

ON THE ORIGIN OF CHESS WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY:

1. Egbert Meissenburg

SOME FACTS, DATES AND BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATIONS CONCERNING THE
INITIATIVE GROUP KÖNIGSTEIN (IGK)

2. Yuri Averbakh, Moscow, 1999

STARTING THIS STUDY THE AUTHOR PROCEEDED FROM THE FOLLOWING
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3. Peter Banaschak, 30 May 2000

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IS CHESS MENTIONED IN THE TALMUD?

1. The IGK by Egbert Meissenburg

SOME FACTS, DATES AND BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATIONS CONCERNING THE INITIATIVE GROUP KÖNIGSTEIN (IGK)

Chess history is a journey into an extensive past - and the house in which the researcher may dwell and work has many doors. The Initiative Group Königstein is a world-wide group of chess historians, emanating from Germany, and is aimed as a community interested in chess-history with emphasis on the further promotion of the scientific research perspectives of the expert treatment of the entire history of the game of chess in all its branches and facets. It is, without actually having an established organisation structure, a loose union of scientists, serious researchers into the history of chess and finally also the enthusiasts generally interested in chess history. The circle is open to all who are able and willing to do research in impartiality and tolerance. The circle is international in all aspects as its multilingualism and diversity of promotion proves.

Important and decisive for the INITIATIVE GROUP KÖNIGSTEIN was, and is, not only the attempt to approach a little closer to chess-historical truth -- only: *Quid est veritas?* -- but also a sympathetic co-operation of the various chess and research directions by mutual support of the respective research projects including toleration of the personality of each individual scholar. The strict specialist should therefore likewise respect the ingenious essayist as well as vice versa. Such tolerance should in any case stand in the foreground generally, constantly and undiminished by the mutual relations of chess historians as well as chess-historical journalistic transactions. Chess history remains an assembly ground of greatly different temperaments, but neither should learning, nor objectivity [objectivity in no way means lack of opinion!], nor thoroughness, nor love of truth, or caution in judgement (yes, and also the ability to confess errors) be lacking in anyone participating. Thus: journalistic chutzpah, arrogance, unfair intolerance together with polemics are by no means evident in their indulgence in chess historical research and must therefore at least nowadays be banished to the rejection as an unacceptable vehicle.

At this point it would be inopportune to spot-light individual scholars from the German, English, Italian, Russian, or any other language circle. After all about 70 persons are to be mentioned. These have dedicated and still dedicate themselves in varying degrees of intensity to chess history. What the INITIATIVE GROUP KÖNIGSTEIN has "really" initiated will remain perhaps occasionally debatable in details -- as for instance, whether the 1991 Königstein meeting in fact triggered the C-14 investigation into the Venafro chessmen [with publications in 1994/95]. On the other hand it must be said that, without the INITIATIVE GROUP KÖNIGSTEIN, numerous chess-historical studies might well hardly have been written, or might have never been published. After this general introduction I shall list the bibliographical and other data as promised.

August 1991

The first meeting of chess historians took place in Königstein/Taunus nearby Frankfurt/Main, Germany. 14 participants had been invited by Joanna und Dr. Thomas H. Thomsen. The name of the Group has been chosen in connection with Königstein [«König» means «King» and «Stein» means «Playing material for chess»] and the manner in which future chess historical research could be done – the first name proposed was «Königstein Group». The German text taken from the first "Green Booklet" (Seevetal 1991):

Vom 2. August bis 4. August 1991 fand in Königstein-Falkenstein die Konferenz "The Origins of Chess" statt. Als Gastgeber hatten Dr. Thomas Thomsen und Mrs. Thomsen in Königstein sowie zum Abend des 3. August 1991 Franz Josef und Rosemarie Lang in Kelkheim eingeladen. In einer Atmosphäre von größter Gastfreundschaft versammelten sich 15 Teilnehmer aus den Ländern Großbritannien, Italien, Niederlande, Rußland, Spanien und Deutschland. Freundschaftlich wurden die vielfältigen Standpunkte diskutiert. Die auf diese Weise gewonnene Standortbestimmung könnte Anregungen für weitere Ursachforschungen gegeben haben.

The Origins of Chess had been discussed. The following papers and brochures were the results of this first meeting besides two reports by Irving Finkel and Egbert Meissenburg.

- Dr. Irving Finkel: The Königstein Conference on the Origins of Chess: August 2-4 1991. - In: The Chess Collector, London, vol. II, N° 3, November 1991. Reprinted in: Schachhistorische Forschung. Namen - Daten - Meinungen - Literatur. Eine Übersicht mit dem Stande per 30. November 1991 zusammengestellt von Egbert Meissenburg. - Seevetal: E. Meissenburg 1991, p. 6.
- Egbert Meissenburg: "THE ORIGINS OF CHESS" - ein kurzer Bericht zur Seminartagung in Königstein 1991. - In: Schach-Journal, Berlin, 2. Jg., 1992, Nr. 1/2, S. 108 Publications 1991 und 1992
- Dr. Ricardo Calvo: Valencia, Birthplace of Modern Chess. Dedicated to the ‚Königstein Group‘. - In: New in Chess, Alkmaar, vol. 1991, N° 7, pp. 82-87, 89. Stellungnahme: P.J. Monté: Searching for a Spanish Cradle for Modern Chess. - In: New in Chess, Alkmaar, vol. 1992, No. 1, S. 4-6
- Dr. Ricardo Calvo: Valencia - Geburtsstätte des modernen Schachs. Co-Autor Egbert Meissenburg. Der Initiativ-Gruppe Königstein gewidmet. - In: Schach-Journal, Berlin, 2. Jg., 1992, N° 3, pp. 34-45. This is an enlarged and completed translation into German from the original English text for the Dutch chess periodical "New in Chess" 1991. The German text has been reprinted with some further additions and a new heading in the papers of the Vienna Workshop Valencia und die Geburt des neuen Schachs in: «Vom Wesir zur Dame», Vienna 1995 [1996], pp. 77-89.
- Dr. Isaak Linder: Играл ли Адам шахматы. - In: 64. Шахматное Обозрение, Moscow, N° 21 (884), November 1991, pp. 16-19
- Schachhistorische Forschung: Namen - Daten - Meinungen - Literatur. - Seevetal: E. Meissenburg 1991. 8°
- Chesshistorical [Chess Historical] Research: Names - Dates - Opinions - Literature. - Seevetal: E. Meissenburg 1991. 8°
- Chesshistorical [Chess Historical] Research [...]. Reprinted with some additions per September 30th, 1992. - Seevetal: E. Meissenburg 1992. 8°. These three "Green Booklets" have been especially published for the members of the INITIATIVGRUPPE KÖNIGSTEIN.
- Robert Verhoeven: The Königstein Group. - In: New in Chess, Alkmaar, 1992, No 1, S. 6-8
- Manfred A.J. Eder: Wo entstand der König-Stein - und: wie? Neue schachgeschichtliche Forschungsimpulse durch die INITIATIV-GRUPPE KÖNIGSTEIN. Ein Meinungsbericht - nicht ganz ohne Schlußfolgerungen. - In: Schach-Journal, Berlin, 2. Jg., 1992, N° 3, pp. 13-31

November 1993

The second workshop of the chess historians in the INITIATIVGRUPPE KÖNIGSTEIN has had the Amsterdam Max Euwe-Centrum as host. Organizer: Egbert Meissenburg. The early history of chess has been discussed (India, China, Uruk, Talmud), the matter of the definition of CHESS in chess historical context and the existence and beginnings of the abstract ArabIslamic chessmen.

There have been published the following booklets and items by Egbert Meissenburg:

- Programm zur 2. Konferenz der Schachhistoriker in der "INITIATIVGRUPPE KÖNIGSTEIN" vom 26.11.1993 bis 28.11.1993 in Amsterdam Max Euwe-Centrum Max Euwe-Plein 30A I. - [Seevetal: E. Meissenburg] 1993. [8] Bl., 15 Bl. : 29 cm : Hefter. The 15 leaves which have been counted contain the abstracts of the papers presented by Jurij Averbach, K.G. Beauchamp, Andreas Bock-Raming, Ricardo Calvo, Gianfelice Ferlito, Hans Holländer, Gerhard Josten, Isaak M. Linder, Koichi Masukawa, Alessandro Sanvito and Kenneth Whyld.
- Programme for the Second Conference of the Chess Historians in the "INITIATIVGRUPPE KÖNIGSTEIN" November 26, 1993 to November 28, 1993 Amsterdam Max Euwe-Centrum, Max Euwe-Plein 30A I. - [Seevetal: E. Meissenburg] 1993. [7]

leaves, 15 leaves : 29 cm : Hefter [Typoskript : Kopiert]. The English version of the preceding German "Programm". The abstracts are the same as in the German version.

● Papers presented to the Second Conference of Chess Historians Amsterdam, Max Euwe-Centrum, November 26, 1993 - November 28, 1993. Editor: Egbert Meissenburg. - [Seevetal: E. Meissenburg] 1993. [2] leaves, 14 leaves, 4, [4] leaves, 5, [1] leaves, 5 leaves, 6 leaves, 5 leaves, 3 leaves : 21 cm : Ringbinder

The writers and their papers:

K.G. Beauchamp: Protochess in the Orient.

Manfred Eder: Extrakt zur Problemfrage lebensbildlicher Schach-Figuren als Vorbilder für die "Abstraktion" von Schach-Spielsteinen in "arabesker" Form.

Victor Keats: Is Chess Mentioned in the Talmud?

Egbert Meissenburg: Einige vorläufige Überlegungen zur Entstehung der abstrahierten Schachfiguren im islamischen Kulturkreis.

Joachim Petzold: Positionspapier für das Seminar der Schachhistoriker am 27./28. November 1993 in Amsterdam.

Franco Pratesi: Developing Arab Chessmen.

Novello Williams: Medieval Chessmen Found in Wales.

● English Papers presented to the Second Conference of Chess Historians Amsterdam [...] 1993. Editor Egbert Meissenburg. - [Seevetal] 1993. 8°. With papers by K.G. Beachamp, M. Eder, V. Keats, E. Meissenburg, J. Petzold, F. Pratesi, N. Williams. Some of the lectures read in Amsterdam have been printed in the Berlin SCHACH-JOURNAL, volume 1994, others in the yearbook HOMO LUDENS (Munich, Salzburg) volume IV, 1994.

These are the following reports of the Amsterdam meeting:

● Hans Ree: Silk, Diamonds and the Origins of Chess. - In: New in Chess, Alkmaar, 1993, N° 8, pp. 76-79 & the Dutch text with changes Ree, Hans: De musicus Ziryab. - In: Hans Ree: Schitterend schaak. - Amsterdam/Antwerpen 1997, pp. 153-162. L.C.M. Diepstraten: Congres van Schaakhistorici. - In: Nieuwsbrief Max Euwe-Centrum, Amsterdam, nummer 28, januari 1994, pp. [4]-[5], and Isaak Linder Линдер: Лиха беда - начало. Конференция на родине Макса Эйве [Ejve Euwe].- In: 64. Шахматное обозрение, Moscow, 1994, N° 3/4 (907-908), pp. 52-55. Gianfelice Ferlito: Il Gruppo Königstein. La presentazione di un'iniziativa a favore della ricerca storica. - In: Informazione Scacchi, Bergamo, anno III, 1993, N° 1, pp. 34-35 & Scacco, Mondovì, 1994, p. 69.

Publications in 1994 und 1995

● Dr. Gianfelice Ferlito: Il gruppo d'Iniziativa Königstein e gli scacchi islamici. - In: Gli Scacchi di Venafro. Datazione radiocarbonica. - Milano: L'Italia Scacchistica 1994, pp. 40-43

● Königstein Initiative Group. Islamic Chessmen. - Bergamo: Informazione Scacchi 1995. pp. 52. 8° = Supplemento al N° 2, Aprile 1995, della rivista "Informazione Scacchi", Bergamo. Editor: Dr. Gianfelice Ferlito. "This booklet collects the papers presented at the Königstein Initiative Group Conference on the topic of Islamic chessmen and their origin by chess historians who met Amsterdam, at the Max Euwe Centrum [...] 1993". There are papers by Anna Contadini: A figurative Islamic ivory chess piece, pp. 48-51

Manfred A. J. Eder: Extracts as to the Question and Problem of Figurative chessmen serving as pre-conditioning Models for á so-calledñ "Abstractá edñ " Chess-Pieces in the á so-calledñ "Arabian á Islamicñ Style", pp. 11-19

Gianfelice Ferlito: Old Islamic Chessmen. Historical, religious and artistic considerations about their shape and design, pp. 29-47

Egbert Meissenburg: Some preliminary considerations on the origin of abstract chessmen in Islamic culture., pp. 2-10

Franco Pratesi: Developing Arab Chessmen, pp. 20-25

Alessandro Sanvito: The origin and development of Islamic Chess pieces over the centuries, pp. 26-28.

Two of the texts - by Egbert Meissenburg and Manfred A.J. Eder - already have been previously published in their German version.

- Kenneth Whyld: A HISTORY OF CHESS. Corrections and additions mostly by the author H.J.R. Murray. - Caistor: [Published by the author] 1994. 8°. "This work is for those in the [Königstein] Group. Everyone researching chess history uses Murray's A History of Chess to some extent. This present booklet is offered to my friends and colleagues in the hope that it may assist them".

- Dr. Andreas Bock-Raming: Untersuchungen zum indischen Würfelspiel in nachvedischer Zeit. I: Das Backgammon nach der Darstellung des Mānasollāsa. - Seevetal: Meissenburg 1995. II, 18 leaves : 4° = Reihe "Schach-Forschungen" N° 9

November 1994

The third meeting of the chess historians took place in the Internationales Forschungszentrum Kulturwissenschaften in Vienna. This international workshop had been organized by Dr. Ernst Strouhal (Hochschule für angewandte Kunst, Lehrkanzel für Philosophie, Vienna). Its theme: Vom Wesir zur Dame. Kulturelle Regeln, ihr Zwang und ihre Brüchigkeit. Über kulturelle Transformationen am Beispiel des Schachspiels.

In April 1996

the scientific documentation with the heading Vom Wesir zur Dame came out of the press (187 pages). It contains 16 papers of 15 participants of the Vienna workshop (beginning with Jurij Averbach and ending with Alessandro Sanvito according to the alphabetical order) and especially concerns the history of chess in the Middle Ages and the history of other boardgames.

