THE CRUX OF THE CRUCIFORM: RETRACING THE EARLY HISTORY OF CHAUPAR AND PACHISI

Jacob Schmidt-Madsen
University of Copenhagen

One of the most pervasive misconceptions about South Asian board games today is the widespread belief that they all date from hoary antiquity. Needless to say, no single reason can be given as to the origin of this belief, but the historical construction of the region's past by successive rulers certainly plays its part. On the one hand, European colonial powers tended to portray India as timeless and unchanging, whereas in fact it was a highly volatile region owing to the constant migrations from West and Central Asia. On the other hand, the Hindu nationalist movement which formed in response to colonial hegemony claimed an unbroken line of descent leading back to Vedic (c. 1500-500 BCE), or even Harappan (c. 3200-1300 BCE), times, whereas in fact modern Hinduism had very little to do with Vedic, and even less with Harappan, practices. The implicit assumption of both of these views was that whatever existed in India today probably also did so thousands of years ago.¹

That the same belief applies to traditional Indian board games became apparent in a previous study on the origin of Snakes & Ladders. The dominant view encountered both inside and outside India was that the game, commonly known as *gṛān caupār*, or the game of knowledge, must necessarily have been designed by religious sages at the very dawn of civilization.² This in spite of the fact that no substantial evidence could be produced from before 1780-82 when the earliest known specimen of the game was commissioned by Richard Johnson from a local artist in Lucknow. As argued elsewhere, the game is unlikely to have been invented

¹ For a series of polemical yet insightful discussions of history and ahistory in an Indian context, see Lal 2003.

² The claim was popularized in the West by Harish Johari who wrote a “New Age” book on the game, stating that it dated back “at least 2.000 years” (2007: 2). *Leela: The Game of Self-Knowledge* was first published in 1975, and has since been translated into several European languages, including Dutch (Amsterdam, 1979), German (Basel, 1991), Spanish (Santiago de Chile, 1993), and Czech (Prague, 2008).

before the late 17th century, and even then only under the influence of the Italian *gioco dell'oca*, or game of the goose, which first appeared in India in the second half of the 16th century.³

As indicated by the example of *gyān caupar*, discussions about the origin of South Asian board games often take place in a vacuum. Existing game equipment rarely dates back more than a few hundred years, and material evidence in the form of reliefs, sculptures, paintings, and graffiti usually raises more questions than it answers. Visual representations of games tend to lack the level of detail found in the games themselves, and rarely provide information as to how they were played. Graffiti boards are more reliable in this regard since they were actually used as gameboards, but without the accompanying game equipment it is impossible to know exactly which games were played on them. Dating the graffiti boards is another common source of misunderstanding, as in most cases they were only added to the structures on which they appear long after the structures themselves had been abandoned.⁴

Textual evidence remains the single most important resource in mapping the history of South Asian board games. It is, however, replete with its own problems, the most immediate of which is the problem of accessibility. India is home to millions of manuscripts,⁵ and while a large number of texts have been published, scholars often face situations where a text they want to consult only exists in manuscript, and possibly only in one of the numerous regional scripts or languages with which they are not familiar. Copies of manuscripts can be difficult and prohibitively expensive to obtain, and even then they are not always reliable witnesses. The texts they reproduce were often composed hundreds, or even thousands, of years before the manuscripts themselves, thereby greatly increasing the risk of scribal errors, emendations, and interpolations. Text critical editions can aid in mitigating such effects, but due to the excessive number of manuscripts available they are rarely attempted, and when they are the number of manuscripts consulted is often found wanting.

³ For a detailed discussion of the origin of *gyān caupar*, see Schmidt-Madsen 2019: 35-75.

⁴ According to Anita Rane-Kothare, who has surveyed hundreds of caves and temples in Maharashtra, graffiti boards were usually made by local farmers and herdsmen seeking shelter among the ruins, and rarely date back more than a few hundred years (pers. comm.). For a similar note of caution with regard to graffiti boards on ancient Egyptian structures, see Crist, Dunn-Vaturi & de Voogt 2016: 4.

⁵ The National Mission for Manuscripts in New Delhi sets the number at a conservative seven million, while the late David Pingree believed it to be as high as thirty million (Wujastyk 2014: 159-60).

Another problem common to textual descriptions of board games across literary cultures is the lack of precision. Unless a game is referred to by name it can be difficult to ascertain which game is actually being described, and even when the name is given we cannot always be sure that the author associated the name with the same game that we would today.⁶ A verse from the *Rṣabhapañcāśikā*, or fifty verses to the spiritual teacher Rṣabha, written in Prakrit by the Jaina author Dhanapāla in the 10th century, provides a good example:

*sāriṇva bandha-vaha-maraṇa-bhāiṇo jīṇa na humti paīm dītṭhe /akkhehiṇ
vi hīrantā jīvā saṃsāra-phalayammi // (RP 32)*

Like pawns, the souls (*jīva*) on the gameboard of cyclical existence (*saṃsāra*), though carried away by the senses/dice (*akkha*), are freed from captivity, slaughter, and death at the sight of you/the square (*paīm*), O Lord!⁷

Johannes Klatt, who translated the poem into German in 1879, took inspiration from an anonymous and undated commentary in suggesting that the verse referred to a form of dice chess with safe squares, but also mentioned the possibility that it might refer to a form of backgammon (1879: 465-66). Micaela Soar, in her detailed article on the history of backgammon in India, favored the latter suggestion, but admitted that the verse might equally well refer to the game of *caupaṛ* or its later namesake *gyān caupaṛ* (2007: 208-9). Andrew Topsfield, a historian of Indian art specializing in *gyān caupaṛ*, refrained from deciding between backgammon, *caupaṛ*, and *gyān caupaṛ* (2006a: 75; 89, fn. 2), while Andreas Bock-Raming, an authority on the literary sources of Indian board games, found that the verse “evidently” referred to backgammon (1999: 48).⁸

⁶ Andreas Bock-Raming, for example, notes with regard to Sanskrit literature that no specific terms were used to describe particular boards, or even particular details relating to particular boards (1999: 51).

⁷ Translation adapted from Klatt 1879: 465.

⁸ While backgammon certainly remains a strong candidate, I am not convinced by Bock-Raming's argument that the analogy between the game and human existence must necessarily entail a reference to backgammon simply because it does so in other verses dating from around the same period (1999: 48). Metaphorical and other references to board games in Indian literature are almost as common as direct references to the games themselves (cf. Soar 2007: 202-26).

The purpose of the present article is not to make judgment calls on the many ambiguities and uncertainties that adhere to the history of South Asian board games in general, but rather to focus the attention on a particular game, and engage critically and constructively with the assumptions that underlie its often-repeated status as the national game of India. The game in question is usually referred to as Chaupar (Hi. *caupaṛ*) or Pachisi (Hi. *paccīsī*), though it exists under a multitude of different names, and in a multitude of different guises, throughout the subcontinent, and might therefore more accurately be referred to as a family of games. My intention is not only to identify the weaknesses in the arguments on which many popular beliefs about its early history is based, but also to try to understand what might have given rise to such beliefs, and whether they do in fact hint at some underlying truth or half-truth. By providing a detailed example of the notions that need to be challenged and the questions that need to be asked when tracing the early history of *caupaṛ* and *paccīsī*, I hope to be able to alert readers to similar notions and questions pertaining to the early histories of other South Asian board games as well.

I begin by problematizing the very concept of a national game, and the implicit assumption that such a game must necessarily reach back to the supposed beginning of the nation in question. This is especially pertinent in the case of Hindu India where, on the one hand, a national identity only began to take shape in the late 19th century, while, on the other hand, a cultural identity, however loosely defined, had been in place for millennia. The question of what it actually means to be a national game opens up a discussion of how far back we can positively trace the game of *caupaṛ* or *paccīsī*, and what we find when we begin to look beyond those traces. As evidenced by the three examples provided, we quickly enter into a quagmire of myth, legend, and scripture. Arguments that references to the game can be found in the Purāṇas, the Epics, and the Vedas are shown to be the result of retroprojection without any supporting evidence. Still, isolated elements of the game can indeed be found to predate the earliest references to it. By way of example, I demonstrate how an etymological enquiry into the names of *caupaṛ* and *paccīsī* can be used to identify such elements and provide a more holistic view of the history of the game. I conclude with a summary of my findings, and a brief look at how the introduction of the game into the West, and its later reintroduction back into India, helped foster and sustain many of the misconceptions that continue to adhere to it.

The National Game of India

Caupar and *paccīsī* are the two names most commonly applied to a variety of closely related games played on a cruciform board indigenous to India (fig. 1). The most frequently mentioned distinction between them is that *caupar* is played with four-sided stick dice, whereas *paccīsī* is played with binary cowrie shells (e.g. Parlett 1999: 42).⁹ A further distinction would seem to be that the pawns in *caupar* begin the game in predetermined squares on the four arms of the board, while the pawns in *paccīsī* begin the game outside the squares of the four arms (e.g. Temple 1884: 244).¹⁰ It is, however, important to note that these distinctions are by no means set in stone, and should only be used as rules of thumb. The design of the board, the equipment used to play on it, the number of players, and the rules followed by them vary across regions and traditions, and while the same name is sometimes applied to different versions, at other times different names are applied to the same version.¹¹ The only thing that seems to remain constant across versions is the fact that pawns circumambulate the board in a counter-clockwise direction, and that the goal of the game is to get all of them into the central square.¹²

⁹ Shurreef & Herklots upholds this distinction (1832: App. VII, p. lii), while Temple notes that both games are often referred to as *caupar* (1884: 244). A recent survey of the game as it appears today in the states of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Maharashtra also found that the word *caupar*, or any of several variations thereof, was widely applied to the game even when played with cowries (Bhattacharya, Finkel & Soni 2011: 34-36, 43-45, 55-57, 77-80, 98-101). Falkener's identification of "Chauput" (*caupar*) as being played with cowries, and the variant "Chausar" (*causar*) as being played with stick dice, may have resulted from a similar use of *caupar* among his informants (1892: 263-64).

¹⁰ Again, Falkener blurs the line by describing *caupar* as being played, on the one hand, with cowries, and, on the other hand, with some or all pawns placed on the board at the beginning of the game (1892: 264).

¹¹ For a useful yet incomplete overview of attested versions, see Murray 1952: 132-40. For more recent attestations, see, for example, Venkatasubramanian 2002: 47-48, 53-59, 61-64 and Bhattacharya, Finkel & Soni 2011: 34-36, 43-45, 55-57, 77-80, 98-101.

¹² For an overview of the most commonly attested rules, see Parlett 1999: 42-47 (cf. Bock-Raming 2010). The clockwise direction of movement sometimes encountered among contemporary players in India should probably be attributed to influence from the modern Western adaptation known as Ludo which has long since eclipsed both *caupar* and *paccīsī*. See, however, Humphries who noted a version of the game played in a clockwise direction in the state of Uttar Pradesh in the early 20th century before Ludo is believed to have had any major impact in India (1906: 69).

Figure 1: A king (*rājā*) and a queen (*rānī*) playing *caupar*. *Kṛdākaśalya*, c. 1900. Reproduced from Śarmā 1982: 60. Artwork in the public domain.

Considering that the cruciform game is supposed to be the national game of India, the modern traveler would be surprised to find how little it is actually played, or even known, in the country today (cf. Finkel 2004: 57).¹³ While boards, dice, and pawns can be found almost anywhere in the subcontinent, few people remember how to play with them, and most prefer the modern and much simplified version of Ludo first registered as a design in England in 1886 (Copisarow 2010: 208). When Edward Falkener proclaimed *paccīsī* the national game of India in 1892 (p. 257), the situation was quite different. Falkener, who never traveled to India himself (Bell 1969: 193), was in fact merely repeating the sentiment of many others before him. The earliest and most prominent of these was Abul Fazl, the court historian of the Mughal emperor Akbar (r. 1556-1602), who noted that “[f]rom times of old, the people of Hindústān have been fond of this game [*caupar*]”

¹³ This is contrary to the situation in neighboring Nepal where the national game *bāgh bakrī*, or goats and tigers, is still widely produced and played.

(Blochmann 1873: 303). While it seems certain that *caupar*¹⁴ enjoyed great popularity from the 16th and well into the 20th century, it seems a lot less certain just how old the “times of old” referred to by Fazl actually were.

