

The Politics of Go in Old Shanghai

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It was 1933 and the well-known Go player, Gu Shuiru, had just returned to to live in Shanghai from Beiping, as the capital was then called. In Beiping, he had been a long-term, year-round 'Go-employee' and houseguest of the General, Duan Qirui, as were his fellow-masters Liu Dihuai, Jin Yaxian, Wang Yunfeng, and Yi Yaoqing. Their positions and remuneration could not be called low, but then they were depending on someone who, while crazy about Go, was also a most powerful warlord.

Duan Qirui graduated from Tianjin Military Academy and was then posted to Germany to study military affairs. Returning in 1896, he successively held the posts of Commandant of the Baoding Officer's Training School, Commander of the Sixth Garrison, Overseer of the Jiangbei Guard and Commander of the Beijing Government Army, Commander-in-Chief, Premier of the State Council, and so forth.

After his second post in battle in 1924, under the orders of the warlords Zhang Zuolin and Feng Yulan, he was put in charge of the Beijing Provisional Government. During this period, he resisted the formation of the National Congress advocated by Sun Yat-sen. In March of 1926, the eight-country alliance, including Japan, England, and the United States promulgated an ultimatum to the Duan Qirui government to dismantle its defense works at Dagukou.

On the 18th of that month, some five thousand Beijing citizens under the leadership of Li Daqian and others marched in front of Tiananmen, demanding rejection of the ultimatum. Just as the ranks of the protesters reached the government offices, Duan Qirui ordered the guards to open fire on them and suppress the protest. Forty-seven people were killed, and over two hundred were wounded, touching off an angry reaction throughout China. At the time it was known as the '3/18 Tragedy.'

During his life, Duan Qirui did many evil things but because he was infatuated with Go, he gathered around him all the Go 'guests'

he could. In this way, he at least helped the advancement of the art, despite the fact that the majority of their time was spent relieving his boredom. Moreover, every time they played, Duan Qirui had to win. The masters had to carefully watch his mood, cautiously wait on him, and compete with him circumspectly to get on his good side so they could obtain some prize money. Each made his own place by dealing with this tyrant on the one hand, while furtively polishing their Go skills on the other.

Even though Gu Shuiru had held himself above politics, in order to maintain his income, and indeed to keep his head, he had no choice but to make concessions. Naturally by doing this he made a good impression on Duan Qirui, so in 1917 Duan financed a two-year study trip to Japan for him. This trip opened his eyes to the world. He studied copious amounts of Japanese Go theory. After his return to China, he dominated the Go world with a new playing style.

However, it was not long before Duan Qirui fell out of power. Suddenly the masters had lost their support and they scattered, each seeking his own livelihood. So it was, that in 1933, Gu Shuiru left Beiping and returned to Shanghai.

Six years before Gu Shuiru's return to Shanghai, in 1927, an unannounced guest from Shanghai had suddenly arrived at Gu Shuiru's residence in Duan Qirui's compound in Beiping. At his door was an ordinary looking, but seemingly spirited youth named Guo Tisheng. He came with a letter of introduction by Gu Shuiru's good friend, Wei Haihong, a very strong Shanghai player who had even beaten some Japanese professionals. If Gu could welcome Guo Tisheng, provide room and board, and arrange for him to play against some of the masters of the region, that would make the wishes of Gu's friend Wei and other famous players come true. It was also noted that Guo Tisheng was a proper gentleman, besides being known as 'Jiangnan's wonder kid,' and the letter went on to list his winning record against numerous good players.

After Gu Shuiru finished reading the letter, he looked at the youth again and a welcoming grin crept across his face. He had heard of Guo Tisheng's talent well before this and had long wanted to meet this young player. Having him at the door now, Gu couldn't help but feel some regret for not having met him before so he treated him

quite warmly, and made suitable arrangements for him, in accordance with Wei Haihong's request.

However, although Gu knew of the fame of Gou Tisheng, he did yet know of the strength. If he played an off-hand game with Guo, winning the game would not be unexpected, but what if he lost? What effect would that have on his position and his reputation? He thought about it a lot, but decided that discretion was the better course, and decided not to play against Guo.

