Contents

Yi Zhi

(The Essence of Weiqi)

INTRODUCTION

The Yi Zhi – Essence of Weiqi – is the world's earliest surviving text devoted specifically to go. It was written by one of the foremost scholars in Chinese history, Ban Gu, who lived from 32-92 AD. He was a native of Anling, Fufeng, in Eastern Han – modern Xianyang City in Shaanxi Province. He served in the time of the Eastern Han Emperor Ming Di as Clerk of the Orchid Pavilion (a palace archive), and as an administrator and proofreader in the Palace Library. Most celebrated as an historian, his works include the Han Shu or History of the Han Dynasty.

The surviving text is given in the Yiwen Leiju by Ouyang Xun of the Tang dynasty. The Taiping Guangji by Li Fang of the Northern Song dynasty also has an abridged version. It later appeared in a succession of famous go manuals such as the Xuanxuan Qijing (Gateway To All Marvels) and encyclopaedias such as the Gujin Tushu Jicheng of the Qing dynasty. All have discrepancies between them, but we follow here the earliest version by Ouyang Xun, though even this has some problems.

Like many Han texts it is highly allusive and requires a barrage of footnotes to do it justice. Still, that seems a small price to pay to commune with a document almost 2000 years old.

THE ESSENCE OF WEIQI

A Scholar[1] once finished expounding on bo, whereupon someone came forward and asked him: "Confucius said there was yi and bo[2]. Now bo is popular among people, yet yi has simply ceased to exist. The meaning of bo is widely known. The meaning of yi has not been handed down. I have asked about this to people who discourse on these things but my teachers have not been able to explain it. Can you tell me what it is about?"

The Scholar said:

"My learning is not extensive and I lack the means to reply to you, my guest. But the people of the North call weiqi (qi) yi[3].

I shall expand on this explanation and enumerate its general points, for its significance is profound.

The board must be square, for it represents Earth's laws. The lines must be straight for they embody the spirit of pure virtue. The pieces are white and black, and so are divided

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[1] [1]*Da Guan* originally indicated a soldier's hat. Later it came to refer to any hat worn by civil or military officials, or aristocrats or scholars. By extension it came to refer to a scholar. We are meant to understand that it here refers to Ban Gu himself and we are to imagine him sitting formally dressed in his official cap as he expounds on *bo*.

[2] *Analects*, Book 17 Yang Huo (Chap. 22). Note that bo (or liubo) was a precursor to backgammon.

[3] From Yang Xiong's Fang Yan. I don't think we need to take too seriously the remark about weiqi disappearing. It was probably a standard Confucianist attitude to ignore it since Confucius himself seemed to disapprove of it.

into the Yin and the Yang. Paired and set out in order[4], they represent the patterns of the Heavens[5]. Once these four symbols[6] have been deployed, it is up to Man to use them to make the moves. In short, this is kingship. Success or failure, good or evil, like benevolence, depend on ability within oneself. This is sitting straight in the face of danger.

Now bo depends on the throws of the dice, not only on the moves[7]. The superior player can have bad luck, the inferior can have good luck. They confront each other and their with their spirits fight mightily. But, although there is a winner and a loser, still this is not sufficient to make it a fair contest of skill.

But with yi it is not so. The strong and the weak repulse each other have distinct differences between them, and the

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[4] This phrase is from a Yang Xiong raphsody and other writers where it seems to refer to an ordered array. I suspect the reference is to the initial pairwise arrangement of starting stones. (In ancient weiqi, the game would start with two black and two white stones placed on opposite star points, in a ”diagonal fuseki” pattern.

[5] It was far from original to use game equipment to symbolise philosophical concepts at this time.

[6] The four representations mentioned above: the board, the lines, the colours of the stones and their arrangememt on the board. These are perhaps also to be related to the Four (Secondary) Figures of the Eight Diagrams, deduced from the Two Primary Symbols in the Book of Changes: (1) the sun, the first, greatest, (2) the moon, that which unites, (3) the stars, daylight, white, (4) the planets, night, etc.

[7] *Bo* often refers to *liu bo*. It is an ancient game, the detailed rules of which have been lost, but there were dice and pieces (”men”) were moved in accordance with the throw of the dice.

players have grades. It is like in Confucius' school where Hui and Ci deferred to each other[8]. They follow names and require substance[9]. They plan by devising strategies; it is like the courts of the Tang and the Yu[10]; where demotions and promotions were on the basis of examining merits. The equipment used may be constant, but actions and plans are

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[8] Hui = Yan Hui, styled Ziyuan and also known as Yan Yuan, was Confucius' favourite pupil. Ci = Zigong, surnamed Duanmu, was a pupil of Confucius. Zigong was good at trade and was the richest of Confucius' pupils. But in Confucius' eyes he still did not equal Yan Hui. The phrase "Hui and Ci deferred to each other" refers to *Analects*, Book V, Gongye Chang, Chapter 9 after Meng Wu asks [in Chapter 8] Confucius about some of his pupils: "The Master said to Zigong, 'Which is superior, you or Hui?' Zigong replied: 'How dare I compare myself with Hui! If Hui is told one thing he understands ten. If I am told one thing I understand only two'. Confucius said: 'You are not as good as he is. Neither you nor I are as good.'"

[9] Requiring that names and substance conform with each other, that is titles had to be matched by actual responsibilities, words had to match deeds. This, and semantics generally, was a topic of great concern to early thinkers, and led to a School of Names. See, for example, the writings of Han Fei Zi (c. 280 BC – 233 BC).

[10] According to legend, leaders of the Taotang tribe and Youyu tribe both gave up the empire to wise men rather than set up a dynasty, and for Confucianists this was a golden age. The Taotang were headed by Yao. At first they lived in Tao and then moved to Tang (Pinyang: within the borders of Linfen, Shanxi), hence the name. The Youyu were headed by Shun and first lived in Yu (Dupuban: within modern Yongji County, Shanxi), hence the name. After their abdication, Yu the Great succeeded. Yao and Shu, of course, have their place in weiqi legend as having invented the game to instruct foolish sons (which created some difficulties for Confucian thinkers!).

always changing. Make secure places in response to the enemy, but respond to the situation and be flexible. Continue without repetition and by changes daily renovate yourself[11]. Sometimes you will set up in empty areas or establish positions in advance, in order to defend yourself.

In short this symbolises Paoxi's system of fishing nets[12]. If you raise dikes all around, you can guard against overflowing rivers bursting through them. This is like the power Xiahou used to control the waters. If there is the defect of a single hole, ruin will be inexorable. This is like the loss when Huzi's floods overflowed. One weiqi piece can similarly burst through an obstruction[13].

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[11] *Great Learning*, Chap. 2.1.

[12] Fu Xi was the legendary first monarch of China and founder of the Xia dynasty, who supposedly reigned 2953-3838 BC. He reputedly taught civilised ways of living for the first time and set up the Eight Trigrams. He instituted "kitchen sacrifices" or paoxi (to keep the kitchens stocked) and so is also known by this name. He was also the first man to use ropes for hunting and fishing. He taught his people how to make fishing nets, and to set the nets in advance and wait for the fish to enter. This is the same as the principle of "setting up in empty areas and setting up positions in advance" in weiqi.

[13] Huzi is to be the name of a dike on the river Han, in Baimai, Shanjun (modern Hua County, Jiangnan). Because a small hole destroyed the Huzi dike the floods overflowed and caused a disaster. This alludes in weiqi to "the mistake of one move can cause the loss of a whole game", but more specifically "dikes" are to be understood as walls in weiqi and their power is "influence". Xiahou was Yu the Great, famous for his flood control and irrigation projects.

Lost territory being again recovered is like the might of Cao Zi[14]. When you lay an ambush and devise a feint, and break through an encirclement and run riot, this is like Tian Dan's surprise move[15]. When you exert pressure on the opponent and plunder from each other and so divide territories and take compensation from each other, this is like the behaviour of Su and Zhang[16].

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[14] Cao Zi's might: Cao Zi refers to Cao Mo, that is the Cao Gui of the "Cao Gui discusses battles" of the pre-Confucian history "Zuo Zhuan". He was from Lu in the Springs and Autumns period. When Duke Huan of Qi invaded Lu, Duke Zhuang of Lu sought peace and both met at Ke (east of modern Yanggu, Shandong). Cao Mo attacked Duke Huan of Qi with a dagger held him hostage and so recovered the part of Lu that had been lost.

[15] Tian Dan was a general of Qi in the Warring Kingdoms period and came from Linzi (now part of Zibo City, Shandong). When Yan invaded Qi, they took over 70 cities in succession. Only the two cities of Xiaju and Jimo remained. Tian Dan was stoutly defending Jimo. By using the "formation of oxen with fire" he routed the Yan army and recovered all 70-odd cities. This was in 279 BC and refers to a famous stiry in which he collected more than 1,000 oxen, tied sharp daggers to their horns and oil-dipped reeds to their tails, and dressed them in colourful cloths. At dead of night he and 5,000 soldiers dressed as monsters set the tails alight and drove the oxen towards the enemy camp. The panicking enemy soldiers were wiped out. This has become a classic reference for doing something by surprise.

[16] Su and Zhang: refer to Su Qin and Zhang Yi. Both were Political Strategists in the Warring States period (475-221 BC). Su Qin, styled Lizi, was from Luoyang, Eastern Zhou. At first he applied to King Hui of Qin but was not employed. Finally he went to Yan and Zhao, and joined the alliance of six states against Qin. Su was head of the "hezong" (vertical confederation of states against Qin). Zhang Yi was from Wei. He served as Minister of Qin under King Hui for over ten

If you solidify your bases and expand yourself, the enemy will be in dread. If out of three parts you have two, but let them go and do not punish them, this is like Wen of Zhou's virtues, and is the concern of a wise man[17]. If having already suffered defeat you can still estimate the weak and strong, you can hold back and act like a kindly teacher. If you defend the corners and rely on the sides but on the other hand continuously defend your weak group, then though

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years, and by means of the horizontal "lianheng" strategy (in which Qin tried to ally with each of the other six states), he approached the six states to get them to oppose the others and support Qin. There are many anecdotes about this pair.

[17] King Wen, an ideal ruler according to Confucius, was leader of the Zhou tribe at the end of the Shang dynasty (11th c. BC). As one of the dukes and princes of the Yin Shang he founded his capital in Fengyi (southwest of modern Xi'an in Shaanxi Province). He was head of the western aristocracy and was so called Earl of the West (Xi Bo). At that time Zhou of the Yin ruled as a tyrant whereas King Wen governed benevolently. More than two thirds of the dukes and princes returned to King Wen. Here Ban Gu is borrowing Wen's deeds and emphasising "solidify his bases and expanding" in order to illustrate in weiqi standing high and seeing far (taking a broad and long-term view), the high-class strategy of winning without fighting.

you may lose once you will not perish. This is like the wisdom of Mu[18], and is the method of the Golden Mean[19].

First were the symbols of heaven and earth. Next was the rule of emperors and kings. In the middle was the power of the five hegemons. Lastly were the affairs of the warring states. I have looked at their profit and loss, and have furnished more or less cases from past and present.

As regards being at ease in playing weiqi, if you exert yourself fully so that you forget to eat, and are so happy that you forget your sorrows, then we can recommend it and praise it highly, for this is like Confucius' concept of himself[20]. If you are happy without wantonness, sad without malice, calling as witness the Book of Odes, it is a kind of

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[18] Mu refers to Duke Mu of Qin (or Ying Renhao) who reigned 659-621 BC. He was one of the Five Hegemons of the Springs and Autumns era. At the time of King Xiang of Zhou he was called Hegemon of the Western tribes, and was appointed Earl of the dukes and princes of the West. The reference is to the Qin army in Yao (a strong pass in Honan, the eastern edge of Qin, which is in modern Honan, southeast of the Sanmen Pass). It was attacked and defeated by the Jin army, and Duke Mu held himself responsible. But later he rested to build up his strength and plan battle. He ended in defeating the state of Jin. Ban Gu believes that when playing weiqi it is important to have this kind of tolerance and courage and insight of Duke Mu.

[19] Of the Confucian school – see *Doctrine of the Mean*

[20] *Analects*, Book 7, Shu er, Chap. 18: The Duke of She asked Zilu [a pupil of Confucius] about Confucius. Zilu did not answer. Confucius said, "Why did you not say: he is the sort of man who is so eager to study that he forgets to eat, who is so full of joy that he forgets his worries, and who does not notice the onset of old age?"

Guan Ju[21] If you handle the hard you understand the soft[22]. Yin and yang arrive in succession.

Following this and nurturing your own nature is like Peng Zu's qi[23]. If on the surface it seems like no action, and silently understanding what it is like to be tranquilly without desires, defending yourself to know the meaning of the Way by using the meaning of the lines on the weiqi board – this is

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[21] *Analects*, Book III Ba Yi, Chap. 20 where Confucius said: "The Guan Ju expresses joy without wantonness, sorrow without malice." *Guan Ju* (the cawing ospreys) is the first ode of the *Book of Odes* (*Shi Jing*):
Guan-guan go the ospreys
On the islet in the river.
The modest retiring, virtuous, young lady:
For our prince a good mate she.
There are a couple more verses but the significance is that the poem is said to refer to King Wen of Zhou and his bride Tai Si and the old commentators believed it was about "rectitude of character and feelings, and harmony of voice and spirit." Here Ban Gu is making a connection between the "rectitude" and "harmony" of the *Guan Ju* and weiqi, which is pure and proper, and a worthy educational activity.

[22] The Chinese expression contrasts a spindle and thread. The one is hard, the other is soft; soft and hard go together. This alludes to things being opposite but complementary.

[23] Peng Zu, or Old Man Peng, according to legend was already 767 years old at the end of the Yin dynasty (11th c. BC). He was great-great grandson of Zhuan Xu, a legendary ruler (2513-2435 BC). He was described as being good at preparing pheasant soup and he thereby served Emperor Yao. According to the *Shi Ben* he served the Shang as a librarian and the Zhou as an archivist, but elsewhere it is said he declined official posts. He was said to be of a quiet nature, uninterested in world affairs and devoted to physical self-cultivation by means of breathing exercises he devised. This is the reference to *qi*, the qi/ch'i/ki of martial artists).

like Lao Zi[24]. Giving free rein to your words while living like a recluse, putting blame at a distance while repenting actions, symbolises Yu Zhong[25]. I believe you can enjoy this game.

