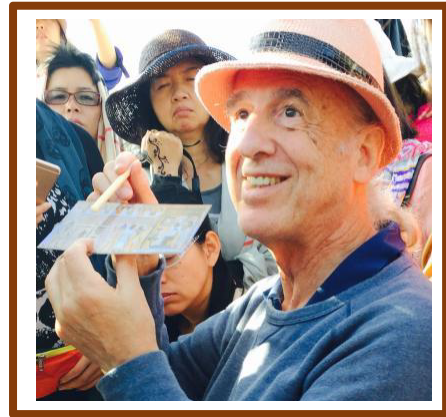
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**Enlightenment** is a viewpoint every person already has available and always has had. It is our essential nature. No technique, practice, or special life style is necessary.

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 Litany of Ra(Tarok Naipa)**

THE LITANY OF RA (Tarok Naipa)

Part I: An Introduction (surviving editions and their relation to the Tarot/Tarok/Naipe cards)

Part II: The Litany of Ra (with the card illustrations based on the Valley of the Kings drawings)

Part III: The User Handbook (poetic text describing the use of the cards and their mantras)

Part IV: The Hieroglyphic Text (computer generated typeset edition) EXTRA BONUS!

The Litany of Ra is one of the most important spiritual texts of ancient Egypt. Some of Egypt's greatest pharaohs such as Thutmose III, Sety I, and Rameses II had illustrated editions of this text included in the decoration of their tombs.

Budge's English version is known fairly widely, and Hornung has produced a German edition that includes transcriptions of all the texts.

Douglass White presents a new translation of the Litany with its full set of illustrations [recently updated with a new revised edition 06/2010].

He has also produced a monograph as an introduction (Part I), a translation and commentary for the litany with card images based on the ancient drawings (Part II), a translation of the poetic Handbook that explains how to use the Litany (Part III), and a computer-generated hieroglyphic transcription of the entire text [Litany and Handbook](Part IV).

Each portion of the text has copious notes that take the reader deep into how the material was used by the Egyptians as well as its relevance to our lives. Dr. White also finds evidence that the Litany of Ra played a role in the evolution of the Tarot (Tarok) cards.

The game of Senet is the basis of the Egyptian “Tarot” and is a repository of wisdom in the form of “archetypes”. During the New Kingdom the Egyptians expanded this set of 30 Senet squares into a “full deck” of 78 archetype cards enshrined in a book called the Litany of Ra. The “cards” could be painted or carved in various media. Each archetype is an expression of Ra’s creative energy.

Each card generally represents either a “god”, a “goddess”, or a power accessory associated with a god or goddess. During the New Kingdom the suits and sequences of the cards were not yet fully determined. The Litany of Ra lists the “cards” and has images for each card as well as a label and a brief description of each. There is a handbook that describes how to study and use the “cards”. Each “card” represents an “avatar” of Ra, the Sun. As the Sun Ra represents creative source. Each card is an aspect of Ra, the Source. Pharaoh Thutmoses III made the first expanded set of 75 cards. Pharaoh Seti I later added 3 cards: Ra as the cover card for the deck as a whole, The Sun Card is a circle with a goat-headed deity (Nighttime Sun) and a scarab beetle (Daytime Sun) inscribed inside it.

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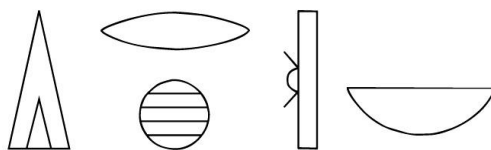
(Transliterated text, translation, and detailed commentary, plus several illustrations based on a mural in Queen Nefertari's tomb and drawings from the book, **Amy Dewat** [also called **Amduat**, **Imydwat**])

### Part IV: Computer generated hieroglyphic transcription of the complete text 212

(Conflated version based on the parallel transcriptions of surviving texts made by Erik Hornung and published in **Aegyptiaca Helvetica**, 1975, 1977.)



# TAROK NAIPE



## The Book of Thoth

That Describes the Tarot (Tarok) Cards and their Uses

(Popular Title)

## The Litany of Ra

Formal Egyptian Title:

**The Appreciation of the Higher Self in the Invisible Realm**

**and**

**The Appreciation of the Integrator in the Invisible Realm**

**Including**

**A Phonetic Transliteration of the Original Egyptian Text**

**With an English Translation and Detailed Commentary**

**by**

**Douglass A. White, Ph. D.**

## Part I: An Introduction

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





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## The Transliteration System Used in this Book

The transliteration system I use is not the standard followed by Egyptologists. I use a hybrid approach to produce a text that accurately reflects the original spelling and at the same time is reasonably easy for the average person to read and pronounce. The only symbol I use that could confuse the reader is the “@” sign. This stands for a laryngeal stop. This means you have to close the windpipe deep down in the throat near the larynx [Adam’s apple where the vocal cords are]. The word for the sun uses this letter, and the pictographic sign for the sun is a circle with a smaller circle inside it. The “@” sign is a nice cursive rendition of this sign, and is available on computer keyboards and standard typewriters. If you have difficulty making that sound, simply treat it as a drawn out “aah”. I transcribe some letters with italics to distinguish phonetic signs from those written in regular font that represent very similar or often even interchangeable sounds. Egyptians wrote only the consonants, so I insert “e” between consonants to facilitate reading. Here is a list of the Egyptian phonetic alphabet. (In my notes I generally write R@ as Ra and Ma@t as Maat.)