The *Ain-i-Akbari*, in which Fazl's statement occurs, was written around 1590, and is often considered the earliest textual evidence for any version of the cruciform game. While this is selling early references to the game a little too short, they certainly become increasingly difficult to find before the time of Akbar. References occur in the Sufi romances *Padmāvat* from c. 1540 and *Mirgāvatī* from 1503/4, and other references found in Hindu devotional (*bhakti*) literature may date as far back as the 15th century (Topsfield 2006b: 20).¹⁵ Further south in the Vijayanāgara Empire (1336-1646), the *Viṣṇumāyānāṭakamu*, written in Telugu by Cintalapūḍi Yellanāryuḍu under the patronage of Kṛṣṇadevarāya (r. 1509-29), also seems to imply a game of *caupar* played between the god Viṣṇu and his consort Lakṣmī (Handelman & Shulman 1997: 93-94).¹⁶ The late Vasantha Rangachar pointed to an even earlier Telugu reference from the Vijayanāgara Empire, but the *Uttaraharivaṃśamu*, written by Nācana Somanādhūḍu in the mid-14th century,¹⁷ does not appear to contain any identifiable description of *caupar*.¹⁸

¹⁴ The history of *paccīsī* cannot be traced as far back as that of *caupar*, though it seems likely that the two versions existed alongside each other. See the etymological discussion of the words *caupar* and *paccīsī* in the section *Another Way Backward* below.

¹⁵ The earliest known illustrations of *caupar* are found in two mid-16th-century manuscripts of the Sufi romances *Mirgāvatī* and *Candāyan* (Topsfield 2006b: 20-21). The latter manuscript deviates in several particulars from the original, written by Maulānā Dāūd in 1379, but the fact that Dāūd himself appears in most of the illustrations makes the connection evident (Khandalavala & Chandra 1969: 106). As the *Candāyan* is based on an episode from the popular north Indian folk tale about Lorik, it is possible that the manuscript mixes in elements from other versions of the folk tale. The episode where Lorik plays dice with Mahipat, illustrated as a game of *caupar* in the manuscript, is not found in the *Candāyan* (Gupta 1967), but appears in a version of the folk tale recorded by Beglar in the late 19th century (1878: 79).

¹⁶ This provides much needed textual evidence that *caupar* was known in the later period of the Vijayanāgara Empire. Earlier arguments based on the presence of graffiti boards among its ruins should be treated with scepticism (e.g. Fritz & Gibson 2007: 112). The same is true of the late Vasantha Rangachar's claim that graffiti boards in the Mallikārjuna temple at Pattadakal and the Jyotirlinga temple complex at Aihole can be used as evidence that *caupar* and *paccīsī* existed in Karnataka in the late 7th and early 8th centuries (2006: 35).

¹⁷ Rangachar wrongly gives the date of composition as 1450 (2003: 32). Perhaps she intended 1350, as a copper-plate inscription from 1344 states that Bukkarāya I (r. 1356-77) made grants to Nācana Somanādhūḍu (Seshashastri 1988: 134).

¹⁸ According to Nagaraj Putari, who kindly helped me with the passage (*UHV* 3.109-130, 4.155), it describes a game played with dice and pawns, but does not give any

The same is true of three additional Telugu references from between the late 12th/13th to the late 15th centuries given by Kallappa Mopidi (2006: app. [203, 205]), none of which can be shown unambiguously to indicate the game of *caupar*.^{19,20}

Other attempts at tracing *caupar* and *paccīsī* back to earlier times and places abound, and though the present focus is on attempts relating to Indian myth, legend, and scripture, a few extra-Indian examples deserve to be mentioned here. Stewart Culin argued that games originated in ritual and divinatory practices (1895: xviii), and that the Korean game of *nyout* (𐄎) was an early survival of such practices, which, in turn, gave rise to games such as “the Game of Goose, Backgammon, Pachisi, and Chess” (1898: 685). His arguments have never been substantiated, and neither have related suggestions, treated of in more detail later, that *caupar* is the ancestor of the Chinese game of *chupu* (樗蒲) dating from the early centuries CE. Turning our attention to Mesoamerica, Edward B. Tylor was of the opinion that *paccīsī* gave rise to the cruciform game of *patolli*, popular among the Aztecs upon the Spanish conquest of Mexico in 1521 (1879: 125). The correspondences he saw between the two games were challenged by Charles J. Erasmus who argued convincingly that the games might equally have been the result of independent origination (1950: 382). Available evidence cannot decide the question at present, but an article by Lieve Verbeeck indicates several differences between *paccīsī* and *patolli*, and suggests that the latter goes back to the turn of the 2nd millennium CE, which would make influence from *paccīsī* highly unlikely (1998: 93). Finally, mention should be made of a Russian article from 1962 by G. P. Snesev summarized by

information about the shape of the board or the number of squares on it. It does, however, tell us that the board was made of wood rather than cloth, which would seem to indicate a game different from *caupar*.

¹⁹ The relevant passages are found in the *Paṇḍitārādhyacaritra* (PAC 3; pp. 367-71, 460) by Pāṅkuriki Somanādhudu (12-13th / 13-14th cent.), the *Bhojarājyamu* (BR 5.72, 7.67) by Anantāmātyudu (1356-1434), and the *Jaiminibhāratamu* (JB 1.155, 3.142) by Pillalamarri Pinavīrabhadruḍu (1450-80). I am grateful to Nagaraj Putari and Upadhyayula K. V. Sarma for reading and discussing the passages with me.

²⁰ A list of games found in the *Bhojarājyamu* (BR 7.67) mentions the word *sogaṭālu* which is commonly used with reference to *caupar* and *paccīsī* in Telugu (e.g. Rao & Shulman 2002: 47, fn. 37). It is, however, unclear which game *sogaṭālu* referred to in the early 15th century when the *Bhojarājyamu* was written. Considering the overlap that existed at the time between backgammon and *caupar* (see below), it is quite possible that *sogaṭālu* referred to the former rather than the latter. This is also suggested by Charles Philip Brown's Telugu dictionaries which gloss backgammon as *cokaṭālamu* (1853: 68), and *sogaṭālu* as backgammon (1903: 1355).

Irving L. Finkel (2002: 71-74). The article correlates archaeological finds of weighted cowries in Khorezm, Uzbekistan, with a living tradition of playing *pachiz* (i.e. *paccīsī*) in the same area in the 1950s, and argues on that basis that the game was known in the early centuries of the 2nd, or perhaps even 1st, millennium CE.²¹ Despite the plausible suggestion that the cowries were imported from India (*ibid.* 72), the wide application of cowries as dice, money, ornaments, divinatory tools, etc. makes it impossible to conclude that they were used for playing *paccīsī* almost a millennium before the game was recorded in Khorezm.

The list of claims for the early history and widespread influence of *caupar* and *paccīsī* goes on and on, but when it comes to direct evidence, the national game of India cannot be traced beyond the 15th century at the earliest. If we try to go any further, we soon find ourselves in a nebulous realm of assumptions and conjectures where, if anything, backgammon seems to be the more likely candidate for the title (Soar 2007: 228); and beyond that, perhaps some other form of race game, the full details of which may never be revealed to us.²² The point is not that *caupar* and *paccīsī* do not deserve the title bestowed upon them, but that the very idea of a national game risks blinding us to the fact that the nation in question may not be as old as those who promote it would like us to believe. This is especially true of the Indian nation as promoted by far-right Hindu nationalists who argue that Hinduism is the *sanātan dharm*, or eternal religion, sustained throughout history from the beginning of Harappan culture in the late 4th millennium BCE (Guha 2005: 404).²³

²¹ Finkel only mentions the early-1st-millennium date (2002: 78, fn. 16), but the article itself makes it clear that the cowries under discussion date from the early 2nd millennium. The early-1st-millennium date is merely a conjecture based on similar finds from earlier periods. I am grateful to Dr. Finkel for providing me with an English translation of Snesarev's article.

²² References to gameboards with 10x10 (*daśapada*) and 8x8 (*aṣṭāpada*) squares can be traced as far back as the 4th or 3rd century BCE, but nothing more can be said about the games that were played on them, except that they appear to have involved an element of chance (Bock-Raming 1999: 43-44).

²³ The appointment of Professor Yellapragada Sudershan Rao as chairperson of the Indian Council for Historical Research in 2014 for what appears to have been purely political reasons is often seen as a watershed moment in the current trend of increasing political involvement in academia. Three articles discussing the consequences for future research within the field of Indology appeared in the *Journal of South Asian Studies*, vol. 37, no. 4, pp. 700-25.

Myth, Legend, and Scripture

The act of projecting one's own experience onto the past can have many different causes and may serve many different purposes. For some it is merely a question of not knowing any better, while for others it is a question of wanting to authenticate and promote a certain view of history. The dominating views among the colonial powers in India from the 16th century onward were those of orientalism and utilitarianism. While orientalists saw India as the long lost spiritual other of the West, utilitarianists saw it as a nefarious nest of superstition. Both parties agreed that India lacked the historical consciousness necessary for change and progress, but they did so for different reasons. While orientalists wanted to identify India as a wellspring of eternal truths, utilitarianists wanted to do away with India altogether and impose their own history and culture.²⁴

A Hindu nationalist reaction to colonial constructions of India's past began to form in the second half of the 19th century, giving rise to the independence movement which finally achieved its goal of ending British rule in 1947. In recent years, beginning in the late 20th century, Hindu nationalism has regained its momentum as manifested in the Bharatiya Janata Party, or Indian People's Party, which has been in power since 2014. The party's continuing cross-fertilization of religious and political agendas has led to several pseudo-scientific claims being professed from otherwise reputable platforms. A recent list of such claims made during the first term of current Prime Minister Narendra Modi includes several examples from the annual meetings of the Indian Science Congress Association established in Kolkata in 1914. To cite just a few, it has been claimed that stem cell research, plastic surgery, airplanes, guided missiles, and even the internet were familiar to the people of ancient India (Solomon 2019).

The field of board game studies has not yet achieved the status that would make it eligible for inclusion at the Indian Science Congress, but it is important to be aware that the nationalist hype surrounding the ancient Indian sciences might also begin to form around the misconceptions adhering to traditional Indian board games. Baseless suggestions that certain games have been integral to Indian culture and society for millennia, readily put forward by Indians and non-Indians alike, may not in itself be anything new, but given the current political climate it may become harder to dismiss them. Many of the misconceptions that adhere to *caupar* and

²⁴ For a discussion of orientalist and utilitarianist positions among colonial powers in India, see Thapar 2002: 1-7.

paccīṣī have been corrected in previous studies, but rarely, it seems, with any lasting success. Leaving aside such colorful, yet ultimately insignificant, questions as whether or not Akbar played *caupaṛ* with slave girls as living pieces,²⁵ I instead propose to take up the more pertinent and ideologically charged question of whether or not the game can be traced back to the myths of the Purāṇas, the legends of the Epics, and the scriptures of the Vedas.

Śiva and Pārvatī

One of the few criticisms that can be leveled against C. P. Bhatta's otherwise highly useful study of dice-play in Sanskrit literature is the inclusion of a photograph of an 8th-century sculpture from Ellora, Maharashtra, showing the god Śiva and his consort Pārvatī playing a board game (Bhatta 1985: ill. 5). The gameboard etched at the feet of the divine couple clearly resembles a *caupaṛ*-like game, but also shows itself to have been added to the photograph after it was developed (fig. 2). The photograph appeared courtesy of the Archaeological Survey of India, yet the added dots and lines bear no resemblance to the actual etchings on the sculpture itself (Soar 2007: 191, fn. 109). As pointed out by Soar, the identification of the etchings as *caupaṛ* can be traced back to James Burgess (1883: 31) who probably relied on his guide for the information (Soar 2007: 190). This little piece of hear-say was later repeated by board game historian Harold J. R. Murray (1952: 35); and it thus becomes apparent how someone might have imagined a *caupaṛ* board that was not really there, and added it to the photograph which subsequently appeared in Bhatta's book.

²⁵ This often-repeated story has been in circulation for more than two centuries (Hunter 1801: 314), and remains popular among guides at Akbar's abandoned fort in Fatehpur Sikri where paving stones form an oversized cruciform board in the so-called "pachisi" courtyard (Rizvi 2002: 34). The authenticity of the board as dating from Akbar's time was questioned by M. A. Husain who thought that it might rather have been constructed by the later Muhammad Shah (r. 1719-48) (1937: 18). Also, see Topsfield's critical assessment of the origin of the story (2006b: 30, fn. 39-40).

Figure 2: Doctored photograph of Śiva and Pārvatī playing a *caupār*-like game. Ellora, 8th century. Originally provided by the Archaeological Survey of India. Reproduced from Bhatta 1985: ill. 5. Artwork in the public domain.

The popular myth of Śiva and Pārvatī engaged in a game of dice (*akṣadyūta*) has a long history in Indian literature, and can be found as far back as the *Mahābhārata* and the early Purāṇas (Syed 1998: 390). However, an identifiable description of the game only appears in the *Kāśīkhaṇḍa* section of the *Skandapurāṇa* (SP 4.2.88.5-12), probably dated no earlier than the 12th century (Bakker 2004: 2). As demonstrated by Soar, and corroborated by the wealth of sculptural evidence from preceding centuries provided by her, the game is clearly portrayed as an Indian version of backgammon. When exactly the game began to be interpreted as a game of *caupār* instead is difficult to say, but it is certain that the idea did not originate with Burgess or his guide in the late 19th century. An illustration on a dispersed page of a manuscript of Bhānudatta's *Rasamañjarī*, or bouquet of delights, drawn in Basohli in north-western India around 1694-95, shows the divine couple seated on a tiger skin with a game of *caupār* spread out between them (fig. 3).