But Guo Tisheng had not traveled a thousand miles to the north looking for a nice place to stay. He wanted to test himself against the northern players, to give full rein to his talents. This point was clear. Even though Gu Shuiru understood this perfectly, he feigned ignorance. Why didn't he tell Guo Tisheng what was on his mind? After much deep thought, Gu Shuiru came up with an idea. He decided to let his student, Wu Qingyuan ⁽¹⁾, play a game against Guo first, so he could get a first-hand look at Guo's skill. So, one day Wu Qingyuan called on Gu for a lesson. To get the two together, Gu used the pretext of a 'teaching game' to suggest that Guo Tisheng and Wu Qingyuan should play each other.

Wu Tisheng had heard much of the famous Wu Qingyuan. He had heard that although Wu was Gu Shuiru's student, his level of Go was not beneath that of his teacher. Wu had defeated many famous masters, and was called a 'child prodigy.' It would be a rare opportunity to be able to play against him, so this chance should not be wasted. So he agreed.

When they sat down at the board, Guo Tisheng discovered that across from him sat a delicate-featured 13-year-old child. Even more disconcerting for him was that Gu Shuiru suggested that Wu Qingyuan should give Guo a two-stone handicap. This embarrassed Guo Tisheng, but not wanting to hurt anyone's feelings, he had no choice but to reluctantly accept the handicap.

(1) Wu Qingyuan would later, under the name Go Seigen, become the strongest player in the world.

Then Guo Tisheng had the same sort of thoughts that had plagued Gu Shuiru. If he lost to this kid, then what face would he have left? By his own estimate, he was not quite as strong as Wu Qingyuan, but he had some doubt as to whether there was a need for him to take a two-stone handicap. He took a deep breath and held it, as if marshalling all his skill for the fight.

Although his playing style was not fully developed, his specialty was to play a fast, flexible, opening. But that day his troubled mind affected his playing ability, and his opening was a little muddled. On the other hand, Wu Qingyuan was as smooth as flowing water, relaxed and self-confident. But in the final analysis Guo Tisheng had considerably more experience than his opponent did. Before long he settled his nerves, gained his footing, and began to patiently fight with Wu Qingyuan. After more than three hours of play, Guo won the game by two points, the slimmest of margins.

Although Guo Tisheng had won the game, after this contest he had gained a clear insight into his own strength. He never asked Gu Shuiru about playing against anyone again. He felt that he needed further training. After a month, he made an excuse to say goodbye to Gu Shuiru. Gu felt this was rather sudden, but he did not try to detain Guo. He chose a board and stones and a few Go books for Guo and sent him on his way.

Since then, every time Gu Shuiru recalled this incident, he had a guilty conscience. He felt he had not fulfilled the responsibility of an elder. Now, in Shanghai, when he first met with Wei Haihong and the Southern master recounted Guo Tisheng's glorious record in Shanghai, Gu was not the least bit jealous; rather, he was ecstatic. He quickly decided he wanted to meet with Guo Tisheng face to face, and to plan together a revival of the Shanghai Go profession.

So Wei Haihong made a date to meet and talk with Guo Tisheng in the tearoom at the French Park.

Guo Tisheng, on the other hand, had already heard the news of Gu Shuiru's return to Shanghai. He thought that Gu Shuiru's return was out of the ordinary. Even though he was forced to head this way when his patron fell from power, he was in a superior position unparalleled by any other Go player. He had been a long-term, generously treated houseguest of Duan Qirui. He certainly had some

money socked away; so there was no way that he could become poverty stricken like Guo and others. Could it be that he had returned, relying on his reputation, his strength, and a few of his friends in Shanghai, to plant a big 'Gu' flag and assert his dominance over Guo Tisheng? It was hard to say.

Guo Tisheng was not a petty person, but he could not help but feel a little nervous and defensive. The debacle suffered on his trip to the north six years prior was always on his mind. He had not been ridiculed, had not met with any disaster, and his reputation was still intact. But in the month of contact with Gu Shuiru he had developed some distaste for Gu Shuiru.

This was because, given Gu Shuiru's situation, Gu could have set down conditions under which they could have played. But in the end he did not do this, and had allowed Guo to leave Beijing in a sullen mood. Now for what purpose had Gu Shuiru prevailed upon Wei Haihong to set up a meeting between them? He felt that the less said the better, and that was not as good as not meeting at all. After careful consideration, he decided not to go into the tearoom. Even if he got blamed for missing an appointment, that was better than being embarrassed.

