

SCIENCES, ARTS ET CULTURES 1

ART ET SAVOIR DE L'INDE

Actes de l'exposition, du cycle « Sciences de l'Inde »
et du colloque « Jeux indiens et originaires d'Inde »
organisés dans le cadre d'Europalia India

édités par
J. M. DELIRE



LES ÉDITIONS HEB

Between Tradition and Modernity: A Reassessment of the *Vilāsamañimañjarī*

Andreas Bock-Raming

Göttingen/Mainz

The present article, which is based on a lecture given on the occasion of the conference “Jeux indiens et originaux d’Inde: Caturanga, échecs, etc.” at the Haute École de Bruxelles-Defré and Université Libre de Bruxelles from 13th to 14th December 2013, deals with a Sanskrit text called *Vilāsamañimañjarī* (henceforth abbreviated as *Vmm*). It is composed of exactly 472 verses and a few prose passages in Sanskrit dealing with one hundred chess problems and their solutions. On the majority of the verses there is also a commentary in Marathi.

I.1 Authorship and time of composition of the *Vmm*

The name of the author of the *Vmm* is given as Triveṅgaḍācārya or, according to a variant reading which occurs several times in the text, as Tiruveṅgaḍācārya. Except from the very few statements of the text of the *Vmm* itself we don’t have, at least as far as we know, any information about him. From the introductory part of the *Vmm*, the so-called Prastāvanā, we learn that Triveṅgaḍācārya lived as a poet at the court of

“the noble Bājī, the universal monarch”¹. As in the same context² also a minister of Bājī named Sadāśiva is mentioned, it may surely be concluded that the Śrī-Bājī of the *Vmm* is to be identified with Baji Rao II (1775-1851), the last Peshwa of the Maratha Confederacy, who ruled from 1796 to 1818 and had Sadashiv Mankeshvar as one of his prime ministers³. It seems plausible to assume that the *Vmm* was composed in this time⁴. From the introductory part of the *Vmm* we also learn that Triveṅgaḍācārya hailed from “Tirpati”⁵, which is certainly synonymous with Tirupati in South India. Triveṅgaḍācārya’s historicity seems to be ascertained by a remark of the great chess historian H. J. R. Murray in his book *History of Chess*. According to Murray Triveṅgaḍācārya established his reputation in a small circle of chess players in Bombay and was known there as “the Brahmin”⁶.

I.2 Contents and composition of the *Vmm*

The whole text of the *Vmm* is divided into the following parts:

1. The Prastāvanā: This section begins with two *maṅgala*-verses the contents of which, curiously enough, have been transmitted with slight variations: in some of the text’s manuscripts these *maṅgala*-verses are dedicated to Tryambakīśa, in others to Padmādhīśa, i.e. Viṣṇu. The Prastāvanā then describes how the noble Bājī – that is Baji Rao II – orders his minister Sadāśiva to have the poet Triveṅgaḍācārya to write a new book on the game of chess. The latter complies with this request by composing the Vilāsamaṇimañjarī.
2. The Paribhāṣā: This section covers a variety of rules concerning the game of chess. We will deal with some of these rules in detail later on in this article.
3. The Pūrvakhaṇḍa: This section is subdivided into the first and second *stabaka*. In the first *stabaka* altogether 48 different positions of

1. *ŚrīBājī sārvaabhaumo*, *Vmm*, Prastāvanā, v. 3 (this and all subsequent quotations from the *Vmm* are given according to the edition of Kulkarnī from 1937 (cf. below, I.3 with footnote no. 8)).

2. *Vmm*, Prastāvanā, v. 7.

3. According to R. D. Choksey (Choksey 1951: 320) Sadashiv Mankeshvar “became the Peshwa’s chief ministerial adviser” in 1803.

4. Kulkarnī suggests that the text of the *Vmm* was compiled between 1802 and 1814 (cf. in his edition the chapter titled *saṁśodhanāviśayīm thoḍī adhik māhiti*, p. 25).

5. *ŚrīTirpatipurī śiṣṭasaṁsevyā yasya janmabhūh*, *Vmm*, Prastāvanā, v. 5.

6. Murray 1913, Part I: 87.

the chess pieces on the board are described. These positions are arranged according to the number of moves which are necessary until the mate by the chess piece called foot-soldier is achieved. This means: mate in one move (problem no. 1), in two moves (problems no. 2 + 3), three moves (problems no. 4 to 6) and so on until a mate in 12 moves (problem no. 48) is achieved. This method of arrangement of the chess problems is continued in the second *stabaka*: here positions are described from which the player should try to checkmate his opponent with a foot-soldier in 13, 14 etc. up to 225 moves. But there are also other kinds of problems dealt with in this part of the *Vmm*. For example, the numbers 63 and 66 to 73 admit of two possibilities of ending the game: either the opponent's king is checkmated in a certain number of moves by one of one's own foot-soldiers or the opponent is forced to checkmate one's own king in a given number of moves by one of his foot-soldiers. The latter possibility is known as self-mate. There are also problems in which the opponent is supposed to be checkmated by a piece other than a foot-soldier. In problem no. 75 a board of 10 times 10 squares with an enlarged number of chess pieces is used.

4. The Uttarakhaṇḍa: This section is subdivided into the *stabakas* three and four. It contains the solutions of all problems described in the Pūrvakhaṇḍa.

I.3 Hitherto existing editions of the *Vmm* and new manuscript material

The text of the *Vmm* has been edited twice so far. First, in 1936 in Dhulem by Viṣṇu Hari Nijasure⁷. The text was edited once more shortly afterwards in 1937 in Kolhāpūr by Gaṇeś Raṅgo Kulkarṇī together with another, very short text of only seven verses on two-handed chess, the anonymous "Bālakahitabuddhibalakrīḍana"⁸. Kulkarṇī's edition of the *Vmm* is mainly based on a Devanāgarī manuscript which he acquired in 1928 in Kolhāpūr. However, Kulkarṇī's edition as well as that of Nijasure are not free from er-

7. Vilāsamaṇimañjarī. Tīruvenkaṭācārya-kṛt. Rājvāḍe-Saṃśodhan-Maṇḍal-granthamālā 3.

8. Paṇḍit Trivenḡaḍācāryakṛt Vilāsamaṇimañjarī athavā Buddhibalakrīḍaratnē āṇi Bālaka-hita-buddhibalakrīḍanam [Ekā anāmak granthakārācā ek aprakāśit saṭik prabandh]. Kolhāpūr 1937.

rors. Therefore, we are presently working on a new edition of the text which is based on three more manuscripts which are all Devanāgarī manuscripts: one in the possession of the Asiatic Society in Kolkata⁹, one from the Bhandarkar Oriental Institute in Pune¹⁰ and one from the Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute in Jodhpur¹¹.

I.4 The so-called English translation of the *Vmm*

When discussing the textual material of the *Vmm*, mention must also be made of its so-called English translation which appeared in 1814 in Bombay. Its full title is: *Essays on Chess. Adapted to the European Mode of Play: Consisting principally of Positions or Critical Situations Calculated to Improve the Learner and exercise the Memory, by Trevangadacharya Shastree. Translated from the original Sanskrit. Printed for the Author, By M.D. Cruz, No. 10 Military Square.* On closer examination it becomes clear that there are a lot of discrepancies between the Sanskrit original of the *Vmm* and its English version. The *Essays on Chess* cannot at all be called a faithful rendering of the Sanskrit text. This is most evident from the following observations:

Firstly: There are whole passages in the English version which have no counterpart in the Sanskrit original. On the other hand, some passages of the Sanskrit text have no counterpart in the English version.

Secondly: The individual problems are presented in the English version in an order different from that of the original. Their wording in the English version is much more concise than in the Sanskrit text.

Thirdly: More than once in the English version the chess pieces are assigned a position on the chess-board which differs from the arrangement of the chess pieces in the Sanskrit text.

