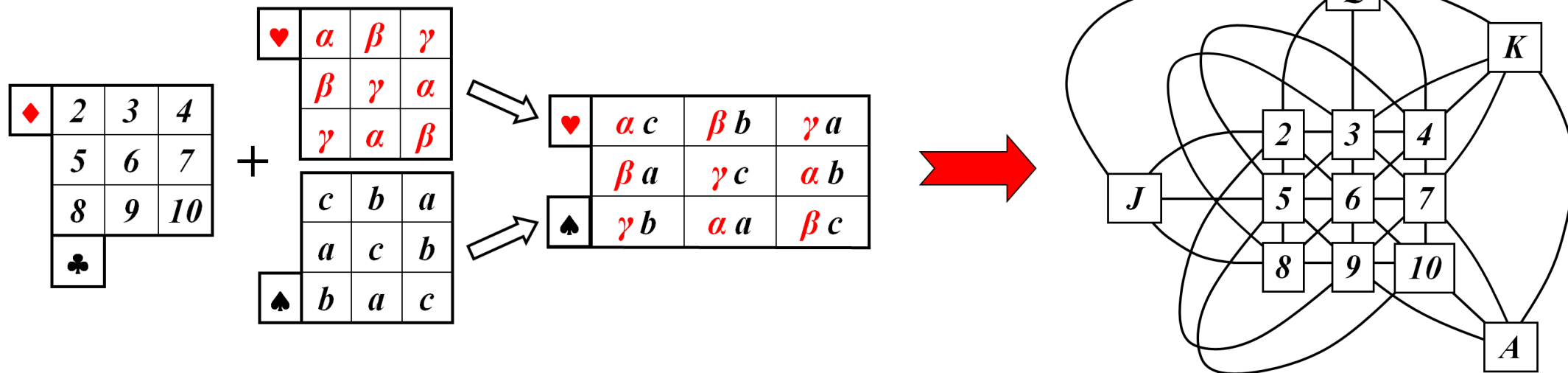




THEOREM OF THE DAY

The Bose Equivalence Theorem in Design Theory *A finite projective plane of order n exists if and only if a complete set of mutually orthogonal Latin squares of order n exists.*



PROBLEM: Arrange the 52 playing cards of a pack into 13 columns of 4 so that any pair of card values appears in exactly one column, and any pair of columns share exactly one card value.

SOLUTION: illustrated in the picture via the 'if' part of the theorem, for $n = 3$: we arrange the non-court card values in an $n \times n$ square (marked here \diamond and \clubsuit , although the card suits only relate to our problem not to the theorem). We will combine this with $n - 1$ mutually orthogonal Latin squares or *MOLS*, marked here \heartsuit and \spadesuit . Each *Latin square* has a set of n symbols appearing exactly once in each row and column; a set of $n - 1$ forms a *complete set of MOLS* if, superimposed, every cell contains a distinct ordered list of $n - 1$ symbols (here, $ac, \beta b, \gamma a$ in the top row, etc). Each row and column of the $\diamond\clubsuit$ square becomes a line in the diagram on the right. Additionally, the position values of each Greek letter of the \heartsuit Latin square are joined with a line (so 2,7,9 for α etc), and similarly the positions of each Roman letter of the \spadesuit Latin square. This gives us, so far, $n^2 + n$ lines, forming a so-called *affine plane* of order n . In a projective plane, each set of parallel lines meets in a distinct point, added here as J, Q, K, A . Join these $n + 1$ points with a line and the projective plane is complete: it has $n^2 + n + 1$ lines each having $n + 1$ points; $n^2 + n + 1$ points each lying in $n + 1$ lines; every pair of lines meets at exactly one point; every pair of points is joined by exactly one line. We make each line a card column using our chosen suits, and we are done. Click [here](#) to see a version of this page with the solution visible in the background (0.6MB).

Raj Chandra Bose (1901–1987) was working at the Indian Statistical Institute when, in 1938, he forged this beautiful link between geometry and combinatorics.

Web link: math.ucdenver.edu/~wcherowi/courses/m6406/csln.html (section 1.2).

Further reading: *Designs, Graphs, Codes and their Links* by P. J. Cameron and J. H. van Lint, Cambridge University Press, 1991.