Eventually, however, Guo Tisheng overcame his hesitancy and the three were able to get together at Wei's house.. After exchanging a few pleasantries, Gu Shuiru cut right to the point, 'I heard that you didn't come to the tearoom because you were indisposed. I also heard you have been working hard since returning to Shanghai, and your skill has improvement tremendously. That makes me very happy!'

Without waiting for Guo Tisheng to reply, he continued, 'This time I had no choice but to return to the south. I'm sure you understand this. Now, I don't like being lonely, and I have a passion for Go, so I thought I would do a little something to promote the game. For this purpose, I thought I would operate a small Go club. I wanted to ask you if you would like to join me. I don't know what your honorable opinion might be, so I asked you to come over and discuss it with us, to see if it can be done. I am very interested in your opinion.'

So this was what it was all about!

Gu Shuiru had spoken candidly and sincerely. Guo Tisheng couldn't help but feel surprised, and his face involuntarily flushed! He had not expected this highly placed 'saint' to be so open as to treat him as an equal in an exchange of views.

But Guo Tisheng said, 'If Teacher established a Go club, everyone would notice it, and it would inevitably draw some reaction from society at large. You know, whether it be Beijing, Tianjin, or Shanghai, there are numerous Go clubs and tea parlors of all sizes, but 80 to 90 percent of them are in the 'betting' business. Not a few have become gambling dens, with all sorts of people fouling up the atmosphere, treading on the good name of Go and Go players! So our Go club cannot take that same road. If it turns out like that, it would be better not to have started!'

Guo Tisheng had drunk quite a bit of wine, but his speech was well thought-out. That was because he had personal experience with this sort of thing. He told Gu Shuiru about how a few years ago when he was in Beijing he would often visit a certain tea parlor to play Go. In order to turn a profit, this tea parlor used 'handicap betting' and 'audience prizes' to make something off the players and attract more spectators. The so-called 'audience prize' players would collect some funds from the wealthy on-lookers to serve as prize money. The winner of the game would take all the money.

This form eventually evolved into a combination of prize money and betting. That is, not only would the winner get the prize money, he would also receive 'penalty money' according to the number of stones in the winning margin. The loser was forced to contribute this 'penalty money.' One time, a 'VIP' came to the tea parlor and put up a prize, designating a game between Guo Tisheng and an up-and-coming player, Mr. 'C.' There was a huge prize, but it was also stipulated that the loser would pay the winner a 'set penalty' of ten silver dollars in addition to the a heavy penalty of two silver dollars per stone in the losing margin. This was obviously going to be an exciting battle to the death.

All the high rollers put up 'backing money' for either Guo Tisheng or Mr. 'C.' This put additional pressure on both players. They were trembling with fear, and had no choice but to steel themselves for the battle. Guo Tisheng had no desire to play this ruthless game, because no matter which side lost, the outcome would be the loss of

the family fortune. This sort of game was not Go; it was more like risking your life!

Mr. 'C' was no match for Wu Tisheng in either Go strength or money. So before the match he was so nervous his heart was racing and his blood pressure was up. His only chance was to get a go-between to make an agreement with Guo Tisheng. He would concede the game to Guo Tisheng, but asked that Guo would return the penalty money to him on the sly. Guo Tisheng didn't mince words, he simply agreed.

Even after several intervening years, Guo Tisheng's stomach went sour when recalled this affair. A high-ranking Go player was no match for the power of a VIP. What sort of a lowly life did they lead? Now if Gu Shuiru was going to allow this horrible practice of 'betting' in his new Go club, there was no way Guo would accept it!

Gu Shuiru heard him out, and then laughingly said, 'You have a point. I have thought about this as well. I can tell you, honorable sir, this Go club will serve the membership. There will be a small, one-time membership fee. After that, we will provide a playing venue free of further charges. Naturally, we would still charge for tea. Gambling will be strictly forbidden!'

Thus it was, after two months of anxious preparation, the 'Shanghai Go Association' formally opened its doors for business at No. 14 Yu Yang Lane off Lü Ban Road. It was a modern four-story masonry warehouse. The total floor space was over 2000 sq. ft. Gu Shuiru moved his wife and children there, taking up the fourth floor. Guo Tisheng and his students were happy to sleep on the bottom floor. The second and third stories were set up as playing rooms, doubling as tearooms. The funding for the Association came entirely from Gu Shuiru. He put a lot of effort into this: not only did he invest his entire life savings, he also borrowed money from his friends. Guo Tisheng could not help but be moved by this.