Fourthly: The Sanskrit nomenclature of the chess pieces – elephant, horse, chariot, minister, foot-soldier – we will refer to that in more detail later on – was replaced by the respective English terms rook, knight, bishop, queen and pawn.

So far we have no convincing explanation for these discrepancies. If the so-called translation was really done by Triveṅgaḍācārya himself, one must assume that he, for whatever reason, revised his original work to a considerable extent.

9. Manuscript No. G 8322.

10. Manuscript No. 408.

11. Manuscript No. 854 (Library Accession No. 24430 E).

II.1 The rules of Indian chess according to literary sources prior to the *Vmm*

Before we explain the rules according to which chess is played in the *Vmm*, it is necessary to mention the origin of the game and to have a look on what Indian literary sources prior to the *Vmm* tell us in this respect.

Although it was for a long time a matter of debate among chess historians whether the game of chess originated in India, or in Persia or even in China, according to the current state of research in all probability the game of chess was originally an Indian game. This may be concluded from the fact that it was called from earliest times *caturaṅga*. This Sanskrit word meaning "having four limbs" denotes the four parts of which the ancient Indian army traditionally consisted, namely the elephants, the war-chariots, the cavalry and the infantry. In other words, the game which is nowadays called chess was developed in India according to the model of the structure of the ancient Indian army and was given the name *caturaṅga*, "game of war". The word *caturaṅga* was then transformed to *čatrang* in the middle Persian language which in turn adopted the form of *šatranğ* in the Arab language¹². So while there seems little doubt about the place of origin of chess, the question when it was invented is much more difficult to answer. The first relatively reliable evidence for the existence of chess in India is found in Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita*, which is a novel belonging to the classical Sanskrit literature from the first half of the 7th century A.D.¹³ In the second chapter of this work it is mentioned that during the reign of king Harṣa peace was so great that there were no more real wars on the battle-field. Consequently, the *caturaṅga*, the four-fold army, was only arranged on the *aṣṭāpada*, the board of eight times eight squares¹⁴.

Detailed descriptions of the rules of *caturaṅga*, which go beyond such casual mentions of the game as in the *Harṣacarita*, can only be found after the turn of the millennium. The earliest complete description of the rules of two-handed Indian chess is given in a passage of 63 verses contained in a Sanskrit work titled *Mānasollāsa*¹⁵. This is a kind of encyclopedia

12. Cf. Sundermann 1999: 58-59.

13. According to Syed 2001: 9 Bāṇa composed this work shortly after 630 A.D.

14. *aṣṭāpadānām caturaṅgakalpanā* (*Harṣacarita* 2, p. 35 of P. V. Kane's edition [Delhi etc., 1965]). For a detailed discussion of this phrase cf. Syed 2005: 586f.

15. Edited by G. K. Shrigondekar in three volumes: vol. 1 (first and second *viṃśati*): Baroda 1925 (repr. 1967), Gaekwad's Oriental Series 28; vol. 2 (third and fourth *viṃśati*): Baroda 1939, G.O.S. 84; vol. 3 (rest of the fourth *viṃśati* and fifth *viṃśati*): Baroda 1961,

covering a great variety of subjects and is attributed to the South Indian ruler Someśvara Bhūlokamalla, who reigned at the beginning of the 12th century. The *Mānasollāsa*'s passage on chess is mainly concerned with the positions of the chess pieces on the board and their movements. Their names are, as mentioned above, in accordance with the names of the four parts of the ancient Indian army. That is why they are called: chariot – horse – elephant and foot-soldier. Additionally, there are the figures called minister and king both of which had, of course, their place in the Indian army, too¹⁶.

According to the *Mānasollāsa*, in the initial position the two chariots were placed at the corners of the first row of the board (see diagram 1.a¹⁷). Next to them are the two horses, which are followed by the elephants. The minister and the king were placed in the middle of the first row. However, the *Mānasollāsa* gives no clue, whether the minister actually stood left of the king, as in the modern game and as indicated in diagram 1.a, or right of it. The foot-soldiers were placed on the second row.

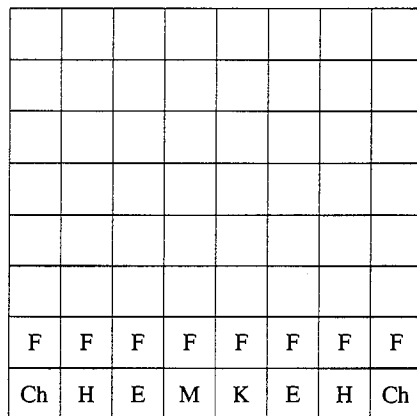


Diagram 1.a *Mānasollāsa*: position of the chess pieces on the board

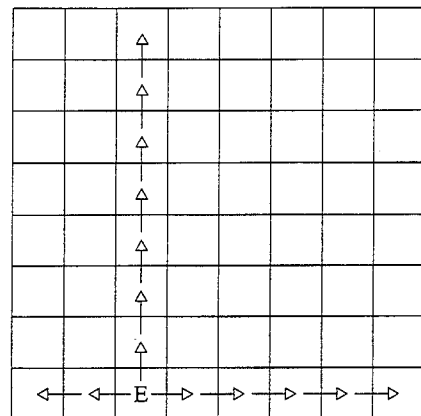


Diagram 1.b *Mānasollāsa*: movement of the elephant

Abbreviations:

K = King

M = Minister

F = Foot-soldier

H = Horse

E = Elephant

Ch = Chariot

G.O.S. 138. The passage on chess is contained in the 5th *vimśati*, v. 560 - 605ab. For detailed investigations on this passage cf. Bock-Raming 1996; also Syed 1993.

16. Cf. Syed 1995: 74-79.

17. We are indebted to my wife, Dr. Elsbeth Raming, for drawing the diagrams of this article.

The movements of the chess pieces were according to the *Mānasollāsa* the following: the horse, the foot-soldier, and the king moved and captured exactly as the knight, the pawn, and the king do in modern chess. The elephant moved like the rook in any of the four cardinal directions (see diagram 1.b). The chariot at the corner of the board was only allowed to move aslant to the next but one square (see diagram 1.c). The most conspicuous difference concerns the minister who corresponds to the queen in modern chess. While the latter is the most powerful chess piece, the minister of the Indian game could only move aslant to the next square (see diagram 1.d).

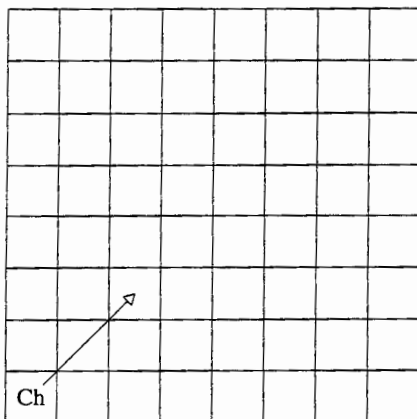


Diagram 1.c *Mānasollāsa*: movement of the chariot

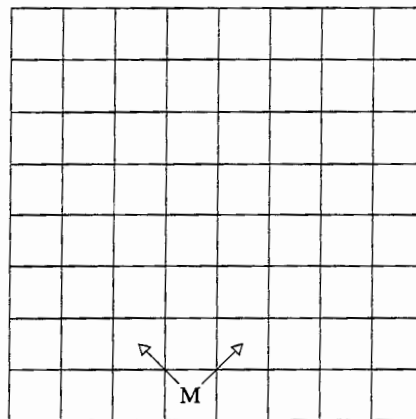


Diagram 1.d *Mānasollāsa*: movement of the minister

As in the modern game, according to the chess rules of the *Mānasollāsa* it was not allowed to capture the king.