July 1995

The first number of OKKASIONELLER RUNDBRIEF has been published in Seevetal (Germany). Editor: Egbert Meissenburg. It was the aim of the RUNDBRIEF to give better contacts to the chess historians in the INITIATIVE GROUP KÖNIGSTEIN. Most of the papers were research papers but there are some articles of bibliographical character, too. Authors i.a.: Ricardo Calvo, Gerhard Josten, Franco Pratesi. There have been already published 15 numbers of the OKKASIONELLER RUNDBRIEF (the last number 15 in March 2000).

August 1996

- Die Schach-Geschichtsforschung zum Ausgange des 20. Jahrhunderts. Fünf Jahre "Initiativgruppe Königstein". Zur Gründung des "Förderkreises Schach-Geschichtsforschung". Mit einem Beitrag von Manfred A. J. Eder herausgegeben von Egbert Meissenburg. - Seevetal: Meissenburg 1996. 8°

November 1996

The chess historical workshop Approaching the Roots of Chess has been arranged in Pondicherry, Central University, India. For the first time an organized attempt was made to bring together well-known specialists in chess history, Sanskrit studies, Indology and archaeology. Dr. C. Panduranga Bhatta was the chief organizer. Five members of the INITIATIVGRUPPE KÖNIGSTEIN from Europe and Japan were present besides the organizer Dr. Bhatta: Dr. Andreas Bock-Raming, Manfred A.J. Eder, Dr. Irving Finkel, Koichi Masukawa and Egbert Meissenburg. All these chess historians has been given the opportunity for having lectures.

- APPROACHING THE ROOTS OF CHESS. Abstracts and Papers dedicated and presented to the Organizers and Participants of the SYMPOSIUM at PONDICHERY UNIVERSITY Pondicherry (India) November 26th through 29th, 1996. Edited by Egbert Meissenburg [...] on Behalf of INITIATIVGRUPPE KÖNIGSTEIN and FÖRDERKREIS SCHACH-GESCHICHTSFORSCHUNG e.V. - Seevetal: Meissenburg 1996. 30 pp. 8°. This booklet has been dedicated by Egbert Meissenburg to the participants of the Pondicherry

workshop. It contains four abstracts for the Pondicherry Symposium. Additionally: Five members of INITIATIVGRUPPE KÖNIGSTEIN who could not attend the Indian workshop presented papers concerning their opinion of the origin of chess in English.

August 1997

In 1897, Antonius van der Linde (*1833) died in Wiesbaden. A chess historical meeting "Die Suche nach Fakten - Searching for Facts" has been arranged to celebrate the memory of the well known Dutch chess historian. It took place in the Wiesbaden Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv. Organizer: Manfred A.J. Eder. There were several exhibitions. This Wiesbaden event has been counted as the 4th meeting of the chess historians in the INITIATIVGRUPPE KÖNIGSTEIN. August 1997 to August 1999

- Dr. Isaak Linder Линдер: The Significance of the Work of Antonius van der Linde for the Research on the History of Chess. - [Seevetal: Meissenburg 1997.] [1], 8, [4] Leaves : 29 cm : Hefter. The text on page [1]: IN MEMORIAM ANTONIUS VAN DER LINDE. [Signature of van der Linde in facsimile] This is a special arrangement for only English speaking participants of the 4th Wiesbaden Symposium of the INITIATIVGRUPPE KÖNIGSTEIN. It contains the English version of the German Wiesbaden lecture of Dr. Isaak Linder with some separate details of the live and of the writings of Antonius van der Linde.
- Dr. Isaak Linder Линдер: Ван дер Линде и современность. Где нет знаний, властвует фантазия. - In: 64. Шахматное Обозрение, Moscow, 1997, N° 9, pp. 53-55. Dr. Isaak M. Linder Линдер: Die Bedeutung des Werkes von Antonius [i.e. Antonius] van der Linde für die Erforschung der Schachgeschichte. - In: Rochade Europa, Maintal, 1997, Nr. 10, Oktober 1997, pp. 36-38. Dr. Ulrich Schädler: Camel Captures Giraffe. Gaming Pieces for Medieval Chess-Variants. A paper read at the 4th colloquium of the Initiative Group Königstein [Königstein] "Searching for Facts". - In: The Chess Collector, London, vol. 8, 1999, N° 1, pp. 6-9. Ken Whyld: Old Facts for the Origin of Chess in China. (Paper read before the 4th Symposium of the Initiativgruppe Königstein, Wiesbaden, August 14, 1997). - In: Okkasioneller Rundbrief, Seevetal, Nr. 14, August 1999, pp. 107-112.

February 1999

- Die Schach-Geschichtsforschung in der INITIATIVGRUPPE KÖNIGSTEIN. Namen, Daten, Meinungen, Literatur. 4. Ausgabe. Zusammengestellt und herausgegeben von Egbert Meissenburg. - Seevetal: E. Meissenburg 1999. pp. 52. 8°

March 1999

- Chess Historical Research in the INITIATIVE GROUP KÖNIGSTEIN. Names, Facts, Opinions, Literature. Third English Version. Compiled and Edited by Egbert Meissenburg. - Seevetal: E. Meissenburg 1999. pp. 48. 8°. This is the version of the "Green Booklet" mainly published for the English speaking members of IGK.

May 1999

- Egbert Meissenburg: Die Initiativgruppe Königstein. - In: Rochade Europa, Sömmerda, 1999, Nr. 5, May 1999, page 56. This article has been reprinted in a list of antiquarian chess books SCHACH published by Michael Mitzkewitz in [D-]Remagen-Rolandseck August 1999 (pp. [48]-[49]).

Oktober 1999

- Egbert Meissenburg: Bibliographie zur Geschichte des Schachspiels im europäischen Mittelalter á Schriften ab 1990ñ . - (Seevetal: [Selbstverlag] Egbert Meissenburg) 1999. pp. 32 : 21 cm : Br. = Thesaurus Bibliographicus Scacchisticorum N° 3. [Umschlagtitel]. [Kopftitel:] Egbert Meissenburg: Bibliographie zur Geschichte des Schachspiels im europäischen Mittelalter á ca. 1000-1500ñ - Schriften ab 1990 mit einigen Ergänzungen in zeitlicher und sachlicher Hinsicht. **

November 1999

- Schach im abendländischen Mittelalter und [in] der Frühen Neuzeit. Alltagskultur - Spielspezifik - Hohe Literatur. Programm zum V. Symposium der INITIATIVGRUPPE KÖNIGSTEIN Hamburg November 1999. Herausgegeben von Egbert Meissenburg. - Seevetal: [Egbert Meissenburg] 1999. 56 S. m. Diagrammen und Abbildungen : 21 cm : Br. This is the programme for the Hamburg Symposium in November 1999. There are papers by Gianfelice Ferlito, Reinhold F. Glei & Thomas Paulsen, Gerhard Josten, Egbert Meissenburg, Franco Pratesi and chess artist Elke Rehder, English written death reports of Tassilo von Heydebrand und der Lasa († 1899) and the abstracts of the papers by Jurij Averbach, Peter Banaschak, Ricardo Calvo, Barbara Holländer, Hans Holländer, Horst Lüders, Koichi Masukawa [full paper], Peter J. Monté, Josef Pauser, Ulrich Schädler, Kenneth Whyld.
- SCHACH im abendländischen Mittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit. Alltagskultur - Spielspezifik - Hohe Literatur. V. Symposium der INITIATIVGRUPPE KÖNIGSTEIN Hamburg November 1999. Informationsmappe. - [Seevetal: Egbert Meissenburg 1999.] [26] leaves : 29 cm : In Klemmhefter oder Hefter. The German text taken from that in ROCHADE EUROPA May 1999 has been translated into English by Mr. Kenneth Whyld. Many thanks for this welcome and valuable assistance. I used some parts of this translation for this article. 32 copies for further information for the participants of the Hamburg Symposium.

March 2000

- Die Initiativgruppe Königstein. The Initiative Group Königstein. Geschichte und Aktivitäten. History in Part and Activities. Verfaßt von | Prepared by Egbert Meissenburg. - Seevetal: (Egbert Meissenburg) 2000. 12 p. : 21 cm : Br. ISBN 3-921966-34-X. This is a further "Green Booklet" with a survey of the activities and facilities of the INITIATIVGRUPPE KÖNIGSTEIN.
- Banaschak, Peter: The Eastward Diffusion of Chess: Why this history cannot be written. PREPRINT from Schach im abendländischen Mittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit. Alltagskultur - Spielspezifik - Hohe Literatur. The Collected Papers of the 5th Symposium of the INITIATIVGRUPPE KÖNIGSTEIN held Hamburg November 1999. - Seevetal: [E. Meissenburg] 2000. 12 p. : 21 cm : Br. August 2000
- Holländer, Barbara: Überlegungen zur Entwicklung einer Schachterminologie im Mittelalter. PREPRINT from Schach im abendländischen Mittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit. Alltagskultur - Spielspezifik - Hohe Literatur. The Collected Papers of the 5th Symposium of the INITIATIVGRUPPE KÖNIGSTEIN held Hamburg November 1999. - Seevetal: [E. Meissenburg] 2000. 8 p. : 21 cm : Br.
- Holländer, Hans: Karl Wilhelm Ramler und die Schachkultur des 18. Jahrhundert. PREPRINT aus Schach im abendländischen Mittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit. Alltagskultur - Spielspezifik - Hohe Literatur. The Collected Papers of the 5th Symposium of the INITIATIVGRUPPE KÖNIGSTEIN held Hamburg November 1999. - Seevetal: [E. Meissenburg] 2000. 12 S. : 21 cm : Br.

October 2000

- Meissenburg, Egbert: Die Kölner Internetseite zur Schachgeschichte. Eine Initiative der INITIATIVGRUPPE KÖNIGSTEIN. <http://www.mynetcologne.de/~nc-jostenge>. - In: Rochade Europa, [D-]Sömmerda, N° 10/2000, October 2000, pp. 70-71
- Meissenburg, Egbert: Das VI. Symposium der INITIATIVGRUPPE KÖNIGSTEIN, Amsterdam, 2001.

November 2001

Die bisherigen Symposien hatten in Königstein/Taunus 1991, Amsterdam 1993, in Wien 1994 (hier allerdings bei anderer Organisationsstruktur, jedoch in die Zählung der IGK-Veranstaltungen bislang unwidersprochen hineingenommen), Wiesbaden 1997, Hamburg 1999 stattgefunden (die ‚Papers‘ der Hamburger Veranstaltung wurden in vier Teilbänd[chen] zu Seevetal 2001, 2000, 2000, 2000 veröffentlicht). Das Jubiläums-Symposium der IGK im Jahre 2001 war bereits im November 1999 in Hamburg – IGKfiveHamburg1999 – angedacht und angeplant worden. Immerhin sollte der 10. Jahrestag der Gründung der IGK im August 1991 in Erinnerung gebracht werden. Erst Anfang Juli 2001 kam dann (die Gründe für die Verzögerung sollen an dieser Stelle nicht darlegt werden) wieder Schwung in die Sache: Mich rief Gerhard Josten aus Köln an, was denn nun mit der diesjährigen Tagung der IGK sei..... Dieser Anruf löste eine Viel-, ja Unzahl von Briefen (zuerst mit den speziellen Einladungen), von Telefonaten, von Email-Schreiben aus. Binnen kurzem stand fest: Das Treffen konnte im Max Euwe-Centrum in Amsterdam stattfinden. Dort hatten die Schachhistoriker in der INITIATIVGRUPPE KÖNIGSTEIN bereits 1993 die Gastfreundschaft der niederländischen Schachfreunde kennengelernt, die ihrerseits 2001, im Euwe-Jahr, den 100. Geburtstag ihres Schach-Heros zu feiern unternahmen. Die Festschrift 1991-2001. Zehn Jahre Schachgeschichtsforschung innerhalb der INITIATIVGRUPPE KÖNIGSTEIN [Seevetal 2001 - ISBN 3-921966-48-X] gab bereits im August 2001 einen kleinen Rückblick über das von der Gruppe in den vergangenen 10 Jahren schachhistorisch Geleistete.

So trafen sich vom 30. November 2001 bis 02. Dezember 2001 im Amsterdamer Max Euwe-Centrum etwa 30 Schachhistoriker zu einer Arbeitstagung. Organisation und Gestaltung lag in den Händen von Egbert Meissenburg und auch von Gerhard Josten, die an Ort und Stelle durch Frau Eveline Dirksen und Team tatkräftig unterstützt worden waren und wurden. Kōichi Masukawa aus Japan, der große Kenner der Geschichte des Shogi-Spiels, der den Einleitungsvortrag am Samstag über Europäisches Schach in Japan nach 1868 hielt, hatte den weitesten Weg zurückgelegt. Gäste kamen aus Kanada und den USA. Schachhistorien-Großmeister Dr. Isaak Linder, im privaten Gespräch lebendig und kommunikativ wie eh, hatte es sich nicht nehmen lassen, zusammen mit seinem Sohn Wladimir an dem Treffen teilzunehmen (beide präsentierten stolz auch ihre neueste Monumentalarbeit über die Schachweltmeister). Die große Familie der Schachhistoriker vervollständigten viele prominente Namen aus Deutschland, Großbritannien, den Niederlanden und Spanien (die italienischen und österreichischen Schachhistoriker hatten leider entweder abgesagt oder waren stillschweigend dem Treffen ferngeblieben).

Es war, wie bereits betont, eine Arbeitstagung mit einem prallen, aber sinnvoll strukturierten Programm (siehe Abdruck in diesem Band), das sogar am Samstag-Nachmittag durchgeführt wurde. Hauptthemen der Vorträge waren die Frühgeschichte des Schachs und das Schachspiel im Mittelalter. Die Sitzungen an den drei Tagen wurden als Chairman jeweils geleitet durch Egbert Meissenburg, Dr. Ulrich Schädler und Dr. Ricardo Calvo. Für das MEC begrüßte IGM Hans Ree die Anwesenden.

Den Haupt- und Einführungsvortrag am Freitag hielt Dr. Isaak Linder zu dem Thema Das Problem des Schachursprungs im Lichte der Fakten und Hypothesen des letzten Jahrzehnts. Er erläuterte nicht nur seine eigenen Auffassungen zum Ursprung des Schachspiels, sondern befaßte sich kritisch vor allem mit denjenigen der Münchner Indologin Renate Syed, hob andererseits die Forschungs-Verdienste von Jurij Awerbach, Pavle Bidev†, Andreas Bock-Raming, Joachim Petzold† und anderen hervor. Mit seinem Vortrag Chess – A Living Fossil wählte Gerhard Josten einen völlig anderen Ausgangspunkt, indem er vornehmlich auf die Struktur des (frühen) Schachspiels abstellte, dabei seine Vereinigungs-Hypothese vertiefte und die Aufmerksamkeit der Zuhörer auf die geographischen Regionen um die (große) Seidenstraße lenkte. Michael Mark (London) argumentierte in seinem Vortrag But it Probably Does Come from India, seine eigene Meinung vom (wahrscheinlichen) indischen Ursprung des Schachspiels zum Ausgangspunkt nehmend, gegen die Auffassung von Ricardo Calvo [1998] vom iranischen Ursprung. Dabei

prägte er das Wort von den für die Schachgeschichts-Forschung noch immer dringlich benötigten hard facts, dem sich auch in der Diskussion keiner aus dem Auditorium zu verschließen mochte. Ulrich Schädlers Darstellung zu The Talmud, Firdowsi, and the Greek game polis betraf Überlegungen zur griechischen Kultur in Indien und die These, daß mit ‚iskundree‘ im Talmud das griechische πολις gemeint gewesen sein könnte, ebenso wie Firdausi anstelle des Nard das πολις game dargestellt haben könnte.