Figure 3: Śiva and Pārvatī playing *caupār*. Basohli, 1694-95. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, acc. no. 57.185.2. Artwork in the public domain.

The question of when Śiva and Pārvatī stopped playing backgammon and started playing *caupār* touches upon the larger question of when the popularity of the latter eclipsed that of the former. All we can say with any certainty is that the transition must have occurred gradually, and that it must have been complete by the 16th century when Abul Fazl claimed that *caupār* had been popular in India since “times of old.” Given the lack of references to *caupār* prior to the 15th century, it seems unlikely that the game should have risen to prominence much before then, and, certainly, if we go back to the 12th century, we find that the list of games and pastimes compiled in the *Mānasollāsa*, or delight of the mind, clearly privileges chess (*caturāṅga*) and backgammon (*pāśakakrīḍā*) over other board games.²⁶ Narrowing down the period of transition any further is not only complicated by the dearth of references to both backgammon and *caupār* (Soar 2007: 228), but also by the confusion which the transition seems to have caused in the terminology relating to them. The lasting effects of this confusion can

²⁶ As will be seen in the section *Another Way Backward* below, the *Mānasollāsa* does in fact describe a board game reminiscent of *caupār*, or rather *paccīsī*, but the description is much less developed than those of chess and backgammon, and does not find any counterpart elsewhere in the literature.

be gleaned from the tendency of later commentators to describe *caupaṛ* as a form of backgammon (cf. fn. 6).²⁷

It has been suggested by Finkel that the four-player game of *caupaṛ* developed from an earlier two-player race game, such as backgammon, effectively turning a game played lengthwise on a rectangular board into a game played sidewise on two rectangular boards forming a cross (2006: 61).²⁸ His argument that the majority of traditional board games were originally made for two players fails to convince in an Indian context where, for example, four-player chess was already known to Al-Biruni in the early 11th century (Sachau 1910: 183-85),²⁹ but his suggestion that the cruciform board resulted from the reduplication of a rectangular board deserves further deliberation. A possible inspiration might have been the cruciform shapes often found in grid-based ritual diagrams known as *bhadraṃḍalas* (fig. 4), which reach back to at least the mid-1st millennium CE (Bühnemann 2007: 27). Rituals performed on *bhadraṃḍala* diagrams within the non-sectarian Smārta tradition often involve the manipulation of the dome-shaped areca or betel nuts (*supāri*) also used as pawns in *caupaṛ* and *paccīsī*. The officiating priest invokes various deities into the nuts, and places

²⁷ An example can be found in a list of games popular among South Indian Muslims in the early 19th century. While the otherwise exhaustive list does not include backgammon, it gives “tukhta-e-nard” as an alternative name of “chowsar,” thus invoking the Persian name for backgammon as a valid alternative to the Hindi name for *caupaṛ* (Shurreef & Herklots 1832: App. VII, p. lii). The same practice is followed by classical Hindustani-English dictionaries, such as Shakespear (1834: 1765) and Platts (1968[1884]: 1131), both of which state that *nard* can be used with reference to backgammon or any other game played with pawns.

²⁸ Tylor had previously hypothesized the same, suggesting that the reduplicated two-player game in question might be the Middle Eastern game of *tāb* (1879: 120; 1896: 58), known in Maharashtra as *tābūl* (Deodhar 1905: 359-64) and in Karnataka as *tābla* (Bhattacharya, Finkel & Soni 2011: 115-16), yet described by R. C. Bell under the name of *tablan* (1969: 87-89). However, given that the history of the game in India has as yet not been traced beyond the late 19th century, Tylor's suggestion appears unlikely. See, however, Soar 2007: 22-23.

²⁹ It is worth noting that Al-Biruni also mentions *nard*, or backgammon, but neither *caupaṛ* nor *paccīsī* (Sachau 1910: 182). The ritualized form of the Vedic dice game discussed below (see *Akṣasūkta* and *Rājasūya*) provides another example of a game, albeit not a board game, played by four players seated across from each other as in *caupaṛ*. A further example is found in a relief from the Buddhist shrine (*stūpa*) in Bharhut (c. 150-100 BCE) which shows two pairs of players seated on opposite sides of a 6x6 board, though the exact interpretation of the figures and the scene remains uncertain (Bock-Raming 2000: 140-45). Early examples from outside India include several finds of game equipment for what may have been a four-player game with cubic or stick dice and six pawns per player in mid- to late-1st-millennium Europe (Duggan 2015).

them on specific squares in the grid.³⁰ This does not, of course, constitute any direct link between *bhadraṃḍala* rituals and *caupar*, but serves as a reminder that we may need to cast a wide net if we want to fully understand the origin of the game.

Figure 4: *Bhadrāmḍala*. Varanasi, early 18th century. Detail of dispersed leaf from an unidentified manuscript in the Kenneth G. Zysk Indological Manuscript Collection at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark. Photograph by the author.

Though suggestions that the four-player cruciform game developed from a two-player rectangular game must as yet remain in the realm of speculation, there are other and more straightforward ways in which it

³⁰ For a detailed description of *bhadrāmḍala* rituals, see Bühnemann 1987.

might have been influenced by backgammon. Since, as discussed below, the cruciform game may initially have been played with cowries, as in *paccīṣī*, it is possible that it only began to be played with stick dice, as in *caupar*, under the influence of backgammon, which appears always to have been played with multi-sided dice. Another example concerns the initial placement of pawns. According to the *Mānasollāsa*, the pawns in backgammon begin the game *on* the board (Bock-Raming 1995a: 114), whereas the pawns in *phañjikā* (likely an early version of *paccīṣī*) begin the game *off* the board.³¹ It is therefore possible that the pawns in the cruciform game originally began outside the board, as in *paccīṣī*, and that the idea of starting them in certain predetermined squares, as in *caupar*, was inspired by the similar practice in backgammon.

The question remains as to why *caupar* replaced backgammon in the popular imagination sometime between the 12th and 15th centuries. Soar argues that backgammon “gradually disappeared from India because it ceased to fulfil a religious function” (2007: 228), but such an argument presupposes a direct link between the popularity of a game and the symbolic meaning attributed to it, which, in turn, presupposes that the people playing the game are actually aware of any such symbolic meaning. Evidence in support of Soar's argument is not only lacking, but even countered by fieldwork experience in modern day India which rarely, if ever, indicates that players attribute symbolic meaning to abstract games. The more obvious answer would be that the old game of backgammon was overtaken by the new game of *caupar*, and that contemporary artists and storytellers followed suit and began invoking the latter in their creations. Whether this shift in gaming habits was only effected among the upper classes of society, or whether it penetrated into the lower classes as well, cannot easily be determined from available evidence.³²

Yudhiṣṭhira and Śakuni

When episode forty-six of the *Mahabharat* aired on the state-owned television channel Doordarshan on 13 August 1989, millions upon millions

³¹ *Dānakāni* [°dhāma] *bahirbhadre* [°dram] *sarvāny api niveśayet* (MS 837cd) [one should place all one's pawns outside the diagram]. *Phañjikā* is discussed in more detail in the section *Another Way Backward* below.

³² Soar argues that the common association of backgammon with royal courts and temples indicates that it was only played by the upper classes (2007: 228). This, however, may simply be due to a bias in the available evidence which rarely discusses the games of the lower classes.

of Indians were exposed to the presumed fact that the fateful game of dice between King Yudhiṣṭhira and his jealous cousin Duryodhana was a kind of *caupar*.³³ An untouched bowl of black and white tokens sat mysteriously next to the cruciform board, the cross-marked safe squares were unevenly distributed on the four arms, the throws of the two stick dice were rarely applied to the pawns, only Duryodhana's cheating uncle Śakuni got to throw them, and stakes were continuously won and lost throughout the game.³⁴ Still, the underlying message was clear: *caupar* was as old as the *Mahābhārata* itself.

The *Mahābhārata* is an epic poem of extraordinary length believed to have been composed over a period of several centuries before and after the beginning of the Common Era. It tells the story of an internecine conflict between the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas set in motion by a game of dice that loses the Pāṇḍavas their entitlement to kingship and sends them into exile. The game is played with *akṣas*, usually translated as dice in a general sense, though most commentators agree that the dice were in fact unmarked *vibhītaka* nuts, or similar (e.g. Bhatta 1985: 86).³⁵ The text itself does not tell us anything more about them, except that every throw is preceded by the announcement of a stake, which is then immediately won or lost after the result is produced.³⁶ Neither does the text mention the presence of any

³³ See <https://thetvdb.com/series/mahabharat/seasons/official/1> (accessed 9 Feb, 2020). A poll made by an Indian newspaper after the series concluded in 1990 found that it had been watched by upwards of 92 percent of television viewers in the country (Mitra 1993: 90, fn. 1).

³⁴ An equally popular remake of the series from 2013-14 further strengthened the association with *caupar* by adding a scene where Śakuni explains the overall concept of the game (episode 147, aired 29 March 2014). The explanation makes it clear that each player has four pawns, that the pawns move around the board in a counter-clockwise direction, and that a pawn can capture another pawn by landing on its square. See <https://thetvdb.com/series/mahabharat-2013/seasons/official/1> (accessed 9 Feb, 2020).

³⁵ A verse occurring in a later book of the *Mahābhārata* suggests that Yudhiṣṭhira lost because “the dice always turned their faces away” (*akṣeṣu nityam suparāṇmukheṣu*) (*MBh* 5.2.11b), which would seem to indicate the use of multi-faced, or at least binary, dice (cf. Shulman 1992: 357). Van Buitenen, however, translates the passage metaphorically as “the dice were always hostile to him” (1978: 192).

³⁶ Heinrich Lüders challenges this notion in his monograph on dicing in India, and suggests that each of Śakuni's winning throws are made in response to a previous throw by Yudhiṣṭhira, though no such previous throws are mentioned in the text. Lüders cites as evidence the occurrence of the verb *√pratidiv* (i.e. “to play (the dice) back”), and interprets it as an indication that Śakuni threw the dice *against* a previous throw by Yudhiṣṭhira (Lüders 1907: 60). The verb, however, only occurs once in Śakuni's series of twenty throws, and not at all in the critical edition which reads *√pratipad* (i.e. “to take back (the dice)”) instead (*MBh* 2.58.13). The critical edition was published by the Bhandarkar Oriental

board or pawns, and the method of play seems to preclude the need for any.³⁷ What we are left with is a description of a gambling game in which every throw of the dice produces a winner and a loser.³⁸

The lack of any textual basis for the claim that Yudhiṣṭhira and Śakuni played *caupar* has been pointed out by game scholars many times over, but is still very much alive in the popular imagination both inside and outside India (Handelman & Shulman 1997: 33). The reason for this should not be attributed to the TV series alone, but rather to a long tradition of associating the game of dice in the *Mahābhārata* with the game of *caupar*. The association goes back at least to the late 16th century when the Mughal Emperor Akbar commissioned a translation of the *Mahābhārata* from Sanskrit into Persian. The resulting *Razmnāma*, or book of war, was accompanied by 169 full-page color illustrations, one of which clearly shows Yudhiṣṭhira and Śakuni engaged in a game of *caupar* (Hendley 1883: 9) (fig. 5).³⁹ As Audrey Truschke has pointed out, a key strategy of the translators was to adapt the original text to a contemporary Mughal setting (2011: 508). Considering the great popularity of *caupar* at the Mughal court, this easily explains why it came to replace the poorly described and long forgotten dice game alluded to in the original text.

Research Institute in Pune from 1927-66, and thus would not have been available to Lüders.

³⁷ Though the literature provides ample evidence that a piece of cloth was sometimes used as a surface upon which to throw the dice (Bock-Raming 1999: 42-43), no such cloth is mentioned in the dicing episode in the *Mahābhārata*. Bhatta's argument to the contrary is based on Nilakaṇṭha's commentary from the late 17th century, and is not supported by the text itself (Bhatta 1985: 76). The phrase *upastīmā sabhā* (*MBh* 2.53.1) does not seem to indicate that the specific place of gambling (*sabhā*) was covered (*upastīmā*) by a piece of cloth, but rather that the entire gambling hall (*sabhā*) was either covered by a carpet (van Buitenen 1975: 127) or simply made ready (Smith 2009: 131). The only indication that a dice-cloth was used is found in a verse preceding the gambling match itself where Śakuni speaks of his "(dice-)cloth" (*āstara*) (*MBh* 2.51.3).

³⁸ The best translation of the dicing episode into English remains van Buitenen 1975: 106-69.

³⁹ Copies of the *Razmnāma* ordered by Mughal nobles in the late 16th and early 17th centuries also portray Yudhiṣṭhira and Śakuni as playing *caupar*. See, for example, an illustration in a copy from 1599 at the Free Library of Philadelphia, item no. mcom00281 (accessed 9 Feb, 2020: <https://libwww.freelibrary.org/digital/item/38990>).

