

Journey to the cradle of Europe

(Reise zur Wiege Europas)

SYNOPSIS FOR A DOCUMENTARY FILM BY

PETRUS VAN DER LET
AND
JÜRGEN BORCHHARDT



Petrus van der Let Filmproduktion
Schleifmühlgasse 5; A-1040 Wien
Tel: +43158695760 Fax: 5868917
e-mail:vanderlet.p@aon.at

Synopsis

Originally the editor of the documentary wanted to do a research voyage to the Odyssey with his friend and archaeologist. Yet at their first trip through the ancient Lycia, a chapter of Austrian archeology history opens up, captivating like an exciting thriller, as they arrive in Trysa by Antalya, at the tomb of the Lycian prince.



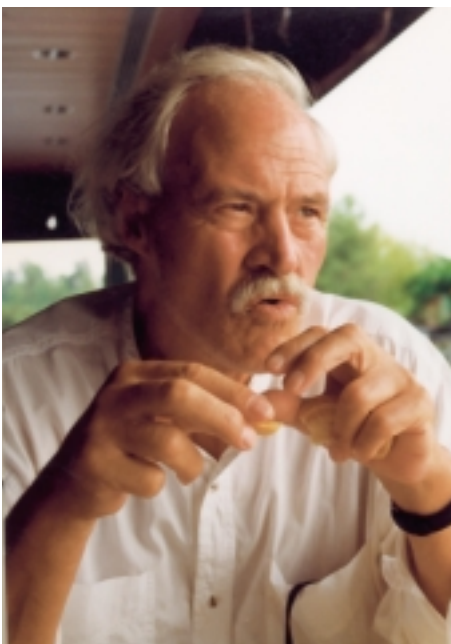
THE DOCUMENTARY FILM INVESTIGATES THE CRADLE OF EUROPE ON TWO LEVELS

1) Which of the adventures of Odysseus might have a historical background – which sea routes could he have possibly taken on his voyage home from Troy to Ithaca when he got lost on his way? The geographical descriptions are astonishingly well suited for a reconstruction of his odyssey.

2) The exciting research about the Austrian expedition from 1882-84, which brought the Lycian tomb, the »Heron of Trysa«, to Vienna. Furthermore the evidence of the legal possession of the precious discovery by a barter deal: In 1993 the Republic Turkey claimed the restitution which now could be completely confuted.

Three people lead through the film:

1) The archaeologist Jürgen Borchhardt who was the head of the Lycian excavation in Turkey and a Homer-Specialist, he represents the current state of scientific knowledge.



2) The Archaeologist Hubert Szemethy, co-worker of J. Borchhardt, it took him years of research to find original documents and photos about the discovery and acquisition of the Heroon of Trysa, in 2006 he also published a detailed study about it.

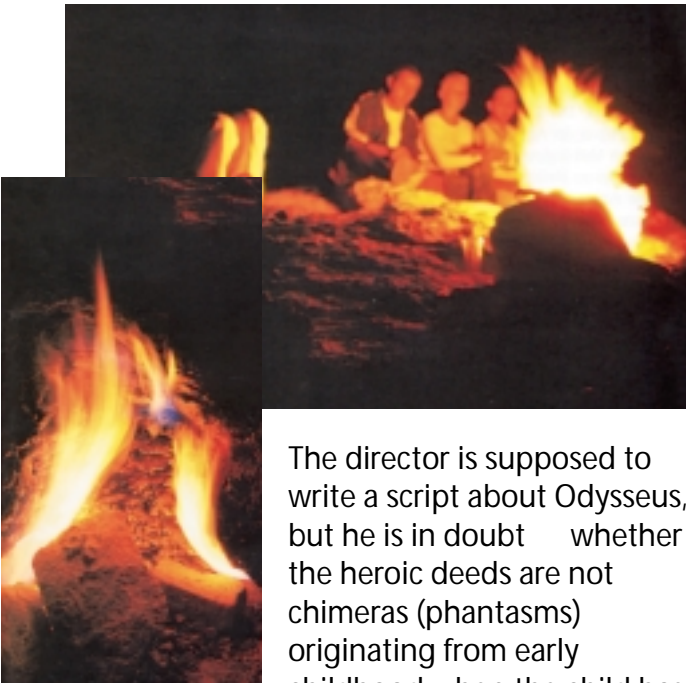


3) The director of the film who questions the existence of Odysseus. The film maker is supposed to write a script about the Odyssey for a US television station in the style of a feature documentary film – a trend in style which doesn't sit easily with him –, and the scenes he has drafted for the story board are in places animated in an ironic way.



