

TRANSLATION **A**CES NEWS

JANUARY 2011

◆ NUMBERS GAME(S) PEOPLE PLAY ◆

On 1/11/11, we thought it interesting to investigate numbers and meanings all over the world. Why do we call our numbers *Arabic*? It most commonly refers to the numeral system widely used in Europe and the Americas but was invented by mathematicians in India around 500 CE and introduced to Europe around 900 by North African Arabs, so it's often called the *Hindu-Arabic* system, bringing us the glyphs 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9, used in conjunction with the Latin alphabet since early modern times. *Roman* numerals, based on only seven symbols (I, V, X, L, D, C and M) might require their very own future News feature story.

Anciens Caractères Arithmétiques.

1. Notes de Bocce.	{	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2. De Plume.	{	1	μ	μ	ε	ϕ	ϕ	∨	∧	9 10
3. d'Alphabet.	{	1	μ	μ	ε	ϕ	ϕ	∨	∧	9 10
4. Chiffres de Sicco Bozco.	{	1	τ	3	2	ϕ	6	∧	8	9 10
5. De Roger Bacon.	{	1	7	3	2	ϕ	6	∧	8	9 10
6. Des Indiens Modernes.	{	9	2	ε	ϕ	γ	3	9	τ	6 9
7. Chiffres Modernes.	{	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 10
8. d'Alphabet.	{	1	∧	ε	ε	ϕ	∨	ε	ε	∨ μ ∨ ϕ ϕ ϕ / ϕ



Seven represents luck in casinos the world over, and if polled, more Americans would say 7 is their 'lucky number' than any other, perhaps coming from many different origins. The 7th day is considered the Sabbath; there were 7 golden candlesticks in Solomon's temple; among ancient myths, the 7th child of a 7th child would be born with special gifts or powers.

However, in China, it is customary to regard even numbers as being more auspicious than odd numbers. The number *two* [二 or *Er*] usually suggests harmony, so wedding decorations or gifts (including money) are often in pairs. *Six* [六 or *Liu*] conveys indirectly its homophonic meaning: do everything smoothly; and 8 [八 or *Ba*] sounds similar to *Fa*, which means 'to make a fortune,' so business people naturally favor this number. Remember, 08/08/08 was the most popular date for weddings and for the biggest celebration of all: the opening of the Beijing Olympics. And 8 on its side, of course, is ∞ -- infinity. However, *four* is the exception to the even-number rule, because 四 sounds like *Si* ('death'). So avoid choosing your license plate, hotel room floor, house or telephone number with a '4' in there! In China and Japan, buildings do not have a 4th floor, and cartoon characters with only 4 fingers are considered bad luck. The superstition runs so deep that cardiac deaths for Chinese- and Japanese-Americans are said to increase on the 4th of each month. Hmmmmm.



In many cultures, 13 has 'bad luck' associations. One theory relates it to lunar-solar calendars of 12 'true months' plus a smaller, often portentous, 13th month. It's rare to find a hotel, office or apartment building with the floor above 12 actually labeled 13. Of course, the number 13 has its own phobia, **Triskaidekaphobia**, a word coined in 1911, though since the 1800s, Friday the 13th has been considered a bad-luck day, as a combination between an unlucky day, Friday, and the number 13. Another theory attributes it to the Friday the 13th after the final Crusade when men were sent to capture the last 13 Knights Templar and burn them alive.



It's easy to list our 13 colonies, the 13 cards in a suit, a baker's dozen and this, our 13th consecutive Newsletter!

◆ FEATURE ◆ Lingua Quiz!

- 1 Which of the following are correct definitions of 'numerical' words?
(a) **Numerology:** the study of occult significance of numbers
(b) **Numeracy:** the ability to reason with numbers and other mathematical concepts
(c) **Numerics:** the numerical field of employment or its instructional program at a college or university.
(d) **Numeration:** the art of reading in words numbers expressed in numerals
(e) **Nummary:** Where Shakespeare's Hamlet tells Ophelia to "get thee to"
- 2 Which of these languages has more than one numbering system?
(a) English
(b) Japanese
(c) Korean
(d) Vietnamese
(e) Roman
- 3 Mix & match the foreign-language word for "ZERO"
(a) Maltese 1 Null
(b) Tibetan 2 leikou
(c) Spanish 3 rei
(d) German 4 cero
(e) Japanese 5 xejn
(f) Hawaiian 6 şifr
(g) Arabic 7 ole

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ANSWERS:

1: (a), (b), (c) and (d)
2: (b), (c) and (d). Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese each have 2 different numbering systems, consisting of the native vocabulary as well as a Sinoxenic system, referring to the pronunciations given to the Chinese characters for numbers.
3: (a) = 5; (b) = 2; (c) = 4; (d) = 1; (e) = 3; (f) = 7; (g) = 6

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