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## **Jean Philippe Vogel and Johan Huizinga: Three drawings by Huizinga**

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# Vihagottama – Superbird

The multifaceted life of Jean Philippe Vogel



Edited by

Lennart Bes, Alied de Cock and Dory Heilijgers

This volume is published on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the *Vereniging Vrienden van het Instituut Kern* (VVIK, Society of Friends of the Kern Institute). The Sanskrit term *Vihagottama*, Superbird or in Dutch *Oppervogel*, was a nickname for professor Jean Philippe Vogel (1871-1958), to whom this work is devoted. Vogel was a Sanskritist and archaeologist, and also the founder of both the VVIK and Leiden's Indological centre, the Kern Institute. In this volume, the VVIK presents seven articles about various aspects of Vogel's multifaceted life, highlighting his countless and varied activities, his extensive network and his rich legacy up to the present day.

# **Vihagottama – Superbird**

## **The multifaceted life of Jean Philippe Vogel**

Published on the occasion of the  
hundredth anniversary of the  
Society of Friends of the Kern Institute  
Leiden, 1 December 2024

Edited by  
Lennart Bes  
Alied de Cock  
Dory Heilijgers

*Cover illustration:* drawing by Johan Huizinga showing Jean Philippe Vogel as “Superbird” at the top, with the Sanskrit term *Vihagottama* next to his left temple, ca. 1921 (for an extensive explanation, see Chapter 2).

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## 2.

### Jean Philippe Vogel and Johan Huizinga: three drawings by Huizinga

*Peter C. Bisschop*

The Dutch historian Johan Huizinga and Jean Philippe Vogel were lifelong friends. Huizinga embarked on a study of Dutch languages at the University of Groningen in 1891. Since Sanskrit formed a regular part of the curriculum of Dutch studies in those days, in accordance with the Higher Education Act of 1876, Huizinga also had to take up Sanskrit. His Sanskrit teacher in Groningen was Jacob Speijer, about whom Huizinga would later write that he never had any better teacher.<sup>1</sup> Huizinga had a strong passion for linguistics and, under the supervision of Speijer, wrote his PhD thesis on a Sanskrit subject: *De vidūṣaka in het Indisch tooneel* (The Vidūṣaka in Indian theatre) (1897). In the same year he took up private Sanskrit lessons with Speijer's own teacher, Hendrik Kern, in Leiden.

It is in these circumstances that he must have met and befriended Jean Philippe Vogel. In September 1899, they attended the International Congress of Orientalists in Rome together, after which Vogel journeyed on to India. Unlike his fellow student, Huizinga did not continue on the path of Indology, but became one of the world's major historians of culture, authoring historical classics such as *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen / Autumntide of the Middle Ages* (1919), *Erasmus* (1924), *Homo Ludens: proeve eener bepaling van het spel-element der cultuur / Homo Ludens: a study of the play element in culture* (1938) and *Nederland's beschaving in de zeventiende eeuw / Dutch civilisation in the seventeenth century* (1941).<sup>2</sup>

While Huizinga was first and foremost a historian, he was also a gifted maker of drawings and caricatures. Three of his drawings of Vogel and himself are known, the first two of which come from the collections of the Kern Institute now held at the Leiden University Library. Their current whereabouts and access numbers are unknown.<sup>3</sup>

The first is a drawing on a postcard dated 18 June 1898 (figure 2.1). It has been published once before in the first volume of Huizinga's edited letters.<sup>4</sup> The drawing depicts Vogel as a sturdy Dutch man cycling through the puddles in the pouring rain. In the headlight two Hindu deities are shown. The first is a four-armed Viṣṇu, in a seated position, holding the mace (*gadā*), discus (*cakra*) and a third object that cannot be easily identified, perhaps the conch shell (*śaṅkha*)? Next to him sits a cheerful four-armed Gaṇeśa with a trident in his upper left hand and an unidentifiable object in his lower right hand. His upper right hand appears to be cheering Vogel on and with his lower left he seems to be guiding him the way. The accompanying text in Dutch reads: "Zijt gij droog overgekomen?" (Have you come across dry?), along with two names: "Tjeenk"<sup>5</sup> and "Huizinga." The card was sent from Haarlem, where Huizinga was a teacher of history at the high school (HBS Haarlem) at the time. Vogel himself was

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<sup>1</sup> Huizinga 1947, 21: "In 1913 heb ik aan zijn graf getuigd, dat ik geen beter leermeester heb gekend."

<sup>2</sup> For an insightful account of his move from Indology to Dutch and European history, see Huizinga 1947.

<sup>3</sup> The images are reproduced from Huizinga 1989.

<sup>4</sup> Huizinga 1989, 27, no. 6.