I feel that what I have said is not complete, but I have used what was asked to illustrate what it is all about."

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[24] There appears to be something missing here, and from the clues around it appears to be a reference to Lao Zi, which is accordingly inserted here.

[25] Yu Zhong, also called Zhong Yong, was the second son of King Tai of the Zhou. King Tai gave birth to three sons. The eldest was Tai Bo, the second Zhong Yong and the youngest Ji Li. King Tai wanted to set up his youngest son, Ji Li, on the throne, and so Tai Bo and Zhong Yong avoided Ji Li by running away to the area of Jingman (Jiangnan). Fratricide was a common way of stalling potential opposition. Tai Bo later became lord of that area and was known as Wu Tai Bo. When Tai Bo died, Zhong Yong succeeded him as ruler and became the ancestor of the later state of Wu. There is a reference here to *Analects*, Book 18 Wei Zi, Chap. VIII. Of Yu Zhong and Yi Yi, he [Confucius] said, "While living as recluses they gave free rein to their words. But they were unsullied in character and showed sound judgement in accepting their dismissal." The idea seems to be "running away to live another day".

Qijing Shisanpian

(The Classic of Weiqi in Thirteen Chapters)

Translated and with an Introduction by Paolo Zanon

INTRODUCTION

The most important text on the game of *weiqi* is certainly *Qijing Shisanpian* (The Classic of *Weiqi* in Thirteen Chapters). Its precise style and fulness of information place it far above all the other texts devoted to w*eiqi* in Chinese literature. The present paper discusses the transmission of this text until modern times and gives its full translation[26].

The date of composition of *Qijing Shisanpian* is given right at the beginning of the work. It goes back to the Huangyou period, during the reign of the emperor Renzong of Northern Song (1049 to 1054 AD). A certain Zhang Ni is also quoted as author.

Nothing is known about Zhang Ni; his name does not appear in any biographical work. In a Ming text, *Wenjianlu* (Report of Things Heard and Seen), written by Shao Bowen, the scholar Yu Jiaxi did find a reference to Zhang Ni, son of Zhang Wang, who lived south of Yangzi, was a member of the imperial burocracy, and was distinguished for his profound knowledge of Confucian culture[27]. Yu Jiaxi believed that a mistake had been made in the name of Zhang Ni, because in the Song text *Jilebian* (Compilation of Small Trifles), son of Zhang Wang, was called Zhang Jing and not Zhang Ni.

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[26] The author would like to thank Gabriel Walton for her translation of this work from the original Italian into English. Chinese encoding: BIG5.

[27] YU JIAXI, *Siku Tiyao Bianzheng*, Beijing, Zhonghua Shuju, 1937, *juan* 40, p.800.

It was in fact noted that Zhang Wang explicitly wished to call his son by a name containing the radical *li*, his grandson by one containing the radical *men*, his great-grandson with a *jin*, and so on, with *shi* and *xin*. In this way, in six generations, it would have been possible to read the sentence: "the sovreign is at the door, the heart is golden".

All these facts led Yu Jiaxi to the conclusion that the correct name of the author of *Qijing Shisanpian* was Jing, not Ni. He assumed that the mistake could be explained by the similarity between the characters *jing* and *ni*, if written in *caoshu* style[28]. In any case, there is no further informations about the author, who remains shrouded in mystery.

What we know about the text itself is clearer: already from Song dynasty some of its quotations indicate that the date mentioned in the introductions is credible. *Tongzhi* (Universal Annals), written between 1104 and 1162, reports a work entitled *Yiqi* (*Weiqi*)[29]. *Chongwen Zongmu* (General Index of Noble Literature), edited by Wang Yaochen (1001-1056 *circa*), reports a "*Yiqijing* (Classic of *Weiqi*) in a *juan,* unknown author"[30]. An undated and unidentified fragment in *Siku Quanshu* (Complete Library in Four Branches of

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[28] *Ibidem*.

[29] ZHENG QIAO (ed.), *Tongzhi* (Universal Annals), *s.l., s.n., s.d.,* n°TC-496 of Venice Univ. Chinese Dept. Library, *ju*.69.

[30] WANG YAOCHEN (I ed., 1001-1056 A.D.), QIAN TONG (II ed., 1142 A:D.), *et al*. (III ed., 1799 A.D.), *Chongwen Zongmu* (General Index of Noble Literature), in *Chongwen Zongmu Jishi*, *s.l.*, Huangwen Shuju, 1968, p.438.

Literature) states that, from the times of Liu Zhongfu[31] (*fl.*:1086-1100) onwards, all the *qidaizhao*[32] have read "these thirteen chapters"[33].

So already in Song times there was a text, one *juan* long, devoted to the game of *weiqi* and set out in thirteen chapters. The slightly different title does not really present any problem, because even in Qing times *Qijing Shisanpian* was sometimes called *Qijing*[34].

The first compilation in which *Qijing Shisanpian* appears is *Wangyou Qingle Ji* (Collection of Pure Joys, in Order to Forget Adversity), edited by Li Yimin[35], about whom we only know that he was a *qidaizhao* in the Song dynasty. However, his name supplies us with more information: Yimin means "retired from society" and is a typical example of the *hao* adopted by the *literati* when the dynasty to which they were loyal to was overthrown by a new one. In this way they indicated their disinclination to serve the new rulers.

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[31] LI SONGFU, "Beisong Guoshou Liu Zhongfu", *Weiqi*, Sept. 1979, p.32.

[32] Title introduced in Tang times to designate the members of the Hanlin Academy, selected for their skill at *weiqi*.

[33] *Siku Quanshu* (Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature), in WANG TAIYUE (ed.), *Qiding Siku Quanshu*, Taibei, Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1983, vol. 839, p.1001.

[34] WANG TAIYUE, *ibidem*.

[35] LIU SHANCHENG, *Zhongguo Weiqi* (Chinese *Weiqi*), Chengdu, Sichuan Kexue Jishu Chubanshe, 1988, p.607; LI SONGFU, *Weiqi Shihua* (History of *Weiqi*), Beijing, Renmin Tiyu Chubanshe, 1990, pp.160*ff*.

So Li Yimin should have lived after the fall of the Song dynasty (1278) and the establishment of the Yuan dynasty. The above quoted *Siku Quanshu*'s fragment states that Li Baiyang as the sixth *qidaizhao* after Liu Zhongfu: he could well be the same Li Yimin. Therefore *Wangyou Qingle Ji* must have been edited in the beginning of Yuan dynasty.

A copy of this text, edited by Li Yimin, still exists in the Peking Library. *Wangyou Qingle Ji* is divided into four parts: the first presents Liu Zhongfu's *Qijue* (The Secrete Art of *Weiqi*), Zhang Ni's *Qijing* and a *Lunqijueyao Zashuo* (Miscellaneous: Discourses on the Main Stratagems of *Weiqi*) by Zhang Jing. The latter is simply the last chapter of *Qijing Shisanpian* published as an autonomous text and ascribed correctly to Zhang Jing, while *Qijing Shisanpian* has already been wrongly ascribed to Zhang Ni.

The second part of the work illustrates examples of eighteen games, some by Liu Zhongfu, the third shows example of corner fights with variations; and the fourth thirty-four "life and death" problems[36].

However, the collection in which *Qijing Shisanpian* was published and which became the most famous and widely printed is entitled *Xuanxuan Qijing* (The Very Mysterious Classic of *Weqi*). It contains three introductions which allow its history to be reconstructed.

The oldest of these is dated "autumn 1348" and was written by Yu Ji (1272-1348), about whom we know that in

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[36] LI SONGFU, *op. cit.*, p.161.

1341 he wrote a preface to the Buddhist text *Fozu Lidai Tongzai* (General Report on Buddha and His Patriarchs) by the monk Nian Chang[37].

Yu Ji's text[38] begins with a series of classic parallels referring to *weiqi*: *Yin* and *Yang*, the circle and the square, active and passive, and so on. He goes on to recount an autobiographical event which occurred in 1330 at the court of the Mongol emperor Wendi. The sovreign asked the author, as a member of the imperial Hanlin Academy, if it was dignified for the Son of Heaven to play *weiqi*. Yu Ji answered:

> When the ancients invented an object, they allowed themselves to be perfectly absorbed by its spirit, and from each object they extracted its usefulness. And indeed, there is no object which does not have its particular use. Regarding the game, Confucius long ago saied that playing *weiqi* was better than doing nothing, and Mencius even believed that it was an art. One may understand it therefore only by

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[37] WILLIAM H. NIENHAUSER, JR., *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1986, p.351. ZANG LIHE, *Zhongguo Renming Dacidian* (Great Dictionary of the Names of Illustrious Chinese), Shanghai, Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1940, p.1322.

[38] YU JI, "Xuanxuan Qijing Xu" (Introduction to The Very Mysterious Classic of *Weiqi*), in WANG RUNAN (*et al.*), *Xuanxuan Qijing Xinjie*, Beijing, Renmin Tiyu Chubanshe, 1988, p.1.

> concen-trating on it with a will of iron. Moreover, the methods of organization and preparation, the *Dao* of conquest and preservation, reasoning and decision, all recall the logic followed in compiling state laws and preparing military orders according to division, brigades, battalions and companies. After having studied all these things and absorbed their contents, one's attention will remain vigilant even in times of peace[39].

The emperor was so favorably impressed by these words that he permitted Yu Ji to carve an inscription on the box containing his personal *weiqi* set.

Yu Ji goes on to describe how he later fell into disfavour and was exiled to Linchuan, now on the outskirts of the present-day city of Fuzhou. During these years of his exile, he occupied his time exclusively with *weiqi*. His reputation became such that players passing through Linchuan visited him to play the game and debate fine points. In the autumn of 1348, a player arrived from Luling, now Ji'an, south-west of Nanchang, carrying a copy of *Xuanxuan Qijing*. He presented it as a work from Song times, collected and comented on by two of his countryman: Yan Tianzhang and Yan Defu. It is probable that he was referring only to *Qijing Shisanpian* as a Song text, and that Yu Ji misunderstood and extended the dating to the entire *Xuanxuan Qijing*.

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[39] *Ibidem*.

Struck by the value of these texts, Yu Ji decided to have them printed for posterity, but committed the singular error of considering the two compilers as man of letters from the Song dynasty.

The second introduction[40] to *Xuanxuan Qijing* is the work of Ouyang Xuan[41], composed at the beginning of the Chinese new year of 1349. Ouyang Xuan states that he was obliged to study hard as a young man in order to attain his present position, which was why he had not been able to learn how to play *weiqi*. However, he accepted the task of writing this introduction on the pressing request of Yan of Qingcheng, who intended to publish *Xuanxuan Qijing*. Althought this lord Yan remains a mysterious figure, at least the place of publication may be identified. It was Qingcheng which, in Yuan times, was a small town north-west of the present-day Chengdu. Of the compilers of the work, Ouyang Xuan writes:

> At Luling, the skilful player Yan Defu began to collect a series of works on [how to play] *weiqi*. Yan Wenke, who came from a distinguished family of *literati*, enriched this compilation by adding examples of game situations[42].

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[40] OUYANG XIU, "Xuanxuan Qijing Xu" (Introduction to The Very Mysterious Classic of *Weiqi*), in WANG RUNAN (*et al.*), *op. cit.*, p.4.

[41] Famous from the age of eight for his prodigious memory. He was a historian and a member of the Hanlin Academy. ZANG LIHE, *op. cit.*, p.1509.

[42] OUYANG XIU, *ibidem*.

According to Ouyang Xuan therefore, Yan Defu compiled the texts and Yan Wenke prepared the illustrations.Yan Wenke may be another name for Yan Tianzhang, or a mistake may have been made.

In the third introduction[43], dated "the third month of 1350", we find that the compiler is the same Yan Tianzhang, believed to have died centuries before by Yu Ji. Moreover: Yan Defu was still alive at that time:

> In my prefecture [*i.e.*, Luling] lives professor Yan Defu, a person of absolute probity and iron will. At the early age of twenty, he was already famous south of the Yangzi as a *weiqi* player. He collected classics on this subject in order to aid scholars in posterity. Now he is an old man and fears that the ancients, although intelligent, did not fully appreciate some of the finer points of the game and that, although their knowledge was profound, it was not perfect. This is why he is publishing this work, after having sought in it its deepest and most mysterious aspects and made comparisons with other discordant editions. [...] I have therefore respectfully copied the text and had it carved in *catalpa* wood blocks in order to publish it. If learned and cultivated men of letters who share

[43] YAN TIANZHANG, "Xuanxuan Qijing Xu" (Introduction to The Very Mysterious Classic of *Weiqi*), in WANG RUNAN (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.5.

> my opinions were to wish to correct my mistakes [and inform me of them], they would make me extremely happy[44].

In this appreciation, Yan Tianzhang attributes all the merit of the collection to Yan Defu, but it is possible that he himself also helped to prepare the illustrations, if he is that Yan Wenke quoted by Ouyang Xuan.

To summarise, therefore, Yan Defu of Luling was probably the main compiler of *Xuanxuan Qijing*. The work, still in manuscript form, quickly circulated among competent players along the Yangzi: the first editions, by Yu Ji and Yan of Qingcheng were prepared hundreds of miles away. When Yan Defu and Yan Tianzhang decided to print the collection, it was already famous.

Xuanxuan Qijing is composed of two parts: the first containing texts on *weiqi*, and the second, made up of five books (*juan*) illustrating various problems of play and recommended moves.

The *Xuanxuan Qijing* texts contain not only *Qijing Shisanpian*, but also *Yizhi* (The Excellency of *Weiqi*) by Ban Gu (32-92 AD), *Weiqi Fu* by Ma Rong (78-166? AD), *Yuanyi* (The Origin of *Weiqi*) by Pi Rixiu (834?-883?), *Qijue* (The Secrete Art of *Weiqi*) by Liu Zhongfu. There is also *Wuqi Ge* (Song of Understanding *Weiqi*) by Lü Gong – a poetical exercise – and *Sixianzituxu* (Introduction to the Illustrations

[44] *Ibidem*.

of the Four Immortals) – a description of a match also illustrated in *Wangyou Qingle Ji* , by Xu Zongyan.