Apart from the nomenclature of the chess pieces, their positions on the board as well as their movements, the *Mānasollāsa*'s passage on chess gives tactical instructions how to play the game. For example, it teaches how to protect one's own figures¹⁸. Moreover, it also describes how the opponent's king can be defeated with the help of various constellations. In this connection, specific terms seem to be used. The text advises the player "to tie" or "to fetter" the opponent's king for which the root *ni-bandh-*¹⁹ is used. This

18. Cf., e.g., *Mānasollāsa* 5,585.

19. Cf. *Mānasollāsa* 5,586 ab ... *nibadhnīyāl lakṣyasthāne* (editor's emendation for *lakṣa*° in the manuscripts) *param nṛpam*: "one should fetter the opponent's king 'at a place to be kept in view'" (? *lakṣyasthāne*); Syed [1993: 99] suggests to translate *lakṣa-/lakṣyasthāna* as 'target place' ('Zielort').

possibly means that one should try to stalemate the opponent's king²⁰. The constellations by which the opponent's king is "fettered" are called *bandhana* or *bandha* both translating as "bond", "tie", "fetter"²¹. Furthermore, the idea of checkmating the opponent's king is conveyed by the compound *gati-rodha* = "obstructing (his) movement"²².

Last but not least it should be mentioned that the *Mānasollāsa* teaches certain opening positions similar to the *ta'bīyas* in the Arabic chess. In the *Mānasollāsa* these opening positions are called *vyūha* = "(battle) array" which may be taken as additional evidence that the *caturāṅga*, the Indian game of chess, was conceived as an image of war or battle between two parties. As is well known, in the relevant Sanskrit literature on warfare there are many descriptions of such *vyūhas* which were dependent on certain criteria such as the condition of the soil, the strength of the opponent etc.

Much more later than the *Mānasollāsa* we have another textual witness for chess in India played by two participants. It is a passage of sixteen verses in the Sanskrit work *Nītimayūkha* composed by Nīlakaṇṭha probably in the 17th century²³. It gives a description of the game in which there are the following chess pieces and their positions: on the first row two elephants,

20. Cf. Bock-Raming 1996: 21f. If my assumption is right that the *Mānasollāsa* in the passage discussed there deals with the question of stalemating and thus defeating the opponent's king, this would imply that it adopts a position which is well known from the Arabic chess. Cf. Murray 1913: 229: "It occasionally happened in the course of the game that a player, whose turn it was to play, found himself unable to move any of his pieces in a legal manner, and yet at the instant his King was not in check. This ending, to which we give the name of *stalemate* . . . , was decisive in Muslim chess. The player who found himself in this predicament was held to have lost the game". Cf. also Murray 1913: 267.

21. The *Mānasollāsa* mentions three such constellations: *vajrabandha*, *dr̥ḍhabandhana* and *bandha*. Syed (cf. Syed 1993: 99) thinks that the constellation called *bandha* means the protection of one's own chess pieces which we doubt, for *Mānasollāsa* 5,589, *pāda a aṅgarakṣā iva raṇe* does not mean "Das Schützen eines [Heeres-]Teiles in der Schlacht" ("the protection of a part [of the army] in the battle"), but "as 'bodyguards' in the battle", a comparison which relates to the preceding statement in 5,588cd.

22. Cf. *Mānasollāsa* 5,599 cd: *gatirodhaṃ narendrasya kuryād yatnena kovidaḥ*: "the clever (player) should carefully obstruct the king's movement"; 601cd - 602ab: *kiṃ vā surakṣitān yodhān aśvaṃ vā syandanam gajam || mantriṇaṃ vā nyaset prājño gatirodhāya bhūpateḥ* [mss. °pati, °patiḥ]: "The clever (player) should put up (one of his) well-protected soldiers or his horse (or) his chariot (or) his elephant or his minister in order to obstruct the movement of the king".

23. The *Nītimayūkha*'s passage on chess was edited on the basis of three manuscripts together with an annotated translation by A. Weber in: Monatsberichte der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin aus dem Jahre 1873, Berlin 1874, 705 - 735.

two horses, two camels, the minister, and the king; on the second row eight foot-soldiers (see diagram 2.a).

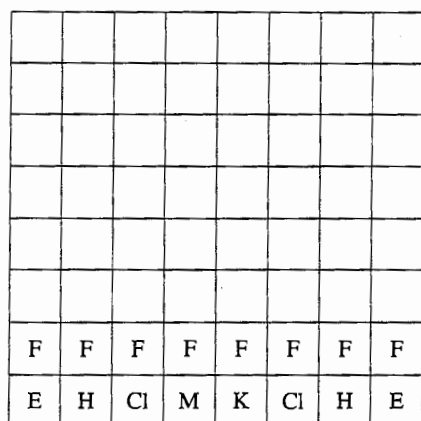


Diagram 2.a *Nītimayūkha*: position of the chess pieces on the board

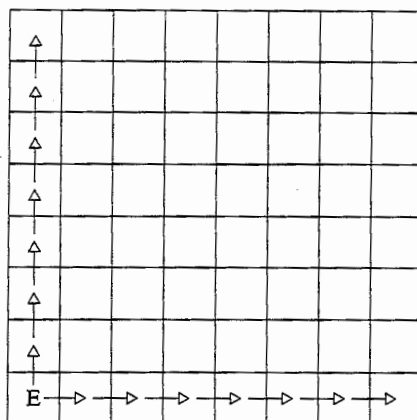


Diagram 2.b *Nītimayūkha*: movement of the elephant

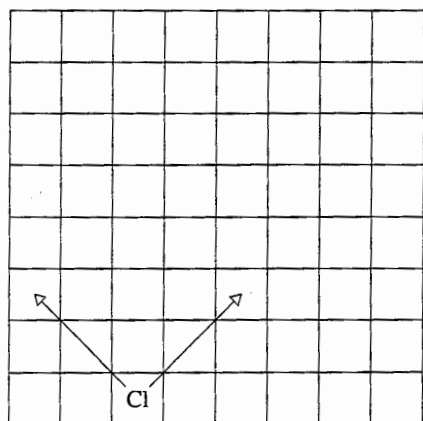


Diagram 2.c *Nītimayūkha*: movement of the camel

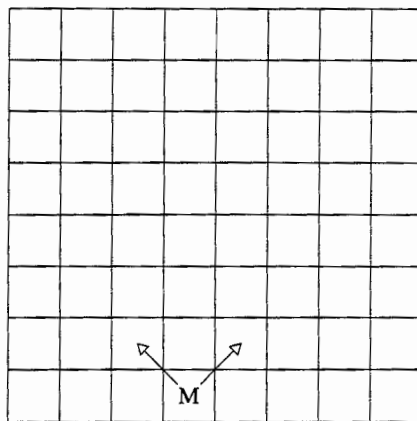


Diagram 2.d *Nītimayūkha*: movement of the minister

Additional abbreviation: Cl = Camel

So the *Nītimayūkha* differs from the *Mānasollāsa* in the following points: The elephant was now placed at the corner of the first row, that is it had the position of the rook in modern chess. It moved like the elephant in the *Mānasollāsa* (see diagram 2.b). The chariot of the *Mānasollāsa* was replaced in the *Nītimayūkha* by the camel which in the ground position occupied the

third and sixth squares of the first row and moved aslant to the next but one square (see diagram 2.c). The minister moved according to the *Nītimayūkha* as in the *Mānasollāsa* aslant to the next square (see diagram 2.d).

II.2 The nomenclature of the chess pieces, the technical terms and specific rules used for playing the game of chess as revealed by the *Vmm*

From the chess problems dealt with in the *Vmm* and the way in which they are solved it becomes evident how the chess pieces in this text are named, where they are placed in their initial positions and how they move.

