

»sukandukam
yajāmahe sadvṛttam
lakṣagāminam«

From the lost
Kandukaveda

Der Vidūsaka

Ausgabe 2 – EM-Sonderausgabe

Herausgegeben vom Weimarer Indologenkreis

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GASTKOMMENTAR

Liebe Freunde des runden Leders,

nach vielen Irrungen und Wirrungen schwang sich die abendländische Philosophie um die Wende vom 19. zum 20. Jh. zu der Erkenntnis auf, daß die durch vier Eckfahnen bezeichneten Grenzen auch die Grenzen meiner Welt bedeuten (vgl. L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, 5.6: »Grau ist alle Theorie. Entscheidend ist auf 'm Platz.«). Wittgensteins Schlußsatz 7 lautet denn auch: »Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, das muß man kommentieren« – heute bekanntlich das Motto aller televisionären Sportreporter. Wittgenstein folgt wie alle Alpenvölker natürlich ebenfalls »fußballterminologisch angereicherten Denkmustern« (Gauthier Ejals), und zwar gleich im ersten Satz 1: »Die Welt ist alles, was der Ball ist.« Die Bedeutung dieses berühmten, etwas kryptischen Anfangssatzes war lange unklar, weltfremde Philologen schlugen unsinnige Konjekturen wie »Fall« (statt des inhaltlich geradezu zwingenden »Ball«) vor, bis Wittgensteins kongenialer Ausleger J. Herberger, ein früher postcultural anthropologist, im Jahre 1954 in Bern die Lösung fand und schlagend paraphrasierte: »Der Ball ist rund.«

Die meisten Indologen kennen Herberger aus einem anderen Zusammenhang, denn von ihm stammt auch der berühmte Satz: »Nach dem Sarga ist vor dem Sarga«, der erst nach der Wende von einer Arbeitsgruppe der Universität Halle überzeugend dechiffriert werden konnte. Auf Herberger geht auch die Einsicht zurück, daß Sanskrit *pauruṣa* mit »Blutgrätsche« zu übersetzen ist. Entsprechend bedeutet *puruṣasya puruṣatā* »die Eigenschaft eines typischen Sechser«, wörtlich »Kampfkraft des Kampfschweins«.

Als »Sechser« bezeichnet man bekanntlich einen »Spieler« (*puruṣa*), der das *madhyakṣetra* abräumt. Sein Prototyp ist der von dem Schlachtenbummler Kṛṣṇa zum Sieg getriebene Knüppler und üble Foulspieler Bhīma aus der Fußball-Saga Mahābhārata, die aus Fangesängen von sogenannten Fanbeauftragten (*sūta*) zusammengestellt wurde. Unsterblich ist auch der lange mißverständene Satz, mit dem der göttliche Spielmacher Rāma seinen besten Stürmer zum entscheidenden Konter gegen die srilankische Nationalmannschaft in die Gasse schickte: »Ha nu Mann, geh du voran!« In diesem Sinne: Ein dreifaches saubhāgyam!

Lord Saint-René

Bend it like the Ṛṣis

Recent findings in the Indus valley have suggested that the ball was an im-



portant item in Indus culture. A newly discovered seal depicting something resembling a football with the usual undeciphered signs has sparked new theories about the Indus people and has prompted a reinterpretation of archeological remains. The »great bath« could after all be a football ground, made unusable by floods and therefore deserted. Indeed the whole question of an »Ary-

an invasion» may have to be readressed from a completely different angle. If a research scholar with the intellectual agenda of the 23rd century would find British tabloids writing »Blitz the Germans«, he would not necessarily think of football, and similarly the »invaders« from the North-West could have been there for the first indo-european premier league.

With this new perspective many other details suddenly fall into place: Most importantly, the »Indus script«, recently thought to be no script at all, seems to consist of symbols expressing the names of teams, as *Harappa Bulls* (see the image below). Note that the sign on the far right is an image of a football ground, second left displays a flag, a clear reference to a fan club, while the second right is an Indian club symbolically sheathed, which means »hooligans go home«.



Some colleagues fascinated with these findings have reacted with a frenzy of reinterpretation, sensing that the Oriental other has suddenly become so close. What totally escaped my notice was that the sign on the left was a necessarily two-dimensional projection of a football, with the stitching indicated. If that would be accepted, Buddhism would have adapted its *dharmacakra* from the famous game and even been influenced by its terminology. Now, finally, the original meanings of *cakravartin*, of *dharmacakra* (»fair game«),

and *tripīṭaka* (“hattrick”) can be regained.