The history of the transmission of *Qijing Shisanpian* as an autonomous work ceases with the publication of *Xuanxuan Qijing*. However, it is interesting to follow its trials and tribulations until it came down to us.

One copy of the Yuan edition, printed in Qingcheng, has survived until now. It is identical to a Ming copy, the only one of that period still remaining, edited between 1573 and 1619[45].

In Ming times, *Xuanxuan Qijing* was inserted in two large encyclopaedias, *Jujia Bibei* (Preparations Necessary for the Home), now lost, and *Yongle Dadian* (The Great Collection of *Yongle*), currently lacking in various of its books, including the one concerning *weiqi*. Yao Guanxiao, the editor of the latter, committed the same error as Yu Ji in considering Yan Tianzhang as the Song author of *Qijing Shisanpian*[46].

In Qing times, *Yongle Dadian* was the edition used for republication in *Siku Quanshu*. In fact, *Siku Quanshu* only contains *Qijing Shisanpian* (called here *Qijing*) and Liu Zhongfu's *Qijue*. Neither the illustrations nor the commentaries of Yan Defu are included[47].

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[45] LI SONGFU, *op. cit*, p.176.

[46] YU JIAXI, *Sikutiyao Bianzheng* (Analyses and Researches on the Annoted Catalogue of the Imperial Library), Beijing, Zhonghua Shuju, 1937, *ju*. 40, p.800.

[47] WANG TAIYUE, (*et al.*), *op. cit.*, vol 839, p.1001*ff*.

However, during the Qing period Zhang Haipeng prepared an edition based directly on the texts going back to Yuan times. Owing to a fire in the publishing house, this edition never saw the light of day, and it was only thanks to the original drafts of Zhang Haipeng that Qian Xizuo was finally able to have the definite edition of *Xuanxuan Qijing* printed by Shoushan'ge. Qian Xizuo not only republished Yan Defu's notes, but also added his own and corrected the erroneous attribution of *Qijing Shisanpian*, referring it to Zhang Ni. He also was the first to put forwards the hypothesis that Zhang's real real name was Jing and not Ni[48].

In 1717 Shen Fu reprinted *Xuanxuan Qijing* with notes. But the greatest commentator of Qing times, for the number and quality of his notes, was Deng Yuanlü[49].

In Japan, the first publication goes back to 1630. The oldest edition to come down to us bears the date 1753 and is entitled *Gengenkikei rigenshô* (Translated Edition of the 'Very Misterious Classic of *Weiqi*')[50].

In 1985, *Xuanxuan Qijing* was reprinted with the modern annotations of Li Yuzhen and Cheng Enyuan, together with all preceding commentaries and explanatory notes on possible textual differences. This is the edition from which the following translation was made[51].

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[48] *Ibidem*
[49] LIU SHANCHENG (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.159.
[50] LIU SHANCHENG (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.628.
[51] LIU SHANCHENG (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp.156-187.

THE CLASSIC OF WEIQI IN THIRTEEN CHAPTERS

INTRODUCTION

The Classic of Weiqi in Thirteen Chapters was written by Zhang Ni[52] during the Huangyou period (1049-1054 A.D.) of the Song dynasty.

Zuozhuan stated: "To stuff oneself with food all day without worrying about anything is difficult indeed! But what about *weiqi* players then? it is better to be one of them than to do nothing!"[53].

In his *Xinlun*, Huan Tan wrote: "There is now a game called *weiqi*, concerning which some say that it is a kind of simulation of war. The skilful player, fully cognisant of its configurations, places his pieces so as to encircle those of his opponent and thus win. The average player, although he aims at gaining advantages, can isolate his adversary. Therefore, whether he wins or loses, he must always be attentive and circumspect, and must also carefully calculate and evaluate in order to be certain of winning. The inexpert

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[52] This translation uses the name Zhang Ni, as it has come down to us in the various editions of the text.

[53] Although the quotation is reported correctly, the same cannot be said for the source. This passage is not found in *Zuozhuan*, but comes from the chapter "Yanghuo" in *Lunyu*. RUAN YUAN (ed.), *Shisanjing Zhushu* (The Thirteen Classics with Notes), Beijing, Zhonghua Shuju, 1991, vol 2, p.2526.

player, although able to defend sides and corners, moves in small areas, limiting himself simply to surviving in small portions of territory"[54].

Since the period of the Springs and Autumns all ages have had players of these categories, so that the Way of *weiqi* has always prospered.

The most important problems dealing with victory and defeat, divided into thirteen chapters, are now examined. Extracts from *Sunzi Bingfa* have sometimes been inserted in the text.

[54] HUAN TAN, *Xinlun* (New Debates), Shanghai, Renmin Chubanshe, 1977, p.12.

CHAPTER ONE

ON THE PIECES AND THE BOARD

The number of the Ten Thousand Beings originates from the One. Therefore, the three hundred and sixty intersections of the *weiqi* board also have their One. The One is the generative principle of numbers and, considered as a pole, produces the four cardinal points.

The three hundred and sixty intersections correspond to the number of days in a year[55]. Divided into four "corners" like the four seasons, they have ninety intersections each, like the number of days in a season. There are seventytwo intersections on the sides, like the number of *hou*[56] in a year. The three hundred and sixty pieces are equally divided between black and white, modelled on *Yin-Yang* .

The lines on the board form a grid called *ping*, and the squares they compose are called *gua*[57]. The board is square and quiet, the pieces are round and active[58].

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[55] The Chinese solar year had twelve months of thirty days each. The same comparison was made in chapter "Xiangming" of *Dunhuang Qijing* (The Classic of *Weiqi*) [hereafter: *Qijing*], written between 502 and 550 A.D. See CHENG ENYUAN, *Dunhuang Qijing Jianzheng* (The Dunhuang Classic of *Weiqi* with Notes), Chengdu, Shurong Qiyi Chubanshe, 1990, pp.158*ff*.

[56] A *hou* is five days long

[57] Literally "small spaces".

[58] This comparison was stated for the first time in the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.) by Ji You in *Weiqi Ming*. It later appeared in chapter "Xiangming" of *Qijing* (*ibidem*) and in Tang times (618-907 A.D.). See OUYANG XIU, *Xin Tangshu* (History of the Later Tang), Beijing, Zhonghua Shuju, 1975,

Ever since ancient times, no player has ever happened to place the pieces on the board in exactly the same way as he did during a preceding game. *Zuozhuan* states: "Every day is new"[59]. Therefore, reasoning must go deep and analysis must be perfect, and an attempt must be made to understand the processes that lead to victory and defeat: only in this way is it possible to attain that which is still unattained.

Li Mi biography, vol. 15, p.4632.

[59] The attribution of this passage to *Zuozhuan* is erroneous: it in fact appears in the book "Daxue" in *Liji*. See RUAN YUAN (ed.), *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 1673.

CHAPTER TWO

ON CALCULATIONS

The player whose configurations are correct can exercise power over his adversary. He must therefore establish his strategy internally, so that his configurations are complete externally too[60].

If he is able to work out who will win while the game is still being played, he has calculated well. If he is not able to work this out, he has calculated badly[61]. If he does not know who is the winner and who is the loser at the end of the game, he has made no calculations at all!

It is written in *Sunzi Bingfa*: "Those who calculate greatly will win; those who calculate only a little will lose. But what of those who don't make any calculations at all?!"[62]. This is why everything must be calculated, in order to foresee victory and defeat[63].

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[60] The internal-external dualism here represents the player's mind on one hand, and practical application on the game-board on the other.

[61] This passage follows Sunzi, who opened his treatise on military arts with the chapter "On Calculations". He states: "Those who, even before the battle, have worked out who will win have calculated well. Those who, in the same condition, have calculated who will lose, have calculated badly... But what about those who have not bothered to make any calculations at all!?" AI QILAI (ed.), *Sunzi Bingfa Jingyi* (Sunzi's Methods of War with Notes), Beijing, Zhongguo Guanbo Dianshi Chubanshe, 1991, p.58.

[62] *Ibidem*

[63] Here too, an almost identical expression may be found in *Sunzi Bingfa*, as a conclusion to the chapter on calculations

CHAPTER THREE

ON CONTROL OF TERRITORY

Control of territory means the need to lay down the general lines of the game while the pieces are being positioned.

At the beginning of the game, the positions are divided up at the four corners. Then play begins, and pieces are placed obliquely[64], missing out two intersections and placing one "below". Starting from two adjacent pieces, three spaces may be skipped; with three adjacent pieces, four[65]. Five spaces may be skipped, if the player wishes to be nearer another configuration; but nearness does not mean adjacency, nor must distance be excessive[66].

(*ibidem*).

[64] This description refers to the early phases of the game, during which this kind of move, called "lengthening" (extending one player's area of influence), is made. To avoid such circumscribed areas being cut by the adversary, a close relationship is maintained between the number of friendly pieces arranged consecutively vertically and the number of intersections to be skipped horizontally in order to put down pieces. In this way, if the adversary attempts to separate one piece from its companions, a careful player will always be able to counteract successfully.

[65] The same advice is expressed at the end of the section “On good methods of play” in *Qijing*, chapter “Buxiang”.

[66] At the beginning of the game, placing a piece next to an enemy one means that the adversary, by putting his piece “above” the first, deprives it of two freedoms. As these moves take place early in the game, *i.e.*, generally on the third or fourth line from one side, the other player can calculate the extent of the risk he runs. This is because a third enemy piece played laterally would be enough to condemn the first piece to death, since it cannot free itself, due to its nearness to the side and the absence of friendly pieces. Even if one

All these things were debated by the ancients, and the rules were then studied by their successors. Therefore, those who do not wish to accept but who wish to change their methods, cannot know what the results may be[67].

Shijing states: "Without a good beginning, there can be no good end"[68].

player were to prevent his opponent from placing a third piece, this move would clearly be defensive in nature and would mean that the initiative – extremely important in this opening phase of the game – would be lost.

[67] This typically Confucian attitude on the goodness and validity of tradition and ritual not only strengthens the concept but also introduces the following quotation from *The Classic of Poetry*.

[68] From the poem "Dang" in the section "Daya" of *Shijing*. RUAN YUAN (ed.), *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p.552.

CHAPTER FOUR

ON ENGAGING CONFLICT

In the Way of *weiqi*, it is important to be careful and precise. [At the end of the game], the skilful player will have succeeded in occupying the centre of the board[69], the inexpert player will have occupied the sides, and the average player[70] will find himself in the corners. These are the eternal methods of players.

It is generally believed that sometimes many pieces may be lost, provided that the initiative is not lost. This is because losing the initiative means passing it to the other player, who did not have it before.

Before attacking to the left, observe the right; before invading the space behind your opponent's lines, observe what is in front of them[71].

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[69] This does not mean that a good player must play in the centre right from the beginning of the game, but that, in the end, he will have been able to control the central areas, which are those in which skilful play is crucial. Although, by using a corner, a player may use its two sides to construct "eyes", or may exploit the possibilities offered by one side, constructing eyes in the centre requires a far greater number of pieces.

[70] The terms "inexpert player" and "average player" are inverted here, probably due to a transcription error in the text. The sentence, as it now stands, would not be logical, for the reason expressed above.

[71] This technique is described in the treatise by Sunzi in the following terms: "A distant army must pretend to be close; a nearby army must appear to be distant". AI QILAI (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.57

It is not necessary to divide two “living” groups, because both will live in any case, even if they are not linked together[72]. The distance between pieces must be not excessive; nearness must not be adjacency.

Rather than keeping endangered pieces alive, it is better to abandon them[73] and acquire new positions.

Instead of expending effort in making worthless moves, exploit every opportunity which allows you to strengthen your position.

When there are many enemy pieces but few of your own in a given territory, first of all carefully consider your own chances of survival. If the opposite situation arises, when your own pieces are numerous and your enemy is in difficulties, exploit that situation to extend your configurations.

As the best victory is that gained without fighting, so the best position is one which does not provoke conflict[74]. In

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[72] Chapter 1 of *Qijing* expresses the same concept in the words: “In the same way that two autonomously 'living' formations should not be divided, there is no sense in attempting to join two practically dead ones”.

[73] A similar concept is expressed in the section “On good methods of play” in *Qijing*, chapter “Buxiang”.

[74] It is precisely by arguments such as these – *i.e.*, by considering conflict and warlike contestations not as ends in themselves but as phases of play inferior to an easy victory – that the author implicitly counters the accusation that weiqi resembles war too closely. However, the fact of presenting a player able to influence change completely, capable of turning events "naturally" towards his already established aims, without force or direct confrontation, echoes the Taoist theories of the school of Dark Science, *Xuanxue*, which

any case, if you fight well you will not lose, and if your ranks are not in disorder, you will lose well.

Although at the beginning of the game, you must arrange the pieces according to the rules, at the end you must use your imagination[75] in order to win.

Carefully observe the most minute details of all territories: if they are solidly constructed, they cannot be overwhelmed, but, if you surprise your adversary with an idea which has not occurred to him[76], you will be able to overwhelm him where he is unprepared.

If your adversary defends himself without doing anything, it is a sign that in reality he intends to attack. If he neglects small territories and does not play in them, he is in fact plotting to make great conquests there.

A player who puts down his pieces haphazardly is devoid of strategy: if he does not reflect and simply responds

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represented a sovereign able to order and administer the empire by means of his non-action, by virtue of natural cause-effect reactions, devoid of subjective will (cf. FU YULAN, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1983, vol. 2, p.231*ff*).

[75] In chapter "Shipian" of his work, Sunzi advises: "In any battle, engage conflict with the enemy in the ordinary manner, but in order to win, use your imagination". AI QILAI (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.85.

[76] Sunzi expressed this concept in the words: "Attack where the enemy is not prepared, advance where he cannot even imagine you to be". AI QILAI (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.57.

to his adversary's moves, he is on the path towards defeat. As *Shijing* observes: “Trembling with fear on the edge of the precipice”[77].