Der zweite Samstag-Vortrag The Oldest Chess Pieces in Europe? (u.a. die vier Elfenbein-Figuren von St. Gennadio) war bereits durch eine Druck-Dokumentation von Ricardo Calvo vorbereitet worden und zeichnete sich durch einen prächtigen Dia-Überblick über das mozarabische Spanien aus. Barbara Holländer referierte über Les Echecs amoureux und hob im Rahmen dieses mittelalterlichen Textes die Bedeutsamkeit der Funktion des Schachspiels im Bild-Text-Verhältnis hervor. Dr. Peter J. Monté, der auch schon zuvor das spätmittelalterliche und frühneuzeitliche Schachspiel analysiert hatte, ging in seinem Vortrag Vicent reconstructed über die Überlegungen von J. Averbach 1985, Joaquín Pérez de Arriaga und Ricardo Calvo (jeweils 1997) hinaus und stellte Lucena's plagiarism durch die [nach seiner Angabe wahrscheinliche] Übernahme des ganzen Vicent, der bei seinen Problemen noch den altspanischen Regeln gefolgt sei, in den Vordergrund. Kenneth Whyld analysierte anhand verschiedener bislang unbeachtet gebliebener Einzelheiten The Göttingen MS – es könne nicht ausgeschlossen werden, daß die sog. Göttinger Schachhandschrift später als Vorlage für eine neue Version in französischer Sprache gedient haben könnte, während das sog. Place MS für Lucena Vorlage hätte sein können. Dr. Peter J. Monté stellte in seinem zweiten Vortrag Nomenklatur-Betrachtungen zu Openings in Modern Chess (1497-1634) an, während Hanspeter Suwe in seinen Bemerkungen zur Rochade-Notation die Geschichte von 0-0 und 0-0-0 an frühen Literaturbeispielen erläuterte. Professor Dr. Hans Holländer begann seinen Vortrag über Nachrichten zu einem verschollenen Schachclub. Zum Berliner Schachclub von 1803 mit dem Hinweis, für die Langfassung benötige er 3 Stunden - aber selbst die ihm zur Verfügung stehenden nur 30 Minuten brachten eine spannende Retroanalyse anhand von kunstgeschichtlichen, bislang noch nicht ausgewerteten Materialien. Dmitry Gorodin berichtete über die Bedeutung von Andor Lilienthal im Rahmen der Ideengeschichte des Schachspiels. Johan Weststeijn (Amsterdam) hatte einen schachspielenden Juristen des 7. Jahrhunderts aus dem Gebiete des heutigen Saudi-Arabien entdeckt und referierte darüber eindrucksvoll und ohne jedes Manuskript (eine seiner Thesen: Wenn schon damals das Blindspiel möglich gewesen sei, dann hätten die [damaligen] Schachfiguren nicht abstrakt sein können). Dr. Alexander de Voogt, engagiert bei der ‚Society of Board Games Studies‘, hielt, von dem umfassenden Begriff des Spiels als tragendem Element der Kultur bei seinem Landsmann Johan Huizinga ausgehend, den Schachhistorikern vor, „they never had been other than chess historians“. Die anwesenden Schachgeschichtsforscher nahmen dieses Diktum gelassen - und sahen sich im Anschluß an den letzten Samstag-Schachvortrag angenehm überrascht, daß das MEC zu ihren Ehren einen Empfang gab. Aber auch danach und noch nach 9 Stunden angestrengter schachgeschichtlicher Arbeit war am Abend Gelegenheit und Möglichkeit zu einem gemeinsamen Abendessen in einem indonesischen Restaurant.

Der das Symposium abschließende Sonntag-Vormittag war dann etwas weniger arbeitsreich gestaltet. Donald McLean hatte das Thema The Fool's Guide to Pawn Promotion vorbereitet. Egbert Meissenburg trug seine Stellungnahme zu The Book Project – A NEW HISTORY OF CHESS vor. In der lebendigen Diskussion, die dann in kleinerem Kreise im MEC und später im D-Zug von Amsterdam Centraal nach Osnabrück Hauptbahnhof fortgesetzt wurde, konnte Einigkeit über den Haupt-Herausgeber und darüber herbeigeführt werden, daß vorab ein Struktur-Papier zur Herbeiführung einer soliden Finanzierung zusammengestellt werden müsse. Vier der zum Vortrag zunächst vorgesehenen Papers mußten wegen Verhinderung der Autoren verlesen werden - so die Texte von Jurij Averbach (der seine Anwesenheit in Amsterdam zugesagt hatte, dann aber in Moskau als Schiedsrichter tätig werden mußte), von Dr. Jean-Louis Cazaux, von Prof. Carlo Alberto Pagni, einem Spezialisten der frühen Fernschach-Geschichte, und Prof. R. Vasantha [Indien] (deren Paper Game boards, Pieces, Dices – its Relation with

Indian Chess: An Archaeological Investigation Kenneth Whyld vortrag).

Egbert Meissenburg und Gerhard Josten hatten für den schachgeschichtlichen Kongreß ein 64seitiges Programm-Heft [keine ISBN-Nummer] hergestellt, das die Kurzfassungen der Vorträge und die persönlichen Stellungnahmen von insgesamt 16 Forschern zur Schachgeschichte und zu ihrer Beteiligung hieran enthält. Egbert Meissenburg hatte zusätzlich die PAPERS von Jurij Averbach, Jean-Louis Cazaux, Koichi Masukawa und seinen eigenen Beitrag in einer 28seitigen Broschüre vorgelegt (ISBN 3-921966-51-X). Als Nummer 23 der SCHACHFORSCHUNGEN kam die bereits erwähnte Arbeit von Ricardo Calvo The Oldest Chessmen in Europe [Seevetal 2001 – ISBN 3-921966-53-X] zur Verteilung.

Die Schachforscher hatten sich im Max Euwe-Centrum sehr wohl gefühlt und wurden perfekt betreut. Auch von der technischen Ausstattung her erwies sich das MEC als idealer Austragungsort. Die Sprache des Symposiums war deutsch und ... englisch. In freundlicher und freundschaftlicher, ja familiärer Atmosphäre konnten die (teilweise konträren) Standpunkte in Sachlichkeit ausgetauscht werden. Die Symposien der INITIATIVGRUPPE KÖNIGSTEIN haben sich als Stätte der schachgeschichtlich forschenden Begegnung unter den Schachhistorikern erfolgreich durchgesetzt.

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Oktober 2003

- Meissenburg, Egbert: Das VII. Symposium der Initiativgruppe Königstein Berlin Oktober 2003

Bereits zum siebenten Mal seit 1991 trafen sich die Schachhistoriker in der INITIATIVGRUPPE KÖNIGSTEIN und deren Gäste vom 17. bis 19. Oktober 2003. Hamburg im Jahre 1999 und Amsterdam im Jahre 2001 waren die beiden letzten Tagungsorte für die Symposien gewesen. Berlin war ausgewählt worden, um auch die Besichtigung einer Ausstellung zu ermöglichen, die Hans und Barbara Holländer in akribischer langjähriger, auf Spurensuche in Berliner Archiven beruhender Arbeit vorbereitet und inhaltlich gestaltet hatten und die den 200. Gründungstag des ältesten Schachklub Deutschlands betraf. Die Initiatoren haben ihn „Schadows Schachclub“ genannt. Diese Ausstellung war zugleich eine Hommage an die kulturelle Landschaft des preußischen Berlins im frühen 19. Jahrhundert. Der Bezug zu Schadow wurde, obwohl in der Literatur lediglich von dem „Club“, dem „Alten Club“ [im Gegensatz zu der 1827 gegründeten „Schach-Gesellschaft“] oder „Schach-Klub“ die Rede gewesen ist, deshalb hergestellt und ehrend hervorgehoben, weil der Bildhauer Johann Gottfried Schadow (1764-1850) diesen „Club“ - „Schach-Klub“ - 1803 wahrscheinlich nicht initiiert, jedoch mit Energie und Tatkraft bis 1847 aufrechterhalten hatte.

Die Ausstellung, über die in ROCHADE EUROPA N° 11/03 auf den Seiten 73-75 berichtet worden ist, gab denn auch für das schachgeschichtliche Treffen einen würdigen Rahmen. Der Vortragssaal der Kunstbibliothek/des Kunstgewerbemuseums am Matthäikirchplatz (Kulturforum) konnte für die Vorträge durch das Entgegenkommen des Direktors der Kunstbibliothek, Prof. Evers, mit allen Bequemlichkeiten, die die moderne Technik bot, aufgrund der Vermittlung von Frau Holländer dankend benutzt werden. Für das Treffen hatte auch die in Berlin ansässige Emanuel Lasker-Gesellschaft, die die INITIATIVGRUPPE KÖNIGSTEIN bereits im März 2003 zu Gast hatte, durch Internet-Präsentation geworben, so dass mit den teilweise mehr als 30 Teilnehmern ein interessiertes Auditorium begrüßt werden konnte.

Der engere schachgeschichtliche Kreis wurde repräsentiert unter anderem durch unsere Freunde GM Jurij Averbach und Schachhistorien-Großmeister und Nestor der Schachhistoriker Dr. Isaak Linder, die beide aus Moskau eingeflogen waren, und Koichi Masukawa, den bedeutendsten Erforscher des japanischen Shogi, aus Japan. Er hatte einen jungen Kollegen aus seinem Heimatland zu dem Symposium mitgebracht, Herrn Shimizu, der als Archäologe schachgeschichtliche Details aus japanischen und chinesischen Quellen analysierte. Von ihren Beiträgen wird nachfolgend noch die Rede sein.

Von weit her gereist waren auch Myron J. Samsin aus Kanada sowie David Shenk aus New York (der dann die Berlin-Reise noch mit einem Besuch in Ströbeck verband). Der Damespiel-Forscher Arie van der Stoep aus den Niederlanden und die Indologin PD Dr. Maria Schetelich konnten ebenfalls erstmalig in dem Kreis der Schachgeschichtsforscher begrüßt werden. Das IGK-Treffen war dem Gedenken zweier von uns gegangener Schachhistoriker gewidmet: Dr. Ricardo Calvo war im September 2002 verstorben und wir hatten die Ehre, seine Witwe Carmen unter uns begrüßen zu können; Kenneth Whyld war im Juli 2003 von uns gegangen. Der Zeitplan war dieses Mal nicht so gedrängt wie in Amsterdam 2001, als es dort im Max Euwe-Centrum auch möglich gewesen war, den in der Planung vorgesehenen Zeitrahmen um einiges zu überziehen (was ja, wenn sich angeregte Diskussionen entwickeln, im Interesse der Sache notwendig ist). Aber auch in Berlin blieb genügend Zeit und Gelegenheit zur Diskussion, zum näheren Kennenlernen, zum freundschaftlichen Austausch auch bei den beiden gemeinschaftlichen Abendessen, zu weiteren Begegnungen im Hotel. Die Kongreß-Sprachen waren deutsch und englisch. Vielen von uns war ja die Zweisprachigkeit schon geläufig. So wurde vor allem zur Erleichterung der anwesenden Schachhistoriker, die der deutschen Sprache nicht hinreichend mächtig waren, nicht nur gelegentlich aus dem Deutschen ins Englische gewechselt. Als Wegweiser durch das VII. IGK-Symposium diente das von Egbert Meisenburg zweisprachig gestaltete Programmheft mit den Abstrakts und mehreren Abhandlungen (40 Seiten). Der erste Tag des Symposiums - Freitag - sah zuerst die Führung durch die Ausstellung „Schadows Schachclub“ vor. Hier konnte Hans Holländer seine Ideen, seine mit der Ausstellung verbundenen Arbeits- und Vorgehensweisen beredt vortragen, während die Anwesenden den klugen, didaktisch geschickten Aufbau der Ausstellung anhand seiner Erläuterungen bewundern und Einblicke in die kulturellen und sozialen Bezüge der Honoratioren-Gesellschaft der Berliner Spätaufklärung nehmen konnten. Danach wechselten die Anwesenden in das Kunstgewerbemuseum über, wo in der Dauerausstellung Schach- und Damespielbretter neben einem Kunstschränk in das historisch-künstlerische Kolorit einzubeziehen waren. Nach einer kurzen Ruhepause war jedoch für die Schachhistoriker, die Mitarbeiter an der NEW HISTORY OF CHESS sind, der Schachtag noch nicht zu Ende: 7 Beteiligte setzten sich - nach dem zweitägigen Arbeitstreffen im März 2003 nunmehr wiederum in Berlin, wie auch schon Ende des Jahres 2002 - ein weiteres Mal zusammen. Gegenstand des gut einstündigen Austausches waren im wesentlichen der Stand der Vorbereitungen bei den einzelnen Beiträgen und die technischen Details für den Druck der NHC.