	<b>A, a</b>		<b>Kh, kh</b>
	<b>A, a</b>		<b><i>Kh, kh</i></b>
 	<b>Y, y</b>		<b>S, s</b>
	<b>@</b>		<b>S, s</b>
 	<b>W, w/U, u</b>		<b>Sh, sh</b>
	<b>B, b</b>		<b>Q, q</b>
	<b>P, p</b>		<b>K, k</b>
	<b>F, f</b>		<b>G, g</b>
	<b>M, m</b>		<b>T, t/T, t</b>
	<b>N, n</b>		<b>Th, th</b>
	<b>R, r</b>		<b>D, d</b>
	<b>H, h</b>		<b>J, j</b>
	<b>H, h</b>		

“*A*” and “*A*” differ in that the former has a glottal stop, but you can represent it with an “*a*” as in bat. The latter is more like the “*a*” in father. “*S*” and “*S*” are interchangeable and which is used depends mainly on calligraphic requirements. “*H*” seems softer than “*H*” and is almost like an initial “*E*”, and “*Kh*” is rougher and more guttural than “*H*”. “*Kh*” and “*Kh*” are pronounced about the same. Egyptians sometimes left out some medial *r*’s and *n*’s (e.g. “heneqet” [beer] can become “heqet”, and “hat” [heart] is probably “hart”).

The Handbook’s page numbers (right column) correspond to Hornung’s transcription.

# Tarok Naïpe: The Litany of Ra

(The Book of Thoth that Describes the Tarok Cards and Their Uses)

## Part I: An Introduction

### TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE AND INTRODUCTORY NOTES


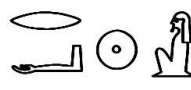






#### Origin of the Book and Its Formal Title in Ancient Egypt

The **Litany of Ra** is the earliest known book specifically dedicated to the illustration and explanation of the entire deck of Tarok cards as a literary, artistic, and spiritual expression. The Egyptian Tarok goes back at least to the earliest origins of Egyptian civilization. The **Pyramid Texts** of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> dynasties already contain many allusions to specific cards and their relationship to the game of Senet. However, we do not get a holistic vision of the complete deck from these early sources.

The name “**Litany of Ra**” is the short title that was coined by Egyptologists who found this poetic work on the Avatars of Ra and began studying its contents. The text was composed by an unknown author during the New Kingdom around the time of the reign of Thutmose III (Jehuty Mes III), the sixth ruler of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty, possibly at his behest. Thutmose III was a powerful ruler whose reign covered much of the 15<sup>th</sup> century B.C. During the first 22 years of his reign his aunt Hatshepsut was his co-regent. Upon her death he assumed the full role of pharaoh and ruled Egypt for over 30 additional years. During the last two years of his reign he co-ruled with his appointed successor, Amenhetep II. Thutmose seems to have been a key figure in the evolution and promotion of the **Litany** although we do not know the details of why or how this came about.

The original official title of the book, as given in the work itself is “*Dewa R@ em Amenet; Dewa Demed em Amenet*”. (**Appreciation of the Higher Self in the Invisible Realm and Appreciation of the Integrator in the Invisible Realm**). This book describes the complete deck of 78 Tarok cards as it was known in the days of classical Egyptian culture.

**Official Egyptian Title of the Litany of Ra:**

	Dewa	Appreciate
	Ra	Higher Self Sun
	em	in
	Amenet	Invisible Realm
	Dewa	Appreciate
	Demed	Integrator
	em	in
	Amenet	Invisible Realm



**RA**

The name “Ra” symbolized the Egyptian sun god. To the Egyptians the sun was a totem image for the Higher Self. This powerful symbol became the leading Trump of the ancient Tarok. The pharaoh identified with the Higher Self in his role as the leader of all Egypt and her people. The Cosmic Higher Self manifests from an Invisible World of Undefined Awareness into numerous embodiments in space and time in order to play the Cosmic Game of Life. We can call these embodiments the Avatars of the Higher Self.

For Egyptians the “Invisible Realm” was the world of the mind that we enter when we close our eyes and explore reality with our thoughts and meditations. “Amenet” (Land of the West) is the invisible world of Pure Undefined Awareness and includes an Astral Realm of mental and spiritual beings and various states of consciousness that are not visible to the ordinary fleshly eye, but are symbolized by the night sky and the unseen but real relative motion of the sun between dusk and dawn after it

disappears over the western horizon. Mut/Hathor (Amenet) is the personification of this Undefined Awareness as a goddess of Pure Unconditional Love and Light.