[77] This quotation is linked to the sense of this chapter: reacting irrationally to an opponent's play, putting down pieces haphazardly in an attempt to stop him, is like letting oneself be overcome by vertigo high up in the mountains. In both cases, one risks death. This passage is taken from the poem “Xiaowan”, from the section “Xiaoya” of *Shijing*. RUAN YUAN (ed.), *op.cit.*, vol. 1, p.452.

CHAPTER FIVE

ON EMPTINESS AND FULLNESS

In *weiqi*, if you follow too many main strategies, your configurations will become fragmented. Once they are disrupted, it is difficult not to succumb.

Do not play your pieces too close to those of your opponent, for if you do, you will make him "full" but you will "empty" yourself. When you are empty it is easy to be invaded; when you are full, it is difficult to overwhelm you[78].

Do not follow a single plan, but change it according to the moment. *Zuozhuan* advised: "If you see that an advance is possible, then advance! If you encounter difficulties, retreat"[79]. It also observed: "If you seize something but do not change your method, at the end only a single thing will have been seized"[80].

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[78] Similar concepts may be found in chapter "Xushipian" of Sunzi's work, entitled, like this one, "On Emptiness and Fullness". Sunzi writes: "The formation of the army is like water: like water, it moves from high places and flows downwards, In the same way, military formations should avoid whatever is already full and occupy the void". AI QILAI (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.100. The theory which, as in this case, presents the passage of one principle to its opposite in infinite cycle, is proper to Taoism

[79] In *Zuozhuan*, this excerpt, from the twelfth year "Xuangong", closes by stating that this "is a good rule for conducting armies". RUAN YUAN (ed.), *op.cit.*, vol. 2, p.1879.

[80] Taken not from *Zuozhuan* but from the book "Jinxin" of *Mengzi*, in: RUAN YUAN (ed.), *op.cit.*, vol. 2, p.2768.

CHAPTER SIX

ON KNOWING ONESELF

The wise man is able to foresee even things which are not yet visible. The foolish man is blind even when the evidence is placed in front of his eyes.

Thus, if you know your own weak points, you can anticipate what may benefit your adversary, and thereby win. You will also win if you know when to fight and when to avoid conflict[81]; if you can correctly measure the intensity of your efforts; if, exploiting your preparation, you can prevent your adversary from being prepared too; if, by resting, you can exhaust your adversary; and if, by not fighting, you can subdue him.

In *Laozi* it is written: "He who knows himself is enlightened!"[82].

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[81] Chapter "Mougong" of *Sunzi Bingfa* contains, among the "five things which must be known in order to win": "If you know when to engage battle and when to avoid conflict, you will win; if you know how to measure the intensity of your efforts, you will win; if, by exploiting your own degree of preparation you can prevent your adversary from being equally prepared, you will win". AI QILAI, *op.cit*., p.75.

[82] Chapter 33 of *Laozi* begins with this sentence: "He who knows others is wise, but he who knows himself is enlightened". XU XINGDONG (*et al*.), *Daodejing Shiyi* (The Classic of *Dao* and *De*, with Explanations), Jinan, Jilu Shushe, 1991, p.80.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ON OBSERVING THE GAME

The configurations taken on by the pieces must be harmoniously linked together. Try therefore, to take the initiative and maintain it, move after move, from the beginning to the end of the game.

If, when engaging conflict on the game-board, one adversary does not know which is the stronger and which is the weaker player, he must examine even the tiniest details. So, if you notice from the arrangement of the pieces that you are winning, you must take care to maintain your configurations; if, instead, you realize that you are losing, you must astutely invade larger territories.

If your advance along the sides only allows you to survive, you will be defeated[83]. The less you retreat when in difficulties, the greater your defeat will be[84]: a desperate struggle to survive leads to many defeats.

If two configurations are encircling each other, first constrain your adversary from the outside. However, if there are no nearby configurations granting you support and the

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[83] This is because a player leaves the centre of the board, where there are many intersections, in the hands of his adversary.

[84] A peculiarity of inexpert players is that they struggle hard to prevent their groups of pieces being captured, with the inevitable result that they lose an even larger number. It may be said that the capacity to understand when a group of pieces is "dead" truly discriminates among players of various levels.

pieces are arranged unfavourably, do not place further pieces there. When danger looms, when your adversary has penetrated one of your configurations, do not play there, because to do so would simply mean placing pieces and not placing them. This is not proper play.

There are many ways of committing errors by yourself, but there is only a single path which leads to success. Many victories go to the player who knows how to observe the board properly[85].

In *Yijing* it is written: "He who cannot see the way ahead must change: it is only by changing that connections may be made[86], and only thus may he live long"[87].

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[85] This advice is similar to that contained in Chapter 1 of *Qijing*, in which careful observation of play, especially at moments of conflict, is recommended.

[86] The verb *tong* means both "to communicate, put into contact" and "to understand". The deliberately ambiguous translation "to connect" has therefore been chosen here, since it also implies "putting friendly pieces in contact with each other".

[87] Chapter "Xici xia" of *Yijing* (The Classic of Changes). RUAN YUAN (ed.), *op.cit.*, vol. 1, p. 89.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ON EXAMINING FEELINGS

At birth, a person is calm and his feelings are difficult to discern. However, after he has received sensations from the outside world, he becomes active and, consequently, his states of mind may be perceived. If we apply this theory to *weiqi*, we will be able to predict victory or defeat[88].

Generally, if you are sure of yourself yet modest, you will often win; if you are uncertain and proud, you will often lose[89]. If you can maintain your positions without fighting, you will win: if you continually kill pieces without worrying about anything else, you will lose.

If, after a defeat, you reflect on its causes, you will improve your skill at the game, whereas if you flatter yourself on your victories, you will lose your ability. To seek the error in yourself and not blame others, therefore, is advantageous.

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[88] The author clarifies the following concept at the end of the chapter: for a player to manifest the fact that he is disturbed during play is not only impolite but also disadvantageous, because it allows his opponent to understand and exploit his plans. To keep calm (also mentioned in Chapter 13, together with the recommendation to breathe regularly) allows an adult person to regain that "original state" which he had when he was a child. The value of this regression to a childlike state was upheld by Taoism. See also chapter 55 in *Laozi*, which reads: "He whose heart is impregnated with the most profound Virtue is like an infant". XU XINGDONG (*et al.*), *op.cit.* p.132.

[89] Chapter 1 of *Qijing* reads: "Insatiability leads to numerous defeats, timidity to little success".

Attacking the enemy without caring about the attacks which he may make on you is disadvantageous.

Thinking is perfected by carefully observing the entire development of the conflict on the game-board. If you are distracted by other matters, your mind will be confused.

Skilful players correctly weigh up all aspects of the game. Unworthy players prepare themselves for battle in a superficial or incorrect manner. You are strong if you are really able to intimidate your adversary. Merely glorying in the fact that he cannot attain your level is a sure way of being defeated. If you are competent, you will be able to make associations of ideas; if you only have one plan in your mind, you have little indeed!

Abstain from making comments but remain inscrutable, so that your adversary will not be able to guess your plans and will be in difficulties. If first you are agitated and then calm, without finding a proper equilibrium, you will irritate him.

In *Shijing* it is written: "If others have something in mind, I will try to discover what it is"[90].

[90] RUAN YUAN (ed.), *op.cit.* vol. 1, p.454.

CHAPTER NINE

ON CORRECTNESS AND INCORRECTNESS

Some[91] have stated: "*Weiqi* considers change and deceit as necessary, invasion and killing as technical terms; is this not perhaps a false *Dao*?!" But I answer: Not at all!

In *Yijing* we may read: "When an army is out on a mission, it needs welldefined rules, otherwise it is in danger"[92]. An army must never be deceived: false words and the path towards betrayal belong to the "Horizontal and Vertical"[93] doctrine and the Warring States[94].

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[91] The author refers here to the Confucians, who had harshly criticised the game, and in particular to Wei Yao. The quotation which follows in this text is a paraphrase of Yao's *Speech on Weiqi*: "To use change and trickery as a method of play is dishonest and disloyal; and to use terms such as 'invasion' and 'killing' is a principle which demonstrates being devoid of Humanity". *Boyi Lun* (Speech on *Weiqi*), in CHEN SHOU, *Sanguo Zhi*, Shanghai, Zhonghua Shuju, 1963, "Wushu", Wei Yao biography, *ju*. 65

[92] RUAN YUAN (ed.), *op.cit.*, vol. 1, p. 25.

[93] This term was used to describe the theories of Su Qin and Zhang Yi.

[94] By this statement, the author distances the game from the doctrines, condemned by Confucian thought, which were generally associated with *weiqi* and in which the game was viewed as amoral: the indifference of means towards ends, which in turn were based exclusively on personal advantage. By objecting that *weiqi* does not allow total liberty but instead obliges players to follow a series of unwritten rules of courtesy (indicating pieces with one's hand, making known one's plans, etc.) and by making a rigorous logical examination of the situation, the author concludes that *weiqi* is correct in itself, and relegates players who do not follow this etiquette to a lower level. This reasoning overcomes the greatest cultural obstacle, which later became anachronistic,

Although *weiqi* is a small *Dao*[95], it is exactly the same as fighting. Thus, there are many levels of play and not all players are equal: those who are at a low level play without thinking or reflecting, and simply act in order to deceive. Others aid their thinking by pointing at the positions of the pieces, and yet others talk and allow their intentions to become known.

But those who have reached a high level certainly do not behave like this. On the contrary, they think deeply and ponder on remote consequences, exploit the possibilities offered by the shapes which come into being as the pieces are laid down, and let their thoughts travel around the game-board before putting down a single piece. They aim at conquest before conquest becomes manifest, preventing their adversaries from placing pieces even before they think of placing them.

Do such skilled players base their method of play on talking too much and making frantic gestures?!

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which prevented the Chinese *élite* from full acceptance of the game.

[95] Chapter "Gaozi shang" of *Mengzi* defined *weiqi* as "a small art". While there the accent fell on its subordination to true arts, here Mencius's authority is used to have *weiqi* accepted as a *Dao* "even though it is small". YANG BOJUN (ed.), *Mengzi Yizhu*, Beijing, Zhonghua Shuju, 1990, vol. 2, p.264.

Zuozhuan states: "Be honest and not incorrect!"[96]. Is that not precisely what we are talking about?!

[96] This quotation is in fact taken from *Lunyu*: "Duke Wen of Jin was incorrect and not correct, Duke Huan of Ji was correct and not incorrect". YANG BOJUN (ed.), *Lunyu Yizhu*, Beijing, Zhonghua Shuju, 1992, vol. 2, p.151.

CHAPTER TEN

ON OBSERVING DETAILS

During play, there sometimes appears to be an advantage where in fact there is not; at other times, the opposite is the case. It is usually considered advantageous to invade, although there are invasions which only cause damage to those who make them.

At times the advantage lies in playing to the left, at others to the right. Sometimes you have the initiative, sometimes you are subjected to it. Sometimes the pieces are arranged close together, at others they are far apart. When you play a *zhan*[97] [...] not before[98]. When you abandon pieces, reflect on the consequences. Sometimes you begin playing close to certain pieces and end up far from them; at others you have only a few pieces in a given spot and end up with many.

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[97] A *zhan* is a move in which one piece is inserted between two friendly pieces separated from each other by an intersection, called *guan*.

[98] The text is corrupt here. The note in the Yuan edition, contained in *Xuanxuan Qijing* (The Very Mysterious Classic of *Weiqi*) suggests that the original text was intended to read: "Do not forget what has happened before", thereby stressing the importance of links with previous moves. WANG RUNAN (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.15. However, it seems more logical to interpret this sentence as: "Do not play a *zhan* until it is absolutely necessary".

If you wish to strengthen the outside, first take care of the inside[99]. If you wish to consolidate to the east, attack to the west[100].

Pieces laid down by your opponent which are aligned but which do not yet form “eyes” must be “broken” as soon as possible[101].

Play a *jie*[102], if it does not damage other groups of pieces.

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[99] The pieces must be placed inside a friendly group, in order to consolidate it but, naturally, an *equilibrium* must be sought: putting down too many pieces would be useless and would make the player lose the initiative; too many would suffocate the configuration and could even kill it. But not to play any pieces at all could make it too “empty” and thus allow it to fall an easy prey to invasion. It is therefore necessary to identify which intersections, in the case of an attack, guarantee maximum safety with the minimum number of moves.

[100] Chapter 1 of *Qijing* likewise advises players to move to the north-west if their goal is to the south-east.

[101] Preventing eyes from being created is one of the surest ways of capturing enemy pieces.

[102] A *jie* consists of playing a piece in an enemy configuration while its eyes are still being created, in an intersection of the *za* type – *i.e.*, the adversary can kill it with a single move – but in such a way that the enemy piece, once played, is in turn in a *za* position and thus vulnerable. At this point, a move must be made which attempts to kill many pieces in another area of the board, obliging the adversary to respond immediately so as to occupy a strategic point in the forming configuration and kill it, preventing the creation of two eyes. This move is successful only if all the conditions for its fulfilment exist.

If your opponent plays with "handicap pieces"[103], arrange your own pieces amply: the player who uses handicap pieces avoids battle but extends his positions.

Invade territories only after you have selected them carefully. Once you have ascertained that they contain no obstacles, penetrate them.

These are some of the most excellent methods used by expert players, who naturally know them well.

Yijing states: "Who but the most intelligent and elevated person in the world can attain such a position?"[104].

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[103] Handicap pieces, nowadays numbering from one to nine, are those given by one player to an opponent of inferior skill. They are placed on fixed intersections at the beginning of the game.

[104] RUAN YUAN (ed.), *op.cit*. vol. 1, p.81.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

ON TERMINOLOGY

Weiqi players have given precise names to all dispositions. Some configurations may be understood easily, like "life or death"[105] and "establish oneself or disappear".

[105] A combat situation in a restricted space containing two unstable antagonistic groups. The little available space does not allow both to survive at the same time, so one group must destroy the other or succumb. In view of the importance in such a situation in the economy and precision of each single move, modern *weiqi* manuals emphasize the difficulties involved.

