



(<https://i-p-c-s.org/wp/home-2>)

Who are the people shown on cards?

The kings, queens and jacks of the standard English (International) pattern are not thought to *represent* anyone. They have *never* carried names, nor is it probable that they originally portrayed anyone.

However, French (Paris pattern) court cards *do* have names.

	Hearts	Spades	Diamonds	Clubs
K	CHARLES	DAVID	CAESAR	ALEXANDER
Q	JUDITH	PALLAS	RACHEL	ARGINE
J	LA HIRE	OGIER	HECTOR	JUDAH MACCABEE (or JUDAS MACCABEUS)

The use of names printed on French cards meant for use in France goes back a very long way—probably before the emergence of the English or French patterns. The courts on the French pack must not be taken as portraits of the persons named; there can have been no known portraits of some of them, e.g. Hector of Troy. In fact the link between the name and the figure is in the (imaginative) heraldry displayed by some of them.

Playing-cards used in England, and from there exported to the rest of the world, are based on a pattern originating in Rouen, France. Emblems, gestures and clothes on the Paris pattern can be compared with the relevant Rouennais pattern in order to discover the identities of its unnamed courtiers.

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It is possible that these figures became corrupted over time as they were copied by illiterate copiers, and that the following legendary heroes and heroines from ancient sources were those figures which inspired the original card makers.

- Jewish: David, Judith and Judah Maccabee
- Greek: Alexander, Argeia and Hector
- Roman: Caesar, Pallas and Aulus Hirtius
- Christian: Charlemagne, Ragnel and Ogier

See Paris and Rouen pattern figures (https://www.i-p-c-s.org/faq/history_14.php) for further explanation.

More misconceptions

Is Queen Elizabeth I shown on the courts? No. Queen Elizabeth I was born in 1533; this was *after* the courts were designed. A contemporary portrait of Lord Burleigh playing cards shows the typical Jack of Hearts of the English pattern, confirming that the pattern was already in evidence during her reign. She reigned over England and Ireland 1558-1603.

What is the significance of the objects the court figures carry? The objects carried have no particular significance. They indicate the rank of the court card and differentiate one court card from another. One exception is Charlemagne (on the king of clubs) who carries a globe identifying him as emperor of the Christian world. They have become distorted over time.

Why do some of the Jacks have only one eye? Two jacks (and the king of diamonds) only show one eye for the obvious reason that the heads are meant to be in profile.

why is the King of Hearts alone in not having a moustache? The King of Hearts *did* originally have a moustache. It was lost by poor copying of the original design.