Figure 5: Yudhiṣṭhira and Śakuni playing caupār. *Razmnāma*, c. 1586 (Seyller 1985: 65, fn. 2). Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum, Jaipur. Reproduced from Ray 2014: 205 reproducing Hendley 1884: pl. x. Artwork in the public domain.

Just as the *Mahabharat* TV series was not the first to portray Yudhiṣṭhira and Śakuni as playing *caupaṛ*, Akbar was not the first to have the *Mahābhārata* translated into another language than Sanskrit. The Tamil poet Peruntēvaṇār had already rendered it into his native tongue in the 9th century under the patronage of Nandivarman III (r. 846-69) of the Pallava Dynasty.⁴⁰ Though the *Sabhāparvan*, or the book of the assembly hall, in which the dicing episode occurs, is not found among the surviving fragments of his translation (Zvelebil 1974: 143), it is indeed found in several later translations, or rather adaptations, into a wide variety of regional languages from the 10th century onward. A full-fledged comparative study of the many regional *Mahābhāratas* needs to be undertaken before we can decide on their various representations of the dicing episode, as does a study of the several Sanskrit commentaries on the *Mahābhārata* produced from the 11th century onward, many of which remain unpublished (Minkowski 2010; 2011: 234-37).

The 13th-century *Bālabhārata*, or little (*bāla*) as opposed to great (*mahā*) story of the descendants of Bharata (*bhārata*), provides an example of what might be found when looking into the wealth of translations and adaptations of the *Mahābhārata*. The work was written in Sanskrit by the Jaina author Amaracandra under the patronage of Viśaladeva (r. 1243-61) of the Vāghela Dynasty in Gujarat. It describes the game of dice between Yudhiṣṭhira and Śakuni as being played on a golden board (*aṣṭāpadāṣṭāpada*) with red and black pieces (*sāra*) which move from square to square (*gyhāntarāropana*), and are liable to be both captured (*baddha*) and liberated (*mukta*) (BB 2.5.11-14). While this might be interpreted as a two-player game of *caupaṛ*, the use of the terms *gama* and *cara* (BB 2.5.14) would seem to exclude the possibility, since they are technical terms associated with different styles of play in backgammon, as evidenced by their inclusion in the chapter on backgammon in the *Mānasollāsa* (Bock-Raming 1995a: 114-15; cf. 1999: 48).

This not only brings us back to the question of when *caupaṛ* replaced backgammon, but also indicates that the game played by Yudhiṣṭhira and Śakuni may have followed a trajectory similar to that played by Śiva and Pārvaṭī. In both cases the game began as an unidentified game of dice (*akṣadyūta*), which was subsequently transformed into a game of

⁴⁰ An even earlier Tamil translation, now lost to the ravages of time, was apparently written by Pāratampāṭiya Peruntēvaṇār (Zvelebil 1974: 143; 1995: 555).

backgammon, only to end up as a game of *caupar*.⁴¹ However, while Śiva and Pārvatī can be shown to have played backgammon since the 6th century, and possibly even earlier (Soar 2007: 182), it is unclear when Yudhiṣṭhira and Śakuni began taking to the game, or any board game for that matter.⁴² Keeping in mind the previously mentioned caveat that little research has been done on early regional *Mahābhāratas* and Sanskrit commentaries, I am not aware of Yudhiṣṭhira and Śakuni playing any kind of board game prior to the description in the *Bālābhārata*.⁴³ Christopher Minkowski argues that the beginning of epic commentary during the early centuries of the 2nd millennium CE was due to the rise of regional literatures and the rendering of the epics into new languages and cultural spheres (Minkowski 2011: 236-37). Adopting the same argument, we might attribute the shift from a dice to a board game in the *Mahābhārata* to regional influences following from the vernacularization of the epic.

Akṣasūkta and Rājasūya

The history of games in India begins with a lament. The *akṣasūkta*, or dice-hymn, which appears in the *R̥gveda* composed in the late 2nd millennium BCE, is sung by a hapless gambler who has lost everything to “the brown ones” (*babhru*), or the unmarked *vibhūtaka* nuts used as dice in Vedic times (*RV* 10.34). The exact rules of the Vedic dice game remain unclear, though the general consensus is that it involved grasping (*glaha*) nuts from a larger pool, throwing them into a designated space (*abhidevana*), and dividing them into sets of four. The winning grasp would leave no remainder (*kṛta*), while the losing grasp would leave a single remainder (*kali*). The outcome of grasps with a remainder of two (*dvāpara*) or three (*tretā*) is less clear, but both appear to have indicated partial wins with a remainder

⁴¹ The trajectory outlined here does not take into account any regional, or even local, variations that may have existed, yet it clearly shows how one traditional game is substituted for another as their popularity wanes and waxes.

⁴² It does, however, seem that they were still playing backgammon in the Tamil *Bhāratam* written by Villiputtūrār in the early 15th century only some 150 years before the Mughals had them play *caupar* (Shulman 1992: 363).

⁴³ A relief in the Lakṣmīnaraṣimha temple constructed in 1250 at Javagal in Karnataka appears to show Yudhiṣṭhira and Śakuni playing a game with stick dice on a 2x5 board with money bags for pawns. One might speculate whether this indicates a transition from portraying them as playing a pure gambling game to playing a board game. I am grateful to RG Singh and Raghu Dharmendra for making me aware of the relief and sharing a photograph of it.

of three being better than a remainder of two.⁴⁴ While nobody has as yet, to my knowledge, claimed that India's first compulsive gambler played *paccīsī* with *vibhītaka* nuts for cowries, associations between the two games have indeed been made.

Norman Brown, in his seminal article on *caupaṛ* and *paccīsī*, hinted that certain elements of the cruciform game might be connected to Vedic, and even Harappan, games (1968: 50-52). A stronger connection between the two had been suggested three decades earlier by G. J. Held who speculated that the nuts grasped in the Vedic dice game were laid out in the four cardinal directions in a counter-clockwise motion reminiscent of “the modern Pachisi-game” (1935: 267-69). This was picked up by Jan Heesterman in his description of the dice game in its ritual context (1957: 146), and later explored in several installments by David Shulman (e.g. 1992: 351; 1994: 21-22; Handelman & Shulman 1997: 32-37). The problem, however, is that the Vedic texts do not tell us how the nuts were organized into groups of four. Harry Falk agrees with Held's theory on the basis that “sich auch heute noch Vertreter dieser These finden,” but at the same time cites evidence, also mentioned by Heesterman, to the effect that the nuts were laid down in sequence touching one another (1986: 130-31). Whatever geometrical pattern the sequence of nuts were made to form, it can hardly have been compatible with distributing them in the cardinal directions as imagined by Held.

While attempts at linking *caupaṛ* and *paccīsī* with the Vedic dice game are not as widespread as attempts at linking them with the dicing episode in the *Mahābhārata*, the link to the former is often made by way of the latter.⁴⁵ This is largely due to the attractive theory of J. A. B. van Buitenen, who began a complete translation of the *Mahābhārata* into English in the 1970s, that the *Sabhāparvan*, or book of the assembly hall, in which the dicing episode occurs, is modeled on the *rājasūya*, or royal consecration, described in ritual manuals dating from the mid-1st millennium BCE (van Buitenen 1972). Besides the fact that Yudhiṣṭhira performs an actual *rājasūya* in the *Sabhāparvan*, van Buitenen shows how various features of the ritual, such as the establishment of the cardinal directions (*digvyāsthāpana*), the taking of the guest gift (*arghābhiharana*), and, of course, the game of dice (*akṣadyūta*), are dramatized

⁴⁴ For a detailed discussion of the method of play, as far as it can be reconstructed from the sources, see Falk 1986: 111-33.

⁴⁵ David White, however, uses the festival of Divālī as a stepping stone instead, when he asserts that gambling during the festival, often explicitly associated with the playing of *caupaṛ* and *paccīsī* (e.g. Sastry 1923), “differs but little from the ancient ritual dice games” (1989: 289, fn. 19). He may have adopted this view from Heesterman (see below).

and narrated throughout the book. The underlying structure of the *rājasūya*, however, is ultimately corrupted as the predetermined outcome of the ritual dice game is suddenly left to chance, or rather, as van Buitenen would have it, to skill. Closing the gap between the Vedic and Epic dice games even further, he suggests that the dice game in the *Sabhāparvan* might be seen as a survival, or perhaps rather a revival, of the ritual dice game in the *rājasūya* (*ibid.* 79).

Van Buitenen's theory has been readily accepted by scholars intent on establishing a line of descent from the Vedic dice game over the dicing episode in the *Sabhāparvan* to the modern game of *caupaṛ* or *paccīsī* (e.g. Handelman & Shulman 1997: 32-37, 68; cf. Shulman 1994: 22). Heesterman, however, recently criticized several aspects of van Buitenen's theory, thereby weakening the link between the *rājasūya* and the *Sabhāparvan* which, in turn, weakens the link between the Vedic and Epic dice games (Heesterman 2010). A long-time believer in the continuity between the two dice games, Heesterman tries to salvage it from his own criticism by asserting that “the dicing game [in the *Sabhāparvan*] is and, at the same time, is not part of the *rājasūya*” (*ibid.* 397). He also says that the *Sabhāparvan* “lift[s] the dicing episode out of the *rājasūya*” (*ibid.* 398), but this claim appears no less spurious than his earlier claim that the dice game in the *rājasūya* finds its counterpart in games, such as *caupaṛ* and *paccīsī*, played during modern-day Divālī celebrations (Heesterman 1957: 153).⁴⁶ Even van Buitenen is not prepared to go that far, as underlined by his description of the dice game in the *Sabhāparvan* as a gambling game where “every one throw decides the play” (1972: 80), effectively removing the ground for comparison with games involving a board and pawns.

The easily observed fact that the games alluded to in the *akṣasūkta* hymn and the *rājasūya* rite have nothing to do with *caupaṛ* or *paccīsī*, as we know them today, does not preclude the possibility that conceptual elements of the Vedic dice game could have carried over into the cruciform game. Held's often-repeated suggestion that the *vibhītaka* nuts were laid out in the cardinal directions in a counter-clockwise motion would have provided an excellent example, if only we had any evidence to support that they actually were. A better example, clearly supported by evidence, is the number of players and their positions relative to the game. Though nothing certain can

⁴⁶ According to Venkatarama Raghavan, the dice game (*dyūta*) played during Dīpāvalī, or Divālī, is played in imitation of the dice game played by Śiva and Pārvatī (1979: 163). This suggests that the game played during Divālī would have undergone the same changes as the game played by the divine couple, as evidenced by the fact that *caupaṛ* remains associated not only with Śiva and Pārvatī, but also with Divālī (Rettberg 2008: 37).

be said about the number of players in the secular version of the Vedic dice game, the ritual versions prescribed for the *rājasūya* (Heesterman 1957: 143-44) and *agnyādheya* (Falk 1986: 138) rites both indicate four players seated to the east, south, west, and north, as if at the end of the four arms of a cruciform board. Similarly, the object in the Vedic dice game is to grasp a number of *vibhītaka* nuts divisible by four, reminiscent of the four pawns controlled by each player in the cruciform game. As the pawns enter the board one by one, it might be speculated that the perfect set of four (*kṛta*) is broken up, and only by returning the pawns to their initial state outside the board can the set become whole again and the game won.⁴⁷

Several other conceptual correspondences between the ritualized dice game and the later cruciform game, especially those touching upon the workings of the cosmos and the liberation of the self, have been explored in earlier studies (e.g. Beck 1982: 199-205; Handelman & Shulman 1997: 61-74). The value of such studies should not be underestimated, but it is important that we do not mistake the conceptual affinities of the cruciform game for the game itself, and begin investing it with a history far beyond what available evidence permits. Unsupported claims of hoary antiquity do not only detract from the history of the game itself, but also from the history of the conceptual tradition to which it belongs.

Another Way Backward

The above examples demonstrate that popular, and sometimes even scholarly, attempts at tracing the early history of *cauṇḍa* and *paccīsī* beyond the 15th century, where no direct evidence for the existence of the game is available, tend toward myth-making. There are, however, other ways of enquiring into the early history of the game than merely projecting it onto other games. One of those ways begins with the realization that games rarely appear in a vacuum, but rather develops over time in response to already existing games and game concepts.⁴⁸ More often than not, what is truly

⁴⁷ Just as five *vibhītaka* nuts, representing the four cardinal directions and the zenith, were handed over to the king before the commencement of the ritual dice game during the *rājasūya* rite (Heesterman 1957: 141, 143-45), so another version of the Vedic dice game, apparently played with two cubic dice, revolved around the number five rather than the number four (Falk 1986: 118-26). A reflection of this might be found in the five pawns used by each player both in the *paccīsī*-like game of *phaṇḍikā* (see below) and in the game of *cauṇḍa* described in the 17th-century hagiography *Caurāsī vaiṣṇavan kī vārtā* (Barz 1976: 120).