Am Samstag begann dann die eigentliche Arbeitssitzung. Am Vor- und Nachmittag standen insgesamt 11 Vorträge auf dem Programm. Für dessen Strukturierung war nicht nur der zeitliche Rahmen, den die Ausstellung „Schadows Schachclub“ vorgegeben hatte, sondern auch der Referate-Wunsch der Teilnehmer maßgeblich. Zuvörderst wurde jedoch der schachgeschichtlichen Verdienste der beiden Schachhistoriker gedacht, die der INITIATIVGRUPPE KÖNIGSTEIN eng und bedeutsam verbunden gewesen waren. Carmen Romeo Perez, die Witwe von Ricardo Calvo (in der ROCHADE EUROPA 2002 hatte ich einen Nachruf auf Ricardo geschrieben) berichtete über die letzten von großer menschlicher Tragik überschatteten Pläne ihres Gatten, eine umfassende Geschichte des Schachspiels zu schreiben. Der Tod hatte Ricardo noch vor vollständiger Fertigstellung des Manuskripts gleichsam die Feder aus der Hand genommen. Die posthume Laudatio auf Kenneth Whyld hielt Ernst Strouhal (Wien): Ken wusste viel und gab sein Kenntnisse gern weiter - seine Art, an die Schachgeschichte heranzugehen, war präzise und quellenkritisch. Auch Dr. Isaak Linder (Moskau) gedachte der beiden Freunde, ehe er sich dem Thema „Philidor und die ersten russischen Meister“ zuwandte. A. D. Petrow und Carl Friedrich Jaenisch wurden in ihrer Bedeutung für die Geschichte des Kombinationsspiels und der Eröffnungstheorie gewürdigt. Mit einem First im schachgeschichtlichen Rahmen wartete dann Susanna Poldauf-Klünder (Berlin) auf. Im Anschluß an ihren weit vor- und weit zurückgreifenden Vortrag zu dem Thema „Philidor in Berlin“ brachte sie - wir fühlten uns von Klängen umhüllt wie in einem Konzertsaal - eine von einer französischen Sopranistin gesungene Arie aus einer der Opern Philidors den Anwesenden zu

Gehör. Ich überlegte: War Philidor nun als Komponist besser denn als Schachspieler oder war es umgekehrt!? Arie van der Stoep aus den Niederlanden, mit einem Thema zur Etymologie des Damespiels promovierter Damespiel-Historiker, referierte zu seiner These, dass im 18. Jahrhundert in Frankreich und in den Niederlanden das Damespiels (draughts) in erheblichem Umfange die Terminologie des Schachspiels beeinflusst habe. GM Jurij Averbach gab dann den Überblick „To the History of Chess Endings“. Jurij sprach völlig frei und demonstrierte bildhaftverständlich am Demo-Brett. Er entwickelte die Theorie der Endspiele anhand von ausgewählten Beispielen von Polerio, Salvio, Greco, Stamma, Del Rio, Cozio, Ponziani bis zu den Endspiel-Heroen des 19. Jahrhunderts. Die Schnelligkeit der Analyse eines Großmeisters überraschte immer wieder - und auch GM Wolfgang Unzicker, der anwesend war, zeigte bei der Analyse sein großes Können. Nach der Mittagspause stellte David Shenk (Brooklyn, N.Y.) das Schachspiel in den Rahmen eines metamorphischen Gedankenspiels (thought tool) durch die Jahrhunderte, beginnend mit der sog. Innocent Morality, um dann über Wittgenstein, Duchamp, Nabokov den Kreis zu dem Nobelpreis-Träger Herbert A. Simon und zu Allen Newell zu schließen. Mit Myron J. Samsin kam dann ein Schachhistoriker zu Wort, der sich mit einem forschungstheoretischen Thema befasste: Während sich die Methoden, die frühe Schachgeschichte zu analysieren, bislang im wesentlichen auf literarische und/oder archäologische Grundlagen stützen, ging es ihm darum, darzutun, welche Vorteile eine komparatistisch-linguistische Methode der Erkenntnisgewinnung für die frühe Schachgeschichte habe. Yasuji Shimizu (Japan), auch des Chinesischen mächtig, befasste sich, im wesentlichen basierend auf Grabungen in China, als Archäologe mit den Steinen für das chinesische Schach aus der Song-Dynastie (960-1279): Sie sind nicht nur als Spielfiguren verwandt worden, sondern hätten auch zu magischen Zwecken benutzt werden können. Koichi Masukawa, der beim Abendessen lebhaft erzählte, wie er seine erstaunlichen Deutschkenntnisse erworben hatte, referierte anschließend in deutscher Sprache über „Die Unterschiede zwischen japanischem und chinesischem Schach“. Nach Japan sei das Schachspiel in der zweiten Hälfte des 10. Jahrhunderts direkt von Indien über Süd-Ost-Asien gelangt. Maria Schetelich, die in Leipzig lehrende Indologin, entwickelte in dem letzten Samstag-Vortrag lebendig und kenntnisreich einen weitgreifenden Überblick über die in Indien entstandenen Schachtexte aus dem 12. bis 19. Jahrhundert. Ihr Hauptaugenmerk waren Überlegungen zur örtlichen Entstehung derartiger Texte (die geographische Komponente) und zu der Einbettung der Schachtermini in diese Texte (die erweiterte inhaltliche [m.E. bislang doch sehr vernachlässigte] Analyse).

Gestärkt durch eine ausreichende Nachtruhe und ein gutes Hotel-Frühstück fanden sich die Schachhistoriker dann am Sonntag leicht verspätet zu der Abschlussitzung zusammen. Überlegung: Das Gruppenfoto !! – es war zuvor in der Geschäftigkeit des schachgeschichtlichen Organisationsablaufs fast in Vergessenheit geraten – das war nachzuholen. Arie van der Stoep referierte in seinem zweiten Vortrag seine These von dem linguistischen Einfluss des Damespiels auf das Schachspiel nunmehr in Bezug auf die Entstehung der „neuen“ weitreichenden Dame. Eine lebendige Diskussion schloss sich mit divergierenden Standpunkten an. Ernst Strouhal brachte die Gegenmeinung auf den Punkt: Die Schachhistoriker würden bei den Fragen um die Entstehung des Neuschachs nicht von einer punktuellen Betrachtung auf der Grundlage einzelner Worte ausgehen, sondern ihr Ergebnis durch eine Gesamtschau aller relevanten Umstände herbeiführen. F. R. van der Vliet (den Haag) hatte für seinen alsdann folgenden Vortrag das Thema „Emanuel Lasker. The First Chess Businessman“ ausgewählt. Auch diesem Vortrag folgte eine lebendige Diskussion, an der sich auch die GM Averbach und Unzicker beteiligten. Dimitry Gorodins Vortrag „Schachspieler ausländischer Herkunft in Russland bis 1850“ befasste sich mit einer Vielzahl von Namen, deren Träger vor dem Londoner Turnier 1851 für Russland von das Schachspiel fördernder Bedeutung waren.

Drei interessante und wichtige Tage lagen in dem „neuen“ Berlin hinter den Schachhistorikern. Die Vorträge hatten nicht nur die weit gestreute Palette von Themen, an denen die Schachgeschichtsforscher in der IGK arbeiten, gezeigt, es war auch die Unterschiedlichkeit der Charaktere, der Interessen und der Profile zum Ausdruck gekommen. Diese willkommene

Unterschiedlichkeit soll auch weiter aufrechterhalten bleiben - „Denkverbote“ sind in der IGK fehl am Platz. Für das nächste Symposium sind bereits zwei Tagungsorte angedacht worden. Und ich verrate kein Geheimnis, wenn einer der Teilnehmer in Berlin sich schon jetzt für das nächste IGK-Treffen gleichsam anmeldete. Ich bin mir auch sicher: Er wird nicht der einzige bl
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Oktober 2005

● Meissenburg, Egbert: VIII. schachgeschichtliches Symposium der IGK, Berlin 2005
Zum Geleit (Aus: Programm-Heft VIII. Symposium der IGK Berlin 2005)
Die jedenfalls ab 1997 in regelmäßigem zweijährigem Turnus stattfindenden Treffen der Schachhistoriker in der Initiativgruppe Königstein, diese Gruppe hat sich keine statuarisch festgelegte Organisationsstruktur gegeben, sind als Arbeitstagungen zu verstehen, als Gelegenheit zum Austausch und schließlich zum persönlichen Kennenlernen. Daß außerhalb des Zweijahres-Rhythmus die Kontakte nicht abreißen, ist lediglich am Rande zu erwähnen.
Die INITIATIVGRUPPE KÖNIGSTEIN widmet sich als weltweite, im Jahre 1991 von Deutschland ausgegangene und seit fast einem vollen Jahrzehnt auch weiter ausgehende und in unserem Lande nunmehr anderweitig aufrechterhaltene schachhistorische Interessengemeinschaft bei betonter Hervorhebung der wissenschaftlich-forschenden Gesichtspunkte der sachkundigen Bearbeitung der Schachgeschichte in all ihren Zweigen und Facetten. Als lockere Verbindung der Beteiligten ist IGK von Internationalität und von Meinungsvielfalt geprägt.
Zumindest die Programm-Abfolgen für die Symposien ab 1999 dokumentieren darüber hinaus die Vielfalt der bearbeiteten schachhistorischen Gegenstände ohne Verengung auf einen einzigen, einen bestimmten Problembereich. Trotzdem: Es besteht nach wie vor Forschungsbedarf für eine Vielzahl von schachhistorischen Themen. Wie ein Vergleich mit dem, was Van der Linde und Von der Lasa im 19. Jahrhundert geschaffen haben, zeigt, kennt der schachgeschichtliche Fortschritt keinen Einhalt. Die Schachgeschichte ist eine Reise weit in die Vergangenheit; und das Haus, in dem der Forschungsreisende wohnt und arbeiten kann, hat viele Türen - so hatte ich 2001 formuliert. Für ein Haus bedarf es eines Fundamentes - für die Schachgeschichte gleichfalls. Worin besteht nun dieses Fundament?
Für die Schachgeschichte in der Kenntnis der Entwicklung des praktischen Spiels - die Figuren, das Brett, die Spieler - und von dessen spezieller Literatur und deren Scribenten, schließlich eine - wenn nicht hervorragende - so doch gute Leistung beim Spiel über dem Brett. Für die Schachgeschichte in der Beherrschung der Instrumentarien, die für die Philologen und andere wissenschaftliche Disziplinen vor allem im universitären Bereich entwickelt worden sind, verwandt und gelehrt werden, in Sprachkenntnissen, in der Beherrschung der Methoden der Quellenkritik und der Analyse der außerschachlichen (für die Schachgeschichte zu verwertenden) Quellen.
Die Baumeister des Hauses sind die aus den Wissenschaftsbereichen Kommenden, die ernsthaften Schachgeschichtsforscher und schließlich auch die an der Schachgeschichte allgemein interessierten Enthusiasten. Die Schachgeschichte erscheint mithin auch als ein Gestaltungsfeld höchst unterschiedlicher Temperamente und Arten der Gelehrsamkeit. Ich zitiere ein weiteres Mal aus einem meiner Texte von 2001:
Es geht nicht nur um die Sichtbarmachung von Grundstrategien bei der Erforschung der Schachgeschichte, sondern auch um die Erforschung der Wahrheit in Abkehr von einer nur teiloptimierten Grundhaltung.
Ich bin gewiß, daß dieser (nicht geringe) Anspruch für das diesjährige VIII. schachgeschichtliche Symposium Gültigkeit haben und Beachtung finden wird.
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Zeitplan der Arbeitstagung

Tagungsstätte: Berlin-Kreuzberg, Leuschnerdamm 31 (Souterrain) außer Samstag [nur 9.45 h]

Haupteingangsbäude Pergamon-Museum, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Museumsinsel, Am

Kupfergraben

21.10.2005 Freitag

14.00 s.t. Begrüßung Herr Stefan Hansen als Gastgeber

14.10 Eröffnung Egbert Meissenburg

14.30 Dr. Isaak Linder: Die Größe Emanuel Laskers - gestern - heute - morgen

15.15 GM Jurij Averbach: Ilja L. Maiselis - Historian and Theoretician of Chess

15.45 Kaffeepause

16.15 Barbara Holländer: Bericht in Sachen Hauptmann Angerstein

16.45 Fred R. van der Vliet: Chess in Breslau after 1800 till 1945

[[~17.30 -~19.00 Besprechung der anwesenden Mitarbeiter an NHC | nicht öffentlich]]

20.00 s.t. Dr. Helene Thiesen: Schach und Politik im 20. Jahrhundert [Arbeitstitel]

20.30 Prof. Dr. Ernst Strouhal: Ideengeschichte und Instrumentalisierungsversuche des Schachspiels im 20. Jahrhundert. Ein Überblick.

22.10.2005 Samstag

09.45 Die Teilnehmer treffen sich vor Haupteingang Pergamon-Museum, Am

Kupfergraben

10.00 s.t. Dr. Jens Kröger [im Museum für Islamische Kunst]: Die Schachfiguren im Museum für Islamische Kunst Berlin. Danach Rückfahrt zum Leuschnerdamm & Kaffeepause

12.00 s.t. Norbert Fieberg: Deutsche Regional-Geschichtsforschung des 20. Jahrhunderts

13.00 – 14.30 Mittagspause

14.30 s.t. Dr. Bijan Gheiby: Zur Kulturgeschichte von Brett- und Würfelspiel in Persien

15.15 Dr. Ulrich Schädler: Recent finds from Jiroft (Iran) and the origin of

„Backgammon“

15.45 Nach Diskussion: Kaffeepause

16.30 Prof. Dr. Hans Holländer: Schach und magische Quadrate

17.00 M. C. Romeo: Alfonso X the Wise: The Law of Gambling Houses and Chess

17.45 Myron J. Samsin: Thomas Hyde and the 17th century English Enlightenment

20.00 Gemeinsames Abendessen

23.10.2005 Sonntag

10.00 s.t. Koichi Masukawa: Die besonderen Eigenschaften des japanischen Schachs – ihre verschiedenen Formen und die Regel des Wiedergebrauchs der gegnerischen Figuren

10.30 Dr. Maria Schetelich: The Indian Knight's Tour Problem

11.15 Dr. Ulrich Schädler: Murray as a game inventor: the Ashtapada case

11.45 Kaffeepause

12.00 Dmitry Gorodin: Das Schachspiel im Kreise Anton Tschechows

~12.30 Abschluß – Ausklang – Farewell

**2. Yuri Averbakh, Moscow, 1999:
STARTING THIS STUDY THE AUTHOR PROCEEDED FROM THE
FOLLOWING THESIS:**

The history of chess cannot be studied without a proper knowledge of the history of other board games. First it is necessary to observe the games which had come into existence before chess appeared. Only after that we are able to understand the sources and reasons which guided to the origin of chess.

The history of games in Old India shows that much simpler games were in existence before a complicated war game came into being. In particular, the direct predecessor was *asthapada* - a fourhanded race game on an 8x8 board where the movement of the game pieces was determined by the throw of dice.

H.J.R. Murray (1913) asserted flatly the following: "The theory that chess is a development of an earlier race game involves the hypothesis that some reformer changed the whole nomenclature in order to make it self-sufficient as a war game and secured the agreement of all his contemporaries. I find this hypothesis incredible". Nevertheless, it is not too hard to prove the possibility of such a transition though it should have taken rather a long time and consisted of several intermediate stages.

A very important fact helped this transition. For one of the highest castes of the Indian society the representatives of the military aristocracy - *Ksatriyas* - the challenge to a gambling match was equal to the challenge to a duel. This testifies to the fact that a game of dice was put on the same footing as a battle. The *Ksatriyan* used to have battles on chariot races were their favourite pastime (side by side with gambling) in time of peace.