The day of the opening, many close friends came by to wish them well. The doorway was jammed with brightly-colored bouquets that caught the eye, and firecrackers assaulted the ear all day. It was quite festive. It was no small matter that two of the strongest players in Shanghai were cooperating hand-in-hand to run the association, Gu Shuiru as the manager, Guo Tisheng as assistant. The news

spread fast. Players from far and near swarmed to the place like bees. Even people who knew very little about Go grabbed the chance to join the party. For the first few days, both floors of playing rooms were packed with friends and customers, a continuous scene of prosperity.

Besides the income the Association gathered from selling tea and renting Go sets, Gu Shuiru and Guo Tisheng also collected a little money by playing against admirers. So, whereas their income was not great, they had enough to get by. Even more importantly, the Association brought together a group of Go friends, who could come and go freely, playing without charge. This instigated an exchange that improved their Go skill.

Before long, the Association had a fine reputation, known throughout society at large. What had been a disorganized Go community had gained a new lease on life. Seeing this, Gu Shuiru and Guo Tisheng were naturally delighted without bounds. This spurred them to work harder and manage their affairs more diligently. And along with this, their friendship grew stronger day by day.

But, good things have their limits, and just as they were at the height of their enjoyment, Duan Qirui arrived in Shanghai! Now, Duan Qirui had been forced to relinquish power, but some remnants of fame and power still remained, despite the fact he was now 70 years old. Since he was unemployed, his spare time for 'playing at Go' was even greater. As soon as he arrived in Shanghai, he sent for Gu Shuiru, to 'discuss Go matters.'

Duan had already heard that Gu Shuiru and Guo Tisheng were running a Go club, and that it was doing well. They had attracted a group of players about them. Naturally, one could not say this was a bad thing. But now that he was in Shanghai, for Gu Shuiru to carry on this way obviously did not fit in with his wishes. Duan's objective in summoning Gu was to have Gu gather all the Go players for Duan's benefit, just as in Beiping, with all activity centered around Duan Qirui. But he did not relate his plans directly to Gu Shuiru, preferring that Gu bring it up himself.

As soon as he saw Gu Shuiru, Duan asked, 'I hear you opened a Go club, is that so?' Gu Shuiru bowed and said, 'That is true.' Now, Gu Shuiru had been employed by Duan for 20 years and they had

played many games of Go together. If they were ordinary players, then they would have been old friends. But while Duan Qirui was outwardly very polite, in his mind he had never considered Gu to be his equal. So Gu Shuiru was always reserved and dared not speak boldly when he conversed with old Duan.

‘How is business?’, Duan asked. To Gu Shuiru, Duan Qirui’s appearance was that of an imperious, despotic, coarse person. Along with so many successful years of plying his trade in official circles by playing political tricks, he had also become a temperamental master at controlling even famous Go players and *literati*. There were two reasons he employed all of those Go guests: firstly, to be able to play against them to relieve his boredom, and secondly (and more importantly), he could pose as a lover of culture by mixing with these men of letters. This way he could build a good reputation as a patron of the arts. Gu Shuiru was the overlord of the Go world. No matter where he went for all that time, Duan Qirui had kept him under complete control.

Of course, Gu Shuiru knew exactly what Duan Qirui meant by asking, ‘How is business?’ Speaking of ‘business’ he could say it was good, but he did not want to answer this way. He knew that Duan Qirui had already made up his mind, and there was no way for Gu to change it. Furthermore, even though Duan had stepped down from power, he had control over many rich and powerful followers in Shanghai. They revolved around him like he was the center of the universe. So under these circumstances, wasn’t it clear what the consequences would be if he dared to defy Duan Qirui and run his Go club? Accordingly, he answered: ‘I am very grateful for Lord Duan’s concern. I am running the Go club as a means of livelihood. I have no other choice. Over the past half-year or more, I have been so busy, and beset with difficulties, I haven’t even recovered the investment yet!’

As soon as Duan Qirui heard Gu, he immediately went with the flow, exclaiming, ‘If it’s that bad, you should have closed up shop long ago!’ After saying this, he lifted his old eyes and searched Gu Shuiru’s lean face. Without waiting for an answer, he continued, ‘I would advise you to wind it up! I would like to rally the Go masters around me, in a cooperative effort to improve their technique. While I have the opportunity, I would like to do some good, to accumulate a little virtue. You, honorable sir, would not object to that, would you?’