⁴⁸ To elaborate on an already mentioned example, *gyān cauṇḍa*, or the game of knowledge, appears to have originated in the merging of Tantric diagrams with goose

innovative about a game is not the invention of new game elements, but rather the combination and utilization of pre-existing game elements. It therefore makes sense to enquire into the history of the key elements that make up a game, and attempt to trace them beyond the game itself. Not only does such an exercise create a ludic context for the game in question, it also paints a more complete and realistic picture of its origin and development.

In the following I will enquire into two elements of *caupaṛ* and *paccīsī* that those who invented the cruciform game, or perhaps rather those who played it, considered to be among its most iconic. I speak of the iconicity of the elements with confidence only because they are the ones after which the game was named. It was already noted by Brown that *caupaṛ* refers to the cruciform shape of the board, whereas *paccīsī* refers to a specific throw of the cowries (1968: 48-50). While further attempts at probing the etymology of *caupaṛ* have revealed the contours of yet another treacherous landscape, attempts at probing the etymology of *paccīsī* have overlooked an entire game still awaiting its rightful place in the history we are trying to piece together.

Caupaṛ

According to R. L. Turner's comparative dictionary of the Indo-Aryan languages, the Hindi word *caupaṛ* derives from the Sanskrit word *catuspūṭa*, meaning “that which has four folds” (1966: 252). The latter word occurs in the Sūtra literature, usually dated to around the mid-1st millennium BCE, where it refers to a piece of bull's hide used for extracting the inebriating yet unidentified nectar of the gods known as *soma*. The hide is equipped with four folds, or pockets, which contain stones that press the juice out of the *soma* plant.⁴⁹ Nowhere is the word associated with any kind of game, and the related Prakrit word *caṭṭippuḍa* is only found in the early religious literature of the Jains where it simply indicates a piece of cloth folded in four.⁵⁰ If instead we follow the lead of Brown, and derive *caupaṛ* from

games. Further inspiration may have come from a family of primarily East Asian promotion games. Cf. fn. 3.

⁴⁹ *Yasmin mimīte tasyādhiṣavanacarma kharam parikṛtam catuspūṭam upariṣṭād āsecanavat* (ĀŚS 12.2.14). Translated by Willem Caland as: “Von dem Stierfelle, auf welchem er den Soma abgemessen hat, wird das Stück Leder verfertigt, auf welchem der Soma ausgepresst werden soll; es soll (rot gefärbt), rau und rund zugeschnitten sein, es soll vier Falten, und eine Stelle zum Ausgiessen des Somasaftes haben” (1924: 241).

⁵⁰ The word occurs in the story of the deformed Prince Miyaṇputta (Skt. *mṛgāputra*) who is kept in an underground chamber by his mother. Before going to feed him, she covers her

catuspāṭa, meaning “that which consists of four cloths,” we do, indeed, arrive at a word used with reference to a gameboard. *Catuspāṭa*, however, is not attested in the literature before the 19th century when it appears as a translation of *caupar* into Sanskrit, but only with regard to the board and not as the name of the game.⁵¹ It would therefore seem that *caupar* is a vernacular word without any direct precedent in the Sanskrit literature.⁵²

Though *catuspāṭa* does not occur in the early literature, the component *pāṭa* (also *paṭṭa*) does. The general meaning of *pāṭa* is that of a flat surface, but the more specific meaning is usually that of a board or a piece of cloth. As Bock-Raming has shown, *pāṭa* is only used in game texts from the 12th century onward, and always in the sense of a gameboard made of cloth (1999: 50).⁵³ This indicates that the Sanskrit word *pāṭa* only began to be associated with gameboards in the 12th century, and that the same might be true of the vernacular equivalent *par*. I am, however, not aware of any instances of *par* being used in connection with games other than *caupar* (lit. “four-cloth”) which, as we have seen, cannot at present be traced beyond the 15th century.

Chupu

In the realm of speculative etymology, or rather phonology, we find the argument that *caupar* traveled from India to China in the early centuries of the Common Era, and came to be known as *chupu* (樗蒲). The suggestion was originally made by Karl Himly (1887: 478), and later picked up and introduced to a wider audience by Murray (1952: 36). The earliest occurrence of the word *chupu* is found in the *Sanguo zhi*, or records of the three kingdoms, completed sometime before the death of its author Chen

face with a fourfold piece of cloth (*caṭṭapudena vatthena muha badhe*), presumably to protect herself against the horrible stench oozing from him (*VS* 1.1.6).

⁵¹ E.g. *catuḥpattam* [i.e. *catuspattam*] *prakurvīta haṃsapādais samanvitam* (*KK* 148ab) [one should equip the four-cloth (i.e. *caupar* board) with goose-feet (i.e. cross-marked squares)].

⁵² Murray's derivation of “chaupur” from “chatush-pada” (i.e. *catuspada*/-*pāda*, lit. “four-footed”) cannot be traced back to Hyde despite Murray's suggestion to the contrary (1952: 133). Rather, the derivation appears to have been adopted from Karl Himly (1887: 478), who himself adopted it from Shakespeare's *Hindustani and English dictionary* (1834: 726). The derivation is not supported by Turner (1966: 251), nor does *catuspada*/-*pāda* ever occur in the literature with reference to a game.

⁵³ The only exception is found in the *Pāśakakevalī*, or system of dice (divination), the earliest known manuscript of which dates from the Gupta Era (4-6th cent.). Here, however, the board (*paṭṭaka*) is not strictly a gameboard, but merely a surface upon which to throw the divinatory dice (see Lüders 1907: 15).

Shou in 297 (S_Z 15.474). The context in which the word appears clearly indicates that it refers to a game, but stops short of providing any specifics. A more detailed description is found in the *Chupu fu*, or ode to *chupu*, attributed to Ma Rong (79-166) by the compilers of the *Yüwen leiju* in 624, but now thought to date from the late Six Dynasties (220-587).⁵⁴ The *Chupu fu* describes the game as being played on an embroidered cloth board from the “Western neighbors” (*xi lin* 西鄰) which could refer to India. Other game equipment includes a dice cup (*bei* 杯, lit. “cup”), five dice (*mu* 木, lit. “wood”),⁵⁵ and an unspecified number of black and white pawns (*ma* 馬, lit. “horse”). The dice appear to have been binary throwing sticks, some of which were marked with special symbols, as detailed in later descriptions of the game (see below). Little can be said about the rules, but the overall idea is clearly that of a race game with an element of conflict between the players. This can be seen from expressions such as “advancing on the road,” “facing the enemy,” and “breaking through a siege.”⁵⁶

The description of *chupu* is further developed in two sources from the early 9th century.⁵⁷ They indicate that the game could either be played with five pawns per player on a track of 120 squares, or with six pawns per player on a track of 360 squares. The number of players is not explicitly stated, but the mention of pawns in five different colors in one of the sources suggests that it went beyond the two players indicated by the two colors of pawns mentioned in the *Chupu fu*. The track was divided into three sections by two barriers or passes, and also included a pit where pawns could get stuck. The movement of the pawns was controlled by throws of five wooden sticks with

⁵⁴ The revised dating of *Chupu fu* is based on stylistic grounds and on the appearance of anachronistic references to works written centuries after the death of Ma Rong. I am grateful to Jui-Lung Su from the National University of Singapore for discussing the game of *chupu* with me, and for sharing his unpublished paper *Ma Rong's (79-166) "Rhapsody on the Chupu Game"* which contains an annotated translation of the *Chupu fu*.

⁵⁵ The word *mu* indicates that the dice are made of wood, but elsewhere in the text they are referred to as *shi* (矢, lit. “arrow”) made of Lantian stone, or jade. While this might indicate that two different sets of dice were used in the game, the more likely explanation is that *mu* should be understood in the general sense of dice, and *shi* in the more particular sense of dice made of jade.

⁵⁶ The expressions are taken from Su's unpublished translation of the ode (see. fn. 54).

⁵⁷ The *Wumu jing* (五木經), or book of five woods (i.e. throwing sticks), was written by Li Ao (772-841), and the *Tang guoshi bu* (唐國史補), or supplement to the history of the Tang Dynasty, was written by Li Zhao (d. before 836). The rules summary in the current paragraph is adapted from Lien-sheng Yang's treatment of the two sources (1952: 132-33). See also Chan, Li & Chiu 2019: 9-13, but note that the illustrations on the so-called “*chupu* bricks” are only *assumed* to be depictions of the eponymous game.

one side painted white and the other side painted black. Two of the sticks were marked with the word “pheasant” on the white side and the word “cow” on the black side, allowing for a total of ten or twelve legal combinations. The goal of the game was to advance one's pawns from one end of the track to the other, though this was complicated by the ability of other players to capture one's pawns, as well as by the special throws required to cross the two barriers and get out of the special square referred to as the pit.

Lien-sheng Yang remarks that the rules of *chupu* have the most in common with the race games *shuanglu* (雙陸), or backgammon, and with *dama* (打馬), or hitting horses (1952: 133). While the comparison with *dama* clearly holds good for the rules as described in the two 9th-century sources,⁵⁸ the comparison with backgammon only appears to apply, if at all, to the rules as described in the earlier *Chupu fu*. If *chupu* did indeed travel to China from India, and not from some other “Western neighbor,” this would fit with our understanding that backgammon, as evidenced by Soar (2007), was a popular game in India around the mid-1st millennium CE when the *Chupu fu* appears to have been written. This leaves the phonetic similarity between *chupu* and *caupar* as the sole remaining piece of evidence for equating the two games. Considering that the earliest mention of *chupu* occurs more than a thousand years before the earliest mention of *caupar*, we might do well to examine alternative etymologies for *chupu*.⁵⁹ And if we were to insist on *caupar* as the etymological origin of *chupu*, we might also do well to consider which game *caupar* might have referred to in the mid-1st millennium CE. Could it, for example, have been the four quarters of a backgammon board rather than the four arms of a cruciform board?

Paccīsī

Turning now to the Hindi word *paccīsī* as applied to a game, we find it to be even more recent than *caupar*. When Thomas Williamson first introduced the national game of India to the British public in 1801, he did

⁵⁸ This seems to be corroborated by the later writings of Li Qingzhao (c. 1084-1155) and Chen Zhensun (c. 1183-1262), both of whom remark on the similarities between *chupu* and *dama* (Cribb 2016: 124).

⁵⁹ One possibility that suggests itself is the Tibetan game of *sho* (Finkel 1995: 24-34; Murakami 2014), which might find support in the fact that *chupu* (樗蒲) is sometimes referred to as *shupu* (擲蒲). See, for example, volumes 50 and 65 of the *Song shu*, or book of Song, written in 492-93 (Jui-Lung Su, pers. comm.). The question, however, awaits closer scrutiny by board game historians well-versed in Chinese history and language.

so under the name of Patcheess, but earlier references to *paccīsī* are few and far between.⁶⁰ This is also true of visual representations which, as inferred from the frequent depiction of stick dice, mostly show the game of *caupar*.⁶¹ A possible explanation might be that *paccīsī*, as Williamson himself puts it, was “one of the principal recreations of the poorer classes” (1801: 4), and thus considered a less fitting subject than the more esteemed *caupar*.⁶² Still, it is worth noting that *paccīsī* does not figure in the list of names for the cruciform game provided by Thomas Hyde in *De Ludis Orientalibus* from 1694.⁶³ It is possible that a thorough search of vernacular Indian manuscripts from the 18th, and perhaps even 17th, century would yield more early references to the game as *paccīsī*, but its absence from Callewaert's *Dictionary of Bhakti* renders any references from before that period unlikely. The dictionary covers a large corpus of popular devotional literature in old Hindi from especially the 16-17th centuries, and only makes reference to the game as *caupar* (Callewaert 2009: 650).

There is, however, another sense in which *paccīsī* might be said to predate *caupar*. If we enquire into the meaning of the word itself, we find that it derives from *paccīs*, or twenty-five, to which is added the suffix *-ī*, indicating something that pertains to the number twenty-five. Since twenty-five is the value awarded a player throwing five cowries face-up, the game obviously derives its name from that exact throw. The logical conclusion would be that the game derived its name from twenty-five because it was the highest possible throw, likely arrived at by multiplying the number of cowries by itself. On this basis, Brown suggested that the game was

⁶⁰ Other early examples include two references to “paucheess” from 1792 (Hunter 1801: 314) and 1798 (Tennant 1804: 366).

⁶¹ Two miniature paintings from Rajasthan in the India Office Library, now part of the British Library, carry inscriptions on their back identifying them as illustrating a game of “Patchees” (Falk & Archer 1981: 274, no. 523, xi; 277, no. 524, xxii). The paintings are not reproduced in Falk & Archer, and I have not had the chance to see them in the British Library, but I consider it at least possible that “Patchees” is a misidentification of *caupar* made by the original buyer or cataloguer. Either way, the paintings were only acquired in the 18th century or later (*ibid.* 36), and may not date back much further.