My hypothesis is that the new race game was built up on the races of chariots. In the course of the game two chariots could be placed on the same square. This then led to a conflict. In the race game this problem was solved easily. The first chariot was taken off the board and it had to start the race from the very beginning. From here, there is only one step to another idea - the chariots start fighting one another. The first chariot perishes and it is removed from the board and cannot return. In this way the *Ksatriya*'s war game could appear as the battle of chariots.

The reform considered above could take place on the same board and it may be quite possible that the name of the game did not change. It preserved the same name *ashtapada*. This explains the silence of the literary sources.

Another natural step was the appearance of all types of the Indian military forces on the board - chariots, elephants, cavalry and infantry. *Chaturanga* completely was built up on *ashtapada*. This war game was (like *ashtapada*) a fourhanded game.

We also have to take the political situation into consideration. The fourhanded game, which appeared in the country divided into separate kingdoms could easily become a game for two players in the Empire. In short: there were reasons to turn a fourhanded game into a twohanded and so it happened.

Especially interesting is the question how the concept of checkmate appeared in the war game when the fall of the ruler meant the loss of the game.

Much ink has been wasted on this problem but nobody has yet given a satisfactory explanation. I believe it was hidden in the well-known text of *al-Biruni's India*. Speaking about a fourhanded game with dice he saw in India *al-Biruni* informs us of the following. "The pieces have certain values according to which the player gets his share of the stakes; for the pieces are taken and passed into the hands of the player. The value of the King is 5, that of the Elephant 4, of the Horse 3, of the Rook 2, of the Pawn 1. He who takes a King gets 5, for two kings he gets 10, for three kings 15, if the winner is no longer in the possession of his own king. And if he still has his own King and takes all three kings, he gets 54 - number which represents a progression based on the general consent and not on an algebraic principle".

It is not difficult to calculate that 54 is a maximum of the points which a player can take if he is in the possession of all three opponent's forces including the kings. The algebraic principle here is strictly observed: $5+4+3+2+4=18$; $18 \times 3=54$. With the general consent a rule was adopted - the

capture of the three kings with one's own king on the board gave a maximum number of points. That meant victory and the end of the game.

And now let us suppose that we have passed from the fourhanded game to a twohanded preserving certainly the same rule. Then to gain a victory will be sufficient to capture the opponent's king. But this is a checkmate!

Here is a very new and an extraordinary conclusion - the idea of checkmate was not invented - it arose automatically with the change from the fourhanded game to the twohanded, preserving the same rules, of course.

To change the Indian war game into chess it was necessary to throw away the dice. Unlike the previous stages which were typical for the evolutionary way of the game's development and were not contrary to the customs of the Indians and their religious beliefs, giving up dice was a radical, a revolutionary step forward that not only changed the game itself but also its philosophy. In fact, that step meant the withdrawal from the principle of Karma - the basic principle of the Indian philosophy.

Now the result depended entirely on the players will, on their choice. They became complete masters of their destiny.

Departing from the stable cultural contacts between Greece and India both before our era and especially in the first centuries of our era the author comes to a conclusion that it were the Greek who helped the Indians to make final step for chess to appear. People from Greece brought to North-West India (the area influenced by the Greeks most of all) their war game petteia. In comparison with chess it was a simpler game. All the game pieces in it were equal but they could "kill" one another. And the most important thing was that there were no dice at all! It was the player himself who decided where and which pieces should move. He had a complete freedom of choice.

3. Peter Banaschak, 30 May 2000: CHINESE-WESTERN CONTACTS AND CHESS

This paper deals with some aspects of Chinese-Western contacts, with special regard to the earlier history of chess. I try to hint at some interesting perspectives for further research.

Introductory remarks

This short paper is (loosely) based on a paper delivered to the 5th Symposium of the Initiativgruppe Königstein, held in Hamburg, Nov. 26th to 28th, 1999.

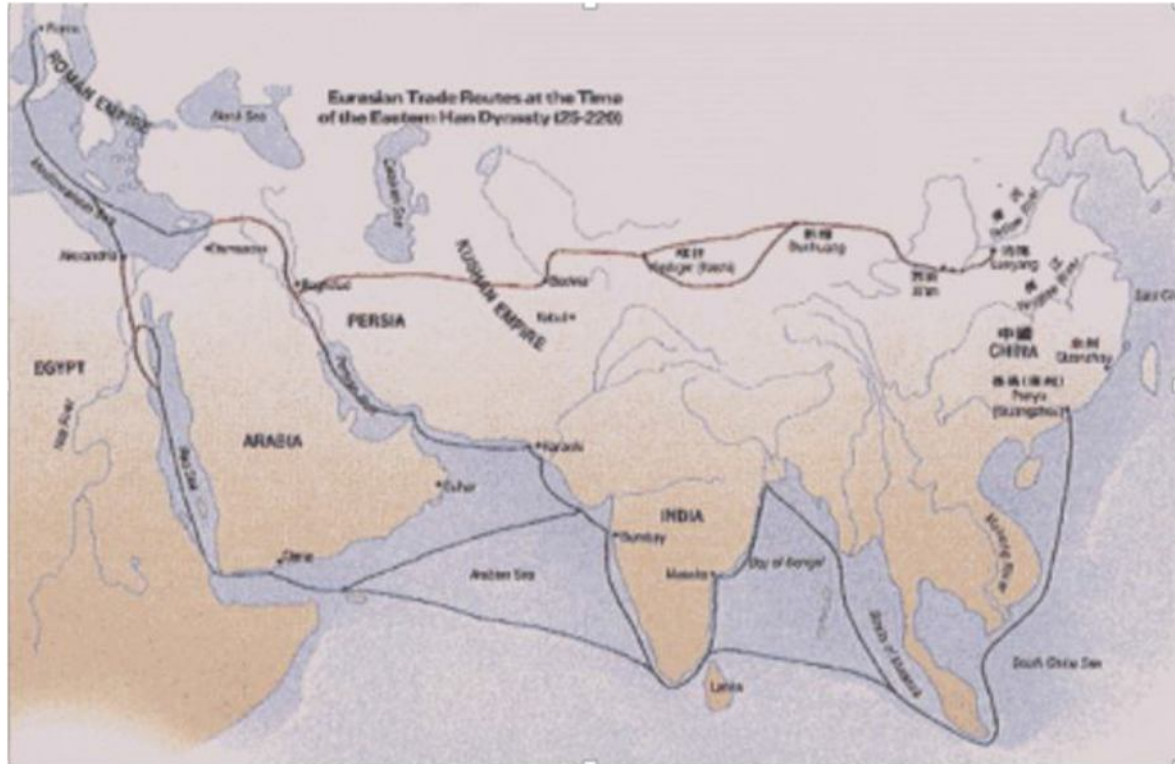
Throughout this paper Xiangqi will be used for 'Chinese Chess'. Xiangxi refers to Emperor Wu's game (the so-called 'Astrological game'). Transcription systems used are Karlgren for Middle Chinese and Pinyin for Modern Chinese.

By CHESS I understand any game that belongs to the board game class of Games of the Chess type (in narrower sense).

1. The starting point

The belief that chess originated in India in roughly the sixth century AD is commonly held. If so, the game must have spread throughout the world. Its way to the West is more or less known from the time on the Persians learned the game. In contrast, next to nothing is clear about its diffusion to the East; but the game must somehow have travelled to China. Nevertheless, this is a question which proponents of the Indian origin of chess must be ready to answer. Many researchers into the history of chess have either not bothered themselves with questions on the connections between East Asian chess games as their main interest lay in clarifying the history of what was to become FIDE chess. - Let us assume thus, for argument's sake, that

- all chess games share a single common ancestor, and
- that the earliest of all chess games originated in North-Western India at about, let's say 500 AD.



Starting from this assumption, an early chess game must somehow have been brought to China, e.g. . Although there are quite a few ways of transportation possible, we'll deal mainly with only one (however, the most likely) candidate: the tangle of trade routes known as the Silk Roads and the areas, realms, and regions around it. These Silk Roads link the areas of the Mediterranean Sea

and the Caspian Sea to North-West India, Tibet, China, Korea, and South-East Asia.

2. Some remarks on the early history of Xiangqi

Before we start, let me point out that there is an idea that chess originated in China proper. This idea is mainly fueled by texts brought to attention by Joseph Needham. He proposes that the ancestor of all chess games was a game Xiangxi that was supposedly invented by emperor Wu (r. 561-578) of the Later Zhou dynasty (557-581). This is reported in

- the "Hou-Zhoushu" ("Annals of the [Late] Zhou dynasty") by Linghu Defen (583-661),
- the "Suishu" ("Annals of the Sui dynasty") by Wei Zheng (580-643), and
- the "Beishi" ("Annals of the Northern dynasties", which covers the time 386-618) by Li Yanshou (612-678).

The first certain references to a game of (possibly) the chess type in Chinese sources date from the early 9th century: these are the short story Cen Shun by Niu Sengru (779-847) and a poem by Bo Juyi (772-846). For the sake of convenience this game is called Baoying-Xiangqi. Nevertheless both texts offer no hints as to how and where the game originated. It has been said that neither text offers a sufficient description (which is true), but if we take both texts into account, we can deduce that in the early 9th century there must have been something not entirely unlike modern Xiangqi.

3. Some ways how caturanga might have come to China

3.1 From India to China?

The origin of chess in India is often linked to the rule of the last Indian High King Harsa. Ainslie Embree mentions that king Harsa (r. 606-647) tried to open diplomatic relations between his own realm (based in Kanauj) and Tang (618-907) China under emperor Taizong (r. 627-650). There was just one embassy, and when the Chinese return mission arrived after Harsa's death, they were attacked by the governor of Tirabhukti. (This led to an attack against and consequent occupation of Tirabhukti by a joint Tibetan-Nepalese army.) Thus, besides of the traffic of merchants, pilgrims and monks, and armies on the Silk Roads, there have been direct contacts between two of the countries which have been credited with the invention / development of chess, and that during the life times of two rulers who are named quite often in connection with the origins of chess.

There are numerous other contacts between Chinese and Indian merchants and monks in later as well as earlier times, but this large-scale contact should suffice as an outstanding example.

If chess or one of its ancestors had been imported to China it would not be unsensible to expect that this import has left traces. As these traces are not to be found in the shape of the pieces, perhaps there might be linguistic evidence of a kind?

If something is imported from a 'foreign' country, the foreign word to name that thing is often imported alongside, but usually this leaves traces in the language. Bernhard Karlgren has reconstructed the Chinese language, more precisely the Chang'an dialect, of about 600 (the so-called Middle Chinese). The Chinese words "Xiangqi" and "Xiangxi" as well as their Middle Chinese counterparts do not show any influence of neither the Sanskrit word nor its Chinese rendition. The same is true for Persian *catrang* and Arab *shatranj*; these words, too, seem to haven't had any influence on the Chinese names of chess games. Of course it might be perfectly possible that someone changed the name of an imported chess game to a more Chinese sounding name.

"Xiangxi" was already known from emperor Wu's Xiangjing, so (as no one knew what Xiangxi really was) the word might have been adopted to render *caturanga*.

3.2 From Persia to China?

Accepting the time table recently proposed by Syed and Abka'i-Khavari, that is

- the game *caturanga* is developed in the early 6th century,
- the game *caturanga* is passed over to the Persians in the latter 6th century,
- the earliest (Indian) mention in a written source dates from about 625 (*Harsacarita* of Bāna),
- earliest Persian mention in a written source dates from about 750 until (at latest) 850 in the later Sasanid time (*Mātik-an-e satranj*),

a chess game ought to have been imported to China until 846 (the year of Bo Juyi's death). It is in no way superfluous to point out that the Middle Chinese predecessors of the words Xiangxi and Xiangqi do not show influences of the Persian word *catrang*, as there was a continuous flow of traffic on the Silk Roads between Persia and China, not only of caravans carrying goods, but also of diplomatic missions. Chinese sources record that from 553 to 578 ambassadors from

- the Hephthalites (553 and 558), a Hun tribe in North India,
- the Sasanids (553, 558, 578), a house of Persian rulers,
- the realm of Kutscha (560), a town at that branch of the Silk Road that runs south of the Tianshan,
- from the Sogdians (564), a nation of Central Asian merchants, based around Samarkand,
- from Bucharā (567), a merchant city in the Amu Darja valley, and
- from the realm of Khotan (574), another merchant city on the Silk Road,

arrived in Chang'an, the then capital of the Later Zhou dynasty. Most of these missions arrived during the reign of emperor Wu (r. 561-578); thus if one of them brought something similar to chess, it may well be that it had influence on the formation of Xiangxi.

Franke and Trauzettel mention that official Chinese-Persian contacts continued in 638, when the last ruler of the Sasanids, Sâhânsâh Yazdegerd III. (r. 632-651) sent a mission to Chang'an (then capital of the Tang dynasty) to request military assistance against the Arabs. Hisson Piruz in 654 and 661 again appealed to the Tang, but was denied help. He was awarded a formal rank as military governor of Afghanistan. In 674 Piruz fled to the Chinese court where he died in 708 as state pensioner.

Already in 651 Chalif 'Otman ibn 'Aff¯an (r. 644-656) had sent a first mission to Chang'an; from about 700 the Arab and Chinese spheres of influence touched each other in East Turkestan. On the occasion of all these diplomatic contacts an early form of Persian or Arab chess might have been brought to China.

Another interesting fact is that Samarkand, the place where some of the eldest known chess pieces have been found (the so-called Afrasiab pieces), was part of a Chinese protectorate in which Chinese craftsmen are known to have settled. This doesn't prove anything, but it shows some (hitherto unresearched) perspectives.

3.3 Can that be proven?

Nevertheless, questions remain. The first problem being that we don't know whether Persians or Indians played any chess game in China (or viceversa.). Abka'i-Khavari tells us that according to the Sahn¯ame *catrang* served as a didactic model in the education of princes in late Sasanid time Persia but the text in question dates from the 10th century. Thus one may doubt that it accurately reflects life at the Sasanid court. If we accept that Piruz and/or his retainers knew *catrang*, they might have made the game known at the Chinese court. The next problem is that (in case the time table presented here holds some truth) we do not hear anything about chess games until the early 9th century. In Niu Sengru's and Bo Juyi's texts Xiangqi appears all of a sudden and without any explanations, as if it were a well-known topic (at least well-known to Niu's and Bo's fellow scholar-officials). A certain diffusion of the game would be necessary for the game to 'pop up' so suddenly.