Diagram 3.a shows that the *Vmm*, although it is a relatively late text, has preserved the traditional names of the chess pieces which were already in use in the *Mānasollāsa* and the *Nītimayūkha*: the elephants which have the same position as in the *Nītimayūkha*; the two horses; the minister, the king, and finally the eight foot-soldiers on the second row. Very interesting is the name of the chess piece on the third and sixth squares of the first row which is called either chariot or camel. Throughout the whole text of the *Vmm* both terms – chariot or camel – are used without

distinction for one and the same piece. This means that with respect to this piece, the *Vmm* combines the nomenclature of the *Mānasollāsa* and the *Nītimayūkha*. So as far as the nomenclature of the chess pieces is concerned the *Vmm* can be called a traditional text. On the other hand, however, there are innovations in the *Vmm* as far as the movements of the chess pieces are concerned: the camel/chariot now has the movement of the bishop in modern chess (see diagram 3.b) and the minister moves like the queen (see diagram 3.c). This means that, although the nomenclature of the pieces in the *Vmm* is traditional, their movements have been adopted from the modern western form of the game.

F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
E	H	Ch Cl	M	K	Ch Cl	H	E

Diagram 3.a *Vilāsamañimañjarī*: position of the chess pieces on the board

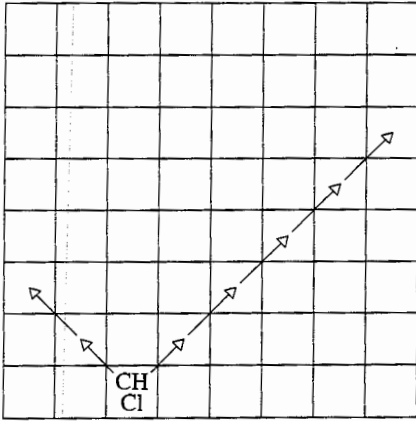


Diagram 3.b *Vilāsamañimañjarī*:
movement of the camel/chariot

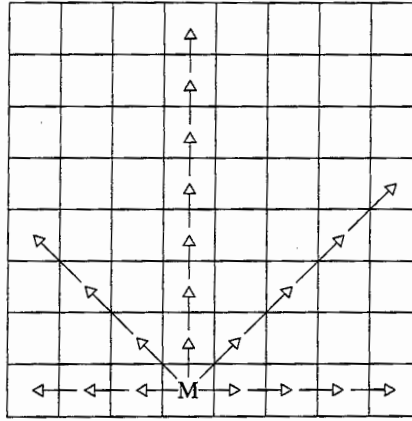


Diagram 3.c *Vilāsamañimañjarī*:
movement of the minister

Apart from the nomenclature and the movements of the chess pieces there are many more technicalities in the *Vmm*. They are mostly contained in the part called *Paribhāṣā* already mentioned. We will now discuss some of them:

1. The author of the *Vmm* distinguishes between two modes of the game. The first is called *nirbala* and means that only a piece of the opponent may be taken which is not protected by another one of his chess pieces. The second mode is called *sabala* in which a protected as well as an unprotected piece of the opponent may be taken²⁴.
2. Apart from these two modes the *Paribhāṣā* explicitly distinguishes between four regional variants of the game of chess which are called north Indian (*haindusthāna*), south Indian (*kāṛṇāṭa*), western (*vailāyata*), and Chinese (*caina*) chess. By the way, we can make here an interesting observation concerning the language used in the *Vmm*. Though it is written in Sanskrit, more than once words are adopted which actually come from New Indo-Aryan languages: *vailāyata* and *haindusthāna* are Sanskritised forms of Hindi/Marathi *vilāyatī* and *hindustānī/hindusthānī*. Another example of this kind is the use of the word *śāh*. Furnished with the ending for the Sanskrit accusative singular -am and combined with a form of the Sanskrit roots *dā-* or *pra-dā-*

Hindi/Marathi: šāh

24. Cf. *Vmm*, *Paribhāṣā*, v. 2: *nirbalaṃ sabalaṃ ceti dvividhaṃ tat prakīrtitaṃ | nirbale nirbalaṃ hanyāt sabale tūbhayaṃ smṛtaṃ ||*

it gives the meaning “to check (the opponent’s king)”²⁵. At another place *śah* is made to form a Bahuvrīhi-compound in *prāptaśāha* “one who has obtained, i.e. been given checkmate”²⁶.

After this incidental remark let us come back to the four local variants of the game of chess mentioned in the *Paribhāṣā* of the *Vmm*.

The main difference between the north Indian chess and the western form is the following: in the north Indian chess the kings and the ministers of both players in their initial position do not stand face to face of each other as in the modern, western game of chess, but cross-over²⁷.

Furthermore, the north Indian chess in contradistinction to western chess only allows the pawns or foot-soldiers to be transformed on the last row to that piece to which they originally belong. The foot-soldiers of the king and the minister become a minister each²⁸.

Also, in the north Indian game a foot-soldier must not enter the last row as long as the piece to which it belongs is “still alive”, i.e. has not been captured²⁹.

The king may, as long as he has not been given check, once move like a horse³⁰.

The south Indian game of chess is only touched upon. The author of the *Vmm* mentions as its distinctive features that the minister moves like the king³¹ and that the chariot only moves diagonally two squares. With respect to the latter the south Indian game seems to have preserved a move which is, as we have seen, already taught in the *Mānasollāsa*³². Finally, the fourth regional variant, the Chinese game of chess is mentioned. But instead of describing its typical characteristics, the author of the *Vmm* only denounces

25. *śāhaṃ dadyād vāraṇena* ..., *Vmm*, Uttarakhaṇḍa, v. 10; *śāhaṃ pradadyād atha* ..., *Vmm*, Uttarakhaṇḍa, v. 38.

26. *Vmm*, *Paribhāṣā*, v. 26; cf. also *Paribhāṣā*, v. 18: *aprāptaśāho nṛpatiḥ*.

27. *nṛpadvayaṃ mantriyaṃ haindusthāne parānmukham | vailāyate tu sāmukhyaṃ taylor bhūyāt parāsparam* ||, *Vmm*, *Paribhāṣā*, v. 34.

28. *uttamasthānagā martyāḥ* (in Kulkarnī's edition °ā) *svasvasvāmipradās smṛtāḥ | nṛpamantrimanuṣyau dvau mahāmātrapradāyakaḥ* (thus according to the Dhuleṃ-edition and the manuscripts; Kulkarnī's edition: *mahāmātya*°), *Vmm*, *Paribhāṣā*, v. 16.

29. *svasvasvāmiṣu jīvatsu bhaṭo naivāntimam višet*, *Vmm*, *Paribhāṣā*, v. 17.

30. *aprāptaśāho nṛpatiḥ sakṛd aśvagaṭiṃ spṛśet*, *Vmm*, *Paribhāṣā*, v. 18.

31. *nṛpatulyo bhaven mantri gamane*, *Vmm*, *Paribhāṣā*, v. 8.

32. However, in the South Indian game as described by the *Paribhāṣā* of the *Vmm* the chariot may also leap over the foot-soldiers which is not mentioned in the *Mānasollāsa*: ... *śakaṭo bhaṭān | ullaṅghya yāti sadanadvayaṃ* (thus according to the Dhuleṃ-edition and the manuscripts; Kulkarnī's edition: *sadanam dvayaṃ*) *koṇena* ..., *Vmm*, *Paribhāṣā*, v. 8.

it in a few words as a form which is of modest value and therefore does not deserve to be dealt with in detail³³.

II.3 Discussion of selected passages of the *Vmm*

Now we would like to discuss some examples of how the author of the *Vmm* describes the chess problems in the part called *Pūrvakhaṇḍa* and how he gives the respective solutions in the *Uttarakhaṇḍa*. Let us first of all have a look at problem no. 9. Like all other problems it is introduced by a sentence in Sanskrit prose which translates thus:

“Again he explains [a position from which] a mate by a foot-soldier in only four [moves is possible]³⁴.”

