



Copyright 2015 Heather Rocchi

Playing Cards Timeline  
[ladyheatherhall.com](http://ladyheatherhall.com)  
[ladyheatherhall@humblechapeau.com](mailto:ladyheatherhall@humblechapeau.com)

- c.e. 105 Chinese invent paper.
- 9th c. Tang dynasty scribe Su E mentions a princess who plays at a game of 'leaves' with other courtiers. Many scholars suggest that this is an early name for cards, and evidence continues so support card play from here onwards. It is possible that Korean divination arrows were the inspiration.
- Arabs in Uzbekistan acquired paper making skills from Chinese prisoners in the 8th c. The Caliphate embraced its use and built mills far and wide, importing paper to Spain by 950. About 1150 a paper mill appeared at Xativa, near Valencia, and by 1390 mills appeared as far as Nuremberg.
- 9th c. chess is introduced to Europe
- The Mamluks (Ayyubid period 1173-1250) prize games for wellness of body and mind. These include a card pack with suits of coins, polo sticks, scimitars, and cups, curiously called *tuman* (*myriads*). The Mamluk pack also features a rank (second viceroy) that did not exist in Mamluk culture, suggesting a borrowed game. The oldest known specimen is dated late 12th c.
- 1337 an entry from Abbey de St. Victor states "quod nulla persona audeat nec praesumat ludere ad taxillos nec ad paginas nec ad eyssychum" (*that no one should venture\* or undertake to play at dice, pages, or chess*).
- Noted writers of the XIV century such as Boccaccio(1313-1375), Chaucer(1343-1400), and Petrarch(1304-1374) do not mention playing cards.
- 1367 an ordinance in Bern prohibits gambling with cards.
- A 1369 Paris gaming ordinance does not mention cards, but an ordinance from 1377 does. Documentation of cards escalates from here onwards.
- 1371 a Catalanian rhyming dictionary defines *naip* as playing cards. Early Spanish and Italian references also include *naib*, *naibi*, and other spellings of what may

have descended from the Arabic *na'ib* (viceroy), a rank in the Mamluk cards.

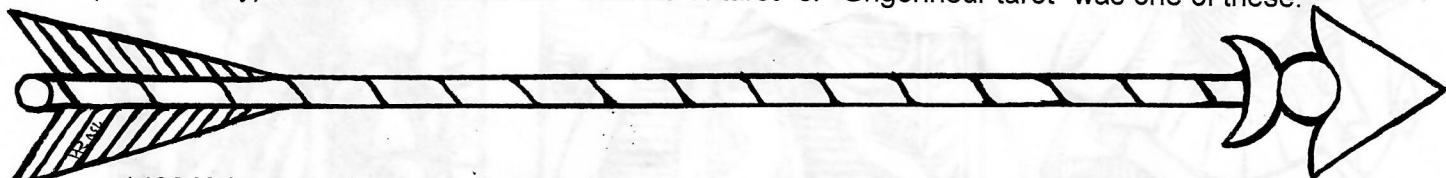
-1376 *naibbe* is forbidden by decree in Florence

-1377 Dominican friar Johannes' sermon from Basel describes a 52 card pack. He does not describe suits, and the surviving 15th century copies may have later packs incorporated.

-1379 An entry in the Chronicles of Viterbo mentions "naib" being introduced by a *Saracen*. Italian nobles challenged each other frequently and often sourced out soldiers for local territorial squabbles. Southern Italy was under Saracen control, and likely provided professional fighters from throughout the Caliphate. This suggests a natural and perhaps common introduction method to Europeans.

-1380 Rodrigo Borges of Perpignan, Catalonia, is listed as *pintor y naipero*, "painter and maker of cards."

-1392 Charles Poupart, treasurer of Charles VI of France, records the purchase of three packs of illuminated cards from Jacquemin Grigonneur. 19th c. author M.C. Leber suggested (erroneously) what is now called the "Charles VI tarot" or "Grigonneur tarot" was one of these.



-c. 1400 Xylography begins to flourish throughout Europe. References to wood carving for printing in Europe begin in the 14th century, with concrete evidence by the 1390s. This technique allows for volume production, along with the color adding method *à la morisca*, a style of finger painting. By this time cards were known to be manufactured in a region stretching from Spain through France, Italy, and Switzerland to Southern Germany. Printed images are considered vulgar.

-1399-1412 *Annals of Egypt and Syria* by ibn Taghri-Birdi mentions that emir al-Malik al-Mu'ayyad won a big sum playing *Kanjafah*, a card game of Persian origin.

-1402 Ulm, Germany: oldest known documentation of 'kartenmacher' (*maker of playing cards*).

-1408 Paris court records mention con artists using cards for *three-card monte*-like scams

-1423 Bologna: St. Bernadin of Siena's sermon against gaming results in a bonfire of thousands of cards, dice, and backgammon boards.

-1426 Ordinance from Nordlingen, Germany, mentions *karnoffel*. It is the oldest known record of a card game, as well as the oldest to use trumps in play, even though there are no trump cards. Many German ordinances appear in these times, and many are augmented shortly after published. Card manufacture is a big industry in parts of Germany now, and is governed by strict guilds. German and Italian crafters begin to engrave metal for printing cards, allowing for high detail. Many crafters are women.

-1434 Maria of Castile receives a box of beautiful cards presented by mercer Miguel de Roda.

-1440 A note records Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta of Florence paid four and a half *ducats* to Giusto Giusti for *trionfi*. Flaunting extravagance was a concern for the nobles of northern Italy, who commissioned illuminated packs to commemorate events and as gifts. These were regarded as precious curios, allowing them to survive centuries.