And then there is the question of the gaming material. Neither in Baoying-Xianginor in the game mentioned by Bo Juyi we find the four branches of the Indian army. Niu's text explicitly names Horse (resp. Cavalry), General, Chariot and (Foot-) Soldiers, it can be deduced that there were Crossbowmen and Catapults, in addition there is mention of a King. Bo explicitly names Soldiers and Chariots. The branches of the army that Niu mentions are not identical with those of the Indian army. Then we don't know anything about the shape of the pieces. If we proceed from the Afrasiab pieces dated to 761 Indian/Persian pieces were actual three-dimensional figurines. Niu's text which describes Baoying-Xiangqi possibly speaks of three-dimensional figures. If that really were the case, no traces thereof are known.

The next unanswered question regards the game board. It seems safe to assume that the *astapada* board was handed down to the Persians along with the pieces. We do not have any information

as to the size of the early Xiangqi board. It is speculated that the transposition of the pieces from the squares to the lines of the board (as in Xiangqi) triggered the invention of a board of 9 by 9 squares, which in turn triggered the invention of a board of 10 by 10 lines etc. This may be plausible but is utterly unproven. It seems plausible, however, to assume that the transposition from squares to lines in Xiangqi is due to the fact that in other Chinese board games the lines, but rarely if ever the squares were used. The earliest known source on the board size is the preface to *Guang xiangxi tu* by Zhao Buzhi (1053-1110). There we are told that in Xiangqi 34 pieces are used on a board of 11 by 11 lines.

The question of the initial arrangement of pieces cannot be answered, as we don't even know what kind of and how many pieces were used in early Xiangqi. We maybe may assume that the initial arrangement was modeled after that of *chatrang* (which in turn we do not know precisely). It should have become clear that Central Asia and the Silk Roads were under constantly changing influence to which both the Indians and the Chinese contributed. The how, where, and when of these interactions is still not very clear as a sizeable portion of research has focused on religion, lesson everyday life, and next to nothing on such questions as board game research.

4. Back to Reality

Returning from the land of what-ifs, we must simply state that too many questions remain yet unanswered to make any definite statement about the possibility of interconnections of early chess games in general, although there are hints that exactly that is the case. It has repeatedly been demonstrated [e.g. by Beauchamp] that not only the moves but also the initial position of the pieces in various older chess games are too similar to explain them through 'sheer coincidence' without further research (It will not be enough to glimpse at them and declare them connected (or not connected)). Nevertheless these similarities are not enough to prove that all chess games share a single common origin, and they are not enough to prove that the Asian chess games are somehow connected.

First of all, we chess historians should stop to speculate. It is time to reinspect all known source materials, this time without bias. By "all known source materials" I mean all known source materials, even those who are held sacrosanct. Sciences make progress, and something that was deemed true a century ago may today be obsolete. If that has been done we can decide whether additional research in certain directions that have been neglected so far has to be done. As soon as we know what the sources really tell us we can launch a search for the puzzles' missing pieces. If the sources lead us to think that materials that might link certain chess games may be found in a certain area, at a given time, we should devote special care to that given area and time. We might find that we ourselves are unfit to do that work, thus we have to recruit specialists in all the fields needed. Hopefully I have been able to transport the necessity of finding specialists e.g. for the languages and cultures of South East Asia in order to find out more on the chess games of that region. ... and we need a lot of experts. Every opinion has to be checked and rechecked to exclude the possibility of biased opinions. Only then is the time to formulate new working hypotheses, which after being backed by sources may have enough support to become a thesis. We are still far away from any theory on the origin and development of chess (even if there are some who will not like the idea). Up to now it is only benevolent to call the hypothesis of the Indian origin of chess a 'hypothesis'; in fact it's not a hypothesis, but a thought, an opinion, a mere speculation backed by only little material. It is time to openly declare that this opinion is nothing more than that; until, of course, unbiased and thorough research makes it possible to formulate the idea as a hypothesis.

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On 30 May 2000, 10:23.

4. Pavle Bidev, Yu Igalo, 1987: HOW I REORIENTATED MY CHESS BELIEFS

Pliant and pliable when necessary, I find cogitation lovely and lovesome. And so it happens that I, "un roseau pensant tremblant au vent"(Pascal), made a big break from the spell of India at the turn of the year 1969/70. The great Needham and his fellow Sinologists at Cambridge taught me better. For a closer understanding of this last statement the reader should study first the last 30 pages of the German text, pages 273-302, and then chapter 8 (of *Stammt Schach aus Altindien oder China?* Igalo 1986. KM). Needham & Co. convinced me very late that they had discovered a kind of official record of the invention of chinese protochess, Hsiang Hsi, in 569. This record is revealed in a couple of chess texts that were completely unknown to chess historians: the commentary by Wang Pao on the invention by the Emperor Wu Ti in 569 (2 pages) and two pages of a lengthy story by Yu Hsin (513-581), a cavalry general and contemporary of the Emperor. It lies translated before us in D.A. Leventhal's book *The Chess of China*, Taipei (Taiwan) 1978.

It was not only the two quoted texts that strengthened my belief in China as the birthplace of chess, but also the circular bronze and ivory counters for the astrological Hsiang Hsi and for the war game Hsiang Chhi found during excavations. Similar finds are totally lacking in India. Indeed, India ist a chess Sahara Desert for archaeological finds, written documents, literature, early references, legends in folklore, or anything akin. China actually abounds in all of the aforementioned.

Wu Ti's book "Hsiang Ching" (manual of the image game Hsiang) had further engendered, in the succeeding Sui dynasty, a two-part commentary. The Emperor's book itself went through a new printed edition in the T'ang dynasty (619-907), under the title "Su-Ku-Siang-King" (manual of the three Siang games). Thus two new games hat emerged from the astrological Hsiang probably even the military Hsiang Chhi. All three were called [H]siang with manifold significance: constellation game, image game, ivory game, but not elephant game, though from 569 to the present day the indistinct outline of the elephant has been discerned in the ideogram for Hsiang. The great researcher of games, Karl Himly, erroneously translated Hsiang Chhi as "elephant game" from 1870 until his death in 1904. Even today people often forget that in our current Hsian only two pieces are known as elephants, and two others have the similar sounding homophone meaning soothsayer. Budde/Bandholz: "Now however no game version classed in general as Xiangqi in the 12th and 13th century has an elephant piece, and so can scarcely be namend after it." (Hollfeld 1985, p.97)

From 569 up to the mid-13th century China had its game versions of Hsiang their precursor; India, but a single early game type, known as chaturanga. And that is not verifiable in India before 621, when Raja Harsha was converted to Buddhism and awarded, as a holy person, the titles Shri (blessed) and Diva (godlike). The Indians took about fifty years to develop the imported Hsiang to a Buddhist version of bloodless war, by means of the magic square of 64 cells. The 9-cell MS has a reciprocal relations to the Chinese chess board, as silent witness to the magical origin of protochess, from the 8 Kua, plus zenith in the niddle, to the 9 numbers of the Lo Shu MS or Chiu Kung, as chess is called in China. When Harsha died in 648 only chaturanga was known in India; but when the Emperor Tsung died in 650 three chess games wee known in China. Thus it is sufficiently clear who the godfather is. That is also the basis for my change from a chess-Indian to a Chinaman.

5. Ricardo Calvo, Madrid, 1996: SOME FACTS TO THINK ABOUT

Fact 1: Indian literature has no early mentions of chess but Persian literature does. The first unmistakable reference in Sanskrit writings is in the "Harschascharita" by the court poet Bana, written between 625 and 640. On the other hand, pre-islamic documents have solidly connected chess with the last period of the Sassanid rulers in Persia (VI-VII century). The "Kamamak", an epical treatise about the founder of this dynasty, mentions the game of chatrang as one of the accomplishments of the legendary hero. It has a proving force that a game under this name was popular in the period of redaction of the text, supposedly the end of the 6th century or the beginning of the 7th. Closely related is a shorter poem from about the same period entitled in Pahlevi "Chatrang-namak", dealing with the introduction of chess in Persia. Firdawsi wrote also about it in the 11th century, but his sources are solid and form a continuous chain of witnesses going back to the middle of the 6th. century in Persia.

Fact 2 : India has no early chess pieces but Persia does. The presence of carved chess men in Persian domains contrasts with the absence of such items in India. There are no chess men there from early times, and only in the 10th century appears an indirect mention from al-Masudi: "The use of ivory (in India) is mainly directed to the carving of chess- and nard pieces". Some experts believe that old Indian chess pieces may be discovered one day. So far, this is mere speculation. The three oldest sets of chess pieces closely identified as such belong to Persian domains, not to India. The most important are the Afrasiab pieces. They were found 1977 in Afrasiab, near Samarkanda, and have been dated by its Russian discoverers as early as the 7th-8th century. Western experts accept at least the year 761 because a coin so dated belongs to the same layer. This seven ivory men, questionable as all "idols" may be, are Persian, even if the territory was under Islamic rule since 712. Next group of chess pieces, (three chessmen) comes also from the Persian area. The so-called Fergana pieces include a "Rukh" in form of a geant bird, and its antiquity should be not too distant from the Afrasiab lot. In the Persian city of Nishapur another ivory set was discovered though belonging to later times, 9th or 10th century. These are not idols anymore and are carved following the abstract pattern which has been characterized as "arabic".

Fact 3 : The Arabs introduced chess in India after taking "Shatrang" from Persia. Games upon the "ashtapada" board of 8x8, with dice and with two or more players may have served as "protochess", but the two types of games already differ too strongly in their nature and philosophy to make the evolution of "Chaturanga" into "Shatransh" a simple question of direct parantage via the Persian "Chatrang". Arab writers stated quite frequently that they took the game of "shatransh" from the Persians, who called it "chatrang". This happens in the middle of a political-cultural revolution, which has been analyzed in historical texts. The ruling Ummayad dynasty was thrown out after a fierce civil war by a certain Abul Abbas, who initiated a new era, founding Bagdad around the year 750 and translating there from Damascus the Islamic political center. The Abbasid dynasty was ethnically and culturally of Persian origin. So Persian influences became clearly dominant in the cultural renaissance which took place inside the Arabic trunk. A lot of the previous knowledge from classical Greece, Byzantium, early Egyptian and Middle East civilizations and even "from the country of Hind" was compiled and re-translated into Arabic and absorbed in a scientific body which followed its further path towards the West. Chess was only a part of this knowledge, packaged together with earlier mathematical, astronomical, philosophical or medical achievements.

Fact 4 : Etymology is unclear. The roots of several chess terms may go further to India, but the fact is that the Sanscrit word "Chaturanga" means only "army", and it is unclear whether it referred to our chess, to a possible form of "protochess" with four players, or to some strategical exercise with pieces over a board with military purposes. In any case, to be on safer ground, we must remember the earliest solid evidences about the board game called chess belong to Persia. The Pahlevi word "Chatrang" means, even to- day, the mandrake plant, which has a root in form of a human figure. So, there is a good case in favour of a different ethymological interpretation: Any game played with pieces representing figures may be compared with the "shatrang" plant.

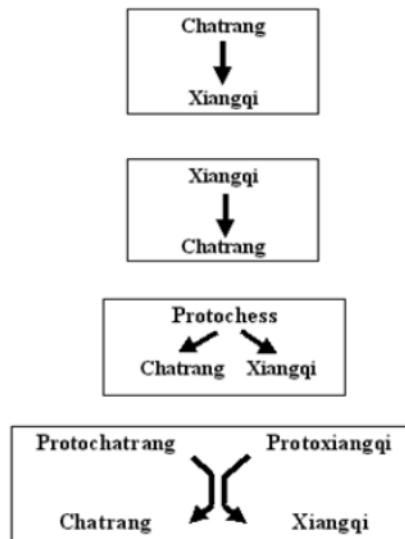
Another hint is the nomenclature of the pieces, persistently related to different sorts of animals rather than to components of an army: In the "Grande Acedrex" of King Alfonso of Castile (1283) lions, crocodiles, giraffes etc. play over a board of 12x12 cases with peculiar jumping moves, and the invention of it is connected to the same remote period in India as normal chess. They are very atypical in any context referring to India. (See the reference "Hasb"(War) in "The Encyclopaedia of Islam", De Gruyter, Leyden-New York 1967). On the other hand, elephants are not at all exclusive from Indian origin (Sir William Gowers, "African Elephants and Ancient Authors", African Affairs, 47 (1948) p.173 ff. Also Frank W. Walbank, "Die Hellenistische Welt", DTV 1983 p. 205-6), not even in military campaigns: The Persian army had also cavalry, footsoldiers, charriots and elephants as well as river ships. In Egypt, the Ptolemaic Kings obtained elephants regularly from Somalia. Strabo (16,4,5) mentions the foundation of several cities in Africa with the main purpose of hunting elephants. The hunters have even written dedications to Ptolemaios IV Philopator (221-204 BC). Polybios describes a battle with elephants between Ptolemaios IV and Antiochos III in 217 BC. Pyrrhus and Hannibal used it in the West. Modern research has confirmed all the details.

6. Jean-Louis Cazaux, Toulouse, 2001: IS CHESS A HYBRID GAME?

Foreword : the opinions developed in this presentation are subjective. I have studied the history and structure of Chess and other board games only by pure passion for several years and hold no title to pretend that my assertions are sound. However, I thought that it could be useful to share my current views with the IGK community, in simplicity.

Chess (as an evolution of Chatrang / Chaturanga) and Xiangqi striking resemblance is certainly not fortuitous. Its study is the object of this researchers and enthusiasts group.

Logically, 4 possibilities can be sketched out :



The first 3 schemes are too simple to explain all Chatrang and Xiangqi similarities AND differences.

A more complex scheme should be envisaged.

Birth of games is not necessarily a linear evolution. 2 (or more ?) seminal games, with mutual coupling by means of cultural influence should be envisaged.

It is true for Tabula / Nard, ancestors of our Backgammon, which can be seen as the marriage between two of the most famous ancient civilisations: Egypt and Mesopotamia.

For Chess, the Silk Road, as a proven bridge between Chinese and Indo-Persian worlds, offers a very plausible ground for such a model.



A careful study of the games structure is necessary.

Let's have a look at the East end of the Silk Road.

The Liubo was played in China from the 7th or 6th century BC up to the 12th century AD.

From Röllicke's excellent study, we learn that the Liubo had a strong mystical spirit and its board was at the same time a cosmological, a calendar and a divination instrument.

Although the rules are still largely unknown, some characters are surprising and intriguing : The board was heavily marked and the central square was commonly called "the water". Each player was moving 6 stones (qi) as basic Pawns which could be promoted to an owl (xiao). In addition, the material included sometimes 20 "fishes" (zishhi qi) which stayed in the water and had to be captured by the players. Therefore, the total number of pieces involved in that game could reach 32.