1. FILM LEVEL:

Sarpedon, son of Zeus and Europa, was expelled from the island of Crete by his brother Minos, and founded Lycia near today's Antalya. In the Trojan War, he appears as a confederate of the Trojans with an array of Lycian soldiers, and dies heroically in the battle. Lycia's most famous hero, however, is Bellerophon who defeated the Chimera (a beast with the head of a lion, the body of a goat, and the tail of a snake), who had ravaged the land with her fiery breath. The archaeology professor Jürgen Borchhardt tells this story to his friend, a Viennese film maker, at the »burning stones« of Yanartas where, according to legend, Bellerophon locked up the Chimera in such a way that only her fiery breath escapes the stony prison. In that place, Methan gas comes out of the earth and burns.



The director is supposed to write a script about Odysseus, but he is in doubt whether the heroic deeds are not chimeras (phantasms) originating from early childhood when the child has

to learn to distinguish between the world of animals and humans. It's no surprise there are humanized animals and fictional creatures made up of parts of several animals in every child's room.

The Lycian's Zeus was called Trquas, akin to the Luwian Tarhunt, whose son was Telipinu. Here in the Middle East the child god Telipinu was worshipped for a century, who, in his infantile wrath, wants to destroy the world. Is this the way Odysseus got his name »the wrathful«?



Just like with hungry, crying babies, Telipinu's wrath could only be soothed with milk and honey. Even today, the so-called »pheasant's eye« is related to Telipinu in Turkey. This plant is used to make sweets, a sweet paste, which is given to the bridegroom on the wedding night. Also the roots of the Mesir Festival celebrated in Manisa, where Mesir chews are distributed, can be traced back to Telipinu.

Starting from where the legendary Troy is said to have been, which is still subject to fierce debate between scientists, the archaeologist and the film director sail off in the direction of the Peloponnesus. Homer's description indicates that Odysseus sailed southwards from Troy with a stormy north wind through the Aegean Sea and arrived at the Peloponnesus. Today there is still a sailing phenomenon that occurs at Cape Malea. Just at the Cape there is practically no wind, but if one sails around it, a very strong wind suddenly begins to blow. Experienced sailors use less sail rather than more despite the calm so as not to be carried off course. But that is exactly what appears to have happened to Odysseus. He tried to sail around Cape Malea towards Ithaca, was driven across the Mediterranean for nine days and ended up in North Africa »where he finds the land of the Lotus Eaters,« as Homer describes it.

Here, however, doubt seems appropriate. About 1000 years before, the child-god Indra, son of the Sun God, also experienced adventures centered on the lotus in the Rigveda that were very similar to those of Odysseus after his arrival in the land of the Lotus Eaters. Odysseus' relation to the sun god, who has connections with the child-gods of the east – with the Indian Indra and the Iranian Mithra – and the story of his odyssey corresponds to the sagas in which Mithra moves through the 12 months. Many of the adventures attributed to Indra and Mithra are also experienced by Odysseus. The question arises, did Odysseus exist as a historical figure at all?



Science suspects today, that in Homer's epics it's not only about one person, but several that were all from Asia Minor and who wrote down traditional verbal stories.

The cave of the one-eyed Cyclops, Polyphemus, is located on the Island of Levanzo near Sicily, according to tourist guides who refer to the discoverer and explorer, Samuel Butler. But why does »kyklops« also mean round-cheeked, like babies? There are, in fact, a number of portrayals of monsters with children's faces, such as the Gorgon in the Acropolis Museum in Athens.



Also, in the Rigveda the infant Indra has to free himself from the cave of blurred vision experienced during the first months of life, by overcoming the monster Vrtra (literally, the one who blocks).

But this locked up dragon is overfed, lazy and unable to move about, like an infant; and we see that Indra has to overcome his fat-cheeked alter ego in order to leave the visual cave of the first few months of his life. Was Odysseus perhaps only a small child experiencing the change from blurred to clearer perception, and the single eye of the giant

merely the eye on an amulet, like those still worn today in Greece to ward off the evil eye (cf. book/film



Cape Circeo lies 180 miles from Bonifacio on Corsica. Following the description in the *Odyssey*, Bonifacio could be the land of the Laistrygones. Two steep tongues of land lie opposite each other and in between them there is a narrow passage less than two hundred meters wide. The harbor at the end of the channel is »enclosed all around by rocks reaching to the sky« according to the *Odyssey*. But there is also a harbor that looks very much like that on Ithaca, the island that was home to Odysseus. A small child must slowly learn to separate the world or people and animals from the optical chaos of his first few months of life. The transitions performed by the enchantress, Circe, who turned Odysseus' companions into swine, could fall into this period: animalized people and humanized animals are a normal feature of every child's room. (Compare with the childish Kirke and Polyphemus in the State Antic-collection in Munich).