Here two things may be pointed out. First: the Sanskrit expression for “mate by a foot-soldier” is – and not only here, but also in almost all other cases – *bhaṭa-bandha*. This is remarkable in so far as *bandha* and at other places of the text of the *Vmm* also *(ni)bandhana* are relatively old expressions, for they occur, as we have mentioned before, already in the *Mānasollāsa* from the beginning of the 12th century where they seem to imply the defeat of the opponent’s king by stalemating him with the help of various constellations. Furthermore, the idea of checkmating him is expressed in the *Vmm* by forms of the Sanskrit roots *rudh-* and *ni-rudh-* = “to obstruct”; which again relates to the *Mānasollāsa* where *rodha*, which is itself a nominal formation of *rudh-*, was used in the compound *gati-rodha*³⁵. Thus one can say that the *Vmm* has preserved relevant terms used in the Indian game of chess, which are already testified in the *Mānasollāsa*. Therefore also in this respect the *Vmm* may be called traditional. Only in a very few cases its author uses the Arabic term for checkmate in a Sanskritised form, namely *mātuḥ* (in the nom. sg.)³⁶.

What follows after the introductory prose sentence is a rather lengthy description of the position of the chess pieces in a verse composed in a *kāvya* metre, here, in problem no. 9, *prṭhvī*:

33. *caināder alpasāratvāt tan mataṃ na sprśāmahe*, *Vmm*, *Paribhāṣā*, v. 12. What is meant by *āder* (“and so on”) is not clear.

34. *caturbhir eva punar bhaṭabandhaṃ viśadīkaroti*, *Vmm*, *Pūrvakhaṇḍa*, prose before v. 17.

35. For *rudh-* cf. e.g. *Vmm*, *Uttarakhaṇḍa*, v. 183; for *ni-rudh-* cf. *Uttarakhaṇḍa*, v. 40, 42, 55, 72, 77.

36. Cf. *Vmm*, *Pūrvakhaṇḍa*, v. 133 and *Paribhāṣā*, v. 6, where also the compounds *peda-mātu* and *māru-mātu* are formed.

"The king [is placed] on the eighth [square] of his chariot; a horse on the sixth [square] of the king's chariot; a foot-soldier and an elephant on the fifth and on the last but one [square] of the king's horse as well as the minister on the second square of his elephant. [Furthermore], the opponent's king is placed on the first square of his elephant and a chariot on the last [square] of the minister's horse³⁷."

According to this description the position of the chess pieces is the following:

One of the two players has five chess pieces, namely: the minister, a foot-soldier, a horse, an elephant and the king. His opponent has only two chess pieces which we have marked with the sign of a circle in the diagram, namely the chariot and the king (see diagram 4.a).

According to the rules of today's chess one would expect that the opponent is checkmated in only one move, namely by the minister moving from a2 to g8. The author of the *Vmm*, however, insists that the opponent should be checkmated by the foot-soldier. Accordingly, he offers the following solution of the problem describing it in the form of a verse:

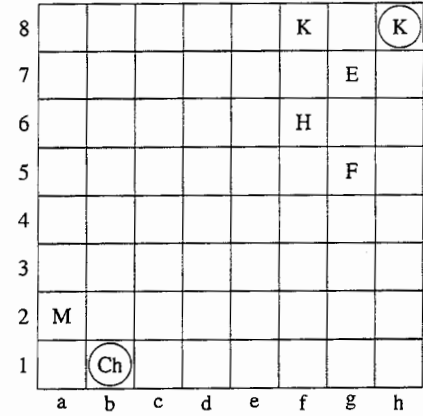


Diagram 4.a *Vilāsamañimañjarī*, problem no. 9: position of the chess pieces on the board

"One should check the [opponent's] king by the elephant on the seventh [square] of the king's elephant and then by the minister on the eighth square of the king's horse. Then the foot-soldier should advance from the fifth to the sixth [square]. Then the defenseless opponent should move his camel anywhere. After this, the checkmate [is achieved] by the foot-soldier³⁸."

37. *nṛpo nijarathāṣṭame nṛpaticakriṣaṣṭhe hayo mahīśahayapañcamācaramayor manuṣyadvipau | dvitīyasadane sthito nijagajasya mantrī paro nṛpo nijagajālaye sacivaghoṭakānte rathaḥ*, *Vmm*, Pūrvakhaṇḍa, v. 17.

38. *śāham dadyād vāraṇena bhūpakunjarasaptame | prabhuvājyaṣṭamagrhe pradhānena nṛpaṃ tataḥ || pañcamāt ṣaṣṭham udgacched bhāṭaḥ paścād vikunṭhitaḥ | paraḥ kvacit kṣipēd uṣṭraṃ tadūrdhvaṃ bhāṭabandhanam ||*, *Vmm*, Uttarakhaṇḍa, v. 10 - 11. The metre of both

If we adapt this description of the solution of problem no. 9 to the modern notation, the complete sequence of moves looks like this:

1. First move: The elephant on g7 moves to h7, thereby checking the opponent's king; – the opponent's camel = chariot takes the elephant on h7 (see diagram 4.b).
2. Second move: The minister moves from a2 to g8, thereby checking the opponent's king; – the opponent's camel = chariot takes the minister on g8 (see diagram 4.c).
3. Third move: The foot-soldier moves from g5 to g6; – the opponent's camel = chariot makes any move, e.g. from g8 to c4 (see diagram 4.d).
4. Fourth move: The foot-soldier moves from g6 to g7, thereby checkmating the opponent's king (see diagram 4.e).

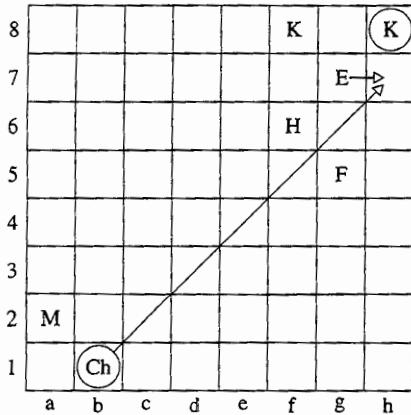


Diagram 4.b *Vilāsamañimañjarī*, problem no. 9: first move of solution

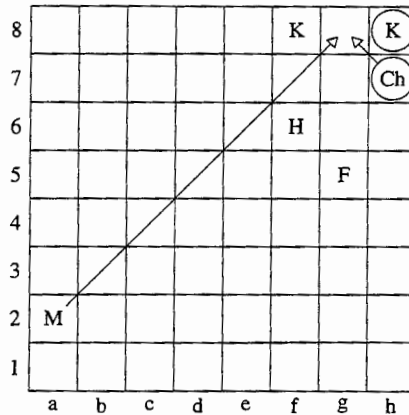


Diagram 4.c *Vilāsamañimañjarī*, problem no. 9: second move of solution

Triveṅgaḍācārya nowhere gives reasons why in the majority of chess problems described by him he insists that the opponent should be checkmated by a foot-soldier. It seems, however, that he was not the only one who had a predilection for this special kind of mate as may be seen from another passage on two-handed chess which we have not mentioned so far. It is contained in the so-called *Cetovinodanakāvya* written around 1823 by

verses is *anuṣṭubh*. In v. 10, *pāda* b, Kulkarnī's edition has erroneously *bhūpaṃ kuñjara*° and in v. 10, *pāda* c likewise mistakenly *prabhur vājy*°.