Is this number a coincidence ? It is a tantalising question...



A proposed vision for an evolution of the Liubo board towards a Xiangqi board

My idea is that someone would have imagined a battle-game using the Liubo material. Two opposite armies were composed of 6 pawns (this is compatible of the Xuanguai lu, the first accepted Chinese chess text circa 810) and 20 major pieces defined in relation with a formalised activity such as, why not, magic squares.

Most of Chessmen moves can be represented on a simple 5x5 square.

That defines the move of:

- 2 short range pieces, Governor (G) and Vizier (V). They move 1 step.
- 3 mid range pieces, Elephant (E), Horse (H) and a not-yet identified X leaper. They move 2 steps. The seducing Horse finds here its rationale.
- The 20 "fishes" could form a set with 1 of each piece moving 1 step, 2 of each piece moving 2 steps and a pair of powerful sliding proto-chariot.
- The Cannon, more exactly a Catapult at those early times (as seen on exhumed charms), could have been originally the mysterious 2-step orthogonal leaper.
- The presence of a long range runner as the Chariot is not well explained here; however such a gaming piece is very common in many warlike games from many civilisations around the world. Why not imagining that the creators of Proto-xiangqi were inspired by a western war game as we are going discussed just after ?

A proto-xiangqi could have looked as the following:

Now, let's have a look at the West end of the Silk Road. This region has been deeply influenced by the Greeks and this Hellenistic heritage was later pursued by numerous contacts (hostile or commercial) with the Roman world.

The Greek Polis and the Roman Latrunculi (more or less the same game) were certainly known, maybe under adapted forms, in this region. The Indian Ashtapada, also known in Persia (Hast-Pay), remains mysterious to us. We only know that it made use of a 8x8 board.

Maybe these Polis and Ashtapada have no link between them, maybe they have, however, they are two good reasons to believe that the Indo-Persian world was ready to play a war-like game on a 8x8 board.

The Pawns are very different in Chatrang and in Xiangqi. For both, they move 1 square forward however they take 1 square diagonally forward in Chatrang, while in Xiangqi they capture as they move. Again, it is difficult to be convinced of an evolution, whatever its direction, explaining one type of Pawn deriving from the other. The Indo-Persian sort is the most elaborated. Also, it corresponds to a game where the Pawns are present to form a full line. I am convinced that this is not fortuitous. My deep intuition is that peculiar Pawn move in Chatrang which can form very efficient self-protected chains could derive from a local evolution of the Graeco-Roman battle

game (the phalanx, the mysterious latin mandra ?).

I also see a genuine Indo-Persian piece into the King. The Chinese counterpart is limited to orthogonal moves only and his confined to the 9-points palace. Then, the Xiangqi is a pleasant circling and blocking game. On the contrary, in Chatrang, the King can really lead the battle. A seducing hypothesis will be to confirm that a kind of Latrunculi had been transmitted to those regions with, at least, 2 types of men : Pawns and Kings.

The Pawn promotion to a Vizier is another typical characteristic of Indo-Persian Chess. Such a process is the good answer to their final arrival on the last row where they get pinned down. A Xiangqi-like solution allowing a side walk was not an acceptable alternative since it was not enough to efficiently chase an unbound King. This promotion mode (on final row) is very clever and intimately attached to the western style of Pawns and Kings.



Kushan gold dinar representing Kanishka I the Great (100-126 AD), inscriptions with Greek alphabet

My proposed birth scenario for Chess is the following :

Westerners (Indians, Persians, Bactrians, Kushans ?) identified their supposed war game with the battle game derived from Liubo, with 32 pieces. The resemblance of their 8x8 board with the Chinese board - 9x10 intersections which give 8x8 squares if one makes abstraction of the separating river - would have helped the identification and adoption of the rest of the troops. Not only the river, but all other markings like the palaces (if they existed) were therefore victim of that assimilation. (Although the never satisfactorily explained crosscut markings of the Ashtapada board are worth a study).

The arrangement followed some logic : they kept the Commander and his Counsellor, here a King and his Vizier, at the centre, the Chariot at the angles and Horses and Elephants in between. This was fulfilling the first row already and since the Cannons were not immediately connected with an accepted division of the army, they were simply ignored and the corresponding pieces assimilated to 2 supplementary Pawns. Therefore, a complete Pawn line was obtained, and I suspect that this line was also found in anterior board-games in these western countries. It can be thought that playing inside the squares rather than on the intersection points influenced the way the chessmen moved. It gave more freedom, allowing Elephant and Horse to jump over an occupied case. This play style is more difficult to accept, psychologically, on a grid where the player who moves his piece two steps does it naturally point by point and is stopped if the intermediate location is occupied. (and Japanese Shogi which is played on squares has a jumping Horse).

Conclusion: The idea behind this paper is that Chess would be an hybrid game combining western characters inherited from Graeco-Roman or Indian games with some eastern elements which have led to Xiangqi from their own side. Others before me have suggested links with board games such as the Liubo, the Polis or the Ashtapada. What I have tried to do here is to draw a consistent frame which could explain most characteristics of both Xiangqi and Chess ludic structures. The argument which is developed in this paper is highly subjective. It aims at raising open discussions with researchers and enthusiast amateurs passionate by Chess history. Since my opinion has evolved and changed directions several times in the past last years, fluctuating with the rich and numerous contacts I had got, it is possible that I revise these views in future. I give an appointment to interested readers on our web site for an up-to-date vision: <http://history.chess.free.fr/enigma.htm>.

7. Gianfelice Ferlito and Alessandro Sanvito: ORIGINS OF CHESSPROTOCHESS, 400 B.C. TO 400 A.D.

FROM: The Pergamon Chess Monthly September 1990 Volume 55 No. 6

The game of chess, as we know it, emerged in the North West of ancient India around 600 A.D.

(1) According to some scholars, the game of chess reached Persia at the time of King Khusrau Nushirwan (531/578 A.D.), though some others suggest a later date around the time of King Khusrau II Parwiz (590/628 A.D.) (2) Reading from the old texts written in Pahlavic, the game was originally known as "chatrang". With the invasion of Persia by the Arabs (634/651 A.D.), the game's name became "shatranj" because the phonetic sounds of "ch" and "g" do not exist in Arabic language. The game spread towards the Mediterranean coast of Africa with the Islamic wave of military expansion and then crossed over to Europe. However, other alternative routes to some parts of Europe may have been used by other populations who were playing the game. At the moment, this "Indian, Persian, Islamic" theory on the origin of the game is accepted by the majority of scholars, though it is fair to mention here the work of J. Needham and others who suggested that the historical chess of seventh century India was descended from a divinatory game (or ritual) in China. (3)

On chess theories, the most exhaustive account founded on deep learning and many years' studies is the A History of Chess by the English scholar, H.J.R. Murray. In his work, Murray quoted with approval a remark made by the American scholar, D.W. Fiske in 1900: "Before the seventh century of our era, the existence of chess in any land is not demonstrable by a single shred of contemporary or trustworthy documentary evidence.... Down to that date, it is all impenetrable darkness."

From Chatrang Namak, (4) the most important of Pahlavic texts, we learn that chess in ancient India was a war game and its name was 'chaturanga'. In Sanskrit texts, a number of references are made to the game or even to terms associated with it. The Indian romance Vasavadatta by Subandhu (late 6th or early 7th century A.D.) may have the first reference though it is not clear. Better than Indian poem Harshcharita by Bana (early 7th century A.D.). In this poem, the words of "chaturanga" and "ashtapada" are mentioned together. (5)

The name of "chaturanga" has a double meaning: the game of chess and a term referring to the four parts which formed the typical Indian army (infantry, chariots, cavalry, elephants). The name "ashtapada" is used for a board of 64 squares which according to the current theory would then become the chessboard for "chaturanga". Through linguistic analysis this conclusion has been reached.

Professor R. Eales writes in his book: "Before the year 600 A.D., there is only archaeology and conjecture...." (6) and later he adds that archaeology is "of little use in studying the origin of chess because so few very early pieces survive. Even when promising objects are discovered, it is almost impossible to prove that they are true chess pieces and not just figurines." In our opinion, however, it is only through archaeological findings that we may eventually find the answer to the origin of chess. Our faith in future archaeological findings is supported by numerous discoveries made during the last 60 years. We refer to the 400 or more chess pieces found in various parts of Old Russia (from 900 to 1600 A.D.), (7) as well as to the Venafro's chess pieces (figure left) (8) and to those of Nashipur which have been dated around 900 A.D. (9) and to the many other Islamic and European chess pieces found in various locations.

Up to now, we had to rely on the experiences of the archaeologists for recognizing and dating the artifacts which resembled chess pieces. When the assessment of the pieces have contrasted with the current theory on chess origin, these archaeological findings have been strongly contested. Take as an example the two Uzbeki's (10) which are dispute as being chess pieces, or the 18 pieces of Venafro now challenged for their dating, rather than as chess pieces, or the recently discussed artifacts of Lothal mentioned in the last issue of The Chess Collector. (11)

We thought worthwhile in this contest to try to suggest some guidelines for an archeologist to use in the event of a fortunate and much welcomed finding of protochess pieces.

In the 1850's, the eminent Dr. Lightfoot of Cambridge University, on the basis of his study of

the Book of Genesis, proclaimed that the world had been created on October 23rd, 4004 B.C. at the civilized hour of 9:00 A.M. (12)

We do not expect, alas, to be so equally precise on the date of the "creation" or "development" of chess, but we hope to give some assistance with indicating a probable period within which the birth of chess may have taken place. If we are convincing, these temporal guidelines could be kept in mind by archaeologists should they find artifacts which have a possible resemblance to chess pieces.

At this point, we may quote H.J.R. Murray that "the date when it occurred to some Indian to represent the chaturanga and its evolutions in a game cannot be fixed, though naturally, it cannot be earlier than the organization of the army on which it is based." We like to add here, that probably the game cannot have been devised in a period in which at least one of the four military parts of the army symbolized in the game was already discarded as obsolete in war terms.

Today, if a simulated game of war were to be invented, it would seem unlikely that the inventor would mix obsolete armaments with the latest technological ones, like crossbows against tanks, ball cannons against helicopters. Each epoch has its typical armaments. The chess game has military symbols which are peculiar to a certain period in the history of warfare. Of course, the game of chess, once developed, managed to stay in existence and, indeed, to flourish in spite of the historical aging of the original military symbols, by virtue of its intrinsic intellectual vitality. We shall give a brief outline of military symbols used in chess in order to establish the temporal limits in which the invention of the game may have taken place. The symbols were: infantry, chariots, cavalry, elephants.

Military history, as we know it today, actually starts in the third millennium B.C. in Mesopotamia with the Sumerians.

Interesting, from a point of view of military history, are two Sumerian testimonies brought to life by archaeologists in the first half of this century: a rectangular object originally of wood, decorated with stone and shell mosaic, 'The standard of Ur' (Babylonia c. 2500 B.C.) and today at the British Museum, and an engraved column called "Stele of the Vultures" of the same epoch and today at the Louvre.

The first shows the Sumerian army going into battle: chariots and infantry are realistically pictured. The infantry is heavily armed (copper helmets and axes) and lightly armed (without cloak, wielding axes or short spears). The chariots are drawn by two wild asses (onagers) and carrying two men of whom one is the driver and the other a warrior who flings light javelins. The second evidence shows the infantry arranged in phalanx formation anticipating by 2000 years the Greek phalanx which won Alexander the Great his victories.

For 18 centuries, the armies will be fundamentally based on infantry and chariotry. The chariots underwent technological innovations of remarkable nature when the horse eventually replaced the onager. It seems probably that people living in the Steppes southeast of Europe around 2500/2000 B.C. imported domesticated onagers from Mesopotamia. They then started to domesticate horses which roamed in great number as wild animals in their territories. It is only around 1700 B.C. that horses were used in war as the 'engine' of the chariot. (13) The Hittites, people of Indo-European language and based in Anatolia where they flourished for 500 years (1700/1200 B.C.) improved the Sumerian chariot and brought this section of the army to a high degree of efficiency by an elaborate system of horse training and by the introduction of a third member of the chariot's crew. (14)

The Egyptian made improvements of the chariot maneuverability: each car contained two warriors, comrades of equal rank.

Many centuries passed before new ideas developed for a different use of the horse in war. It is only with the Assyrian King Ashurnasirpal II (883/859 B.C.) that a new type of warfare is experimented: the mounted troops. It is not yet the mounted cavalry which will be developed and used by another Assyrian King Sargon II (721/705 B.C.). (15)

It is in that period that three military parts (infantry, chariotry, cavalry) are used in an army together for the first time.

The use of elephants in war originated in India. There are mentioned in the Buddhist texts of the VI century B.C. (16). It could be that elephants were used even before in war. There is a reference in Rig Veda (a magnificent collection of 1028 Sanskrit liturgical hymns composed in India around 1500/1200 B.C.) to two elephants bending their heads and rushing together against the enemy. (17) In India, chariots and infantry together with cavalry and elephants, are mentioned in the epic poems Mahabharata and Ramayana which cover a period of 600 years (300 B.C. to 300 A.D.). (18) According to Greek historians, the Indian King Porus, who met the army of Alexander in 326 B.C. at Hydaspes, was at the head of 50,000 men (infantry), 1,000 chariots, 130 elephants and 3,000 horses (cavalry). (19) This testimony proves that at the time the four divisions of an Indian army were already in use. This type of Indian army was called "chaturanga" from "chatur" = four and "anga" = member.

The Indian sculptures of Sanchi, Stupa I, made by artists of the first century A.D. for celebrating the achievements of the King Asoka Maurya (269/227 B.C.) well represent this type of army. It can be assumed that, at the time, the artists were taking contemporary chariots as models. (20) These chariots were drawn by four horses and carried six men. They could not move fast. In India, the chariot, as a vehicle of war, began to be disused, to a certain extent, soon after the commencement of the Christian era. However, it survived as a part of the Indian armies down to 300/400 A.D. By Gupta Times (320/500 A.D.) the chariot was little more than a means of transport. Its disappearance as a fighting force is gradual. It seems, however, that the chariots were completely discarded by 700 A.D. from any Indian army. (21)

So, from a strictly military point of view, the chronology would suggest that the invention of protochess may have taken place between 700 B.C. and 700 A.D. However, if we assume, as probable ground of a protochess game, the vast territory comprising India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and in more general terms, Central Asia, the time limits could be restricted from 400/300 B.C. to 300/400 A.D. because mainly during this period of time were the four divisions of the Indian army used together.