⁶² The *Cetovinodanākāvyā*, or poem on the amusements of the mind, written by Dājī Jyotirvid from Maharashtra in 1822, states that the learned play the game (*dyūta*) with three stick dice (*pāśā*); members of the twice-born classes (i.e. *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*), children, and so forth with two stick dice; and vile persons, members of the lowest class (i.e. *śūdra*), and so forth with cowries (*kaparda*) (CVK 257cd-258).

⁶³ Hyde gives the principal name of the game as “tchūpur” (*caupar*), and then goes on to add “ucksh” (*akṣ*, “dice”), “pashuck” (*pāśak*, “stick dice”), “chókiput” (*caukīpat*, “four-cloth”), “dūta” (*dyūta*, “gambling”), and “acshákacurrida” (*akṣakrīḍā*, “dice-play”) (Hyde 1694: 68).

originally played with five rather than the usual six or seven cowries (Brown 1968: 50).⁶⁴ We will return to this point later, but first we will take a look at another game reminiscent of *paccīṣī*, yet predating any known references to it by several centuries.

Phañjikā

The game of *phañjikā* is only known from the *Mānasollāsa* written, or at least patronized, around 1131 by Bhūlokamalla Someśvara III who ruled over the Western Chalukyan Empire in northern Karnataka from 1127 to 1138 (Gondekar 1925: vi). The work is encyclopedic in nature, and consists of five times twenty chapters, the final twenty of which are dedicated to the description of various games and pastimes to be enjoyed by the king. While the chapters on chess (*caturaṅga*) and backgammon (*pāśakakrīḍā*) have been studied in detail by Bock-Raming (1995b, 1996), little attention has been paid to the chapter on *phañjikā* (MS 5.16.816-63). This may be due to the corrupt and difficult nature of several passages which so far has kept scholars from recognizing the similarities between *phañjikā* and *paccīṣī*.⁶⁵ My recent description of *phañjikā* remedies the situation to some extent (Schmidt-Madsen 2019: 63-68), but further research has shown that it, too, is in need of correction. It, therefore, seems timely to provide a brief and slightly updated overview of the game as I currently understand it.⁶⁶

Rather than being played on a 6x6 grid with a protruding square on each of the four sides, as originally suggested (*ibid.* 64), *phañjikā* is more likely to have been played on four 6x6 grids extending in different directions from

⁶⁴ When played with six cowries the highest throw usually remains twenty-five, while it tends to rise to thirty when played with seven cowries (e.g. Shurreef & Herklots 1832: App. VII, p. lii-liii). However, the exact count of the cowries varies between recorded testimonies.

⁶⁵ The earliest known manuscript of the *Mānasollāsa* was copied in 1671 more than five centuries after the composition of the original text (Gondekar 1961: vii). Gondekar used this and two other manuscripts for the third and final volume of his critical edition in which the chapter on *phañjikā* appears (*ibid.* 253-75). In the introduction to the volume he writes that “[a]s all the three mss. are corrupt the constitution of the text became very difficult” (*ibid.* ix). For previous and ultimately unsuccessful attempts at grappling with the chapter, see, for example, Mishra 1966: 503-5 and Arundhati 2004: 124-26.

⁶⁶ I am thankful to Prof. Krishnamurthi Ramasubramanian from IIT Bombay for reading the chapter with me and providing several helpful insights. An annotated translation is currently in progress.

an empty center (fig. 6).⁶⁷ The number of players appears to have been variable, with sample counts ranging from five to sixteen.⁶⁸ Each player - or, perhaps, team of players - had five pawns which began the game outside the board and were controlled by the throws of seven cowries. As the throws were named after the number of cowries that fell face-down (e.g. *ekaka* for one, *dvika* for two, *trika* for three, etc.), it is likely that they awarded a similar number of moves to the player who threw them.⁶⁹ Unfortunately, the route followed by the pawns is not described in the text. It is only stated that a throw of five cowries face-down, known as *phañjikā*, after which the game was named, was used to enter and exit pawns onto and from the board.⁷⁰ A pawn that ended its move in the same square as another pawn would cause the latter pawn to go back to start, though an unspecified number of safe squares existed where pawns were free from harm.⁷¹ The winner was the first player to exit all their pawns from the board.⁷²

⁶⁷ *Aṣṭādaśāṅgulaṃ kāryaṃ caturasraṃ tu maṇḍalam / tāḍṛśāni caturdikṣu bhastrakāṇi [bhadra°] prakalpayet //* (MS 5.16.826) [one should make a four-sided diagram (measuring) eighteen fingers (on each side), (and) arrange such diagrams in (each of) the four directions].

⁶⁸ *Khelakāḥ pañca sapṭāpi ṣaḍaṣṭau nava ṣoḍaśa* (MS 5.16.818cd) [(There should be) five, seven, six, eight, nine, (or) sixteen players].

⁶⁹ The only exception was a throw of all cowries face-up known as *kalasaptaka*, or low(?) seven. The throw appears to have counted as a double *saptaka*, possibly awarding a number of fourteen moves, as it was registered with a notational sign of two wavy lines rather than the one used for a single *saptaka* (MS 5.16.846). It also had a special rule attached to it, which, however, is not clear from my present understanding of the text (MS 5.16.855).

⁷⁰ *Krameṇānena sarvās tāḥ sarveṣāṃ ca varāṭikā [°kāḥ] / praviśya phaṇjikāpātai [°tair] nirgacchanti tu pañcabhiḥ //* (MS 5.16.857) [according to this procedure, every pawn of every player enters (the board) by throws of *phañjikā*, and exits (it) by (throws of) five (i.e. *phañjikā*)].

⁷¹ Squares where pawns were liable to be captured were termed *mṛtyugeha* (MS 5.16.849), or houses of death, while squares where they were safe from capture were termed *śaraṇāgāra* (MS 5.16.852), or houses of refuge.

⁷² *Strīṣu jayaṃ [°yo] nirgatāsu sthirāsu ca parājayayāt //* (MS 5.16.858cd) [the women (i.e. players) who exit (the board with their pawns) win, and those who remain (on the board with their pawns) lose].

Figure 6: Tentative reconstruction of *phaṇḍikā* gameboard. Graphic design by the author.

A few remaining rules relating especially to the *phaṇḍikā* throw are less clear, and in need of further investigation. Still, the above description should be sufficient to establish at least a preliminary link between *phaṇḍikā* and *paccīsī*. The strongest evidence is not, as might be supposed, the cruciform shape of the board or the seven cowries used as dice, but rather the word *phaṇḍikā* itself. It appears in Sanskrit dictionaries as a botanical expression, but the derivation is obviously via aspiration of the initial *p* in *paṇḍikā* or *paṇḍikā*. Both terms indicate an aggregate of five in the same way that *paccīsī* indicates an aggregate of twenty-five, and it thus becomes possible that the *phaṇḍikā* throw of five cowries face-down was the original basis of the *paccīsī* throw of five cowries face-up. The reason that the games were named after

the throws is not that they were the highest throws (at least not in the case of *phañjikā*), but rather that they were special throws used to enter and (in the case of *phañjikā*) exit pawns. In fact, it seems that this was the *only* use of the *phañjikā* throw,⁷³ and that the assignment of a movement value to the throw as well as the introduction of other throws that also allowed entry onto the board were later developments now associated with the game of *paccīsī*.⁷⁴

The complete lack of references to *phañjikā* outside the *Mānasollāsa*, and the similar lack of references to *paccīsī* until several centuries later, make it impossible to prove any direct relationship between the two games. It is possible that they co-existed in the 12th century, and that *phañjikā* was simply the courtly and hence more elaborate version, but it is also possible that the smaller grid, the fewer number of players, and the wider application of the throws in *paccīsī* indicate a general progression from a slower and more cumbersome to a faster and more accessible game. Certainly, the five of the *phañjikā* throw, as compared to the five times five of the *paccīsī* throw, would seem to favor such a suggestion. The question, however, will remain ripe for speculation until the gap can be closed by further discoveries of some of the many variations which must have existed between the two games.

Pañcikā

The associations of *phañjikā* do not only travel forward in time to *paccīsī*, but also backward in time to the dice game *pañcikā*, from which the *phañjikā* throw may have derived its name. The earliest known reference to *pañcikā* is found in the 7th-century *Kāśikā* commentary on the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, a grammatical treatise composed by Pāṇini in the 5th or 4th century BCE. The game is described as being played with five *akṣas* or *śalākās*, which we would normally translate as “dice” and “stick dice,” respectively (cf. Bhatta 1985: 67-68). The text, however, makes it clear that they are in fact binary dice, since the game is won if all of them fall either face-up (*uttāna*) or face-down (*avāñc*) (*KV* 2.1.10). Thus, *phañjikā* and *pañcikā* not only share the same literal meaning of an aggregate of five, but also its application to a special

⁷³ This is not explicitly stated in the *Mānasollāsa*, but should probably be inferred from the fact that *phañjikā* is the only throw that does not have a notational sign attached to it (*MS* 5.16.841). While other throws appear to have been noted down before they were applied to the pawns, a *phañjikā* throw may have been applied immediately by either entering or exiting a pawn if possible.

⁷⁴ When playing *paccīsī* with seven cowries, new pawns can usually be entered on throws of one, five, or six cowries face-up (Parlett 1999: 44).

throw which requires five binary dice to fall either face-down (both *phañjikā* and *pañcikā*) or face-up (only *pañcikā*, but later also *paccīsī*).

As previously mentioned, it was suggested by Brown that the original number of dice in *paccīsī* was five (1968: 50). A similar suggestion had been made almost a century before by Tylor who believed that the configuration as well as the name of the *paccīsī* throw derived from *pañcikā* (1879: 121). If we are correct in assuming that *phañjikā* presents us with an earlier version of *paccīsī*, the suppositions of Brown and Tylor cannot easily be upheld. However, despite the fact that *phañjikā* was played with seven cowries, it is possible that it represents an elaboration of *pañcikā*, or another such gambling game played with five binary dice. That *pañcikā* may well have existed beyond the initial mention in the 7th-century *Kāśikā* is indicated by the late Vedic commentators Sāyaṇa (14th cent.) and Mahīdhara (16th cent.), both of whom describe an identical game with reference to the ritualized form of the Vedic dice game (Lüders 1907: 19). Since no such description is found in the Vedic texts on which they comment, they must either have known about the game from the later literature or from their own personal experience.⁷⁵ Sāyaṇa flourished during the early years of the Vijayanāgara Empire under Bukka Raya I (r. 1356-77) and Harihara Raya II (r. 1377-1404), and it therefore seems plausible that *pañcikā* would also have been known in the neighboring Western Chalukyan Empire a century and a half earlier when *phañjikā* was described in the *Mānasollāsa*.

Conclusion

In an article on sedentary games and nationalism in India, Nirbed Ray and Projit B. Mukharji point out that surveys of traditional Indian games in the late 18th and 19th centuries were almost exclusively carried out by high-ranking British officials. It was only in the late 19th and early 20th centuries that the Indians themselves began to take part, and those that did were often closely tied to the newly formed nationalist project (Ray & Mukharji 2005: 700-1). Despite the stark political differences, the Indians upheld the

⁷⁵ A game played with five dice (*pañcākṣadyūta*) is also mentioned in Dāmodaragupta's *Kuṭṭanīmata*, or the bawd's advice, written under the patronage of Jayāpīḍa in late 8th-century Kashmir (*KM* 996). The same work also invokes a board game, merely referred to as a dice game (*akṣa*), where players can block or besiege each other's squares (*paragharodha*) (*KM* 11). Bhatta assumes that the two games are identical (1985: 58), but this is by no means certain given that the only link between them is the word *akṣa* commonly used in connection with any game involving dice.

research goals established by the British, namely to find the original ancestors of the games they discovered in the field. This meant that most contemporary versions were dismissed as variant, and even “degenerate,” forms with no real value for establishing the idea of a unified Indian nation reaching back to the most ancient of times (*ibid.* 703-4). The reality, of course, is quite the contrary. Traditional games tend not to begin in stability and end in variation, but rather to begin in variation and end in stability. Ludo, as is well known, stands not at the beginning, but at the end, of the evolution of *caupaṛ* and *paccīṣī*.

In the present article, I have tried to show how the early history of the cruciform game in India has been distorted by orientalist and nationalist ideologies and a tendency to project contemporary phenomena onto the past. I have shown that the game has been widely identified with the dicing episode in the *Mahābhārata* since the late 16th century, with the mythic dice game between Śiva and Pārvaṭī since the late 17th century, and with the ritualized form of the Vedic dice game since the first half of the 20th century. This has less to do with the cruciform game itself than with its rising popularity in the 15th and 16th centuries which appears to have culminated during the rule of Akbar in the second half of the 16th century. No direct evidence of the game from before the 15th century has as yet been found, and it seems likely that this was the century in which it overtook the position as India's leading race game from backgammon, which had been in vogue since the mid-1st millennium CE. The 12th-century game of *phañjikā* may present an earlier, and possibly even prototypical, version of the cruciform game, but the more than three centuries separating them remains to be bridged. Still, the conceptual and symbolical elements that adhere to *caupaṛ* and *paccīṣī* identify them as uniquely Indian, and show them to be rooted in a religious and cultural past reaching back far beyond their own.