The “Integrator” mentioned in the title is the aspect of the Higher Self that integrates the diversity of the universe. We can call this Integrator the “Source of Thought”. “Demed” [or Deba Jemej] is the Integration of the diversity of the Solar Higher Self’s Avatars and the universe that they dynamically play in back into a coherent Unity that exists forever in a state of perfect balance. This State of Balance is what we call Yoga. “Demed” returns all Avatars to their Source in Undefined Awareness. Every thought and experience that we have passes through the Higher Self Gateway of Awareness into the Mind to generate our experiences in the world as individuals. Returning back to this Gateway (symbolized by the Source of the Nile) we pass through the fundamental archetypes of the Higher Self that represent the multiple pathways that form the main channels of all possible experiences as they branch out into the Nile Delta. The **Litany** is about gaining familiarity with and mastery of these pathways, the return to the Gateway of the Higher Self at Source, and the Undefined Awareness that underlies and interpenetrates all like the water of the ocean and the Nile and the stars of the Milky Way and countless galaxies.

The unification during the time of Thutmose III of the entire pantheon of Egyptian gods under the name of Ra as the solar symbol of the Higher Self apparently was an important precursor to the reign of Akhenaten (the tenth pharaoh of dynasty 18), who attempted to formalize this unification with the Aten (Avatar 4) as the official title for the Higher Self. However, Akhenaten’s radical move failed to achieve the full support of the population and the priests who managed the temples. Nevertheless, the pharaohs of the Ramesside period continued to transcribe the **Litany of Ra** on the walls of their tombs down through the 19<sup>th</sup> dynasty and most of the 20<sup>th</sup> dynasty. After the reign of Rameses IX this work seems to have gradually faded from popularity among the pharaohs and only occasionally do we encounter citations from it.

Judging by the general “trickle down” process in Egyptian culture (for example, the way the **Pyramid Texts** that apparently were exclusive to the pharaohs became the **Coffin Texts** used by the nobles and finally the **Book of the Dead** or portions thereof for anyone who could afford a copy in his tomb), we can surmise that the **Litany** continued to be used in some form, at least among the educated classes, and perhaps was part of popular culture through its connection with the national game of **Senet** and of course the religious and funerary art that was standard in ancient Egypt.

However, from the 20<sup>th</sup> dynasty on we know that Egypt was entering her long decline. Foreign powers increasingly dominated the country and challenged the integrity of her culture.

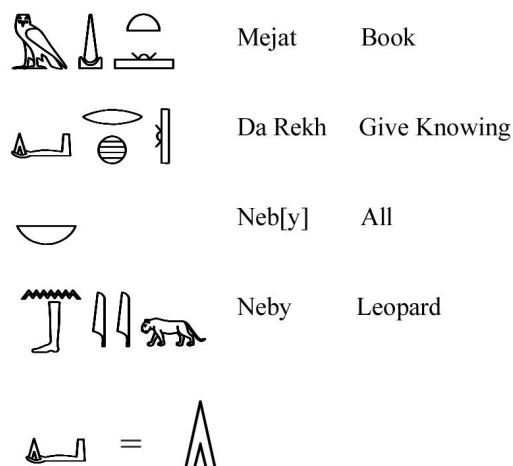
The title **Litany of Ra** (**Litany of R@** in my notation) is handy, but tends to label the work as a repetitive religious ritual text, unfortunately depriving it of the much wider readership that it deserves as an expression of the profound spiritual unity of Egyptian culture and as the ancestor of our worldwide modern genre of Tarot/Tarok decks and books.

### **Egyptian Origin of the Names Tarot (Tarok) and Neb[y] (Naibe)**

There has been much discussion of the origin of the name “Tarot” and no consensus has been reached regarding the etymology, so I might as well share my opinion.

First of all I believe that “Tarot” is a French distortion of the original name. In Italy and many other countries in Europe, the cards used both for gaming and for divination were, and still are, called Tarok (Tarocchi, Tarock, Tarokk, and so on). For some years I held the theory that the name “Tarok” derived from the historical accident that the Europeans learned about the game and the oracle from the Ottoman Turks. For example, in Italian “Turkish” is pronounced “Turchi”, “Turca”, or “Turco” – depending on the dialect – and this is quite similar to the Italian “Tarocchi” that is used as the name for the cards. This provides a relatively prosaic, if historically reasonable explanation.

The other common European name for the cards that was adopted in Spain and her colonial empire was “Naibe” (currently written as Naibe), which means “prophecy” in Semitic languages (for example “NeBYA” is prophet in Hebrew, the Old Testament books of the prophets are called “NeBYAYM”, and among Muslims the Prophet Muhammad is often known as “Al-Nabi”, The Prophet). This word was used by the Ottoman Turks and other Islamic peoples to refer to their use of the cards in divination as well as in games of amusement. However, the more I study the problem, the more I suspect that both these names (“Tarok” and “Nayb”) must ultimately go back to ancient Egypt. My current research suggests that the popular name in Egypt for the **Litany** and the cards associated with it was probably something like “Mejat Da Rekh Neb[y]”.