This temporal guideline, however is not, and should not be the only guide for the archaeologist because, if this framework becomes mechanically used, it implies, for instance, that the old Egyptian game of Senet (c. 1300 B.C.) could not be considered a protochess game because it falls too far outside the limits we have suggested, but the old Roman game found at Herculaneum may be a protochess game because its dating is c. 100 B.C./100 A.D. This is not so. These two types of games were "tabula" games (board games) in use among Egyptians and Romans. It is, therefore, necessary to add to the above-mentioned temporal and geographic suggestions an indication of the possible shape of the pieces. We do not have any description of pieces used in "chaturanga" or in "ashtapada".

We do not know if the pieces depicted the military symbols in a realistic way or were stylized or abstract or shaped for display or play purposes in a variety of styles. We think that the protochess pieces were at least of four different figures that may have justified four distinct types of movements, typical of a chess game played either with or without dice. With regard to the shape of pieces, the history of chessmen has shown us that ornamental pieces have always been in use for display, whereas simple and stylized shapes have been employed for actual play. The findings of Afrosiab (22) are decorative and ornamental, where the Nashipur (23) pieces are stylized. Both are c. IX century A.D. and they support our view. It is, therefore, possible and probable that even the protochess pieces may have similar appearances. Even the ancient 'tabula' pieces may have influenced the protochess shapes.

To summarize: we suggest that three elements need to be considered together when confronting early artifacts:

1. timing between 400/300 B.C. and 300/400 A.D., when the four divisions of an Indian army were active together.
2. Probable geographic area as mentioned above.
3. The shape of the pieces corresponding to the four divisions (infantry, chariots, cavalry, elephants) which could be abstract or realistic.

It is comforting to note, that if around 600/700 A.D. a game, chess, arrives to inspire the creation of fanciful poems (24) and the birth of numerous legends, (25) this signifies that the game was already popular and so widespread that it leads one to believe that the game of chess could have been played a long time before.

If this is so, then in some unknown place, maybe even in a sunken ship or the bottom of a sea, ancient pieces, used for playing a protochess game, are probably still to be discovered. We hope that one day an archaeologist will find them and give us all great joy.

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8. Gerhard Josten, Cologne, 2001: CHESS – A LIVING FOSSIL

Until recently the academic search for the origin of chess was mainly based on literary sources and only now and then the examination of statuary counters was of interest. Starting with Joseph Needham's work written in 1962 for the first time the game itself and its structure were brought into the focus of attention in the search for its origin. In 1994 Hans Holländer put forward the suggestion that neither the names and forms of the counters nor history should be analysed with priority but the structure of the game of chess itself.

This suggestion is what is being pursued here. An analysis of all variants of chess shows that its structure is based on three main elements. The element of hunt games is represented by the central figure, the element of variation of counters by the officers and the element of race games by the pawns.

Based on this observation the first thesis proposed here is that chess was created through the unification of these three elements. Games or related techniques, which certainly preceded the invention of chess and which contain these elements in an isolated form, can be found in the entire area along the Silk Road. The whole process of unification, however, still raises some questions.

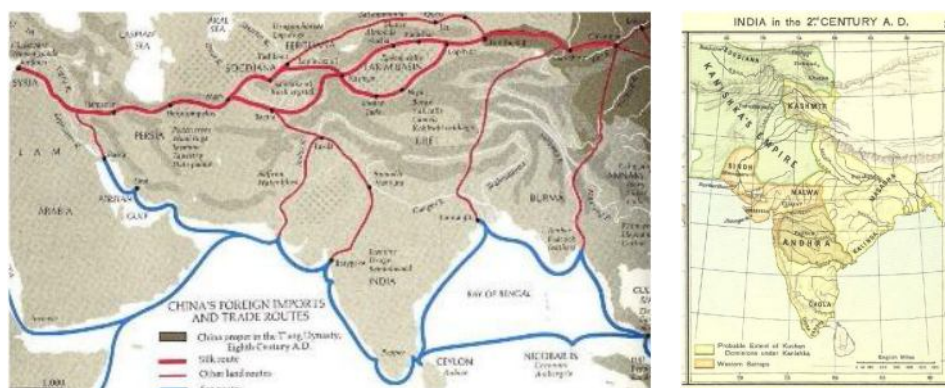
Considering the geographical, historical and cultural conditions, which are relevant as matters stand, in the second thesis put forward here, the actual process of unification is being ascribed to a civilization which died out long ago. An important hint concerning this thesis was given by Isaak Lindner in 1975: The Kushan Empire. On the one hand there are accounts of intensive contact between this empire and its contemporary political neighbours from the Near East to India and China, neighbours which did not only take over the inheritance of this empire - but claim the invention of chess for themselves nowadays. On the other hand this empire is characterized by a harmonious melting of motives and elements of various cultures and artistic traditions, excellent conditions for the process of unification, which was necessary for the invention of a game like chess.

The core of my thesis is thus: Military, divinatory, mathematical or other theories did not create chess, these theories followed the game of chess. Rather, the systematic combination of sophisticated game concepts in the Kushan Empire were the beginnings of this game.

So these are my answers to the questions of Egbert Meissenburg:

- Who? ► The Kushans
- Where? ► In Central Asia
- When? ► Between 50 BC and 200 AD
- How? ► By systematic combination of three sophisticated game concepts
- Why? ► Because of the Kushan syncretism

These theses were developed solely on the basis of an examination of the structure of the game of chess. Only academic verification through literary and further archaeological sources can show their validity. Because nearly nobody ever has heard of the Kushan empire (1st to 3rd century) in Central Asia, I shall give here a first short information:



The Silk Road and the Map of the Kushan Empire

King Kanishka (78 - 144) was one of the greatest kings of the Kushan dynasty that ruled over the northern part of the Indian subcontinent, Afghanistan, and possibly regions north of Kashmir in Central Asia. The capital was Purushapura, nowadays Peshawar. Kanishka's coins show Hindu, Buddhist, Greek, Persian and even Sumerian-Elamite images of gods. They are demonstrative of religious syncretism in his beliefs.

To discover Kushan chess pieces will cause a great problem. The National Museum in Kabul was formerly one of the most important museums in the world; more than 90% of its exhibits were excavated in Afghanistan and formed a complete historical record of this great cultural crossroads. A list of artifacts among the stolen or imperiled treasures of the National Museum contains a collection of 1,772 artifacts excavated between 1937 and 1946 from Begram (ancient Kapisa, the summer capital of the Kushan Empire), in Parwan province on the fabled Silk Route that linked India and China with Rome.

However, the Archaeological Museum Termez in Uzbekistan, 60 km away from Dalverzintepa, is proud to show these two pieces of the Kushan era, which are very similar to the known chess artifacts of Afrasiab:



Chessmen, Dalverzintepa, 2nd century

Why some scientists are denying their characteristic as chess pieces, though their shape is so similar to the accepted chess pieces of Afrasiab, has one simple reason: They wish chess to remain an Indian invention.

Concerning this point, a look at the following “Addendum” is recommended. But first please regard the following piece, which is totally styled like the Afrasiab pieces and was unearthed by Albert von Le Coq (see: CHOTCHO, Koeniglich Preussische Turfan-Expeditionen, Verlag Dietrich Reimer, Berlin 1913, p. 218) during the winter period 1902/1903 in the Taklamakan desert along the Silk Road near the oasis Turfan:



Chessman from Chotcho, date unknown

9. Joseph Needham, Cambridge, 1962: THOUGHTS ON THE ORIGIN OF CHESS

The game of chess (as we know it) has been associated throughout its development with astronomical symbolism, and this was more overt in related games now long obsolete. The battle element of chess seems to have developed from a technique of divination in which it was desired to ascertain the balance of ever-contending Yin and Yang forces in the universe. According to the Chinese literature this "image-chess" (hsiang chhi) was developed during the reign of the Emperor Wu of the Northern Chou dynasty (+561 to +578), and the date of the first treatise on the subject is definitely named as +569. The preface of this by Wang Pao still exists. It appears that the pieces on the board in this divination technique represented the sun, moon, planets, stars, constellations, etc. The suggestion is that this "game" passed to +7th-century India, where it generated the recreational game conceived in terms of battling human armies.

Now this "image-chess" derived in its turn from a number of divination techniques which involved the throwing of small models, symbolic of the celestial bodies, on to prepared boards. Thus there was a dice element as well as a move element, and there were many intermediate forms between pure throwing and placement followed by combat moves. All these go back to China of the Han and pre-Han times, i.e. to the -4th or -3rd century, and similar techniques have persisted down to late times in other cultures. On a parallel line of development numbered dice, anciently wide-spread, were on a related line of development which gave rise in +9th-century China to dominoes and playing-cards.

The most significant of the ancient boards was the shih (used from the Warring States period onwards) - a double-decked cosmic diagram having a square earth-plate surmounted by a rotatable discoidal heaven-plate, both being marked with cyclical and astronomical signs (compass-points, lunar mansions etc.) as well as the symbols of the I Ching (Book of Changes) and other technical terms used only in divination. "Pieces" or symbolic models were employed with this in a variety of different ways, and in the round heaven-plate of the shih we can recognise the lineal ancestor of all compass-dials.

The reason for this is because among the symbolic models used there was one representing the Great Bear (the Northern Dipper), so important in Chinese polar-equatorial astronomy - carved into the shape of a spoon. This replaced the picture of the Great Bear, or Northern Dipper, which previously had been carved on the heaven-plate of the diviner's board. This model spoon was probably first of wood, stone or pottery, but in the +1st century (and possibly already in the -2nd century) the unique properties of lode-stone (magnetite) suggested in China the use of this substance. Since polarity would establish itself along the main axis of a bar of the mineral, whether or not it was removed from the rock in a north-south direction (i.e. in the earth magnetic field), the "south-pointing spoon" was discovered.

During later centuries the frictional drag of the lode-stone spoon on its bronze base-plate was avoided by inserting the piece of lode-stone in a piece of wood with pointed ends which could be floated, or balanced upon an upward-projecting pin. Such methods were used as late as the +13th century. But some time between the +1st and +6th century it was found in China that the directive property of the lode-stone could be transferred to (included in) the small pieces of iron float upon water by suitable devices. The earliest description still extant of such water-compasses, from which all subsequent forms must derive, is the early +11th century. By the +7th or +8th century the needle was replacing the lode-stone, advantage being taken of the property of induction; on account of the much greater precision with which readings could be taken. By the late Thang period (+8th or +9th century) the declination as well as the polarity of the magnet had been discovered, antedating the European knowledge of the declination by some six centuries. The Chinese were theorising about the declination before Europe knew even of the polarity, an event which took place at the end of the +12th century.

Thus it may be said that the ancestor of all dial-and pointer-readings, the greatest single factor in the voyages of discovery, and the oldest instrument of magnetic-electrical science may perhaps be said to have begun as a proto-"chess"-man used in a divination technique. Not without some

surprise we are brought to the conclusion that the recreational game of chess, and the magnetic compass, with all that flowed from it, took their origin at a single point - namely, a group of divination techniques in ancient Chinese proto-science.

10. Victor Keats, London, 1993: IS CHESS MENTIONED IN THE TALMUD?

The Babylonian Talmud was a product of the Jewish settlements on Persian territory, first under the Parthian Empire and then under the Sassanian Empire which succeeded it from AD 226. In these settlements, the descendants of the Jews who were forced into exile in Babylon, Mesopotamia (Iraq) and Persia by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC were joined by the refugees from Judaea which was devastated by the Romans in 70 AD. As a systematic and conscious endeavour to record the history, laws and customs of the Jews, the Talmud provides an authentic account of the social life of its time. It was finalized in about AD 500.

The Talmud was written in Aramaic or Chaldaic, which had long been the diplomatic language of the entire Middle East. It was the language of Jesus, and was written by the scribes or scribe servants of the extended Persian Empire, where stones with Aramaic (Chaldaic) inscriptions have been found. From the Pahlavi and Sassanian dynasties there is a paucity of recorded history of this period. Thus, history written in Aramaic (Chaldaic) is of particular importance.

..... A further reference to a board game occurs in "Nedarim" (25a), where we are told how the rabbinical law court imposes an oath on a litigant. The standard English translation reads:

"When an oath is administered, the man swearing is admonished: "Know that we do not adjure you according to your own mind, but according to our mind and the mind of the Court." Now, what does this exclude? Surely the case of one who gave his creditor *iskundrée* and mentally dubbed them coins".

To perceive its implications of the word "*iskundrée*", we do not need to go into all the niceties of the argument. The difference between a valid oath and a disingenuous one is like the difference between money and pieces in a game -- something that looks like money but is not the real thing. (A similar point arises in Shebuoth 29a).

This same game is mentioned in "Kiddushin" (21b), where two judges are arguing about a point of law. By way of challenging his opponent's competence, one of them says:

"When you were at Mar Samuel's academy you wasted your time playing *iskundrée*".

From the reference to Mar Samuel, the passage is to be dated as early as the third century AD. Mar Samuel was a known historic princely figure and recorded friend of the last Emperor of the Parthian Empire which ended in 226 AD.

Clearly these references to games are no more than incidental and casual. But this very fact suggests that the games must have been broadly familiar to the population supporting the Talmudic Academies; they were firmly enough established in day-to-day usage to be included as a matter of course in legal argument.

A careful discussion of these and other passages was published in 1892 by the American scholar Alexander Kohut. He concluded that only a sufficiently "serious" game could have distracted law students from their studies, hence that the word "*iskundrée*" (of which I shall later discuss the possible derivation) could have only one meaning -- chess.

..... One theory is that chess has an ancestor in the ancient Greek game "of *pesseia* (or *petteia*)" which spread to the East in the period of colonization following the conquests of Alexander the Great (d.323 BC) -- when the name Alexandria was given to so many towns of the greater Persian Empire. In this theory, the original Indian war-game of "*chaturanga*", which was played with dice, was transformed by the influence of "*pesseia*" -- which is mentioned in classical sources as a game essentially dependent on skill. Chess, then, resulted from an amalgamation of the two types of game. In this context it is significant that the talmudic word "*pispussin*" has been equated with "*pesseia*".

But the word "*iskundrée*", which Kohut interprets without reservation as chess, suggests similar thoughts about the derivation of the game. In his article that I have mentioned, Kohut considers that *iskundrée* derives from "Iskander ibn-Phillip Maqudon" which is nothing other than the Persian and Arabic version of the name "Alexander son of Philip of Macedonia". In the Talmud,

Alexander the Great is himself called Alexandros; the contrasting word iskundrée may have been specially chosen to denote the game of which Alexander was the mediator.

Existing theories on the origins of chess are necessarily tentative. Among the sources of information on the societies where chess made an early appearance, the Talmud possesses the unique status of a historical record diligently preserved without a break in time. As further research in the field develops, it is to be hoped that the Talmud will be given the attention which this status demands.