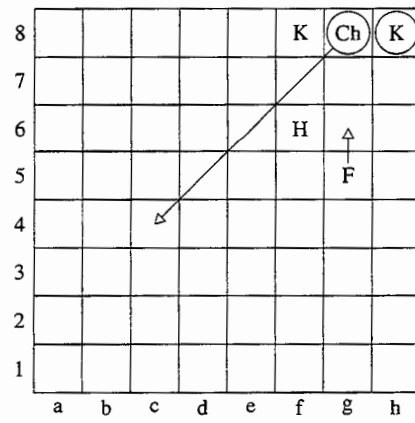


Diagram 4.d *Vilāsamañimañjarī*, problem no. 9: third move of solution

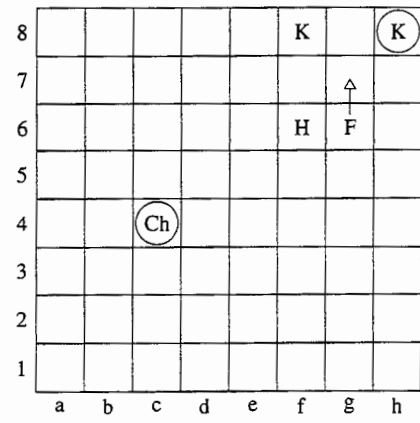


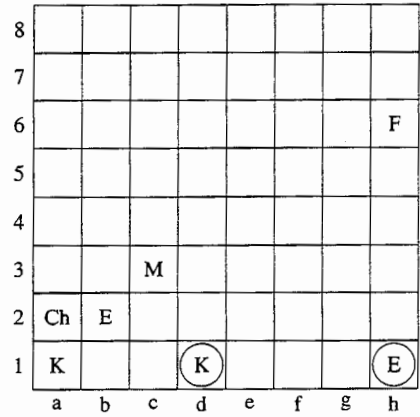
Diagram 4.e *Vilāsamañimañjarī*, problem no. 9: fourth move of solution

Dāṇi Jyotirvid³⁹. In one verse – 220 – of this passage the following statement is given:

“Of all pieces the foot-soldier is the principal one because he does not go backwards. Therefore, the checkmate achieved by him leads to the best victory over the [opponent’s] king⁴⁰.”

Diagram 5 *Vilāsamañimañjarī*, problem no. 61: position of the chess pieces on the board

On the ground of this statement one may conjecture that the author of the *Vmm* had a similar reason for his pronounced esteem of the checkmate by a foot-soldier. Any way, the fact that he does so has as a consequence that the solutions of the individual problems presented in the *Purvakhanda* become very protracted and complicated. A



39. *Cetovinodanākāvyam of Dāṇi Jyotirvid*. Edited by P. H. Joshi & S. Y. Wakankar. Oriental Institute M. S. University of Baroda (The M. S. University Oriental Series: No. 16). Vadodara 1991.

40. *sarvebhyo 'pi padātir mukhyo 'sau yan na prṣṭa* (we suggest to emend to *prṣṭha*) *āyāti | tasmāt tatkr̥tamṛt sā nr̥pater atyapajayāvahā bhavati ||*.

case in point is the problem no. 61 with the position of the chess pieces shown in diagram 5: The first player has the king, a chariot, an elephant, the minister and a foot-soldier. His opponent has the king and an elephant both of which we have again indicated by a circle in the diagram. According to the way in which chess is played today we would expect that the chariot corresponding to our bishop on a2 moves to b3 and the opponent's king on d1 would be checkmated. According to the *Vmm*, however, the solution looks different. Its author gives as in the previous example a very long description of how one has to move one's pieces. It comprises 11 verses in the Pañcacāmara metre and ends after 57 moves by checkmating the opponent's king by the foot-soldier who moves from h6 to h7. This whole sequence of moves looks like this ⁴¹:

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Mc3 – c2 + [Kd1 – e1] | 30. Mf4 – g3 + [Kg1 – f1] |
| 2. Mc2 – d2 + [Ke1 – f1] | 31. Ec3 – c1 + [Kf1 – e2] |
| 3. Md2 – e2 + [Kf1 – g1] | 32. Mg3 – g2 + [Ke2 – e3] |
| 4. Me2 – g4 + [Kg1 – f1] | 33. Ec1 – c3 + Ke3 – d4 |
| 5. Cha2 – c4 + [Kf1 – e1] | 34. Ec3 – d3 + Kd4 – e5 |
| 6. Mg4 – g3 + [Ke1 – d1] | 35. Ed3 – e3 + Ke5 – f4 |
| 7. Mg3 – f3 + Kd1 – c1 | 36. Ee3 – f3 + Kf4 – e5 |
| 8. Mf3 – e3 + [Kc1 – d1] | 37. Mg2 – e2 + Ke5 – d4 |
| 9. Chc4 – e2 + [Kd1 – e1] | 38. Ef3 – d3 + Kd4 – c4 |
| 10. Che2 – d3 + [Ke1 – d1] | 39. Me2 – c2 + Kc4 – b4 |
| 11. Me3 – f3 + Kd1 – e1 | 40. Ed3 – b3 + Kb4 – a5 |
| 12. Mf3 – e4 + [Ke1 – d1] | 41. Mc2 – c3 + Ka5 – a4 |
| 13. Me4 – a4 + Kd1 – e1 | 42. Mc3 – c4 + [Ka4 – a5] |
| 14. Ma4 – b4 + [Ke1 – d1] | 43. Eb3 – b5 + [Ka5 – a6] |
| 15. Mb4 – b3 + Kd1 – e1 | 44. Mc4 – c6 + [Ka6 – a7] |
| 16. Mb3 – c3 + [Ke1 – d1] | 45. Eb5 – b7 + [Ka7 – a8] |
| 17. Chd3 – c2 + Kd1 – c1 | 46. Eb7 – c7 + [Ka8 – b8] |
| 18. Chc2 – b1 + [Kc1 – d1] | 47. Mc6 – b6 + [Kb8 – a8] |
| 19. Eb2 – d2 + [Kd1 – e1] | 48. Mb6 – a6 + [Ka8 – b8] |
| 20. Mc3 – e3 + [Ke1 – f1] | 49. Ec7 – b7 + [Kb8 – c8] |

41. The solutions of the chess problems are presented in the Uttarakhanda of the *Vmm* in such a way that only the moves of the first player are given, when his opponent has only one possible move with which he can answer. When, however, the opponent can choose between several moves, the text explicitly prescribes – not always, but in most cases – which one he has to make. For the sake of completeness we have added also all the other moves of the second player with which he has necessarily to react on an immediately preceding move of the first player. These moves have been put in square brackets here.

222

21. Ed2 - f2 + [Kf1 - g1]
 22. Ef2 - f5 + Kg1 - h2
 23. Me3 - f2 + [Kh2 - h3]
 24. Mf2 - f3 + Kh3 - h2
 25. Mf3 - f4 + [Kh2 - h3]
 26. Ef5 - h5 + [Kh3 - g2]
 27. Eh5 - g5 + [Kg2 - h3]
 28. Eg5 - g3 + [Kh3 - h2]
 29. Eg3 - c3 + Kh2 - g1

50. Ma6 - c6 + [Kc8 - d8]#
 51. Eb7 - d7 + [Kd8 - e8]
 52. Mc6 - e6 + [Ke8 - f8]
 53. Ed7 - f7 + [Kf8 - g8]
 54. Ef7 - f1 + [Kg8 - h8]
 55. Me6 - f6 + [Kh8 - g8]
 56. Ef1 - g1 + [Eh1 x g1]
 57. Fh6 - h7 + (checkmate)

According to the rules of modern chess the game would end here with a draw because of the so-called fifty-move rule.

The case of problem no. 61 just discussed is quite clear insofar as the solution is indeed achieved, as prescribed by the text, in 57 moves. However, there are other cases which are problematic, especially where a rather long series of steps towards a solution is required. A case in point is problem no. 76 of the *Pūrvakhaṇḍa* where a checkmate by the foot-soldier in 45 moves should be achieved. The Sanskrit text of the corresponding solution in the *Uttarakhaṇḍa*, however, instead of giving the whole sequence of moves leading to the solution, enumerates just a limited number of moves. The Marathi commentary, on the other hand, has a complete list of moves, but there are discrepancies between the different textual witnesses: the Marathi commentary as it is contained in the *Dhuleṃ* edition and in the manuscript from the Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute enumerates only 44 moves, some of which prove to be faulty and not practicable. Only the Marathi commentary as it is given in Kulkarnī's edition is correct in listing exactly 45 moves as prescribed in the *Pūrvakhaṇḍa* which actually end with the opponent's checkmate. From this one can only conclude that the text of the *Vmm* and especially of its Marathi commentary has not been transmitted faithfully in all its parts.