These technical terms are: *wo*[106], *chuo*[107], *yue*[108], *fei*[109], *guan*[110], *zha*[111], *zhan*[112], *ding*[113], *qu*[114], *men*[115], *da*[116], *duan*[117], *xing*[118], *li*[119], *na*[120], *dian*[121], *ju*[122], *qiao*[123], *jia*[124], *za*[125], *bai*[126], *ci*[127], *le*[128], *pu*[129], *zheng*[130], *jie*[131], *chi*[132], *sha*[133], *song*[134], and *pang*[135].

Although there are only thirty-two technical terms[136], players must think of ten thousand variations. But all the

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[106] When the adversary is aligning his pieces one after the other (see: *xing*) in close contact with a friendly formation, a *wo* move consists of laying down a line of pieces beyond the enemy formation, in order to create another structure or aid an already existing one.

[107] A diagonal advance in enemy territory which, although it allows greater speed of penetration than an advance along straight lines, is very dangerous, due to the possibility of being cut off by nearby enemy pieces.

[108] A defensive blocking move: placing a piece next to an advancing enemy piece in one's own territory in order to hinder his movements.

[109] Placing a piece diagonally at an intersection far from another friendly piece.

[110] *Guan*: the name given to two pieces on the same line separated by an empty intersection.

[111] The process of encircling a group with the aim of depriving it of all external freedoms.

[112] A *zhan* consists of placing a piece in the centre of a friendly *guan*, in order to create a continuous line composed of three pieces.

[113] These are all moves to escape from the adversary's attempts to encircle a friendly configuration, either towards still free areas or to link up with other external, still “live”, friendly groups.

[114] Placing a piece in front of the empty intersection of an enemy *guan*, in order to oblige him to play a defensive *zhan*.

[115] Placing a piece strategically far from one or more semiencircled enemy pieces, in order to avoid granting them any pathway to escape.

changes made on the game-board, according to distance and nearness, horizontality and verticality, are so many that even I will never be able to know them all.

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[116] Placing a piece next to an enemy piece or pieces, which reduces their freedoms to one. If the adversary does not react, they can be killed in the next move.

[117] Cutting a line of enemy pieces arranged diagonally.

[118] Placing a piece along a horizontal line of friendly pieces, thereby lengthening it; also the entire process of creating a line, provided that the moves are consecutive.

[119] Adding to one or more friendly pieces another piece vertically, towards the nearest side of the board.

[120] All moves made to minimize an enemy *xing* from penetrating friendly territories.

[121] Playing a piece inside an enemy configuration still being created, in order to prevent the construction of two eyes and thereby killing the pieces in question.

[122] Playing one or more pieces inside an enemy configuration so that, by killing them, the enemy is obliged to deprive himself of his freedoms and dies by his own hand.

[123] Playing a piece on the same line as a row of friendly pieces constrained by the adversary near the edge of the board, but separated by one intersection. This piece serves to increase the controlled territory and prevents the death of the threatened group.

[124] Playing above an isolated enemy piece already in contact with a friendly piece.

[125] Playing a piece at an intersection where only one freedom remains. As in his next move the adversary may kill it immediately, this strategy has an ulterior motive.

[126] All moves which aim at exerting pressure on the adversary towards one side and prevent him from expanding towards the centre.

However, it is difficult to disregard these terms if you are aiming at victory. And in *Zuozhuan*[137] you will find written: “Certainly the names must be rectified!” Can't this sentence be applied to *weiqi* too?

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[127] Playing a *qu* in order to prevent an adversary from closing an eye.

[128] All moves aiming at preventing endangered enemy groups from joining other “live” groups.

[129] This corresponds to the move of the “catapulted” piece, *pao*, described in chapter “Qizhipian” of *Qijing*. It consists of placing a piece inside a practically complete enemy configuration, without being able to weaken it but with the aim of making the adversary play his next move there.

[130] This situation occurs when two aligned pieces are surrounded by two enemy pieces at both ends and by three enemy pieces on both sides, thus leaving only one freedom. If the encircled player tries to escape, the encircler can constantly place him in a *da* situation, *i.e.*, always with a single freedom, by creating a zig-zag column of pieces which the encircled player is obliged to follow until he is killed. The only possibility of escape is to anticipate the path which the *zheng* will follow, and place friendly pieces at strategic points along it. The *zheng* and ways of escaping from it are treated extensively by the anonymous author of *Qijing*, chapter “Youzheng”.

[131] See note 51, Chapter 10.

[132] This occurs when two opposing groups encircle each other, without any eyes or possibility of having contacts: only the death of one will be the life of the other. *Mors tua, vita mea*.

[133] Killing one or more enemy pieces.

[134] Enemy pieces, which have remained in one's own territory without being able to form eyes, are allowed to survive and rendered harmless. At the end of the game, they are removed as "prisoners".

CHAPTER TWELVE

ON MENTAL LEVELS

There are nine mental levels into which players are distinguished. The first is called "being in the spirit", the second "seated in enlightenment", the third "concreteness", the fourth "understanding changes", the fifth "applying wisdom", the sixth "ability", the seventh "strength", the eighth "being quite inept", and the ninth and last "being truly stupid".

Levels lower than these cannot be enumerated successfully and, as they cannot form part of the above list, they will not be dealt with here.

It is written in *Zuozhuan*: "The superior man already possesses perfect knowledge from birth; the man who attains

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[135] Playing a *li* on one side in order to begin constructing an eye, or as a move at the end of the game.

[136] The above list in fact only contains thirty technical terms. This may have been a transcription error. The first list of *weiqi* technical terms was composed by Xu Xuan (917-992), tutor to the hereditary prince during Northern Song times and co-author of the literary anthology *Wenyuan Yinghua*. His list, also composed of thirty-two terms, of which only traces remain in the *Shuofu* of Ming times, certainly formed the basis for this chapter. The missing terms are: *jian*: cutting diagonally two enemy pieces; and *chong*, inserting a piece inside an enemy *guan*. In the Qing edition of *Xuanxuan Qijing*, the commentator, Deng Yuan, added other terms which later came into use, bringing the total to forty-eight. LIU SHANCHENG, *Zhongguo Weiqi*, Chengdu, Sichuan Kexue Jishu Chubanshe, 1988, p.152*ff*.

[137] This quotation is in fact contained in *Lunyu*. RUAN YUAN (ed.), *op.cit*, vol. 2, p.2506.

it only after study is at a slightly lower level; the inferior man studies only after having encountered difficulties"[138].

[138] This quotation too comes from the "Jishi" chapter of *Lunyu*, which concludes with the words: "... and those who do not study, even after having encountered difficulties, are the lowest of the low". RUAN YUAN (ed.), *op.cit.*, vol. 2, p.2522.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

MISCELLANEOUS

On the game-board, the sides are not as important as the corners, and the corners are not as important as the centre.

Playing a *na* is better than playing a *yue*, but playing a *bai* is better than playing a *na*[139].

If your opponent plays a *zhuo*, answer with a *yue*[140]. If he plays a *za*, your response should often be a *zhan*.

A large "eye" can overcome a smaller one[141]; a diagonal line is not as useful as a straight one[142].

If two *guan* face each other, play a *qu* immediately.

Do not undertake a *zheng* if there are enemy obstacles in your path.

If an attack is not completed successfully, do not immediately play at that point again.

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[139] That is, crushing the enemy towards one side is the best of these moves, because it presumes that the initiative has been maintained; it is also an attacking move. Instead, constraining the enemy to the sides is a defensive move, and is in any case better than a rigid block, because (unlike the latter) it allows the initiative to be regained.

[140] Obliging the enemy to defend himself in order not to be cut diagonally with a *jian* and thus lose the initiative.

[141] In a situation in which two enemy configurations, each with a single eye and each struggling to kill the other, the group which originally had a greater number of freedoms will survive.

[142] Unlike a straight line, a diagonal line can be broken.

At the end of the game, a *jiaopansusi*[143] group will certainly be dead[144], whereas *zhisi*[145] and *banliu*[146] groups will certainly be alive.

If it is struck in the centre, a “rose” formation[147] will have practically no life left. If a "cross"[148] formation is in a corner, do not try to capture it at first.

When a handicap piece is played in the centre, do not play a *jiaotu*[149].

Weiqi should not be played many times consecutively, otherwise its players become exhausted, and once you are exhausted you cannot play well. Do not play when you are

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[143] Four pieces arranged in an L-shape in a corner of the board, forming a territory comprising two free intersections.

[144] This configuration and its properties were already known to the anonymous author of *Qijing* who, in chapter “Shiyongpian” of his work, expressed them with a sentence containing eight characters, seven of which are identical to those used here.

[145] Six pieces arranged in a corner of the board, enclosing a territory with four free intersections. The peculiarity of this grouping, *i.e.*, the fact that it cannot be successfully invaded, was noted in chapter “Shiyongpian” of *Qijing*.

[146] Thirteen pieces arranged so as to enclose a territory of two lines of three free intersections each.

[147] Seventeen pieces enclosing five free intersections, of which the central one is adjacent to each of the other four. It corresponds to the hualiu formation, mentioned – albeit obscurely – in chapter “Shiyongpian” of *Qijing*.

[148] Four intersections forming a square occupied by four pieces, two of each colour, arranged so that no piece is next to one of the same colour.

[149] An unknown move (literally: “corner figure”).

indisposed, because you will forget the moves and be defeated easily.

Do not boast of victory, nor complain about defeat! It is proper for a *junzi* to appear modest and generous; only vulgar persons manifest expressions of anger and rage. A good player should not exalt his skills; the beginner should not be timorous,but should sit calmly and breathe regularly: in this way, the battle is half won. A player whose face reveals a disturbed state of mind is already losing.

The worst shame is due to a change of heart, the lowest baseness is to deceive others.

The best way to play is to lay down one's pieces in an ample fashion; there is no more stupid move than to repeat a *jie*[150].

Change your play after playing three pieces in a line; playing a *fangjusi*[151] is not acceptable.

Winning by occupying many intersections is called *yinju*; losing without having acquired even one intersection is called *shuchou*.

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[150] Continuous reciprocal capture of pieces placed in the same position. This move can now only be made after a turn in which a move has been made elsewhere. It is not clear from the text whether this rule was in force at the time this text was written, or whether it had been replaced by the convention, mentioned here, that it was a rather vulgar way of playing.

[151] A formation like a “cross”, but one in which all the pieces are of the same colour: a useless and unrefined move.

When both players have won one game each they are equal. A game is declared a draw when both players have acquired the same number of intersections. Matches should not be composed of more than three games each!

When you count your pieces, do not worry about how many you have won.

Remember that a *jie* may be double (which creates an alternate figure) or even triple, which leads to an infinite configuration.

As all players[152] are equal, you must sometimes concede the initiative, or two, or five or seven handicap pieces[153].

It may be said that, in *weiqi*, the life of one is the non-life of the other, that the near and the far complement each other, that the strong configuration of one corresponds to the weakness of the other, that the advantage of one is the disadvantage of the other. This means peace but not serenity, it means that one may establish oneself but not remain inactive. In the same way that danger may lurk behind peace and serenity, remaining inactive means being annihilated. Remember the words contained in *Yijing*: "The *junzi* is at peace but does not forget the danger; he affirms

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[152] The text is corrupt here. It should read: "Not all ...".

[153] The existence of handicap pieces was first mentioned in the history text *Nan Shi* regarding the sovereign Ming (494-499) of the Southern Ji dynasty. LI YANSHOU (ed.), *Nan Shi* (History of the Southern Dynasties), Beijing, Zhonghua Shuju, 1987, vol. 6, p.2027). Chapter "Qizhipian" of *Qijing* also discussed this aspect of the game.

his position but does not forget the possibility of being destroyed!"[154]

[154] RUAN YUAN (ed.), *op.cit*, vol. 1, p.88.

Xuan Xuan Qijing

(The Gateway to all Marvels)

Comments by John Fairbarn

Xuan Xuan Qijing

The most celebrated (though not the oldest) weiqi manual is the Chinese *Xuan Xuan Qijing*. It was published in 1349 by Yan Defu and Yan Tianzhang. The former was a strong weiqi player and the latter (no relation) a collector of old weiqi books. They made a perfect team.

The title of the book is literally "The Classic of the Mystery of the Mysterious", but it is an allusion to Chapter 1 of Lao Zi's *Dao De Jing* where the reference goes on to say that the mystery of the mysterious is "the gateway to all marvels." I prefer that as a title, especially as it is made clear in the preface that this latter phrase is meant to be called to mind, and is meant to imply that the book offers the way to mastering marvels in the form of weiqi tesujis.

It contains, amongst other things, 387 life-and-death problems. Many are stunningly beautiful, and the book has been copied many, many times. The original is lost, and there are now several versions. There are two main texts in China, the oldest being a Ming copy. The first Japanese copy appeared in 1630, and it has appeared many times since. In the process, small changes have crept in. The Koreans also made copies and their main version contains a few problems not found elsewhere.

But the overwhelming core is unchanged, and differences are almost always minor. This must be due in part to the respect generated by the original – only a tiny handful of

mistakes have been found – and partly to its almost unique feature of naming all the problems.

The significance of these names is at least twofold. They are more than pure whimsy. On the one hand they may provide a way of remembering the problem. On the other, they may give a clue to how the problem is to be solved (e.g. whether it ends in ko instead of simple death). Both features have helped perpetuate the original forms.

The names are not explained in the original. Some names are trivial, but many of the names refer to events, beliefs or symbols that would have been familiar to an educated gentleman of the time, though some would be a little testing. There is something of the cryptic crossword clue in this. We can easily imagine the exquisite pleasure felt when the combination of weiqi problem and historical allusion was savoured and solved with friends in a pavilion overlooking a tranquil lake, aided perhaps by a little wine.

For obvious reasons I am going to have to explain the names and the allusions. It may not be possible, therefore, to recreate the original pleasures presented by the problems, but I hope it will create enjoyment of another kind, and help you remember these marvellous tesujis.

