

<http://trionfi.com/0/c/>



## Trionfi

### Imperatori Karnöffel and others

**Preparation of  
the  
Trionfi time  
1420 - 1440**

**Sitemap**

### A Confusing Time

There is not much before 1440, which points to an existence of Trionfi decks before 1440 and nothing has the quality of a sure indication. The time of 1370 - 1420, the first 50 years of a broad existence of playings cards in Europe, is filled with card playing prohibitions and few notes about the production of playing cards. The most important document is the text of Johannes of Rheinfelden (1377), which includes the description of a 60-cards deck, which seems to have had a relationship to the game of Chess and the survived Hofämterspiel (ca. 1455). More interesting are the 20ies of 15th century, here we have some relevant documents and also a few still existent playing cards, which might have been produced at this time - or a little later (probably later).

### Our Suggestions

We believe, that Imperatori cards were similar to Trionfi cards, but had less trumps or special figures. When Trionfi cards became a farspread deck type (after 1450), the Imperatori decks disappeared. We think, they merged in the Trionfi game. Also we believe, that Karnöffel and Imperatori cards had the same origin (a special play), but were not identical: Imperatori decks had special cards, Karnöffel was a game, in which normal cards were defined as special figures (Pope, Devil, Kaiser etc.) Also we believe, that the Chess game took an influence upon the idea of the play of Karnöffel and the Imperatori decks.

### Michelino Deck

It's rather clear, that the Michelino deck - although rather different from the standard Tarot deck - could be perceived by the contemporary Jacopo Antonio Marcello as a "Trionfi deck". Also it seems clear, that it was produced in or earlier than 1425. Can we assume the existence of similar decks around this time? We think not. Marcello calls Filippo Maria Visconti an inventor.



## The Riddle: Imperatori and Karnöffel



At another place we argument, that the Trionfi deck after 1440 had a 5x14-structure (or perhaps a 5x16-structure), before they arrived near to the later form with 4x14 number and court cards and 22 special cards (21 trumps and a Fool).

### Chess

Chess was the great game of 14th century. In the 20ies it seems that chess still was the recommended game for noble men, playing cards seem to have been something for noble women. It was natural to transport chess ideas and figures to the playing card deck - already Johannes of Rheinfelden reports that.



### Imperatori Decks

Imperatori decks appear in Ferrara 1423, as an import from Florence. Much later (1443) they reappear - only in Ferrara - short after the production of some Trionfi decks in 1442. Then again a pause occurred, neither Trionfi decks or Imperatori cards are mentioned till 1450. In 1450 Imperatori cards reappear - again after Leonello commissioned some Trionfi decks in spring 1450. Then Trionfi



The riddle is, what was before 1440? And with that problem we've to find an answer to the question: What are Imperatori cards? Did they have a relation to the game of Karnöffel? Were they a special type of Trionfi deck? Did they've special motifs like Trionfi cards? And if - which were these special motifs? And last not least: Were there a similarity of the Imperatori decks to the game of chess?

Of course all our suggestions to this theme "Imperatori" are highly speculative. There is simply the problem, that there are not much documents.

- **Before 1420:** The council of Constance might have refreshed the Italian interest in playing cards.
- **1420 - 1429:** Moderate playing card laws by Filippo Maria Visconti in the region of Milan. Less moderate prohibitions in and around Florence.
- **1422:** First note of playing cards at the court in Ferrara, which later becomes the major source for Trionfi documents.

### Ferrara 1441

In 1441 some young girls are in a creative situation. They know the Michelino deck and they know Imperatori decks. And a great event, a marriage, is projected. We've to assume, that card-playing was a female domain - and perhaps we've to assume, that these young girls took a deciding influence upon the first Trionfi decks.



became a much played game and Imperatori decks disappeared forever.

### Karnöffel and the Council of Constance

In 1426 in Nördlingen in southern Germany the game Karnöffel is mentioned as an allowed game. From later informations we do know, that this game was also called "Kaiserspiel" or Ludus Caesarum, that is Emperors game and just a very similar name as "Imperatori". However, from later informations we also know, that Karnöffel didn't use special cards but just defined normal cards with a special meaning: Pope, Emperor, Devil etc., that are figures, which also appear in the Trionfi or Tarot game. We assume, that Imperatori cards and Karnöffel were not identical, but had the same origin, that is a game probably played in the free time at the council of Constance. The name Karnöffel is a riddle.

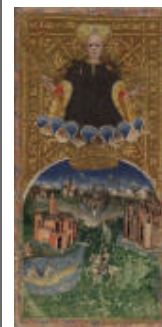


- **1423:** San Bernardino preaches against card playing. From this source we know, that the 4x14-deck structure exists.
- **1423:** Parisina imports 8 Imperatori cards from Florence.
- **1424/1425 (?):** Latest date for the Michelino deck.
- **1425:** Parisina is beheaded. Playing card notes in Ferrara take a pause.
- **1425:** Trionfo in Milano for Filippo Maria Visconti.
- **1426:** The game Karnöffel is mentioned in Nördlingen, southern Germany.
- **1427 - 1431:** The oldest still existing German luxury cards.
- **1439:** It seems, that in the year of the Council of Florence the Italian interests in Trionfo festivities is raised.

Still existing decks, which are suspected to be produced before 1440 (none of these datings are secure, more or less a production before 1440 is in each case unlikely):

- Brera-Tarocchi (Milan, Filippo Visconti) - might be the fragment of an Imperatori deck
- Cary-Yale-Tarocchi (Milan, Filippo Visconti)
- Rothschild cards - might be the fragment of an Imperatori deck
- Guildhall and Goldschmidt Cards (?)

### Brera- and Cary-Yale-Tarocchi, Rothschild cards and the Guildhall and Goldschmidt cards



Some decks have an unclear state, we cannot decide with security, if they were produced before 1440 or after this date.

### Ferrara 1441

START About Us Oldest Tarot Imperatori Ferrara 1441 Documents 5x14 From 14 to 22 Boiardo Iconography Old Decks Biographies Locations Forum News Communications Play FAQ Gallery MUSEUM Name Trionfi Unknown Future Reviews Webmasters Free Reading Links Final Words SITEMAP

**Trionfi.com, description:** History of Tarot in 15th century. Research for the Origin of Tarot, Tarocchi and Trionfi, old playing cards, Karnöffel, Minchiate, chess, playing card suits, medieval iconography, astrology, Geomantia, humanism, Ferrara, Milan (Milano), Florence, Mantua (Mantova), the families Visconti, Sforza, Malatesta, Este, Gonzaga, Medici, biography of Filippo Maria Visconti, Francesco Sforza, Leonello d'Este, Bianca Maria Visconti, Parisina, Lorenzo de Medici, Guarino, Rene d'Anjou, Jacopo Antonio Marcello, Matteo Maria Boiardo, Sagromoro, Michelino da Besozzo, Ludovico Gonzaga, history of Italy, Germany and France in 15th century, ways to modern Tarot, free Tarot card reading online (facade)