The introduction of Patchees to the West in 1801 did little to snatch the game from the jaws of an antiquity to which it did not belong. Williamson said of its origin that “it has been, time out of mind, perfectly common among all ranks of people in India” (1801: 4), and Edward Falkener proclaimed it the national game of India in 1892 without ever having visited the country. The history of the game in the West has been one of gradual simplification and standardization from Patchees in 1801 to Paunchee in 1824, Puchese in 1862, Patchesi in 1863, Parcheesi in 1867, and, finally, Ludo in 1886 (Copisarow 2010: 193-210). Ludo was introduced into India sometime in the early 20th century, and remains the version of the cruciform game most readily identified with *caupaṛ* and *paccīṣī*. According to the Indian webshop *Ancient Living*, which sells a version of the cruciform

game under the combined names of Chausar, Pachisi, and Ludo, it “dates back from the pages of our mythology” and “is the oldest and most played game” in India.⁷⁶ Clearly, the pawns are still circumambulating the four arms of the board with no intention of entering into the crux of the cruciform anytime soon.

References

Abbreviations

- ĀŚS* *Āpastambaśrautasūtra* (Garbe 1885)
BB *Bālābhārata* by Amaracandra (Śivadatta & Parab 1894)
BR *Bhojarājyamu* by Anantāmātyuḍu (1952)
CVK *Cetovinodanakāvyā* by Dāji Jyotirvid (Joshi & Wakankar 1991)
JB *Jaiminibhāratamu* by Pillalamarri Pinavīrabhadruḍu (Vīrēśalingamu 1984)
KM *Kuttanīmata* by Dāmodaragupta (Pāṭhak 1960)
KK *Kṛīḍākauśalya* by Harikṛṣṇa Śarmā (Śarmā 1982[1900])
KV *Kāśīkāvṛtī* by Vāmana and Jayāditya (Sharma, Deshpande & Padhye 2008)
MBh *Mahābhārata* (BORI 1971-75)
MS *Mānasollāsa* by Bhūlokamalla Someśvara III (Gondekar 1925-61)
PAC *Paṇḍitārādhyacaritra* by Pāṅkuriki Somanādhūḍu (Nārāyaṇarāvu 1939)
RP *R̥sabhapāñcāśīkā* by Dhanapāla (Klatt 1879)
RV *R̥gveda* (Brereton & Jamison 2014)
SP *Skandapurāṇa* attributed to Vedavyāsa (1959-62)
SZ *Sanguo zhi* [三國志] by Chen Shou [陳壽] (Shou 1959)
UHV *Uttaraharivaṃśamu* by Nācana Somanādhūḍu (Jayarāmaśāstri & Śarma 1996)
VS *Vivāgasūya* (Skt. *vipākaśruta*) (Jain 1982)

⁷⁶ Accessed 9 Feb, 2020: <https://www.ancientliving.in/native-games/games/pachisi-ludo--indian-ludo--chausar--indian-board-game>.

Sources

- Anantāmātyuḍu (1952) *Bhojarājīyamu*. Chennai: Vavilla Ramaswamy Sastrulu and Sons.
- Arundhati, Patibanda (2004) *Games and Pastimes in Mānasollāsa*. New Delhi: Self-published.
- Bakker, Hans (2004) “The Structure of the Vārāṇasīmāhātmya in Skandapurāṇa 26-31” in Hans Bakker (ed.) *Origin and Growth of the Purāṇic Text Corpus, With Special Reference to the Skandapurāṇa*. Papers of the 12th World Sanskrit Conference Held In Helsinki, Finland, 13-18 July, 2003. Vol. 3:2. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Barz, Richard (1976) *The Bhakti Sect of Vallabhācārya*. Faridabad: Thompson Press (India).
- Beck, Brenda E. F. (1982) *The Three Twins: The Telling of a South Indian Folk Epic*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Beglar, Joseph D. (1878) *Report of a Tour Through the Bengal Provinces of Patna, Gaya, Mongir, and Bhagalpur; the Santal Parganas, Manbhum, Singhbhum, and Birbhum; Bankura, Raniganj, Bardwan, and Hughli; in 1872-73*. Archaeological Survey of India Series 8. Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing.
- Bell, Robert C. (1969) *Board and Table Games from Many Civilizations*. Vol. 1. 2nd edition. London: Oxford University Press.
- Bhatta, Charanabail P. (1985) *Dice-Play in Sanskrit Literature*. Delhi: Amar Prakashan.
- Bhattacharya, Ranjit Kumar, Irving L. Finkel, and Lok Nath Soni (2011) *The Indian Board Game Survey*. Calcutta: Anthropological Survey of India.
- Blochmann, Heinrich (1873) *The Ain i Akbari by Abul Fazl 'Allami*. Vol. 1. Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press.

- Bock-Raming, Andreas (1995a) “The Literary Sources of Indian Chess and Related Board Games” in Alexander J. de Voogt (ed.) *New Approaches to Board Games Research: Asian Origins and Future Perspectives*. Leiden: International Institute for Asian Studies, pp. 112-24.
- Bock-Raming, Andreas (1995b) *Untersuchungen zum indischen Würfelspiel in nachvedischer Zeit I: Das Backgammon nach der Darstellung des Mānasollāsa*. Schach-Forschungen Series 9. Seevetal: E. Meissenburg.
- Bock-Raming, Andreas (1996) “Mānasollāsa 5,560-623: Ein bisher unbeachtet gebliebener Text zum indischen Schachspiel, übersetzt, kommentiert und interpretiert” in *Indo-Iranian Journal* 39, pp. 1-40.
- Bock-Raming, Andreas (1999) “The Gaming Board in Indian Chess and Related Board Games: A Terminological Investigation” in *Board Games Studies* 2, pp. 42-59.
- Bock-Raming, Andreas (2000) “The Gambling Scenes of Bhārhut and Bodhgayā: A Critical Assessment of Their Previous Interpretations and Some New Suggestions” in *Asiatische Studien* 54:1, pp. 131-90.
- Bock-Raming, Andreas (2010) “Der pāśakatrayakrīḍā-Abschnitt des Krīḍākauśalya” in Eli Franco and Monika Zin (eds.) *From Turfan to Ajanta: Festschrift for Dieter Schlingloff on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday*. Vol. 1. Bhairahawa: Lumbini International Research Institute, pp. 51-67.
- BORI (Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute) (1971-75) *The Mahābhārata: Text As Constituted In Its Critical Edition*. Pune: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.
- Brereton, Joel Peter and Stephanie W. Jamison (2014) *Rigveda: The Earliest Religious Poetry of India*. 3 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brown, Charles Philip (1853) *A Dictionary: English and Telugu*. Madras: Christian Knowledge Society.

- Brown, Charles Philip (1903) *A Telugu-English Dictionary*. Madras: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.
- Brown, W. Norman (1968) “The Indian Games of Pachisi, Chaupar, and Chausar” in Bhadriraju Krishnamurti (ed.) *Studies in Indian Linguistics*. Professor M. B. Emeneau *śaṣṭipūrṭi* volume. Pune: Centres of Advanced Study in Linguistics, pp. 46-53.
- Bühnemann, Gudrun (1987) “Bhadramaṇḍalas in the Ritual Practice” in *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens und Archiv für indische Philosophie* 31, pp. 43-73.
- Bühnemann, Gudrun (2007) “Maṇḍalas and Yantras in Smārta Ritual” in Gudrun Bühnemann (ed.) *Maṇḍalas and Yantras in the Hindu Traditions*. New Delhi: D. K. Printworld, pp. 57-118.
- Burgess, James (1883) *Report On the Elura Cave Temples and the Brahmanical and Jaina Caves in Western India*. Archaeological Survey of Western India, vol. 5. London: Trübner & Co.
- Caland, Willem (1924) *Das Śrautasūtra des Āpastamba: Achtes bis fünfzehntes Buch aus dem Sanskrit Übersetzt*. Vol. 2. Amsterdam: De Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen.
- Callewaert, Winand M. (2009) *Dictionary of Bhakti: North-Indian Bhakti Texts into Kharī Bolī Hindī and English*. 3 vols. New Delhi: D. K. Printworld.
- Chan, Chi Chuen, William Wai Lim Li, and Amy Sau Lam Chiu (2019) *The Psychology of Chinese Gambling: A Cultural and Historical Perspective*. Singapore: Springer.
- Copisarow, Edward (2010) “Chronologies Using British 19th-Century Intellectual Property Records: Agon, Ludo and Reversi” in Thierry Depaulis (ed.) *Of Boards and Men: Proceedings of the XIIIth Board Game Studies Colloquium, Paris, 14-17 April 2010*. Self-published on CD-ROM, pp. 177-239.

- Cribb, Joe (2016) “Horse Coins: Pieces For *Da ma*, the Chinese Board Game 'Driving the Horses'” in Alex Chengyu Fang and François Thierry (eds.) *The Language and Iconography of Chinese Charms: Deciphering a Past Belief System*. Singapore: Springer, pp. 105-24.
- Crist, Walter, Anne-Elizabeth Dunn-Vaturi, and Alex de Voogt (2016) *Ancient Egyptians At Play: Board Games Across Borders*. New York and London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Culin, Stewart (1895) *Korean Games, With Notes On the Corresponding Games of China and Japan*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.
- Culin, Stewart (1898) *Chess and Playing Cards*. Washington: Government Printing Office.
- Deodhar, Anant Bābājī (1905) *Sacitra marāṭhī khelāñcem pustak* [Illustrated Book of Marathi Games]. Mumbai: Times of India Press.
- Duggan, Eddie (2015) “Strange Games: Some Iron Age Examples of a Four-Player Board Game?” in *Board Game Studies Journal* 9, pp. 17-40.
- Erasmus, Charles J. (1950) “Patolli, Pachisi, and the Limitation of Possibilities” in *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 6:4, pp. 369-387.
- Falk, Harry (1986) *Bruderschaft und Würfelspiel: Untersuchungen zur Entwicklungsgeschichte des vedischen Opfers*. Freiburg: Hedwig Falk.
- Falk, Toby and Mildred Archer (1981) *Indian Miniatures in the India Office Library*. Delhi and Karachi: Oxford University Press.
- Falkener, Edward (1892) *Games Ancient and Oriental and How To Play Them, Being the Games of the Ancient Egyptians, the Hiera Gramme of the Greeks, the Ludus Latrunculorum of the Romans, and the Oriental Games of Chess, Draughts, Backgammon, and Magic Squares*. New York: Dover Publications.
- Finkel, Irving L. (1995) “Notes on Two Tibetan Dice Games” in Alexander J. de Voogt (ed.) *New Approaches to Board Games Research: Asian Origins and*

- Future Perspectives*. Leiden: International Institute for Asian Studies, pp. 24-47.
- Finkel, Irving L. (2002) "Pachisi in Arab Garb" in *Board Game Studies* 5, pp. 65-78.
- Finkel, Irving L. (2004) "Round and Round the Houses: The Game of Pachisi" in Colin Mackenzie and Irving L. Finkel (ed.) *Asian Games: The Art of Contest*. London: Asia Society, pp. 46-57.
- Finkel, Irving L. (2006) "The Four-Arm Race: The Indian Game of Pachisi or Chaupar" in Andrew Topsfield (ed.) *The Art of Play: Board and Card Games of India*. Mumbai: Marg Publication, pp. 61-73.
- Fritz, John M. and David Gibson (2007) "Game Boards at Vijayanagara: A Preliminary Report" in Irving L. Finkel (ed.) *Ancient Board Games in Perspective*. London: British Museum Press, pp. 110-15.
- Garbe, Richard (1885) *Śrauta Sūtra of Āpastamba, Belonging To the Taittirīya Saṃhitā, With the Commentary of Rudradatta*. 3 Vols. Calcutta: Asiatic Society.
- Gondekar, Gajanan K. (1925) *Mānasollāsa*. Vol. 1. Gaekwad's Oriental Series, no. 28. Baroda: Central Library.
- Gondekar, Gajanan K. (1939) *Mānasollāsa of Kīng Someśvara*. Vol. 2. Gaekwad's Oriental Series, no. 84. Baroda: Oriental Institute.
- Gondekar, Gajanan K. (1961) *Mānasollāsa of Kīng Someśvara*. Vol. 3. Gaekwad's Oriental Series, no. 138. Baroda: Oriental Institute.
- Guha, Sudeshna (2005) "Negotiating Evidence: History, Archaeology and the Indus Civilisation" in *Modern Asia Studies* 39:2, pp. 399-426.
- Gupta, Mātāprasād (1967) *Cāndāyan: Dāūd Viracit Pratham Hindī Sūfī Premakāvya*. Agra: Prāmāṇik Prakāśan.