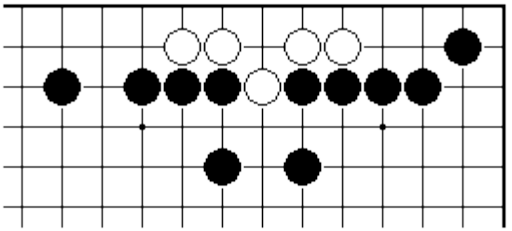
THE FIVE LIGHTS OF HEAVEN BETOKEN GOOD LUCK

This refers to the five planets Jupiter, Mars, Saturn, Venus and Mercury. They are said to betoken good luck when they appear together.

At one level this name is merely representational: "five" for the five white stones, of course, "stars" reminds you they are white, and "good luck" implies they can live.

There is, however, at another level, a hint to the solution.

This problem is rated as easy.

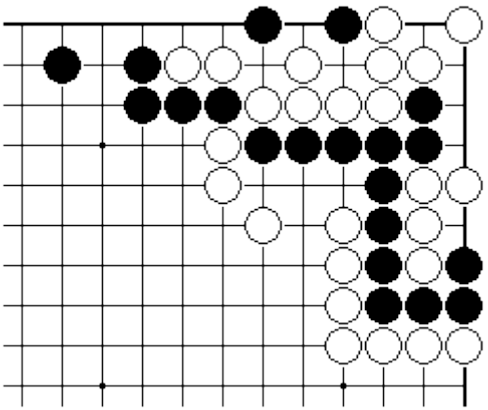


White to play

CAPTURE AND
RELEASE AT LU RIVER

Lu River is in Yunnan Province. This title refers to Zhuge Liang's campaign in Annam. Zhuge was the prime minister of the ancient kingdom of Sichuan. He lived in the Three Kingdoms era (220-265) and is still remembered in China as a brilliant statesman.

He led seven expeditions from Chengdu to try to conquer a barbarian (ie. Non-Chinese) tribe in the Xichang area. He captured the chieftain of this tribe, the Burmese general Meng Leng, seven times, and each time he released him, hoping to win him over by his magnanimity. Six times Meng was unmoved and continued his rebellion, but after the seventh time he became wholeheartedly loyal to the Sichuan Chinese.

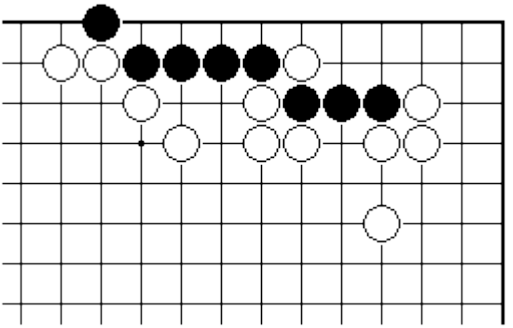


White to play

COLOURED CLOUDS

This title does not so much hint at the solution is describe the formation of the stones. Still, this helps you memorise the position. But there is another level of meaning. The phrase coloured clouds is from a poem, "Setting out Early from Baidi City", by Li Bai, one of China's most famous poets. Li had been exiled in remote Baidi, high up on the Zhudang Gorge. When amnestied and preparing to hurry home, he wrote this poem: "In early morning I left Baidi amid its coloured clouds, to return in but a day to Jiangling, a thousand leagues away. Monkeys chatter ceaselessly on either side of the gorge's walls, and my unburdened boat has already passed ten thousand sombre mountains."

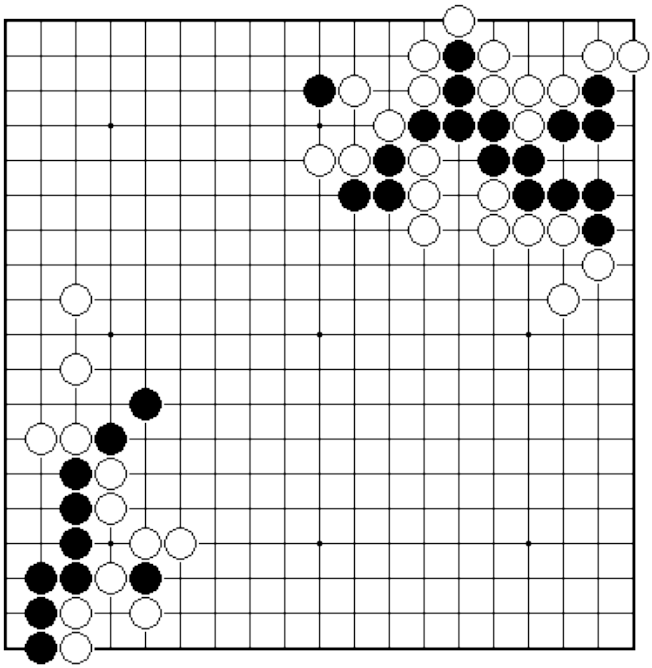
The single white stone on the edge is Li Bai (Bai means White), and it too has to return home down a narrow gorge. This problem is rated as low-dan level.



White to play.

THE SOURCE OF THE CURRENT AND THE ROLLING WAVES

Not as evocative as Zhuang Zi's image of a butterfly flapping its wings and eventually thereby causing a storm, but we have here the same idea of a domino effect: an extra drop of water at the source can leads to tumultuous billows. Cause-and-effect was clearly something that fascinated the Daoist alchemists. The imagery in this case both gives a clue to how to start and convincingly describes the massive effect.



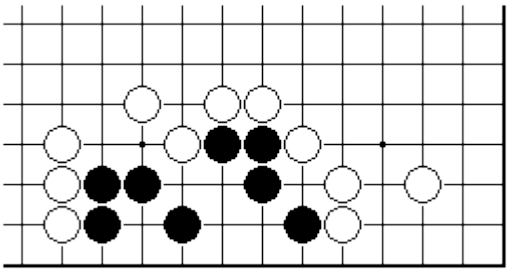
Black to play

CLEAR AND FAR

Or abstruse but lucid. This notion is from a commentary on the Yi Jing, hexagram 53 – "When geese advance to the heights they cannot be disturbed or deflected; there will be good fortune." This implies gradual but sure progress - That is a hint for this problem.

漸䷴

Broken line 1 of the hexagram typifies a shy bride going to her new home, or a young officer on his first posting, A demure start is appropriate. The commentary also sees this as wild geese lumbering into flight. Line 2 continues the seem, but in Line 3 the geese reach the solid line, dry land... and so on. The Yi Jing provides a complex set of hints for this problem. It is rated low-dan.



White to play

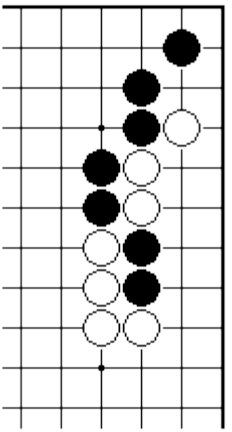
THE TWO PEACH TREES AND THE THREE MINISTERS

Obviously this describes the capturing race between the two black stones and the three white ones, but again there is also a hidden clue to the solution. The phrase implies killing someone by means of an unusual plan. Specifically, it relates to an ingenious plan of Yan Zi (also called Yan Ying) of the Qi dynasty. He died in 493 BC. He was a statesman in the service of the Dukes of Qi, and was renowned for his wise administration and love of economy. He is classed by the Grand Historian Sima Qian with Guan Zhong as a model of statesmanship.

The story of this plan, as it stands, seems preposterous, or else there are some significant details that have to be supplied. But for what it's worth, he is supposed to have got rid of three rival ministers, Gongsun Jie, Tian Kaijiang, Gu Yezi, who stood in the way of his own advancement.

By some cunning device, he persuaded the Duke of Qi to offer two peaches to those of his counsellors who could show they had the best claim. At first only two came forward and they each received and ate one of the coveted peaches. Then the third rival presented himself and proved his merits were at least as great, whereupon the first two slew themselves from loss of face. The survivor, indignant that such noble men should have been sacrificed for the sake of peaches, also promptly committed suicide.

This problem does not involve suicide, but try equating loss of face with loss of liberties.



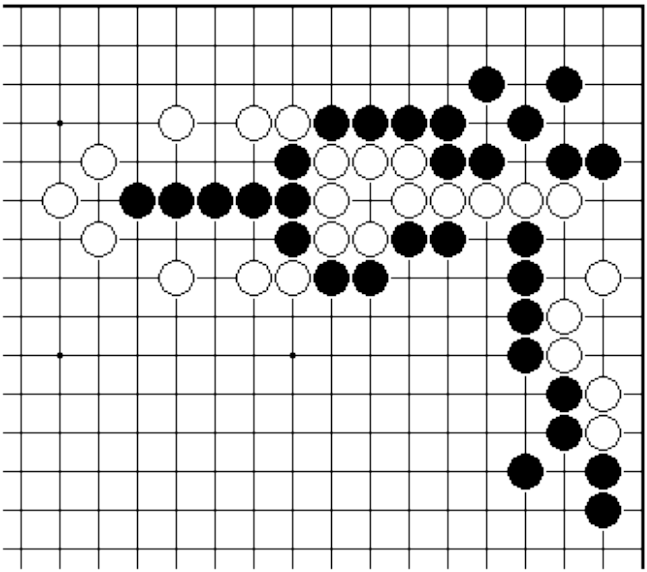
Black to play

KEYONG SUBMITS TO THE TANG COURT

Li Keyong (d. 908) was a renowned commander of the latter years of the Tang dynasty – a period when the Chinese were constantly being challenged by "barbarians." The Chinese themselves had opted for culture over war, giving higher rank to civil officials than military men. While the Empire was at peace this was not a problem. With restless tribes constantly harrying them, it was.

A common tactic was to employ alien tribesmen as mercenaries. Li Keyong's father was one. He was a chieftain of the Sha Tuo tribe occupying a region near Lake Balkash. He was employed by the Chinese in 847 and was prominent in repelling an invasion by the Tufan (Tibetans). In 869 the Emperor Yi Zong rewarded him by bestowing upon him the Imperial surname Li and the name Guochang.

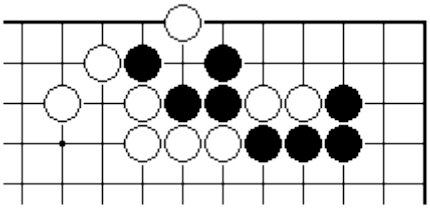
His son, Keyong, also rendered valiant service in suppressing the rebellion of Huang Chao. He too enjoyed Imperial rewards. He excelled in archery, and marvellous tales were told of his skill. But he lost the sight of one eye and became known as the One-eyed Dragon. Dragon is also a Chinese weiqi term for a large group. The white group here on the right is the one-eyed dragon, but it will be made to submit to the black Tang.



Black to play.

JADE HOOK

"Jade" is a general epithet of approval in ancient Chinese. The phrase "jade hook" was sometimes used of a crescent moon, but that does not seem to be the intent here. "Hook" is a straightforward (if that is the right word!) clue to the solution.



White to play

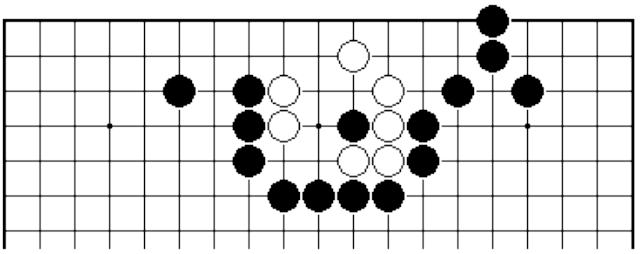
MOTHER OF SEVEN SONS

This refers to a poem in the Book of Odes:

> The genial wind from the south
> Blows on the heart of the jujube tree.
> Our mother is wise and good,
> But among us there is none good.
> There is the cool spring
> Below the city of Jun.
> We are seven sons, and our mother is full of pain and suffering.

The commentary tells us that the ode is in praise of filial sons, but "such were the dissolute ways of Wei that even a mother of seven sons could not rest in her house."

The seven white stones are the sons and probably the lone black stone symbolises the mother, but there is also a hint at the solution in the explanation.



Black to play

DONGFANG SHUO
STEALS THE PEACHES

Dongfang Shuo (160 BC –) was a courtier styled Manqian under the Han emperor Wu (r. 140–87). He served as Gentleman Attendant-in-ordinary then Superior Grand Master of the Palace.

In the most famousstory about him, he thrice stole and ate some peaches of immortality bestowed by the Queen Mother of the West on the Emperor Wu and which ripen only once every 3,000 years.

In 138 BC an Imperial proclamation was issued, calling for men of parts to assist in the government of the empire. Dongfang Shuo sent in an application which closed with the following words:

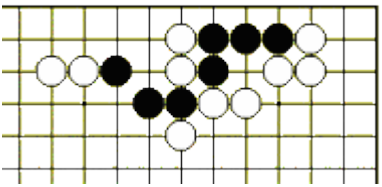
”I am now 22 years of age. I am nine feet three inches in height. My eyes are like swinging pearls, my teeth like a row of shells. I am as brave as Meng Ben, as prompt as Qing Ji, as pure as Bao Shuya, and as devoted as Wei Sheng. I consider myself fit to be a high officer of state; and with my life in my hand I await your Majesty's reply.”

He received an appointment and before long was on intimate terms with the Emperor, whom he amused with his wit. On one occasion he drank some elixir of immortality which belonged to the Emperor. The enraged ruler ordered him to be put to death, but Dongfang Shuo smiled and said, "If the elixir was genuine, your Majesty can do me no harm; if it was not, what harm have I done?" This story has the ring of

truth and may well have been transmuted into the peaches of immortality version.

His mother is said to have been a widow, who became pregnant by a miraculous conception and left home to give birth to her child at a place farther to the eastward, hence the name Dongfang. The boy himself was said to be the incarnation of the planet Venus, and to have appeared on earth in previous births as Feng Hou, Wu Cheng Zi, Lao Zi, and Fan Li. In his late years he fell out of favour and vented his feelings in spiteful essays on the wilfulness of princes.

The supernatural story certainly matches the cleverness of the solution. The version here is a form used by Fujisawa Hideyuki in his Tesuji Dictionary.