A similar case is found with the Sirens – half bird, half woman creatures – who are said to have sung so beautifully south of Salerno that sailors jumped overboard. Nearby lies Marina di Ascea, called Velia in the ancient world, where the »Insula II« represents one of the most important Roman buildings, built in Augustan times upon a much older Hellenic construction. The »Insula II« also used to be the headquarters of a medical college, the origin of which went back to Parmenides, the most famous philosopher from Velia in ancient Greece and a precursor of Plato. The medics of this school had the sobriquet aithrobatês/skywalker (just like the family in the *Star Wars* epic), used to meditate in caves, and applied a therapy which would today be called re-birthing: the patient went to see the medic in a cave where the medic, by the monotonous chanting of a poem, put him in a state of reduced consciousness. This enabled the patient to escape from the dissatisfaction of reality to earlier stages of life which, at that time, did not lack satisfaction. This is why Parmenides' poem only features females; even the animals are all

female. The partially wakeful patient is in a way brought back to his mother's bosom.

The Odyssey, however, also reveals the phantasms of fear, which, especially in men, are connected to the almighty mother at the beginning of their life. The 6-headed sea monster Scylla devours 8 of Odysseus' companions. No matter how opinions differ about other locations in the Odyssey, Scylla and Charybdis have never been sought anywhere else other than in the Strait of Messina.

In the form outlined here, the film works through the epos with pro and contra arguments – historical figure or ancient infant fantasy – from which the film draws its suspense, and finally comes to the conclusion that both have worked together in this story: historical events and the experiences of a small child.

The film should avoid re-enacted historical scenes, and rather perform the search for clues based on today's customs and festivities. After all, a baby in a farmer's family in Ithaca today experiences life just like 3000 years ago.



2. FILM LEVEL:

Sarpedon's death in Troy is also represented on the Lycian prince's grave, who, in 4th century BC, saw himself as the descendant of the founder of Lycia.

Julius August Schönborn, originally from Posen, was a High school teacher and travelled to do research. On December 20th 1841, he discovered in an impassable mountain area of Lycia, the Heroon of Trysa, a grave yard surrounded by numerous reliefs. He also found other significant finds like the carcass of an antic settlement and numerous sarcophaguses, one of the most important certificates of the antic. Schönborn tried to get the sculptures of the monument for the Royal Museum in Berlin, but he failed. After his death, the Heroon of Trysa fell into oblivion. Carl Ritter's act about »Erdkunde von Asien« (Asian's geography) merely mentions it.

Inspired by this book and the: »Mutterrecht und Urreligion« (Mother Law and primeval religions) from Johann Jakob Bachofen, who suspected the matriarchy to be in Lycia; Otto Benndorf suggested to Carl Ritter von Stremayr, who at that time was professor at the Vienna University for classical Archeologie and minister for culture and education, to do an expedition to Lycia.

He wanted to find out, if the sculptures of the Heroon were worthy enough, to diplomatically suggest their acquisition for the imperial-royal collection in Vienna.

Issued on behalf of the Ministry, one of Otto Benndorf's expeditions in 1881 finally succeeded to rediscover that Lycian grave monument. **Felix von Luschan** from **Mauerbach**, who later became the head of the ethnology-museum of Berlin, also participated in this expedition.



The idea of a second expedition, again under the direction of Otto Benndorf, found among the Viennese art-lovers (among them **Family Drasche from Ebreichsdorf**) enough support, so that in 1881 the »Gesellschaft für die archäologische Erforschung Kleinasiens« (society for archeological exploration of Asia Minor) was founded.



They started the excavation of the relief, which was supposed to be offered as a dedication to the emperor. In order to be appropriate for transport, they had to cut it down to 20-25 cm and put it in a ferric reinforced wooden box. The technical head, Gabriel Knaffl Ritter from Fohnsdorf, had to construct a 22 km long way down to the sea that had 17 curves, went over the steep Demre-valley and through a river valley that was dried out in summer.



After several diplomatic negotiations with Adalia, Smyrna and Constantinople, one of the first apportionments of the discovery on

September 4th 1882 furnished the society the approval of 79 boxes, that included all the Western and Southern reliefs that had a total length of over 30 meters.

Other negotiations in Constantinople and Vienna, secured, on behalf of the imperial Government, a new important mission, that consisted in leaving all the artistic parts together. On September 12th, another apportionment of the discovery took place on the previous basis. The turkey excavation com-



missary Suleiman Effendi agreed with a written document, the ownership of another 168 Boxes to the society. The customs officer of Dembre declared, in front of witnesses, that the embarkation would be allowed in exchange of 12 Liras in customs. Only the colossal gate and two sarcophaguses, the Dereimis and the Aischylos and the dolphin sarcophagus had to be left in the area of the Heroon.