- Handelman, Don and David Shulman (1997) *God Inside Out: Śiva's Game of Dice*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Heesterman, Johannes C. (1957) *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration*. 's-Gravenhage: Mouton & Co.
- Heesterman, Johannes C. (2010) "Epic Narrative and Sacrificial Ritual: A Note on the Royal Consecration" in Eli Franco and Monika Zin (eds.) *From Turfan to Ajanta: Festschrift for Dieter Schlingloff on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday*. Vol. 1. Bhairahawa: Lumbini International Research Institute, pp. 389-98.
- Held, Gerrit J. (1935) *The Mahābhārata: An Ethnological Study*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co.
- Hendley, Thomas H. (1883) *Memorials of the Jeypore Exhibition 1883*. Vol. 4. Jaipur.
- Hendley, Thomas H. (1884) *Memorials of the Jeypore Exhibition 1883*. Vol. 4. London: W. Griggs.
- Himly, Karl (1887) "Anmerkungen in Beziehung auf das Schach- und andere Brettspiele" in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 41, pp. 461-84.
- Humphries, E. de M. (1906) "Notes on 'Pachesi' and Similar Games, As Played In the Karwi Subdivision, United Provinces" in Nirbed Ray and Amitabha Ghosh (eds.) (1999) *Sedentary Games of India*. Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, pp. 68-80.
- Hunter, William (1801) "Narrative of a Journey from Agra to Oujein" in *The Asiatic Annual Register, or a View of the History of Hindustan, and of the Politics, Commerce and Literature of Asia, For the Year 1800*. London: Wilson & Co.
- Husain, Muhammad A. (1937) *A Guide to Fatehpur Sikri*. Delhi: Manager of Publications.

- Hyde, Thomas (1694) *De Ludis Orientalibus*. Vol. 2. Oxford: Theatro Sheldoniano.
- Jain, Rośanlāl (1982) *Vipākaśruta: Mūlpāth, Hindī Anuwād, Vīvecana, Pariśiṣṭ Yukta*. Beawar: Śrī Āgamaparakāśansamiti.
- Jayarāmaśāstri, Cadaluvaḍa and V. V. Subrahmaṇya Śarma (1996) *Uttara Harivaṃśamu*. Cantos 3-4. Hyderabad: Visalandhra Publishing House.
- Johari, Harish (2007) *The Yoga of Snakes and Arrows: The Leela of Self-Knowledge*. Vermont: Destiny Books.
- Joshi, P. H. and Siddharth Y. Wakankar (1991) *Cetovinodanakāvyam of Dājī Jyotirvid*. The M. S. University Oriental Series 16. Vadodara: Oriental Institute.
- Khandalavala, Karl and Moti Chandra (1969) *New Documents of Indian Painting: A Reappraisal*. Bombay: The Board of Trustees of the Prince of Wales Museum.
- Klatt, Johannes (1879) “Dhanapāla's *Rishabhapañcāśikā*” in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 33:3, pp. 445-83.
- Lal, Vinay (2003) *The History of History: Politics and Scholarship in Modern India*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lāḷas, Sītārām (2013[1962]) *Rājasthāmnī Sabad Kōs: Rājasthānī Hindī Vṛhat Kōś*. 11 vols. Jodhpur: Rājasthānī Granthāgār.
- Lüders, Heinrich (1907) *Würfelspiel im alten Indien*. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung.
- Minkowski, Christopher (2010) “Nīlakaṇṭha's *Mahābhārata*” in *Seminar Magazine* 608. Accessed 9 Feb, 2020: http://www.india-seminar.com/2010/608/608_c_minkowski.htm.
- Minkowski, Christopher (2011) “What Makes a Work ‘Traditional’? On the Success of Nīlakaṇṭha's *Mahābhārata* Commentary” in Federico

- Squarcini (ed.) *Boundaries, Dynamics and Construction of Traditions in South Asia*. London: Anthem, pp. 225-52.
- Mishra, Shiva Shekhar (1966) *Someśvarkṛt Mānasollāsa: ek sāṃskṛtik adhyayan* [Someśvara's *Mānasollāsa*: A Cultural Study]. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Vidyabhavan.
- Mitra, Ananda (1993) *Television and Popular Culture In India: A Study of the Mahabharat*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Mopidi, Kallappa (2006) *History of Indian Sports and Games: A Study with Special Reference to Andhra Pradesh*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation from Sri Krishnadevaraya University, Andhra Pradesh, India. Retrieved 20 Jan, 2018: <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/68167>.
- Murakami, Daisuke (2014) “Aspects of the Traditional Gambling Game Known as Sho in Modern Lhasa: Religious and Gendered Worldviews Infusing the Tibetan Dice Game” in *Revue d’Etudes Tibétaines* 29, pp. 245-270.
- Murray, Harold J. R. (1952) *A History of Board-Games Other than Chess*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Nārāyaṇarāvu, Cilukūri (1939) *Śrī Paṇḍitārādhyā Caritra*. Madras: Andhra Patrika.
- Parlett, David (1999) *The Oxford History of Board Games*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pāṭhak, Jagannāth (1960) *Kuṭṭanāmataṃ Kāvyaṃ*. Allahabad: Mitra Prakāśan.
- Platts, John T. (1968[1884]) *A Dictionary of Urdū, Classical Hindī, and English*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Raghavan, Venkatarama (1979) *Festivals, Sports and Pastimes of India*. Ahmedabad: B.J. Institute of Learning and Research.

- Rangachar, Vasantha (2003) “Board Games From the City of Vijayanagara (Hampi), 1336-1565: A Survey and a Study” in *Board Game Studies* 6, pp. 25-36.
- Rangachar, Vasantha (2006) *Maharaja's Games and Puzzles*. Kelkheim: Foerderkreis Schach-Geschichtsforschung.
- Ray, Nirbed and Projit Bihari Mukharji (2005) “Sedentary Games and the Nationalist Project: A Silent History” in *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 22:4, pp. 699-707.
- Ray, Sugata (2014) “Colonial Frames, 'Native' Claims: The Jaipur Economic and Industrial Museum” in *The Art Bulletin* 96:2, pp. 196-212.
- Rettberg, Ute (2008) “Chaupad” in *Das Schach und seine asiatischen Verwandten*. Dresden: Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden, pp. 37-59.
- Rizvi, Saiyid A. A. (2002) *Fatehpur Sikri*. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- Sachau, Edward C. (1910) *Alberuni's India: An Account of the Religion, Philosophy, Literature, Geography, Chronology, Astronomy, Customs, Laws and Astrology of India About A.D. 1030*. Vol. 1. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co.
- Śarmā, Harikṛṣṇa (1982[1900]) *Kṛīḍākauśalyam*. Delhi: Nag Publishers.
- Sastry, R. Sharma (1923) “Dice-Play on the First Day of the White Half of the Month, Kartika” in *The Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society* 14:1, pp. 117-19.
- Schmidt-Madsen, Jacob (2019) *The Game of Knowledge: Playing at Spiritual Liberation in 18th- and 19th-Century Western India*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Copenhagen, Denmark. Accessed 9 Feb, 2020: <https://ku-dk.academia.edu/JacobSchmidtMadsen>.

- Seshashastri, R. (1988) “Kannada and Telugu Works of the Early Vijayanagara Period” in Giri S. Dikshit (ed.) *Early Vijayanagara: Studies In Its History & Culture*. Bangalore: B. M. S. Memorial Foundation.
- Seyller, John (1985) “Model and Copy: The Illustration of Three “Razmnāma” Manuscripts” in *Archives of Asian Art* 38, pp. 37-66.
- Shakespear, John (1834) *A Dictionary, Hindustānī and English, With a Copious Index, Fitting the Work to Serve, Also, As a Dictionary English and Hindustānī*. London: J. L. Cox and Son.
- Sharma, Aryendra, Khanderao Deshpande, and D. G. Padhye (2008) *Kāśikā: A Commentary on Pāṇini's Astādhyāyī*. 2 vols. Hyderabad: Sanskrit Academy.
- Shou, Chen [陳壽] (1959) *Sanguo zhi* [三國志]. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju.
- Shulman, David (1992) “Devana and Daiva” in A. W. van den Hoek, D. H. A. Kolff, and M. S. Oort (eds.) *Ritual, State, and History in South Asia: Essays in Honour of J. C. Heesterman*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 350-65.
- Shulman, David (1994) “On Being Human In the Sanskrit Epic: The Riddle of Nala” in *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 22:1, pp. 1-29.
- Shurreef, Jaffur and Gerhard A. Herklots (transl.) (1832) *Qanoon-e-Islam or the Customs of the Moosulmans of India*. London: Parbury, Allen, and Co.
- Śivadatta, Paṇḍit and Kāśīnāth Pāṇḍuraṅg Parab (1894) *The Bālabhārata of Amarachandra Sūri*. Kāvya-mālā Series 45. Bombay: Nirṇaya-sāgar Press.
- Smith, John D. (2009) *The Mahābhārata: An Abridged Translation*. London: Penguin Books.
- Soar, Micaela (2007) “Board Games and Backgammon in Ancient Indian Sculpture” in Irving L. Finkel (ed.) *Ancient Board Games in Perspective*. London: British Museum Press, pp. 177-231.

- Solomon, Saskia (2019) “Ten False Scientific Claims Made During Modi’s First Term” in *The Caravan*. Published online 26 Jun, 2019. Accessed 9 Feb, 2020: <https://caravanmagazine.in/science/false-scientific-claims-modi-first-term>.
- Syed, Renate (1998) “Śiva und Pārvatī beim Spiel: Eine Untersuchung literarischer und bildlicher Quellen” in *Berliner Indologische Studien* 11/12, pp. 389-433.
- Temple, Richard C. (1884) *The Legends of the Panjāb*. Vol 1. London: Trübner & Co.
- Tennant, William (1804) *Indian Recreations: Consisting Chiefly of Strictures On the Domestic and Rural Economy of the Mahomedans & Hindoos*. Vol. 1. 2nd edition. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme.
- Thapar, Romila (2002) *The Penguin History of Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300*. London: Penguin Books.
- Topsfield, Andrew (2006a) “Instant Karma: The Meaning of Snakes and Ladders” in Andrew Topsfield (ed.) *The Art of Play: Board and Card Games of India*. Mumbai: Marg Publication, pp. 75-89.
- Topsfield, Andrew (2006b) “Dice, Chaupar, Chess: Indian Games in History, Myth, Poetry, and Art” in Andrew Topsfield (ed.) *The Art of Play: Board and Card Games of India*. Mumbai: Marg Publication, pp. 11-31.
- Truschke, Audrey (2011) “The Mughal *Book of War*: A Persian Translation of the Sanskrit *Mahabharata*” in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 31:2, pp. 506-20.
- Turner, Ralph L. (1966) *A Comparative Dictionary of the Indo-Aryan Languages*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Tylor, Edward B. (1879) “On the Game of Patolli In Ancient Mexico, and Its Probably Asiatic Origin” in *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 8, pp. 116-31.

- Tylor, Edward B. (1896) “On American Lot-Games, as Evidence of Asiatic Intercourse Before the Time of Columbus” in *Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie* 9, pp. 56-66.
- van Buitenen, Johannes A. B. (1972) “On the Structure of the *Sabhāparvan* of the *Mahābhārata*” in *India Maior: Congratulatory Volume Presented to J. Gonda*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 68-83.
- van Buitenen, Johannes A. B. (1975) *The Mahābhārata*. Books 2 & 3. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- van Buitenen, Johannes A. B. (1978) *The Mahābhārata*. Books 4 & 5. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Vedavyāsa, Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana (1959-62) *Skandapurāṇam*. 6 vols. Calcutta: Manasukharāya Mora.
- Venkatasubramanian, Balambal (2005) *Folk Games of Tamilnadu*. Chennai: C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation.
- Verbeeck, Lieve (1998) “Bul: A Patolli Game in Maya Lowland” in *Board Game Studies* 1, pp. 82-100.
- Vīreśalingamu, Mudigoṇḍa (1984) *Jaimini Bhāratamu: Aśvamedha Parvamu*. Hyderabad: Andhra Pradesh Sahitya Akademi.
- White, David G. (1989) “Dogs Die” in *History of Religions* 28:4, pp. 282-303.
- Williamson, Thomas G. (1801) *Treatise on the Hindostanee Game of Patcheess, With Rules &c.* London: T. G. Williamson.
- Wujastyk, Dominik (2014) “Indian Manuscripts” in Jörg B. Quenzer, Dmitry Bondarev, and Jan-Ulrich Sobisch (eds.) *Manuscript Cultures: Mapping the Field*. Berlin: De Gruyter, pp. 159-81.
- Yang, Lien-sheng (1952) “An Additional Note on The Ancient Game Liupo” in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 15: 1/2, pp. 124-39.

Zvelebil, Kamil V. (1974) *Tamil Literature*. A History of Indian Literature Series, vol. 10. Edited by Jan Gonda. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.

Zvelebil, Kamil V. (1995) *Lexicon of Tamil Literature*. Leiden: Brill.