<sup>5</sup> This refers to the publisher Herman Diederik Tjeenk Willink jr (1872-1945). Huizinga often visited the family of his father, the publisher H.D. Tjeenk Willink sr. See Huizinga 1989, 27.

private teacher of Indian literary history at the University of Amsterdam from 1897 to 1899, so it may have been quite a cycle ride for him.

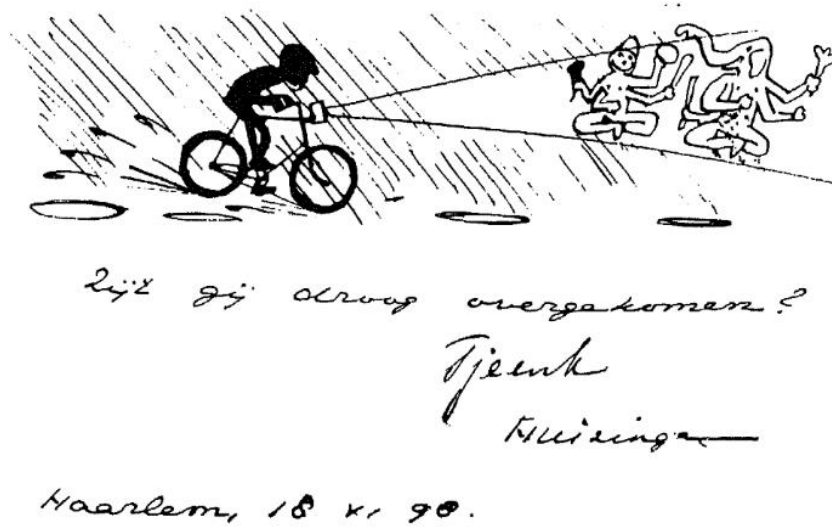


Figure 2.1. Drawing with Dutch text by Johan Huizinga, 18 June 1898.

The second drawing is found on another postcard (figure 2.2).<sup>6</sup> Stamped 12 December 1899, the postcard is addressed to Vogel in Bombay, from where it was forwarded to Benares, where he was based from October 1899 for nine months of fieldwork.<sup>7</sup> In other words, this was sent to Vogel not long after he and Huizinga had been in Rome together. The accompanying text is written in Sanskrit. The drawing depicts a man in various positions of skating and falling on the ice. As the Sanskrit text makes clear, the man in question portrays Huizinga as he imagines himself:<sup>8</sup>

*saumya hastinī-mahāmātra-prabhṛteḥ tava citraphalaka-viracanasya samudra-plavanena sarvalokāya sādhy iti vismayotpādanasya +śubhatayā+ harṣa-pulakito + 'smi ||+ uttara-deśād loha-pāda-pakṣa-gamanāyatta-manaso mama kṣudra-lekhana-parigrahanena anugrahaṃ karotv āryaḥ tvad-gurur ulūka-cañcur-nāma paṇḍitaḥ laiḍaṇākhyā-pattana-stha-mahā-paṇḍita-madhya-gataḥ*

“Gentle man! My hairs stand on end with joy by the splendiddness of your painting of the mahout on the female elephant and so on, which produces the wonderful thought that it is good for everyone to plunge in the ocean. Sir, may you be pleased with the receipt, from the northern country, of a little letter from me whose mind is set on going skating. Your teacher, the professor named Owl’s Beak, is among the great professors resident in the city called Leiden.”

The postcard appears to acknowledge the receipt of a picture sent to Huizinga by Vogel, which would have depicted, among others, a female elephant and its driver plunging in the ocean. It being wintertime in the Netherlands (“the northern country”), Huizinga expresses his excitement at going skating

<sup>6</sup> Huizinga 1989, 38, no. 19.

<sup>7</sup> Theuns-de Boer 2008, 180.

<sup>8</sup> Plus signs indicate corrections and additions to the text by Huizinga himself. I have added hyphens in the Sanskrit compounds to facilitate easier comprehension. The Sanskrit has not been reproduced in the volume of Huizinga’s edited letters, but a Dutch translation is provided. My translation differs in several respects from the one given there.



(literally: “flying on iron feet”). “Professor Owl’s Beak” refers to Vogel’s teacher Christiaan Cornelis Uhlenbeck, who had just taken up the position of full professor in Gothic, Anglo-Saxon, middle High German and (Indo-)Germanic Languages at Leiden University, after his spell as extraordinary professor in Sanskrit, Gothic, Anglo-Saxon, Russian and comparative (Indo-Germanic) linguistics at the University of Amsterdam.<sup>9</sup>