The first version translates as **The Book that Gives All Knowledge**, and the second version translates as **The Book That Gives the Leopard's Knowledge**. There is a word play here between “leopard” and “all”. In ancient Egypt special initiatory shaman priests traditionally wore leopard skins. Pictures of such initiating shamanic priests form an important part of the ritual art of ancient Egypt. Unfortunately, although the expression “*Da rekh*” (sometimes pronounced “*reda rekh*”) is well attested in Egyptian with the general meaning of “to give knowledge” (“to inform”), I do not yet have evidence that precisely connects that phrase to the **Litany of Ra** or other aspects of the Tarot tradition in Egypt. In the “Story of the Eloquent Peasant” (81; 134-5) we find the expression “**rekh** khet en remethet **nebet**” (wisest of all men). This phrase moves us in the direction of “all knowledge”.

When we turn to the text of the **Litany Handbook** for evidence, we find that, although the exact wording “*Da rekh [neb]*” does not appear, the word “*rekh*” (to know) is a key to the whole technology of the **Litany** and appears many times in the work. The **Handbook** portion exhorts the reader to *know* the complete list of the avatars. This is a practical book. A practitioner must know all the names of the avatars and their standard images in order to practice the **Litany** properly. Furthermore, the **Litany** gives (*da*) the information (*rekh*) that you need regarding all (*neb*) the archetypal avatars of Ra – their names and their forms. Here are passages from the **Litany Handbook** section that support this notion and use the key words “*da*”, “*rekh*”, and “*neb*”. (The page numbers given here correlate to the numbers along the right side of my text and to Hornung’s scholarly transcription.)

Aw-a **rekh** seth em renu sen.

Aw-a **rekh**-kwa kheperu sen er jer. .



Aw-a **rekh**-kwa amyut *khatu* sen,  
 Aru sen, **Nebu** Shetau.  
 I know the scent that is in their names. (or I know that which is in their names.)  
 I know their forms to the limit (all of them).  
 I know their embodiments,  
 And their forms, the Lords of Mysteries. (88-89)

Jed er penen neter **neb**.  
 Speak to all of these gods. (113)

**Rekh** kwa seshetau-k  
 Sema@-k kheru-a.  
 Nuk **rekh** Kheperu-k,  
 Neter @a Shetay  
 I know your secrets.  
 You enable me to speak Truth.  
 I know your creations,  
 O Great and Secret God. (145-146)

**Rekh** aru ne pau ne tepu,  
**Rekh** besyu shetau amy Dewat.  
 Know our primordial forms and primaries.  
 Know the secret evolutions in the Twat. (184)

Nuk **rekh** amyut Dewat . . .  
 I know those who are in the Twat. (219)

Nuk @a hery Aakhu,  
 Tut W@, **Rekh** Sheta Re-f.  
 I am the Great One above the Light Beings,  
 The One Image Who Knows What is Secret beyond Him.  
 (or who knows the secret of his mouth.) (220-221)

Hetepetyu, **da** sen en-a @wy sen.  
 Aw **rekhu** Reu, seshem sen wa.  
 The Experiencers give me their two hands.  
 Their mouths know, and they guide me. (230)

Aw-a **rekh**-kwa then.

**Rekh** seshemu-th.

**Rekh** ren[u] en amyu khet.

I know you,

I know your guiding images.

And I know the name[s] in sequence. (257)

The **Handbook** opens with an injunction to know the names and forms of the archetypes, and closes with an injunction to know the whole list of guiding images and even its sequence. The Twat (Dewat) is the Astral Realm, the Womb of Creation in which potential archetypes actualize as physical embodiments. All the Avatar Archetypes reside in the Secret Womb of Potential. Page 230 tells us that the **Litany** book was developed by very experienced people to give (**da**) assistance (@wy) and guidance with images (seshem) so the practitioner would know (**rekh**) what he needed for his spiritual practice. The word I translate as “mouths” (230 and possibly also 221) can mean the chapters and sections of the book, as it often does in the **Book of the Dead**.

Thus, I believe we have here a start at a reasonable hypothesis for the origin of the name “Tarok” (Tarot) that is used today to describe the cards used popularly for divination. The glyph for “neb” is a pictograph of a basket that can be used to collect and hold all kinds of objects. In this case perhaps these are the seals or amulets of the Tarokian Archetypal Avatars. The glyph “neb” used as a noun often means a Lord (“nebet” is a Lady). The goddess Nebet Het (Nephthys) is the “Lady of the Temple”. It may be that she represents the sacred space of the Twat that holds the basket that contains all the Avatars of Ra that can be born into the world with specific incarnations. My belief is that she is a personification of the Kundalini life energy and its nectar of Bliss. She is the embodiment of Higher Self as the vital energy of all His transformations buried deep within the human body.



**Glyphs for Neb and Nebet Het**

## **New Kingdom Sources for the Text and Images**

We are fortunate that the pharaohs of the New Kingdom attached such importance to the **Litany** text that they transcribed it on the walls of their tombs and temples. As a

result ten copies of the **Litany** text survive in various states of completeness and preservation. Below is a list of the extant copies. The codes in brackets are the abbreviations used by Hornung.