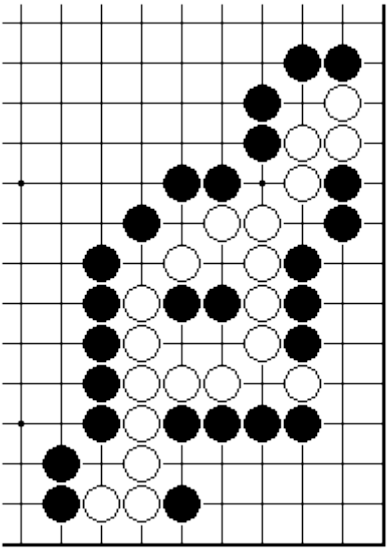
White to play

CONSECRATION HILL

A place, some say, in the south east of Puyang County, Hebei Province. Others put it at Daming in Zhili, but it is where a famous vow of mutual protection was consecrated by the four states Jin, Song, Wei and Cao in the 12th year of Duke Xuan of Lu (596 BC).

The commentators say it was the first ever diplomatic alliance; but as the states did not keep their word the ministers' names are not recorded. The allusion is to the weakest member being isolated and attacked.

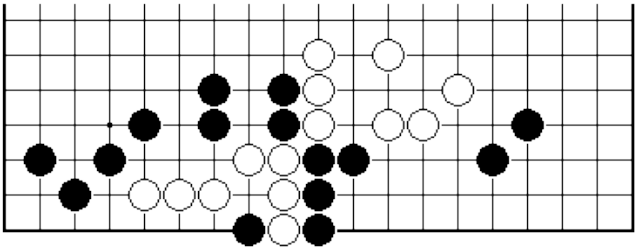
The problem is rated as low-dan level.



White to play.

WILD APES CROSSING THE RIVER

The ancient Chinese were possibly more dedicated naturalists than the telly addicts and documentary makers of today – they copied animal movements to create many of their martial arts. They also observed the habit of apes linking hands to cross a stream and realised it made rather a good weiqi tactic. But as with the apes, great intelligence is called for: this problem is rated at high-dan level.



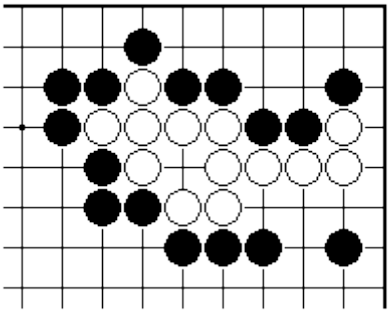
Black to play

WANG QIAO SEEKS THE IMMORTALS

Wang Qiao, a famous Daoist recluse, was said to have been the designation of Prince Jin, a son of Zhou Ling Wang, around 570 BC.

According to legend, he gave up his privileges for a life of a wandering musician. He was taught Daoism by the sage Dao Qiu Gong, and lived with him for 30 years on Houshi Mountain.

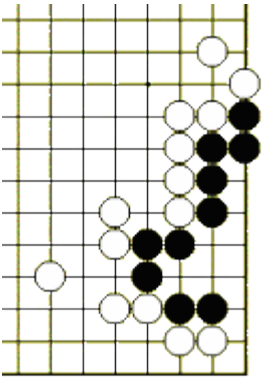
One day he sent a message to his relatives asking them to meet him on the 7th day of the 7th month at the summit of the mountain. At the appointed time he was seen riding through the air upon a white crane, from whose back he waved a final adieu to the world as he ascended to the realms of the immortals.



White to play.

THE GOLDEN FISH
EXCHANGED FOR WINE

The black group is the fish. Imagine those fishes with upturned tails on the roofs of old Oriental buildings. But in this case it refers to a badge of rank of the top three grades of officials, which was a tally shaped like a fish. One portion was kept at court and a matching portion by the office-holder. The wine refers to an incident in which official Gao Shi pawned his badge to treat his friend, the famous poet Li Bai.

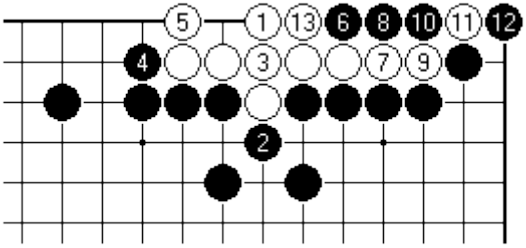


White to play

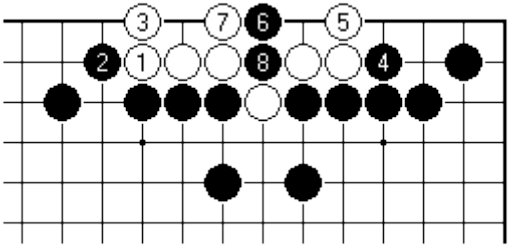
SOLUTIONS

THE FIVE LIGHTS OF HEAVEN BETOKEN GOOD LUCK

White 1 makes a sort of star shape – the clue from the Lights of Heaven. The solution thereafter is relatively straightforward: Black 6 is the only possible hope, but the throw-in at White 11 ensures safety.



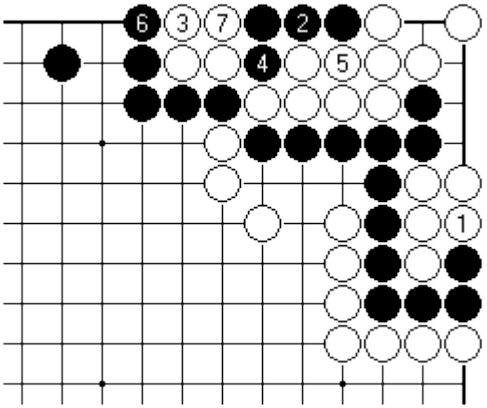
Extending your eye space is normally a good idea, but not if you surrender the vital point, Black 6 here.

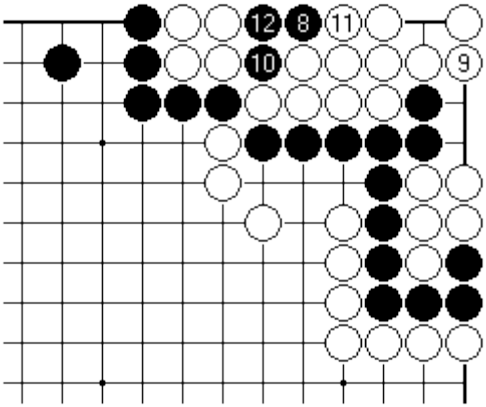


CAPTURE AND
RELEASE AT LU RIVER

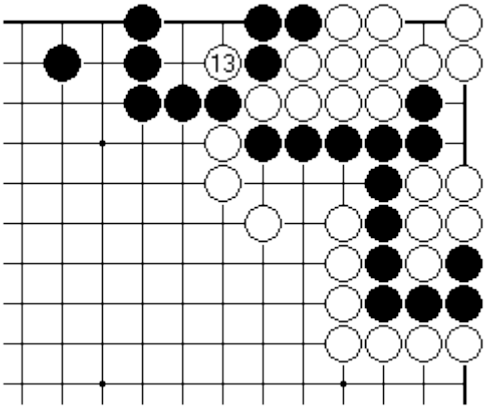
White 1 is the only way to start, making a bulky five killing shape. Black therefore has to kill the white group above in order to live - apparent escape. Remember that in a race to capture a bulky five gives Black 8 liberties to play with.

White 3 is the first "hard" move. Black 4 is forced, because if White plays there he gets a seki. First recapture by White. Black 8 (next page) is a sort of killer move you should spot at a glance.



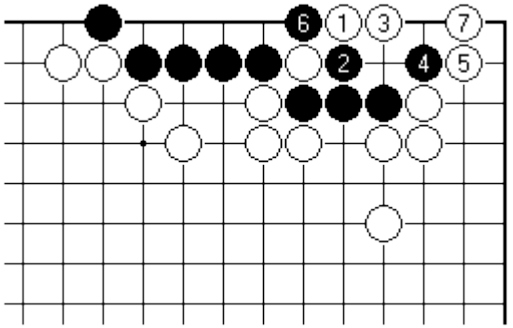


The real technique, though, comes on White's part when he calmly plays 9, apparently letting Black escape again. Only for White 13 - the sword of Zhuge Liang -to come thudding down.

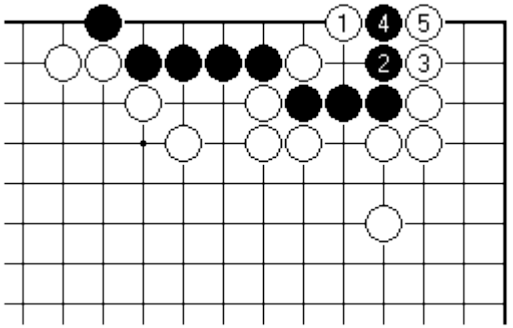


COLOURED CLOUDS

White 1, following the proverb of playing in the centre of three stones, is the initial tesuji. If Black plays the atari at 2, White 3 is important and Black 4 and White 5 are obvious follow-ups. Now the simplest move is Black 6 but this is met by White 7. Li Bai is home and dry. If Black tries 6 at 7, White can answer with 7 at 6, and Black is at loss for a reply.

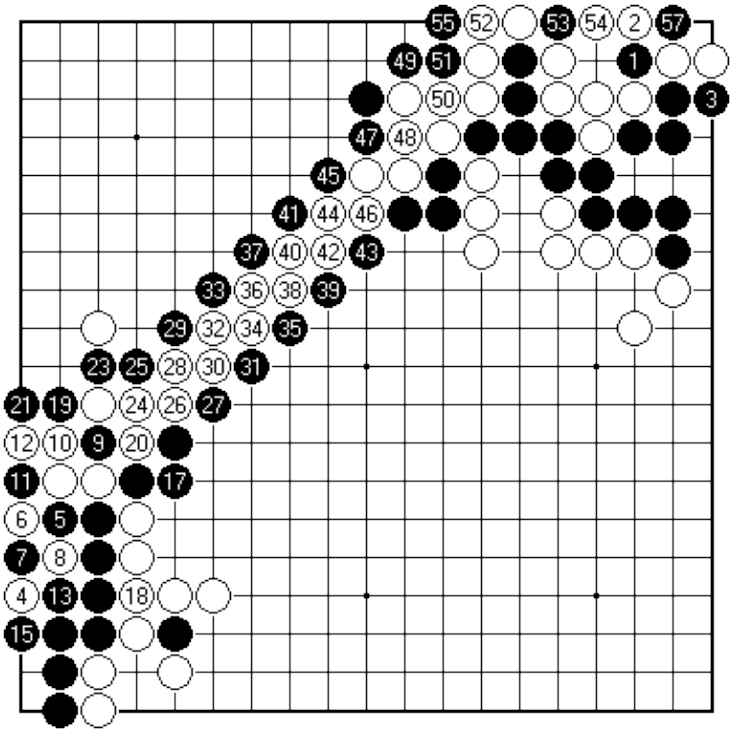


This Black 2 also fails. Black is captured due to shortage of liberties:



THE SOURCE OF THE CURRENT
AND THE ROLLING WAVES

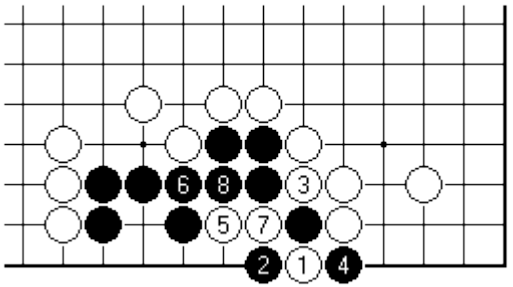
First, Black makes sure his bigger group lives with 1 and 3, though 1 – the drop in the ocean – has a bigger import. Naturally, White then turns to try to kill the other group. But Black's responses turn into a billowing wave that crashes back across the board – where Black 1 allows him to set up a double snapback with 57.



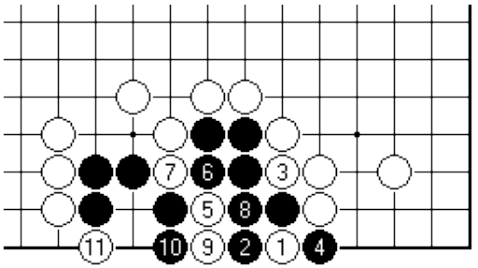
14 = 7; 16 =11; 22 = 9; 56 = 53

CLEAR AND FAR

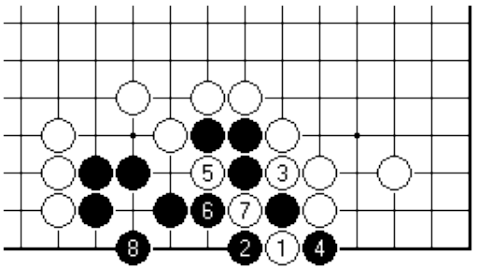
White's first three moves neatly match the lines of the hexagram: slow, slow, then success – but with further to go. Black 6 is the best reply, leading to ko, with White 9 at 1. Black 4 at 7 is refuted by White 6.



If Black tries this 6, he dies.



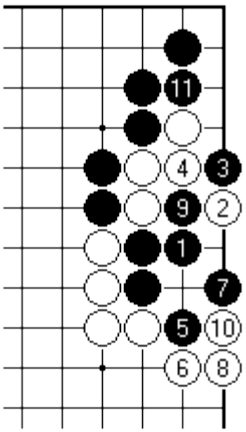
This White 5 is too slow. Black makes beautiful life:

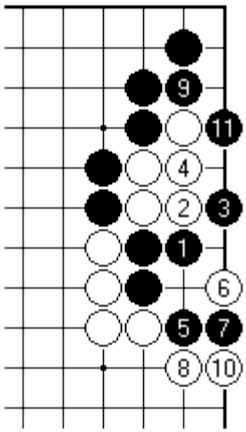


THE TWO PEACH TREES

AND THE THREE MINISTERS

Black 1 is the only move, and White 2 is the cleverest defence. But Black 3 is even cleverer. It forces White 4. If Black omits this 3-4 exchange and plays 5 at once, White can play 6 at 7.