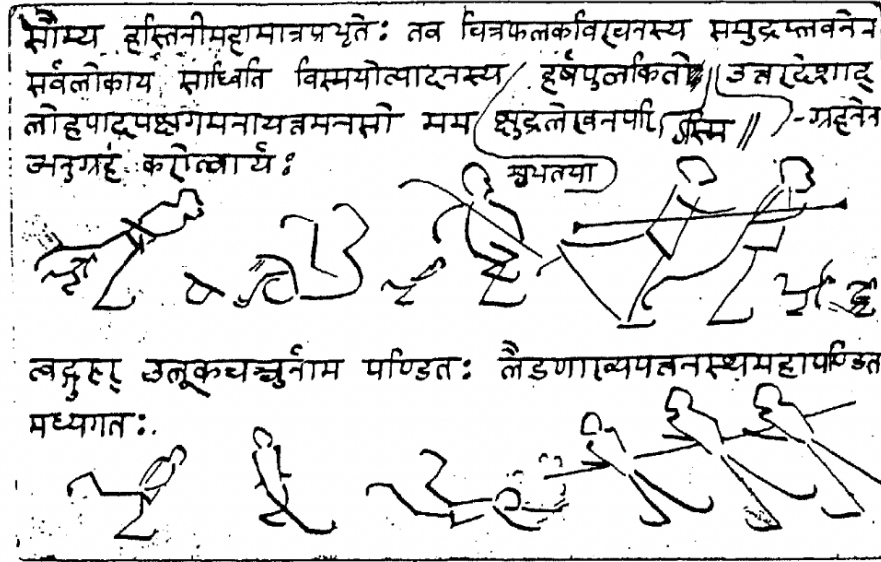


Figure 2.2. Drawing with Sanskrit text by Johan Huizinga, 12 December 1899 (stamped).

A final drawing, whose current whereabouts is again unknown, was made more than twenty year later when Huizinga’s reputation as a historian was well established and Vogel was professor of Sanskrit and Indian Antiquities at Leiden University (figure 2.3). It has been published in a book about Pieter Vincent van Stein Callenfels, the archaeologist of the Dutch East Indies, which also identifies the persons depicted.<sup>10</sup> We see Vogel as a venerable teacher surrounded by his pupils, as indicated in the Sanskrit caption:

*rākṣasa-yavadvīpaja-ṣaḍācāryāśvadaṣṭā-prabhṛti-śiṣya-ratnāvaly-alaṃkṛto mahāgurur vihaḡottamaḡ*

“The great master, Superbird, decorated with a necklace of pearls of students, including the Demon, the One Born on the Island of Java, the Six Teachers and Miss Horse-Bitten.”

From October 1921 P.V. van Stein Callenfels started attending classes of Sanskrit with Vogel, along with Raden Poerbatjaraka, Miss Amshoff and six school teachers from the Dutch East Indies, misters Emeis, Boswinkel, Noordenbos, Deenik, Bakker and De Wilde, who had been sent to the Netherlands for this purpose.<sup>11</sup> It is this highly diverse group that is depicted in this drawing.

Starting with the figure to the left of “Superbird” Vogel (on the right for the viewer), this depicts P.V. van Stein Callenfels as a *rākṣasa* demon. The similarity is quite striking. The archaeologist of the

<sup>9</sup> For the details of Uhlenbeck’s professorships I follow the information provided by Dory Heilijgers on the website [www.dutchstudies-satsea.nl/deelnemers/uhlenbeck-christian-cornelis](http://www.dutchstudies-satsea.nl/deelnemers/uhlenbeck-christian-cornelis).

<sup>10</sup> Swanenburg 1951, 134. The following section largely reproduces in English an earlier piece written in Dutch for the *VVIK Newsletter* (Bisschop 2024).

<sup>11</sup> Swanenburg 1951, 133.

Dutch East Indies studied architecture and archaeology from 1921 to 1924 in Leiden, where he obtained his doctorate with a thesis entitled *De Sudamala in de Hindu-Javaansche kunst* (The Sudamala in Hindu-Javanese art) (1925). Due to his imposing appearance and eccentric lifestyle, he was nicknamed “Iwan de Verschrikkelijke” (Iwan the Terrible). The description “*rākṣasa*” was also used by other Indologists, as can be seen in a handwritten postcard of the French Indologist Sylvain Lévi.<sup>12</sup> In Huizinga’s caricature, he is depicted in the style of a fearsome temple gatekeeper (*dvārapāla*) from classical Indonesia.

“The One Born on the Island of Java” refers to Raden Poerbatjaraka. He is depicted next to the Demon as a *wayang* puppet. Poerbatjaraka was a prominent Javanese philologist from the court of Surakarta. He obtained his doctorate for a thesis entitled *Agastya in den archipel* (Agastya in the archipelago) (1926), a study on the spread of the figure of the sage Agastya and its significance in art and literature. After Indonesia’s independence, Poerbatjaraka was a professor at various Indonesian universities. He published several editions and translations of Old Javanese literature.