-1440 Fillippo Maria Visconti of Milan pays 1500 gold pieces for an illuminated pack

-1442 Florentine receipt for 12 Soldi 3 Denari for a 'cheap' *trionfi* pack. Many packs are acquired from mercers.

-1444 many *Tailleurs de cartes* are on records by this time in Lyon

-1450s Apparently French in origin, Stencilling the piped cards means only the court cards need be printed with xylographs, substantially cutting cost. This affordability made them popular and influential. One late xvi century cardmaker from Lyons experimented with crescent moons in place of *carreaux* (diamonds).

-c. 1500 patterns develop. Card makers retire and sell equipment, as well as plagiarism and consumer influences steer patterns into being. As they became more established in Europe, official patterns were designated for taxes and tariffs.

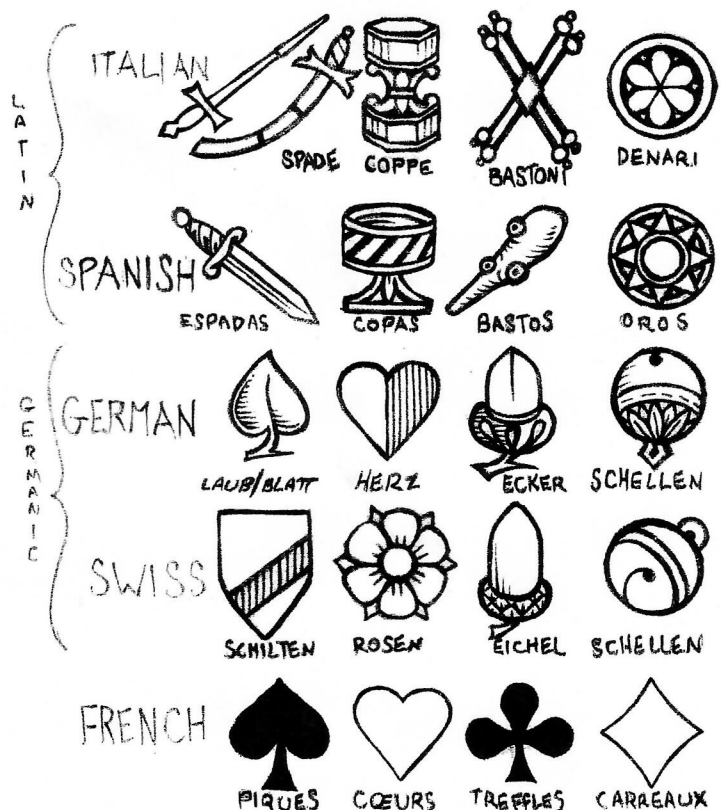
-manufacturers begin to produce cards with simple patterns on their backs.

-1450 Fernando de la Torre of Spain mentions fortune telling with cards

-1463 English Parliament prohibits the importation of 'cardes a jouer.'

- 1475 *De Honesta Voluptate* by Babtista Platina suggests card play as a digestive aid for gentlemen, provided no unscrupulous or personal gain motives are involved.
- 1487 a fortune-telling book is published in Ulm; uses a standard playing card pack.
- 1527 Tiofilo Folengo publishes the *Merlin Cocai* sonnets, in which tarot cards determine the fates of the characters
- 1550 Portuguese sailors introduce cards to Japan. Cards appear in early Portuguese archeological sites as far afield as Peru and Java.

- 1602 Miguel de Cervantes writes a short story that mentions *veintiuna*, or Twenty-one
- 1605 King James decrees that a tax stamp costing six shillings be placed on the ace of spades.
- 1663 Gerolamo Cardano publishes *Liber de Ludo Aleae* (Book on Games of Chance)
- 1780 Jean-Babtiste Alliette publishes a book on divination with a Piquet pack, and claims he learned the skill from a Russian
- 1781 Antoine Court de Gebelin publishes *Le Monde Primitif*, where he suggests ancient Egyptian origins for the tarot.
- 1782 "Etteilla" as Alliette now calls himself, publishes a work on divination with tarot
- 18th c double-headed cards begin to appear. Some areas take to this idea slowly, or even never, while it becomes standard for many other patterns.
- 19th c indexes appear and become common. Lithography and other printing techniques make woodcut/xylograph cards obsolete.
- turned cards appear for some patterns, including the *Anglo-American* or 'poker' pack. This places the suit pip on the left of every court card.
- Jokers appear. This card acts as a universal trump.



Recommended resources  
[trionfi.eu](http://trionfi.eu)  
[wopc.co.uk](http://wopc.co.uk)  
[i-p-c-s.org](http://i-p-c-s.org)  
[plainbacks.com](http://plainbacks.com)  
[tarohistory.com](http://tarohistory.com)  
[tarotforum.net](http://tarotforum.net)

-Singer, Samuel Weller. *Researches Into the History of Playing Cards*. London: 1816  
 -D'ellemagne, Henry Rene. *Les Cartes A Jouer*. Paris: Hachette et Cie 1906  
 -Parlett, David. *The Oxford Guide To Card Games*. Oxford University Press 1990  
 -Kaplan, Stuart R. *The Encyclopedia Of Tarot*. New York: U.S. Games Systems, Inc 1978  
 -Hargrave, Catherine Perry. *A History of Playing Cards*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1930  
 -Merlin, Romain. *Origine des Cartes a Jouer*. Paris: Chez L'auteur, 1869  
 -Fournier, Felix Alfaró. *Playing Cards Fournier Museum*. Vitoria: Heraclio Fournier 1982  
 -THE WORLD IN PLAY: LUXURY CARDS 1430-1540, HUSBAND, TIM 2016