We have already mentioned that the *Vmm*, although it uses the traditional nomenclature for the chess pieces, has adopted their movements to the western or European mode of playing. Another instance of European influence is depicted by the fact that Triveṅgaḍācārya also describes problems in which the so-called self-mate plays a role. This form of mate occurs for the first time in the "Bonus Socius", a collection of chess problems which is attributed to Nicholes de St. Nicholai and probably dates from the second half

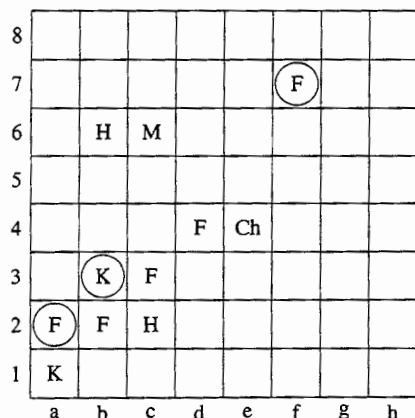


Diagram 6.a *Vilāsamañimañjarī*, problem no. 69: position of the chess pieces on the board

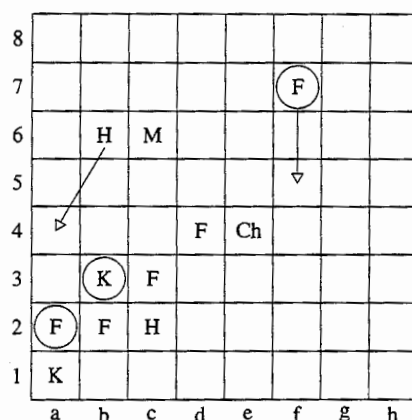


Diagram 6.b *Vilāsamañimañjarī*, problem no. 69: first move of solution

of the 13th century⁴². Especially in the 19th century the self-mate seems to have been very popular⁴³. In the *Vmm* altogether nine problems deal with the self-mate which characteristically are framed in such a way that they admit of both possibilities: either to checkmate the opponent or to force the latter to checkmate oneself. Let us take for example problem no. 69 with the following position of the chess pieces (see diagram 6.a): One of the two players has eight chess pieces: the king, a chariot, the minister, 2 horses and 3 foot-soldiers. His opponent has the king and 2 foot-soldiers. The solution of this problem is given in the *Uttarakhaṇḍa*. In order to check-mate the opponent's king three moves are necessary:

1. The horse moves from b6 to a4; – the opponent's foot-soldier moves from f7 to f5 (see diagram 6.b).

42. Cf. Murray 1913: Part II, 628. Cf. also 651, where Murray characterizes the self-mate as a European invention in which he seems to be followed, e.g., by Joachim Petzold in his book *Das königliche Spiel. Die Kulturgeschichte des Schach*. Stuttgart 1987 (cf. p. 92, where Petzold discusses the *Bonus Socius*: "Schließlich tritt uns zum Abschluß das erste Selbstmatt in der Geschichte des Schachs entgegen"). Antonius van der Linde's argumentation that the self-mate occurring in the *Bonus Socius* has to be traced back to Arabic sources, because it is also found "in the collection of problems of Trevangadacharya Shastree" [i.e. the *Vilāsamañimañjarī*, the text discussed in the present article] (cf. van der Linde 1874: 288) does not seem very convincing.

43. Cf. the online-article by Georg Böller: *Problemisten im Schachbund*, in: KARL. Das kulturelle Schachmagazin (www.karlonline.org/102_1.htm).

2. The minister moves from c6 to d5 thereby checking the opponent's king which in its turn takes the horse on a4 (see diagram 6.c).
3. The foot-soldier moves from b2 to b3 thereby checkmating the opponent's king (see diagram 6.d).

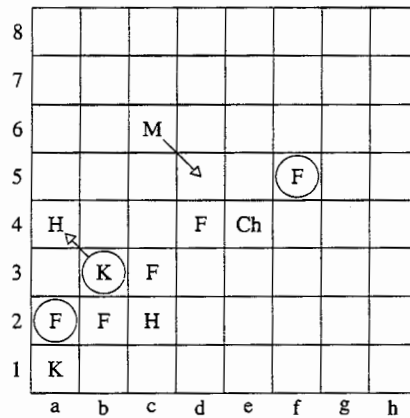


Diagram 6.c *Vilāsamañimañjarī*,
problem no. 69: second move of
solution

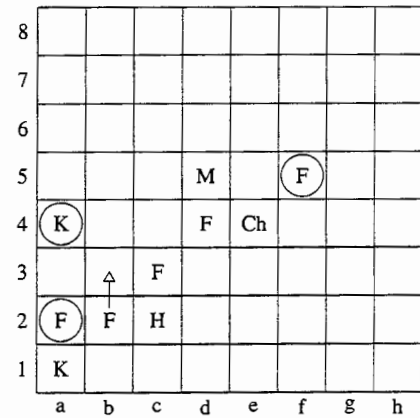


Diagram 6.d *Vilāsamañimañjarī*,
problem no. 69: third move of
solution

In order to achieve a self-mate five moves are necessary:

1. The minister moves from c6 to e6 thereby checking the opponent's king; – the opponent's foot-soldier on f7 takes the minister on e6 (see diagram 6.e).
2. The chariot in e4 moves to g6; the opponent's foot-soldier moves from e6 to e5 (see diagram 6.f).
3. The chariot moves back from g6 to e4; the opponent's foot-soldier takes the foot-soldier on d4 (see diagram 6.g).
4. The chariot moves from e4 to d3; the opponent's foot-soldier takes the second of one's own foot-soldiers on c3 (see diagram 6.h).
5. The chariot moves from d3 back to e4; the opponent's foot-soldier takes the third own foot-soldier on b2 thereby checkmating own's own king (see diagram 6.i).

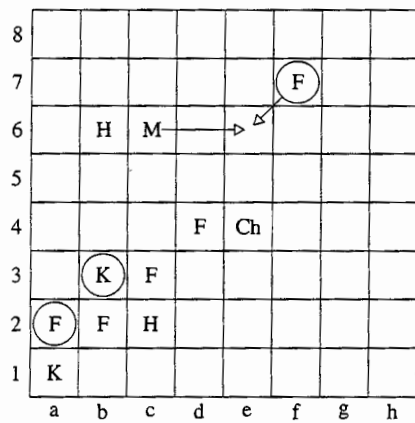


Diagram 6.e *Vilāsamañimañjarī*,
problem no. 69: self-mate – first
move of solution

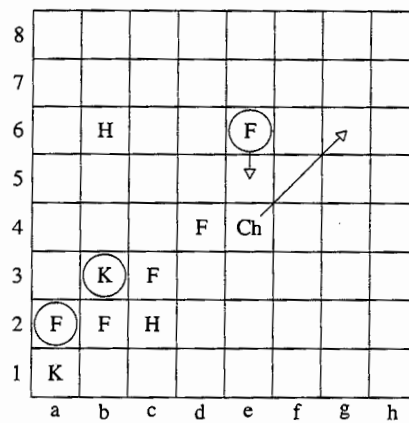


Diagram 6.f *Vilāsamañimañjarī*,
problem no. 69: self-mate – second
move of solution

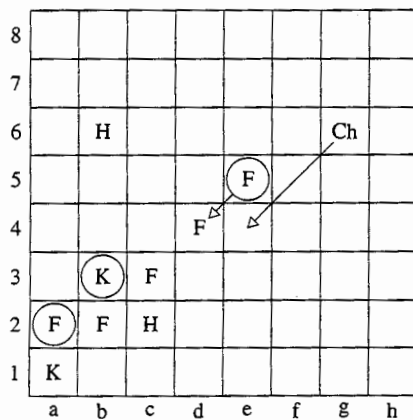


Diagram 6.g *Vilāsamañimañjarī*,
problem no. 69: self-mate – third
move of solution