It is believed that these findings will boost a new phase of post-colonial research, because now the conclusion that the Britishers took football from their colony and left it with cricket has become inevitable.

KIṂ KĀRYAM ?

We have no doubts that the UEFA will fund a research institute in one of the excellent European universities and the former German minister of education, Edelgard Bulmahn, has immediately reacted and modified her recent campaign (“Brains up”) by instituting a new round of project applications under the name “balls up”.

Now a thorough search on the remains of Old-Indian football culture can be conducted by specialists. Hardly studied texts as *The Kick* (*Pādatādīṭaka*) can now be analysed, the Ball yantra (*kandukayantra*), a special tactic (back four, Viererkette) from *Rasaratnasamuccaya* 9.75 can be reevaluated.

And once alerted, the ubiquitous references to football in Indian literature open up entirely new avenues for research. Apparently Śaṅkarācārya was an ardent football player with certain problems in controlling the ball (*pramādataḥ pracyutakelikandukaḥ Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* 325) and it was played within the enclosure of gardens (*ārāmasīmāni ca kandukaghātālilā, Nārāyaṇīya* 8.29.9),

The most fascinating new field of studies emerging from these findings will, however, be gender studies connected with football. From numerous, indeed endless descriptions of women playing football we know that men were stunned by the game: *mano harati subhruvaḥ kim api kandukakrīḍitam* (*Subhāṣitaratnakośa* 17.62),

that plays were organized specifically for the queen (*devīm kandukavihāreṇārādhayitum āgamisyati*, *Daśakumāracarita*) and that tournaments took base every month (*pratimāsaṃ kṛttikāsu kandukanṛtyena*, *ibid.*). Sometimes, when putting in a cross, the ball fell into the palace,¹ so apparently the game was also played at the court.

Again Indologists are on the cutting edge of developments: there is evidence to suggest that British players have preserved secret texts on football, the so called *Kandukaveda*: In order to capture its mantric power, players like David Beckham have tattooed Sanskrit mantras on their arms, used presumably as a repellent charm against missing the goal. Its language is still unknown, but the phenomenon is known from the Buddhist practice of tattooing the ball of virtue (*dharmacakra*) on the sole of one’s foot.

The girl with the ball

In these days of football frenzy an important indological publication that has highlighted the role of ball play in Indian culture is coming to mind, LIENHARD’S *Kanyākandukakrīḍā*, where the most elaborate description of the entirely different Indian football world in the *Daśakumāracarita* is discussed. There, in the story of Mitragupta, we hear of princess *Kandukāvati*. According to the story she was supposed to be a prince, but when a girl was born, the father named her “Bearer of the ball”, *Kandukāvati*. The scene described is the occasion of the worship of the goddess *Somāpīḍā*, who apparently delights most in a ball-game. The hero watches the game and witnesses the initial tricks of the players to impress the other teams: “With languid playfulness she let it fall to the ground. [...] She caught it and let it go again. In that moment, she gave a display of footwork and rhythm, moderate, slow, and then

rapid [...] The princess played on most wonderfully, sitting and standing, closing up and opening out again like a flower, and stopping and starting. [...] The game, once commenced, was not allowed to cease [...] she put on a show of different spectacular games, striking the ball to the ground and into space, juggling what looked like many balls but was in fact just one. [...] When their game was over, she bowed down before the goddess and went away to her royal quarters with her girlfriends.”

The description is fascinating, for it shows that women’s football was dominant in India, no mention is made of male players, who apparently were unable to compete before the goddess.

A passage in the *Bhojaprabandha* shows that the game was by no means confined to the court, for even in Dhārā’s red light districts, women were playing football. What strikes the reader is that the game often appears in an eroticized form, the players being women and with the fans being exclusively men, an unexplained feature of the Indian variety of the game. Furthermore, as in other cultures, the game is a magical act connected with fertility rites. We see a faint trace of this in the unexplained rituals surrounding a successful scorer.



Dr. Jean Grue-Henné

Apophthegmata patrum Sprüche der Väter

*vartulaṃ kandukaṃ tasya
krīḍā tu dvimuhūrtakā*

Sepp Herberger

¹ *tasya saṃkṛīḍamānasya dūram utpatya kandukaḥ, nipatyotpatya ca punaḥ siṃhāsānataḥ gataḥ Bṛhatkathāślokaśaṃgraha* 2.83.