The image at the bottom shows a woman being attacked by a horse, in other words “Miss Horse-Bitten” (*aśvadaṣṭā*). This depicts M.C.H. Amshoff who, according to the reports, had indeed recently fallen victim to an attack.<sup>13</sup> Amshoff was the first female researcher of Acehnese language and literature and one of the first women to obtain a PhD in the study of Southeast Asia, for her thesis *Goudkruintje: een Atjèhsche roman met vertolking en toelichting* (Goldcrest: an Acehnese novel with rendition and commentary) (1929).<sup>14</sup>

Finally, the group of six teachers (*ṣaḍācārya*). These depict, as mentioned above, six teachers from the Dutch East Indies. The designation “*ṣaḍācārya*” calls to mind the first part of the first chapter of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad*. This is traditionally called *Ṣaḍācārya-Bṛāhmaṇa*, after the six previous teachers of King Janaka before he was taught about Brahman by Yājñavalkya. I have no further information on how these six teachers fared.

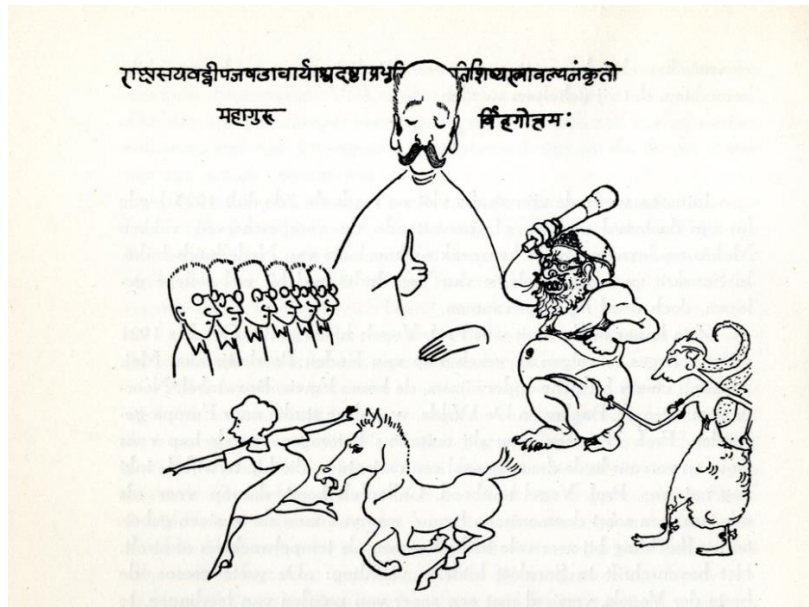


Figure 2.3. Drawing with Sanskrit text by Johan Huizinga, ca. 1921.

<sup>12</sup> Swanenburg 1951, 160.

<sup>13</sup> Swanenburg 1951, 133.

<sup>14</sup> Contrary to what I wrote earlier (Bisschop 2024, 2), she was not the very first woman to do so. As Marijke Klokke has informed me, her grandmother, Lina Maria Coster-Wijsman, preceded Amshoff by three weeks. While Amshoff received her PhD on 28 June 1929, Coster-Wijsman received hers on 7 June 1929, for a thesis entitled *Uilespiegel-verhalen in Indonesië, in het bijzonder in de Soendalanden*.

In these caricatures, Huizinga shows himself to be a master of play: serious and playful at the same time, in accordance with his own analysis in his erudite *Homo Ludens* (1938) about the play element of culture. A richly illustrated reissue, edited by Anton van der Lem, will be published this year. I end with a photograph of Huizinga himself, posing as the Buddha in lotus position showing the *abhayamudrā* “gesture of freedom from fear” (figure 2.4).<sup>15</sup> Dated about 1895, the photograph illustrates that not long after his first encounter with Sanskrit under Jacob Speijer, Huizinga started experimenting and playing with incorporating aspects of Indian culture in his own life. The three drawings for his friend Vogel each in their own way display a similar playful attitude as well.



Figure 2.4. Johan Huizinga posing as Buddha, ca. 1895.

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<sup>15</sup> Koops, Kossmann & van der Plaat 1973, plate 3 (dated ca. 1895). Anton van der Lem has drawn my attention to a letter written by Johan Huizinga’s brother Jakob Huizinga, dated 18 January 1900 (Elandsfontein, South Africa), in which he refers to it: “Tegenover mij zit Han-Boeddha mij aan te kijken: *sarvam śūnyam*, voor mij is alles ook een beetje leeg tegenwoordig” (Leiden University Libraries, BPL 3711: 4). The fact that his brother is able to cite the Sanskrit passage “*sarvam śūnyam*” and apply it to his own condition (“everything is a bit empty for me these days too”) suggests that Johan Huizinga may have written this on the back of the photograph accompanied by a Dutch translation.

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