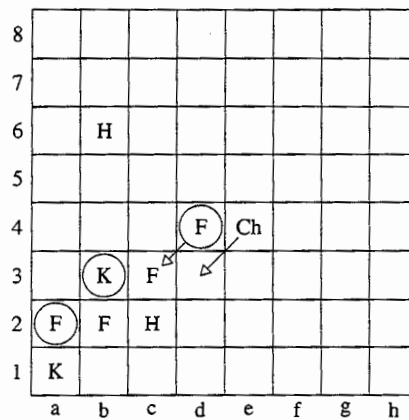


Diagram 6.h *Vilāsamañimañjarī*,
problem no. 69: self-mate – fourth
move of solution

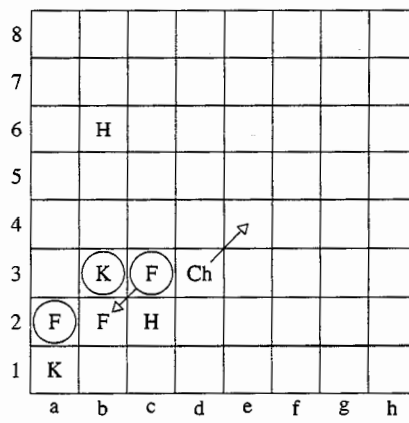


Diagram 6.i *Vilāsamañimañjarī*,
problem no. 69: self-mate – fifth
move of solution

Summary

Summing up the various observations on the *Vmm* made in the present article we would like to draw out once more the following results:

1. The *Vmm* is a comparatively late text on the game of two-handed chess probably composed in the first quarter of the 19th century during the reign of the last Peshwa Baji Rao II. Besides two editions and several manuscripts of the text there also exists a so-called English translation, which, however, is often to a great degree at variance with the Sanskrit original.
2. Although the *Vmm* is a relatively late text, it has, if we consider it against the back-ground of older literary sources on Indian chess, preserved a rather traditional outlook: as we have seen, the nomenclature of the chess pieces – elephant, horse, chariot and minister – is the same as it is already found more than seven hundred years earlier in the *Mānasollāsa*. Also the nouns *bandha* and (*ni*)*bandhana* as well as forms of the Sanskrit roots *rudh-* and *ni-rudh-*, which are used in the *Vmm* in connection with checkmating the opponent's king, are already documented in the *Mānasollāsa* in the same or a similar context.
3. On the other hand, the *Vmm* shows clearly influences from the western form of chess most probably imported by the British: the movement of the minister is the same as of its western counterpart, the queen. Also the self-mate does not seem to be Triveṅgaḍācārya's own invention, but may be inspired by western practices.

4. Also Triveṅgaḍācārya's high esteem of the checkmate by the chess piece called foot-soldier does not seem to be a unique position, as it is attested at least by one more text of roughly the same period, namely the *Cetovinodanakāvya* of Dājī Jyotirvid.
5. Further research may be concerned with the question whether the *Vmm* is also related to textual documents on chess which have received only little scholarly attention so far. These are, amongst others, a long passage in the so-called *Kṛīḍākauśalya* written in Sanskrit by Harikṛṣṇa towards the end of the 19th century⁴⁴. But also works in modern Indian languages must be taken into consideration, e.g. Lala Raja Babu's *Mo'allim-ul-Śatranj* which is a huge work of 400 pages written in Urdu⁴⁵ or Anant Babaji Devdhar's *Sacitra Marāṭhī khelāmcem Pustak*⁴⁶ which is an encyclopaedia on Indian games written in Marathi⁴⁷.

Bibliography

Texts (Editions, Translations)

Cetovinodanakāvya of Dājī Jyotirvid. Edited by P. H. JOSHI & S. Y. WAKANKAR. Oriental Institute M. S. University of Baroda (The M. S. University Oriental Series: No. 16). Vadodara 1991.

Mānasollāsa of King Someśvara. Vol. III. Edited by G. K. SHRIGONDEKAR. Oriental Institute Baroda 1961. (Gaekwad's Oriental Series No. 138).

Nūtimayūkha of Nīlakaṇṭha (Edition and annotated translation of the passage on chess contained in that text by A. WEBER), in: Monatsberichte der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin aus dem Jahre 1873, Berlin 1874, 705-735.

44. It appeared in 1899/1900 (saṃvat 1957 śake 1822) in Mumbaī with the complete title: *Kṛīḍākauśalyam. Bhāṣāṭīkāśametam. Śrīmadbrhājyotiṣāṇavamahāgrantha-kāraśrīmadauraṅgābādanaganarivāsīśrīmaddharikṛṣṇavenkaṭārāmapaṇḍitavaryaviracitam*. Reprinted in 1982 as a paperback-edition (Delhi, Nag Publishers). The Sanskrit text is supplemented by a commentary in Hindi.

45. *Mo'allim-ul-Shatranj or Chess Monitor*. Delhi 1901.

46. Mumbaī 1905.

47. The passage on chess is found on pp. 149-159.

Vilāsamañimañjarī

1. *Vilāsamañimañjarī Tiruveṅkaṭācārya-kṛt.* [Edited by VIṢṆU HARI NIJASURE. Dhuleṃ 1936]. (Rājavāḍe-Saṃśodhan-Maṇḍaḷ-granthamālā 3).
2. *Paṇḍit Triveṅgaḍācāryakṛt Vilāsamañimañjarī athavā Buddhibalakṛīḍāratneṃ āṇi Bālaka-hita-buddhibalakṛīḍanam [Ekā anāmak granthakārācā ek aprakāśit saṭik prabandh].* With a Foreword by DR. BAL KRISHNA. Saṃpādak: Gaṇeś Raṅgo Kulkarnī, Haḷdīkar. Kolhāpūr 1937.
3. *Essays on Chess. Adapted to the European Mode of Play: Consisting principally of Positions or Critical Situations Calculated to Improve the Learner and exercise the Memory, by Trevangadacharya Shastree. Translated from the original Sanskrit. Printed for the Author, By M.D. Cruz, No. 10 Military Square. Bombay 1814.*

Secondary Literature

- A. BOCK-RAMING, *Mānasollāsa* 5,560-623: *Ein bisher unbeachtet gebliebener Text zum indischen Schachspiel, übersetzt, kommentiert und interpretiert*, in: *Indo-Iranian Journal* 39 (1996), 1-40.
- R. D. CHOKSEY, *A History of British Diplomacy at the Court of the Peshwas (1786-1818). Based on English Records of Mahratta History.* Poona 1951.
- A. VAN DER LINDE, *Geschichte und Litteratur des Schachspiels.* Erster Band. Berlin 1874.
- H. J. R. MURRAY, *A History of Chess.* Oxford 1913.
- J. PETZOLD, *Das königliche Spiel. Die Kulturgeschichte des Schach.* Stuttgart 1987.
- W. SUNDERMANN, *Eine Bemerkung zum Namen des Schachspiels, seiner Herkunft und Geschichte*, in: *Arbeitspapiere zum Privatissimum "Indien"*. München 13. und 14. März 1999, 58-59.
- R. SYED, *Das caturaṅga im Mānasollāsa und einige Bemerkungen zum Schach in Indien*, in: *Beiträge des Südasien-Instituts der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin*, Heft 6 (1993), 93-132.
- R. SYED, *Caturaṅga. Anmerkungen zu Alter, Ursprung und Urform des Schachs*, in: *Beiträge des Südasien-Instituts der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin*. Heft 8 (1995), 63-108.

- R. SYED, *Kanauj, die Maukharis und das Caturanga. Der Ursprung des Schachspiels und sein Weg von Indien nach Persien*. Förderkreis Schach-Geschichtsforschung e.V., Kelkheim/Ts. 2001.
- R. SYED, *Aṣṭāpadānām caturāṅgakaḷpanā*, in: Asiatische Studien LIX,2 (2005), 581-591.