- [U] Weser Amen (Useramun, Vizier to Thutmose III), South wall of the Sarcophagus Chamber of Theban Tomb 61.
- [Th III] Jehuty Mes III (Thutmose III), Valley of the Kings on the pillars of the Sarcophagus Chamber [Th III G] and on his shroud dedicated by Amen Hetep II to his father Jehuty Mes III. Most of the shroud is in the Cairo Museum, with a small fragment in Boston. There are no illustrations on the shroud.
- [S I] Sety I (Sethos I), Valley of the Kings, entrance hall. Title fig. first appears.
- [R II] R@ Meses II (Ramses II), Valley of the Kings, and Temple at Abydos
- [Mer] Mer en Peteh (Merenptah I), Osireion at Abydos.
- [A] Amen Meses had a text in his tomb, but Sety II hacked it off.
- [S II] Sety II (Sethos II, Merenptah II), Valley of the Kings
- [Si] Sa Peteh (Siptah, Merenptah III), Valley of the Kings.
- [R III] R@ Meses III (Ramses III), Valley of the Kings
- [R IV] R@ Meses IV (Ramses IV), Valley of the Kings
- [R IX] R@ Meses IX (Ramses IX), Valley of the Kings, portions only.
- [R X] R@ Meses X (Ramses X), Valley of the Kings, a few extracts only.

Other later citations or quotations of the text appear at Taharqa's edifice, the Chapel of Hakoris at Karnak, and the Nilometer at Roda. Passages from the **Litany** also found their way into the **Book of the Dead** and some papyrus documents.

### **Work on the Text by Egyptologists**

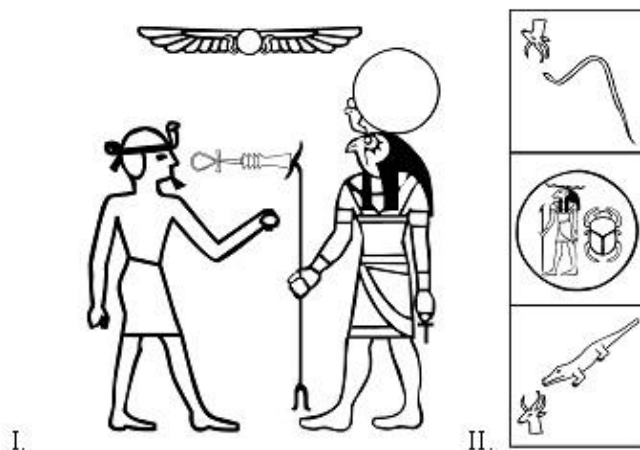
Richard Pococke first described the text as found in R IV. Naville published a French translation in 1875 and an English version in 1876. Budge (1904) provided a version of the **Litany** List portion in his **The Gods of the Egyptians**, Vol. 1, 339-348. In 1938 Grapow did a paper on it. In 1964 Piankoff published an edition in English without the hieroglyph text, but including interesting photographs of tombs and the shroud. Erik Hornung (1975, 1977) has produced the latest and most definitive scholarly edition. Several people have posted versions of the **Litany** List on various websites. I have not checked them all in detail, but from what I have seen they mostly seem to follow Budge.

### Structure of the Deck and Correlations to Trumps, Courts, and Pips

In the **Litany of Ra** we find the first presentation of a complete deck of 78 Tarok cards dedicated to the major Egyptian deities and their “power accessory” amulets. Each card has a name, an illustration, and a brief explanation. The Sun Trump has a label (Khepera Awef R@). There are two special prefatory cards with the Sun Trump that have identifying illustrations but no additional labels (other than a glyph that means “run”.) Then 75 cards follow with text in the **Litany** as well as illustrations and labels. (Curiously, one card, 9a and 9b, has two illustrations, whereas cards 68 and 72 have separate labels but share a single illustration, and cards 70 and 74 also have separate labels but share a single illustration.) The cards are presented as long thin rectangular illustrations painted on the walls of the tombs. Unfortunately no surviving papyrus cards have been found to date.



Ra (R@) is the Egyptian symbol for the Higher Self. Each card in the deck represents an Avatar of the Sun God Ra. The deck often begins with a cover illustration that shows the personified form of Ra with a hawk's head initiating the person who commissioned the transcription of the text. He holds a special Jaam scepter with a Jed and an Ankh attached to it and pointed at the initiate. The Aten globe flies overhead. The card illustrations, with a few special exceptions, show several main transformations of the sun: a young bearded male human, a young female human, a bull, a ram, a scarab, a hawk, a cat, a jackal, and a dog-headed monkey. This suggests that the Egyptians conceived of the Higher Self transforming into avatars through certain “pathways” or lineages.