The Monument finally was supposed to be transported to Vienna in a third excavation under the command of Gabriel Knaffl. As a return service for the in 1882 left behind discovery, the Turkish home secretary Edhem Pascha wanted the dolphin-sarcophagus to be in the newly built Museum of Constantinople. On April 30th 1884, the dolphin sarcophagus was handed over to the Turkish authorities of Constantinople; the rest of the discovery was brought to Vienna. In May it arrived in the »Kunsthistorische Museum« (Museum of Art History) in Vienna, where it still can be admired today.

The only problem was that in 1990, the fact about the big Lycian exhibition **on the Schallerburg (Gods, Heroes and Lycian rulers)** was incomplete. At that time the University of Vienna received a letter from the grand-daughter of Benndorf in Seattle/USA, in which she wrote that she found documents in her cellar about the Austrian expedition to Lycia from 1882.

Dr. Szemehty went to the USA, but the document turned out to be copies, not originals. They gave him hints though, that there might be descendants of Benndorf in Graz, where indeed he could find original documents later, that were in the hands of a great-granddaughter Benndorf's. The documents were mainly letters to

Benndorf's wife, giving many details on the course of the excavation. Pictures and Photos, also from **Felix Luschan**, showed up and lead to an exhibition **in Mauerbach** in 2005.

The film re-enacts the research of Dr. Szemethy. The overlapping areas of the film in 90 min. can also be divided in two TV- Formats of 45 min. considering that the research about the expedition of Heroon of Trysa is one part and the Odyssey the other one.

Petrus van der Let born in Vienna, film maker – during the last years a number of documentaries on the roots of Nazism and racism (as executive producer, director and author for the George Weiss Film Company):

Adolf Lanz - Mein Krampf Hitler Stole My Ideas (50min. ORF, Channel 4),

Herrn Hitlers Religion Religion – Mr. Hitler's Religion (45min. ORF, 3sat, KRO, BRTN),

Wagnerdämmerung – The Wagner Dynasty (50min. ORF, 3sat, AVRO, NPS, Eurimages),

Erlöser – Messiahs (45min. ORF, 3sat, TV2 Denmark),

Rasse Mensch – The Human Race (45min. ORF, 3sat), which have been shown in more than 20 countries.

1998 **Angstfleisch – Fleischangst** – Meat of Fear – Fear of Meat (45min. ORF,3sat, YLE TV2, Media 2).

1999 **Ware Kind Kind** – Kids for Sale (45min. ORF, 3sat).

2000/1 **Mein Kopf gehört mir: Frauen in Wien und Istanbul** – My Head Is Mine: Women in Vienna and Istanbul (70min. ORF, 3sat)

2001 founding of the Petrus van der Let Film Company for the realization of international documentary film projects.

2002/3 **Woher die Götter stammen – oder: Warum Indra mit dem Dreirad zur Hochzeit fuhr** – Where The Gods Come From (91min. ORF, Austrian Ministry of Education and Science, Filmfonds Carinthia, Lower Austria, Styria); First screening: 11. 11. 04 New York International Independent Film & Video Festival – 45min. BR-Alpha-version with the titel Zipfelmützengötter – First screening: International Documentary Film Festival of Scientific Exploration and Adventure, January 05 Bari/Italy;

Gesang als Weg – Singing As A Path – From The Life of the Soprano Hilde Zadek (59min. WDR, SWR, ORF, Vienna Filmfonds, 3sat, Nik-Media, CoBO-Fonds, NI, BR-Alpha, NHK, Japan);

2004 **Naher Osten – Hoffnung und Trauma der Jugend** – Hoffnung und Trauma der Jugend – Middle East – Trauma and Hopes of the Young (59min. ORF, 3sat, BR-Alpha, Ministry of Education, Filmfonds Carinthia, RTR-Fonds).

2005 **Unerwünschtes Kino** – Unwanted Cinema (90min. Uj Budapest Filmstudio, Filmfonds Vienna, ORF, NIK-Media, NI, CoBO-Fonds).

2006 **Posse und Prophetie** – Punch & Prophecy (45min. ORF, 3sat, Bayern Alpha, Filmfonds Austria, City of Vienna, Ministry of Education.

BOOKS:

Rasse Mensch – The Human Race (ed. with Christian Schüller), Aschaffenburg 1999;

Ware Kind – Kids for Sale (with Guido and Michael Grandt), Köln, 1999.

2004: »**ZIPFELMÜTZEN-GÖTTER** (Gods with Pointed Caps) Aschaffenburg.

Jürgen Borchardt, born in Lower Silesia. Studied in Berlin and Heidelberg. Since 1982 professor for Classical Archaeology at the University of Vienna. Since 1969 head of the excavations in Limyra.

BOOKS:

Die Steine von Zémuri, Wien 1993

Der Fries vom Kenotaph für Gaius Caesar in Limyra, Wien 2002

More than 200 articles in Austrian, German, Italian, French and Turkish