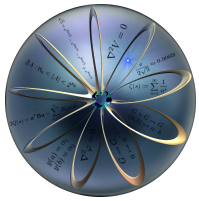

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Ishango bone

Canonical name	IshangoBone
Date of creation	2013-03-22 17:20:26
Last modified on	2013-03-22 17:20:26
Owner	PrimeFan (13766)
Last modified by	PrimeFan (13766)
Numerical id	6
Author	PrimeFan (13766)
Entry type	Definition
Classification	msc 01A10

The *Ishango bone* is an ancient baboon bone with numerical markings on it which was unearthed in a bank of Edward Lake in the Congo by geologist Jean de Heinzelin de Braucourt. Carbon dating shows the bone is at least 20,000 years old. Now on exhibit at the museum of the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, it is characterized as "the oldest mathematical artifact."

The bone has three columns of numbers, the middle column reads: 3, 6, 4, 8, 10, 5, 5, 7 (this sequence is A100000 in Sloane's OEIS). The other two columns read: 11, 13, 17, 19 (a prime quadruplet); and 11, 21, 19, 9. The columns add up to 60, 48 and 60.

Mathematicians and scientists have speculated on the meaning of the numbers on the bone. Alexander Marshack believes the bone might be a lunar calendar, while Claudia Zaslavsky speculates the author was a woman tracking her menstrual cycle. Number theorists note that 48 and 60 are both multiples of 12 and cite this as evidence of the early humans' ability to multiply.

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