I. The Cover Card: Ra and the Initiate

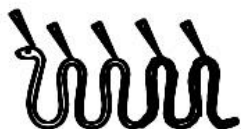
II. The Three Initial Cards: (A) Sun Trump [Ra] (middle), (B) Devil Trump [Serpent @apep] (top), (C) Fantasy 7 of Lotuses [Crocodile Sebek] (bottom). The Seven Lotuses [7 of Cups in modern Tarot] are the Seven Caves of Baba (sensory apertures) on your face that generate the fantasy illusion you have of reality that you call perception. Alternatively we can take them to be the seven fleshly chakras. The tableau of these three cards shows that both the Falsehood of mental imaginings and the Fantastic Fears arise from perceiving creations that appear to be separate from the self and disappear like darkness disappears when the Light of the Higher Self Sun dawns.

The Egyptians often painted the card illustrations and accompanying text on the first corridor [text] and second corridor [remainder text and card images] of the entry to the tombs. Some of Egypt's greatest pharaohs such as Thutmose III, Sety I, and Rameses II commissioned the text. These facts indicate the importance of the text.

Each deck contains 75 avatar cards plus a card for Ra himself as the Sun. Above and below the Sun card we also find the two other special cards as shown in the above drawing. One seems to be the python monster Aapep [@apep], and the other is probably the crocodile Sebek, although no name is given on either card. These two characters represent Resistance and Fear, Falsehood and Illusion, [or **Devil Trump** and **Fantasy (7 of Lotuses)**.] These imaginary creations flee when the light of the Higher Self dawns. The two special cards for Devil and Fantasy have no additional text associated with them in the **Litany**, but instead have in the corner by the card totem's head a glyph of an antelope head. This glyph is read "shesh", which is a type of antelope and means to run. Antelopes run fast. As Hornung correctly suspects, @apep and Sebek are running from the Enlightening Power of the Sun. Yet, ironically, these dangerous beasts are also avatars of the Sun. The serpent Aapep may turn out to be the benign snake, Mehen, who protects the sun during the night and then goes to rest when the sun rises in the morning, but @apep is the more likely identity, because he is mentioned several times by name in the **Handbook** portion of the text (120, 126, and 130). The crocodile glyph for fearful fantasy appears at (1) 132 and (2) 142: "fear flashing [like a shooting star]". Another interesting possibility is that the antelope "shesh" [variant reading "shes"] is a play on the word "shes" that usually has an antelope head for its determinative. This word means wise, cunning, or skilled. The monsters of ignorance look like they are trying to eat wisdom.



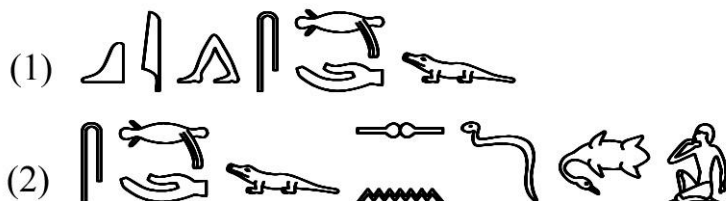
Usual glyphs used for words pronounced “shes” with the meanings of clever, wise, skilled. Why the glyph on the cards has a third central horn is mysterious. Perhaps there is a hint of the unicorn Avatar #53 “Weben”.



Glyph for Aapep, the serpent, symbol of ignorance often has knives slicing him up to show how ignorance dissipates like darkness when the light of knowledge appears.



Sebek, the crocodile



Quotes from the **Litany Handbook** in which the crocodile glyph refers to fearful flashes.

Because Ra is masculine and many of the avatars are female, the text often discusses the female avatars with male pronouns. Singular and plural also get confused because the Higher Self can duplicate himself into many copies of the same avatar.

The **Litany** and its **Handbook** give us insight into how the ancient Egyptians interpreted their major deities and amulets. We might say that the 78 cards developed in the **Litany** represent the main qualities of Creative Intelligence expressed by the Higher Self.

My translation is a pioneering effort that is still in the draft stage. Many questions remain regarding this ancient text and its relation to the Tarok as we have it today. We know that Ra (or “Kheper Awef R@” “Day and Night Sun” as he is presented in his own Trump card) is the first card. He is the **Sun Trump**. All the other cards, including the Devil and Fantasy cards, depict avatar transformations of Ra.

We find 13 among the 75 Avatars that are certain as Trumps and have the same names that I identify them with in my deck (**The Senet Tarot of Ancient Egypt**, available through the website [www.bentylightgarden.com](http://www.bentylightgarden.com)). In addition, “@apep” (The Great Trampler or Great Traveler) is a standard Egyptian epithet for the Devil Trump and is mentioned in the **Handbook** text, although his name is not included in the **Litany** list – only his image right next to Ra. “Khenety Amenety” is a standard epithet for Osiris, the **Magician Trump**. “Amenet Neferet” is an epithet for Mut-Hathor, the **Empress Trump**. “A@@n” is a common name for the **Fool Trump** in his Egyptian form as a Baboon. And “Hery Gefetu” is an epithet for Thoth, the **High Priest Trump**. “Gefetu” may be a variant writing for “Qefetenu”, another epithet for the Baboon Fool. People usually think of Thoth as the baboon scribe’s Master, but the truth is probably the other way around. The Intellect is an avatar of the Fool, and both are avatars of the Higher Self as it plays out the Cosmic Game – according to the world view of the **Litany**.

