

The Wednesday lectures focused on ancient board games. The day was started by Mr. Spreer who speculated on the rules of the Royal Game of Ur, and by an archeologist, Dr. Schädler, who presented slides and data about Backgammon variations in ancient Roman times. Dr. Finkel, organiser of the previous colloquium on ancient board games in London, presented findings in his field of expertise, Assyriology, and contested many of the speculations by Mr. Spreer. Prof. Van Binsbergen gave his views on divination and board games, using his own experience as a diviner. And, being a long-time researcher in Africa, he also alluded to the origins of manqala games.

During the tea break, Natalya Ivanova showed slides about the Russian Chess Museum; earlier Dr. Calvo had squeezed in a short talk about mathematics and board games. After special Pachisi and Checkers cake during the break, Ian Riddler showed his archaeological findings on Anglo-Norman chess, followed by Manfred Eder who speculated on the origins of chess and of games pieces.

This intensive day of lectures was rounded off by music in the Concertgebouw. Together with some scholars of IIAS, we were presented with a piano concert by Wibi Sourjadi. We were tired but inspired, and only two lectures remained to be presented next morning. Dr. Seidel and Luc Reurich exhibited their theories in philosophy, linking together computer science with history, speculation with archaeology, and the like. The consensus reached during the farewell lunch was that the colloquium had been an inspiring and insideful experience for all. It was also agreed that, as a provisional platform for publishing board game research, a next colloquium (perhaps in Florence, perhaps in India) should certainly attempt to start a journal on board-game research and keep this family together.

THE NOVAG AWARD

by David Levy¹

ICCA Vice-President

In the past, the ICCA has awarded a prize to the author(s) of the "best publication on computer chess". To be precise, this award is for the publication which, in the opinion of the judges, makes the biggest contribution to computer chess.

For the first six years this award was known as the MEPHISTO AWARD in recognition of the German chess-computer manufacturer who generously provided the prizes. The ICCA is pleased to announce that this annual prize will be continued by the Hong Kong chess-computer manufacturer NOVAG. The name NOVAG will be well-known to our readers, as will the excellent work of Dave Kittinger, who has been writing chess programs for NOVAG for many years. Kittinger's program WCHES scored one of the outstanding results of 1994 in winning the Harvard Cup competition in Boston, notching up an incredible 2895 tournament performance rating on the INTEL scale. In recognition of the generosity of NOVAG and of its Chairman, Mr. Peter Auge, the ICCA is pleased to announce the winner of the first NOVAG AWARD.

The period covered by the first NOVAG AWARD is April, 1993 to March, 1994, both limits included. The winning publication is the doctoral thesis by Rainer Feldmann of the University of Paderborn, Germany. The thesis was published in German in May, 1993 and an English translation is also available. The English title of Feldmann's thesis is *Game Tree Search with Massively Parallel Systems*.

Rainer Feldmann is one of the co-authors of the ZUGZWANG program which took second place at the 1992 World Computer Chess Championship in Madrid. His thesis presents and discusses the parallel-search algorithm on which ZUGZWANG is based, and which achieves an impressive speedup on multi-processor systems. A review by Ingo Althöfer of the German original appeared on pages 147-148 of the September 1993 issue of the *ICCA Journal*.

The ICCA is honoured in that Peter Auge was present during the 8th World Computer Chess Championship in Hong Kong and was therefore able to present the prize personally to Dr. Feldmann.

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