

PETER A. PICCIONE has continued his ongoing research into the religious applications of the ancient Egyptian thirty-square board game named *senet*. He has found that it was also associated with notions of "rites of passage," and it had a use in Egyptian rituals of initiation into esoteric religious knowledge.

In November 1988 he attended the Fifth International Congress of Egyptology, held in Cairo, after which he spent five weeks in Cairo and Luxor engaged in work concerned with his Theban Tombs Publication project. This included background research about the tomb owners, Ahmose (tomb no. 121) and his son, Ray (no. 72), who were buried in rock-cut tombs at Sheikh abd el-Gurnah in Western Thebes. As part of this project, Piccione conducted a preliminary architectural survey on the outside of tomb no. 72 in preparation for a future full-scale architectural and epigraphic study of the tomb and its inscriptions.

The significance of these tombs lies in the heretofore unknown family relationship of the owners and in their titles. Both father and son were high priests of King Tuthmosis III (c. 1504-1450 B.C.) during the reigns, respectively, of that king and his son, Amenhotep II. The position of Ray was especially important, since he was high priest of three temples of Tuthmosis III, including his mortuary temple

and his temples at Deir el-Bahari and Medinet Habu. In addition, all of his brothers were important priests in these temples. Piccione's study of the tombs includes a prosopographical study of this priestly family and its relationship to the Egyptian royal family of the Eighteenth Dynasty. The architecture of Rays's tomb is an outstanding and unique example of a royal temple style transposed to a private tomb, since it represents a miniature version of Hatshepsut's and Tuthmosis III's temples at Deir el-Bahari, complete with two ramps, a lower colonnade, and upper terrace.

In April, Piccione presented a paper at the annual conference of the American Research Center in Egypt, held in Philadelphia. Entitled, "The 'Mysteries of Mehen' and the Game of Coiled Serpent," his paper discussed Oriental Institute Museum gameboard no. 16950 which represents *mehen*, the coiled serpent-game. He related that game to the cycle of afterlife passage and resurrection in the Egyptian Pyramid Texts and Coffin Texts, all of which tie into aspects of secret religious knowledge ("mysteries") in ancient Egypt.