This analysis leaves the Trumps for the Hanged Man, Judgment, the Hermit, and the Lovers without a clear identification in the list. The Lover Trump does not seem to have a standard epithet in Egyptian, but “@ay” “The Procreator” is about as good a name as any. The card illustration with that label shows him as a young man with a powerful erection. The text of the “Judgment” Trump encodes the name of the Midwife Goddess “Mes-Khenet” in the text for her card (#3). Mes Khenet is how I identify her in my **Senet Tarot** based on the **Book of the Dead** illustrations. The names of the other two Trumps (Hanged Man and Hermit) are not clearly mentioned in the **Litany**, but I have made tentative identifications as shown below in the translation of the text.

Regarding the Court and Pip cards, about 17 out of 56 are mentioned by the amulet names that I assign them in my **Senet Tarot** book and deck. Another 10 have alternate names that are quite recognizable as indicating the amulets I have chosen for my deck. That leaves 29 with alternate names that are not so recognizable. I have made a first pass at identifying them with the cards in my deck. However, there is

no certainty that the amulets I chose are equivalent to the ones intended by the authors of the **Litany of Ra**. Furthermore, the text that we have is often vague or repetitious, leaving us the task of trying to distinguish the exact qualities of Ra's Creative Intelligence that the author intended to portray in this primitive deck. Therefore the interpretations I give below are tentative and intended to stimulate further research and insights. The Egyptians had many important talismans, and the ones selected for the **Litany** may just represent one accepted set. At different times and places during Egypt's long history there may have been local variations just as today we find many variations in the presentation of the Tarot deck, especially with regard to the Pip cards.

The **Litany** of the 78 Avatars of Ra is an extremely important text in the spiritual literature of ancient Egypt because it demonstrates clearly that the Egyptians understood all the many gods of their pantheon to be avatars of a single spiritual principle that they symbolized with the Sun. This principle represents the Higher Self as the Innate Evolutionary Nature of Creative Intelligence. The Egyptian adept identified with this principle (or its canonical model in the human world, Osiris, the Magician Trump) and, through this Avatar Principle, was able to integrate all the diversity of human experience into a spiritual Unity. The popular Tarok and Tarot decks of today are an expression of this essential message that has come down to us from these ancient times, adapting itself to different cultures, languages, and epochs.

I have used Hornung's collated text that contains the surviving partial or complete texts arranged in parallel so that it is possible to eliminate many scribal errors, fill in lacunae due to damage of the texts, and thereby obtain a reasonably accurate reconstruction of the original text. My transcription is a conflated version based on Hornung's collation, but puts the text into the first person, which is how the earliest versions were written.

We still face hapaxes (words or phrases with no other extant examples), copyist errors, and many other odd difficulties with the text. For example, why did the Egyptians select the specific total of 78 forms of Ra? Why did they draw the **Litany** card images in mummified form with features that in many cases are identical, and in other cases are very specific to the **Litany** text? If so many of the images are the same, why bother drawing them as a sequence of rectangular "cards" the way they are presented in the wall paintings? This is especially odd in the case of the major gods that in those days already had well established standard iconic representations available in the **Book of the Dead**, on the walls of tombs and temples, carved as



statues, and so on. One possible theory is that this set of images for the **Litany** was in process of development. When they had not yet decided on the specific features for a **Litany Mummy Card** illustration, the Egyptians simply used a dummy mummy. Perhaps Jehuty Mes III [Th III] wanted the set used in his tomb art before the pictures were fully developed. Then due to the conservative nature of Egyptian art, this unfinished edition somehow became frozen as a standard during the 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> dynasties (New Kingdom). That theory does not satisfy me. Another theory is that the card images were designed for ease of reproduction on papyrus by a calligrapher. Many images differ only in the written labels. Yet another theory is that several basic figures represent avatar “lineages” that derive from several basic aspects of the Higher Self Sun. On the other hand, the lineages could be expressed by grouping the images while still retaining the traditional iconography of the Trump Divinities. The truth may be a combination of these theories and perhaps includes other ideas as well.

The **Th III** pictures and the illustrations for several other editions all have labels, many of which contain the totem glyphs for the particular deity. These label glyphs are over or right in front of the image’s head. For example, we find the “seat” totem of Aset, and the “goose” totem of Geb. This method properly exploited gives a simple edition of the ancient Tarok, identifying each deity or amulet with a label. Unfortunately, the method was not used rigorously and some copies do not label their images. In this book (Part I) I have created two sets of the cards for the reader to study. The first set includes only the illustrations and the labels based on the drawings that survive. In the second set I have added to some of the figures’ other assistive words from the **Litany** text on those cards. Also, when deity names or amulet symbols are missing, I have provided tentative ones from my Tarot deck as identifying tokens. I further added suit symbols to all the court and pip cards. Below each card is the number of the card in the Egyptian sequence plus the card’s tentative corresponding Tarot/Tarok identification in English. Interested readers can find photographs or drawings of some of the card images on the Internet.