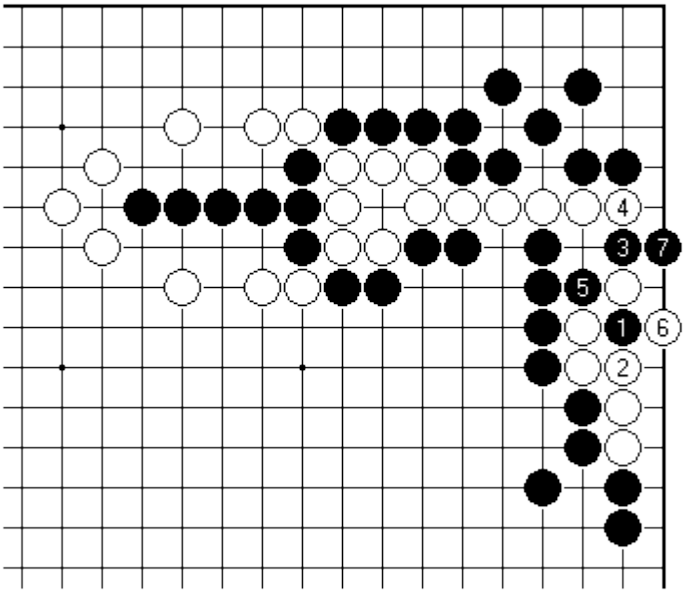


White 2 in the right-hand diagram also fails. The three ministers die.

KEYONG SUBMITS
TO THE TANG COURT

This problem has two themes. One is breaking White's connection on the side. The other is making sure Black can win the capturing race.

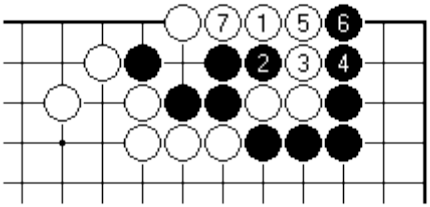
The original shows only this solution, where the one-eyed dragon is cut off, but White lives in part.



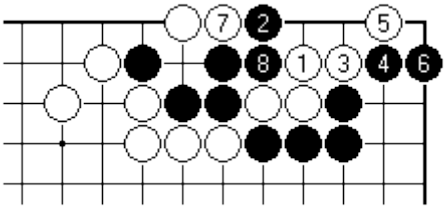
If Black plays 2 at 4, White answers with 3 at 2 and Black loses all. Proverbially striking across the knight's waiste with Black 1 at 3 lets the one-eyed dragon live. White cuts back to the left of 3, and if Black 5, White gives atari at 4 to get his second eye.

JADE HOOK

The vital point is 1. With this, White can catch Black inside his hook.



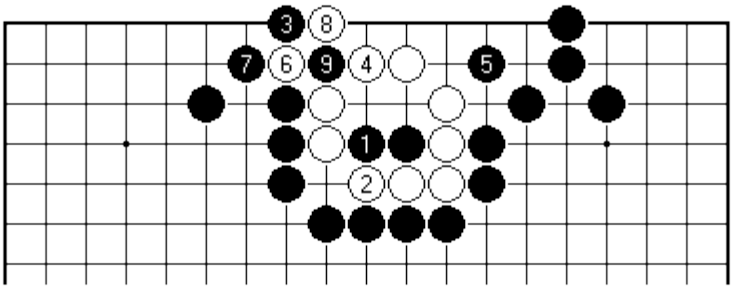
This White 1 fails. Now Black takes the vital point and wins the capturing race by one move.



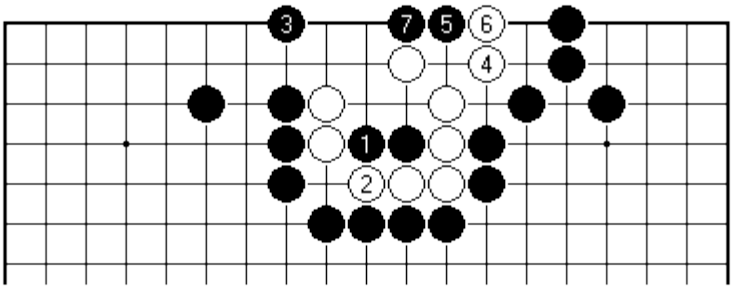
MOTHER OF SEVEN SONS

A nice feature of this problem is that, although it is necessary to start in the centre with Black 1 and White 2, the real focus shifts sharply to the first line, and Black 3 is the key move. First-line tesujis are normally to do with connections, and it is unusual for them to be eye-stealing tesujis, as here.

The best result for both sides is ko, possibly (I would say probably) hinted at in the reference to the restless house – sons repeatedly being lost to the wars in the poem behind the name.



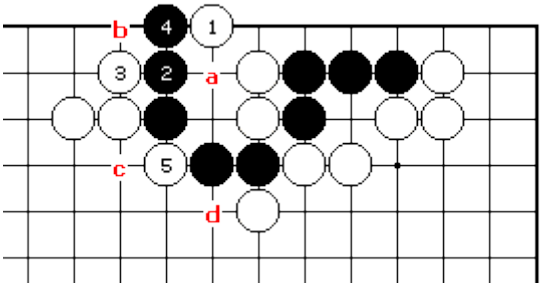
If White tries to resist the ko, he dies unconditionally:



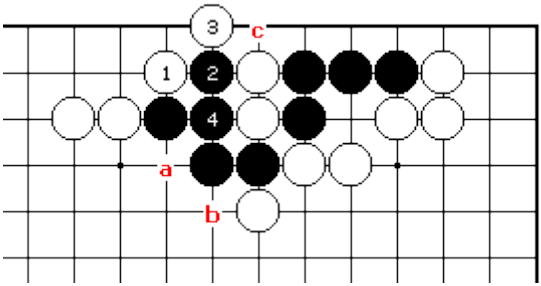
DONGFANG SHUO

STEALS THE PEACHES

The kosumi White 1 is the supernatural move. If Black 2 is at A, White connects at B. Of course Black can play 4 at C or D to escape, but that is a pitiful result after White connects at 4.

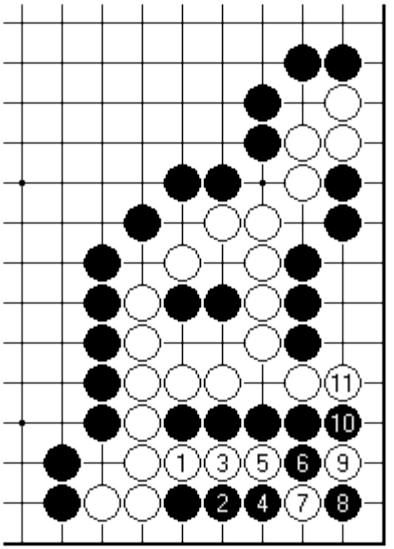


White 1 here fails because of the oiotoshi (domino) attack by Black. It is true that White can seal Black in in sente with 3 at A, 4, B, but Black then lives with C.



CONSECRATION HILL

The slow move White 1 is not the sort of move one normally expects to solve hard problems, but the tactic of attacking the weakest member of the Black alliance works here. White lives by cutting off some black stones.

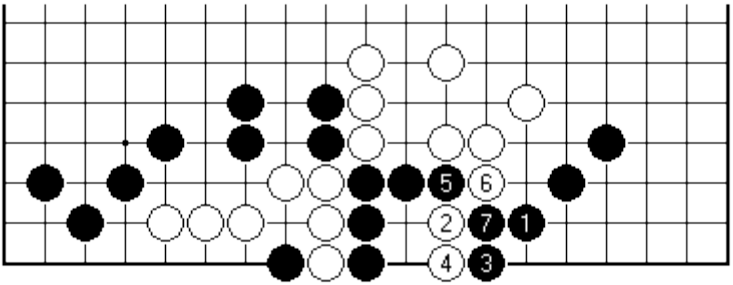


If Black 10 at 11, White 11, Black captures and White gives atari to the five stones including 6.

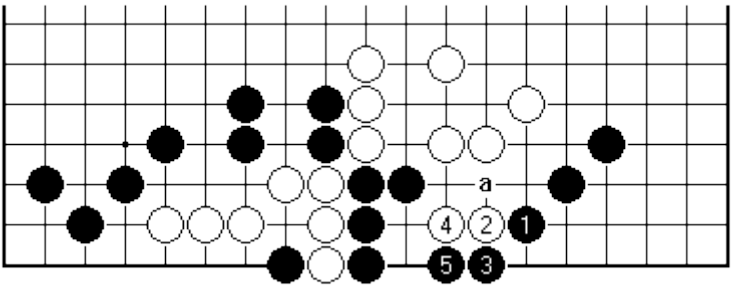
If Black plays 4 at 5, White cuts at 5, followed by Black 7, White 10. Note that if White begins with 1 at 2, Black plays 1 and wins the capturing race.

WILD APES CROSSING THE RIVER

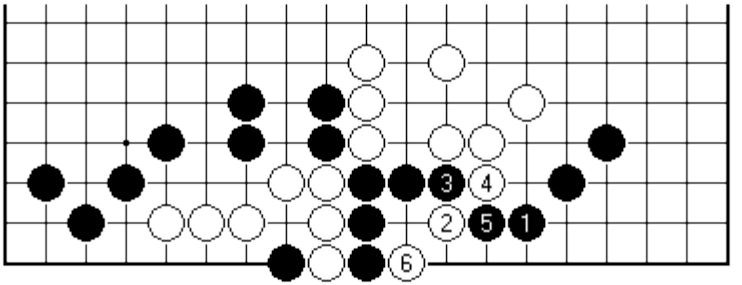
Linking underneath with Black 1 and 3 is the solution, but the tricky bit is realising that, although it ends in a seki-type stand-off, this is only a temporary seki, because the white group to the left has only one eye.



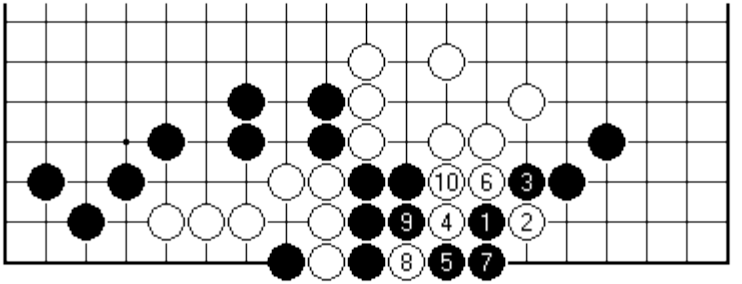
White 2 here fails even more quickly. If White tries 4 at 5, Black simply ataris at 'a'.

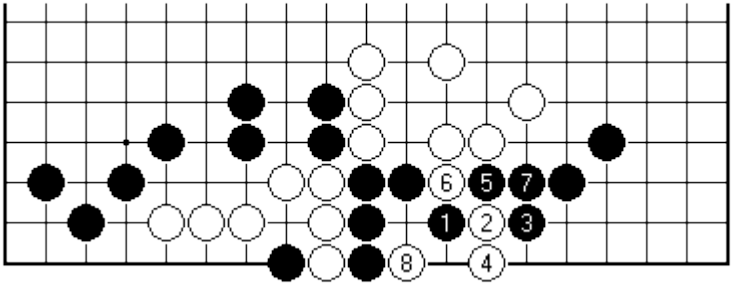


If Black tries to swing through the trees at 3 (next page), White wins the capturing race:



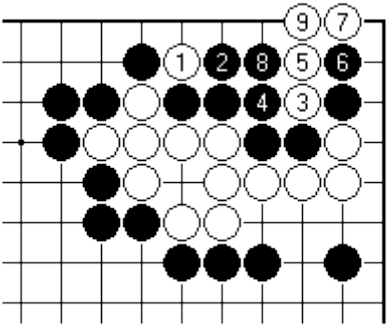
You should clearly understand White's tesujis in the following two diagrams, where Black starts off with the wrong move, if you want to say you have mastered this problem as well as the apes.



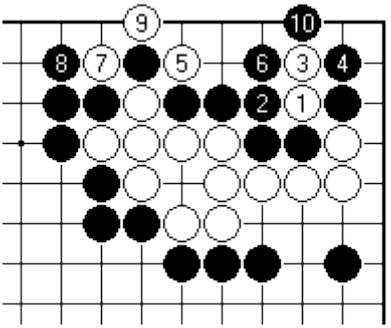


WANG QIAO SEEKS THE IMMORTALS

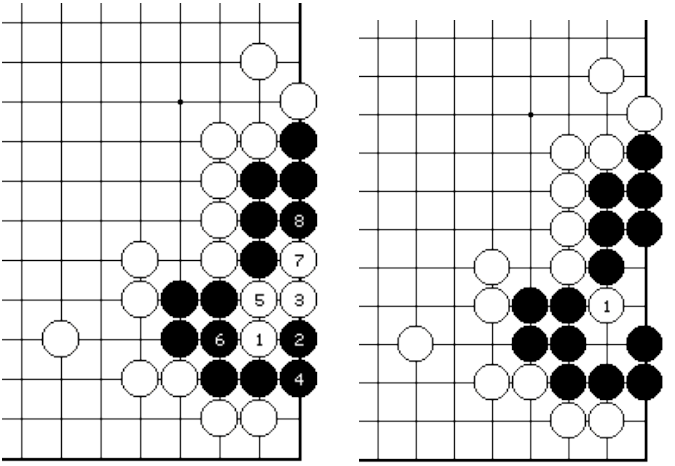
Even if you know the technique to live in the corner, the order of moves is crucial. Cutting first at 1 is important. After White 9 Black suffers from shortage of liberties because of White's cutting stone and so White 3 to 9 have successfully "ascended to heaven".



Omitting the cut at the beginning allows Black to ignore it (5) if it is made later. With 6 he can live in the corner, so White dies:



THE GOLDEN FISH
EXCHANGED FOR WINE



This is an "under the stones" problem. Often, once you are familiar with these, the starting shape makes it obvious, but not in this case. White 1 at 3 fails against Black 1.