Other interesting puzzles remain to be studied. For example, how did the Egyptians arrive at the standard sequence they use for the **Litany**? The cards clearly are arranged in groups. These groupings require study. Why did the Egyptians arrange the **Litany** card images to alternate back and forth between two walls, but **not** with perfect regularity? Starting with card 56 the orderly alternation of odd and even cards breaks down, and then, from card 59, the alternation resumes, but with odd and even sides reversed. The doubling up of the last two pairs of even numbered cards (68-72 and 70-74) originally may have been due to space considerations, although

photographs suggest that may not be the case unless the corner of the pillar where the last two images in the sequence are found was already chipped in antiquity. (The Egyptians did not write numbers on the cards, but we use the numbers to correlate the card images with the **Litany** List Sequence.)

### **Identification of the Four Suits**

In my commentary I use Egyptian symbols for each of the four Tarok suits. The glyph for a **Lotus** stands for the suit of **Cups** (Hearts). The lotus (nekhebet) was the esoteric symbol for tantric yoga (nehebet) in ancient Egypt and represents the purification and spiritualization of powerful emotions that are often suppressed in a person. The glyph for a **Town** stands for the suit of **Coins** (Diamonds), because in ancient Egypt coins had not yet been invented, but urban centers clearly attracted high levels of commerce and trade, representing an appreciation of value. The glyph of a **Firestick** stands for the suit of **Wands** (Clubs). The ancient Egyptians, who lived before the age of matches, had a very effective fire stick technology for lighting fires. This represents technical skill. The glyph of an ostrich **Plume** stands for the suit of **Swords** (Spades). The element of air is invisible, so a bird's feather was an appropriate symbol. The deity Shewe (Shu) represented the atmosphere. Traditionally he wore such a plume on his head.

Paul Huson makes an interesting argument in his recent book **The Mystical Origins of the Tarot** that the four traditional Tarot/Tarok card suits derive from the Four Cardinal Virtues. This notion of four primary virtues goes back at least to the time of Plato, a period which was contemporaneous with late ancient Egypt. Huson identifies coins (a mirror) as Prudence, swords as Justice, cups as Temperance, and rods as Fortitude. This nicely fits my analysis of the four major Egyptian Trump goddesses. Mut-Hathor holding her mirror is Prudence. Properly understood, she is the Empress Trump and represents Cosmic Unconditional Love (the essence of the Self) and embodies her love in the physical forms of the element Earth. Maat, goddess of Truth, wears her tall plume indicating that Truth is as light as air and governs the Scales of Justice. The evolution of the feather of Justice into a sword occurred during Greek and Roman times. Nebet Het as Temperance holds her two bowls of sacred herbs or essential oils to mix a magical potion that brings on and then stabilizes bliss. Her bowls represent the suit of cups, and her secret essences are symbolized by the water-born lotus and its secret Tantric Yoga. Tefnut-Sekhmet, goddess of Strength (Fortitude) holds the long slender Jaam power scepter and represents how the skillful use of the fingers may express the infinite creative power of the mind in the physical world. Her hands and fingers are like rays of light from

the sun. She holds in her hands the element of fire.

The four Sons of Horus exemplify the mastery of these four elements (four energetic states of matter -- solid, liquid, gas, plasma). Dewa-Mut-f adores his mother, Mut-Hathor and the light of dawn that she heralds in the East. Amset masters the use of fire in the culinary arts, metallurgy, the firing of pottery, and the heat of the South. Qebhu-senu-f is the hawk who floats high on the air currents and brings the coolness of evening when the sun sets in the West. Hepy manages the well-watered swamps of the delta and the great Mediterranean Sea that lies to the North of Egypt and into which the Nile drains.

### **The Literary Style of the Litany**

The first part of the text is an extended litany in praise of 75 major avatars of the Sun. Each avatar is given a brief paragraph that begins with the phrase “**Praise be to You, Higher Self, Exalted Power**” to indicate that the avatar is a transformation of Ra, the Higher Self. The paragraph then continues with the avatar’s name or an epithet plus a brief description of some of his or her important attributes. The second portion of the text is what I call the **Handbook** and contains instructions on how to use the list of names and glyphs associated with each avatar in the **Litany**. The **Handbook** includes a description of the benefits to be obtained from proper use of the **Litany** materials. The **Handbook** also contains some sections that are in the form of shorter litanies. The hyperbolic style of the **Handbook** reminds me of the Chinese literary form sometimes known as *fu* and the poetry of the **Chu Ci** anthology. Both the Egyptian and Chinese styles employ rhythm and parallel couplet structure. However, the Egyptian text lacks the rhyme that we find in the Chinese poems. The Egyptian text also contains many verses that seem to address the reader or a deity directly. The style alternates between a lofty literary prose and poetic passages written in the parallel couplets. I have arranged the Egyptian text in a format so that the parallel couplets stand out, and the reader may appreciate the literary structure even though the translation may not do the poetic value of the original fair justice.