‘How could I? Lord Duan has loved Go all his life, and already has done so many good deeds. You could just relax and enjoy life, but you still haven’t forgotten the fortunes of those who live for Go. That really earns my admiration. I am completely in agreement with your proposal. If necessary, I will do my utmost to help.’

‘Good! Not only is Brother Shuiru the undisputed head of the world of Go, and the best player, he is also one who knows me well. Then it’s decided. Within three days, honorable sir, you can move into my quarters. I have many things for you to take care of for me!’

Naturally, Gu Shuiru met with Duan Qirui’s approval, insisting that Gu stay for lunch. During the meal, Duan asked, ‘I hear that over the past few years Guo Tisheng’s skill has improved tremendously. You have been working with him for half a year. What is he like?’

‘After Guo Tisheng met with the rebuff in Hankou,’ Gu answered, ‘he returned to Shanghai and made the acquaintance of Hu Jianru, a civil engineer in the Railroad Bureau. This fellow likes Go, and also speaks Japanese, so he has an extensive collection of Go books at his home. It was as if Guo Tisheng had found treasure. He immersed himself in the study of Japanese Go books and game collections. He became completely infatuated with the works of Segoe Kensaku. Guo has been nurtured by absorbing the essence of these works. He has a command of the principles of modern openings and whole-board strategy. As soon as he reformed from the old ingrained custom of blind fighting, his style became light, lively, and flowing. So he has caught everyone’s attention. Not only does he play beautifully, he is also loyal to his friends. He is a fine young man!’

The reason Duan Qirui had raised the subject of Guo Tisheng was to see if Gu and Guo got along well. He was considering also employing Guo, and wanted to know something of his character, so Gu’s praise was just what Duan was looking for.

But Gu Shuiru, on his part, had a good reason to inflate the reputation of Guo Tisheng. He thought that if the Association were to close shop, Guo would be back to scraping for a living. Some people were even certain to blame Gu Shuiru for lifting the bridge after he crossed it by not putting in a good word for his friends.

Gu Shuiru dispelled any doubts that Duan Qirui had. Duan said, 'I was thinking of inviting Guo Tisheng to come over. What do you think?'

Gu Shuiru unhesitatingly expressed his approval.

That evening, Gu Shuiru invited Guo Tisheng and Wei Haihong to dinner at the Hong Yun Lou, 'The House of Luck.' He related the day's events at Duan's home to Guo Tisheng but Guo found it difficult to pay attention. He was lost in thought. He thought that the time he had spent working with Gu Shuiru was most enjoyable. Now if they entered Duan's employ, they would have no material worries, but there would be a limitation on their individual freedom. When he thought about that, it made him involuntarily shudder, because he had had experience playing him in the Tianjin Concession.

A few years ago, he had been traveling in the north and Gu, who was in attendance to Duan, had gotten him an invitation to meet the old general. At that time, Duan was whiling away his time at home, just as arrogant and conceited as always. Guo had planned to show off his skills, but unexpectedly Duan had sized him up, showing some contempt. Even more of a surprise, Duan ordered Guo Tisheng to play a game with him.

But then he told Guo to take Black and set down three handicap stones before they would start! Sudden anger welled up inside Guo. He raised his head to look at Gu Shuiru, and saw that Gu did not think this was at all strange, and, conversely, was giving Guo the eye! This certainly injured Guo Tisheng's self-respect, but he had no choice but to patiently manufacture a close and losing game. He was extremely annoyed. After such a long time, he still had revenge on his mind. Now, he was to go and meet Duan Qirui again. How could he possibly stand it if he were to be employed in Duan's household, and be under the control of this despot fallen from power?

Again he thought about Gu Shuiru, this overlord of the Go world, a man of great attainment, famous throughout the land. In the eyes of the masters throughout China, he was held in high esteem. Yet in the presence of Duan Qirui he was so subservient and obedient! Plainly he was a man with a split personality! Why would he do this? But it was not hard for Guo Tisheng to understand. He had not lost any respect for his elder. He was just lamenting the fate of Go

players. In this sort of society, certain professors and celebrities, let alone Go players, had involuntarily resigned themselves to their fate! Thinking this through, he calmed down a little, and couldn't help but feel some pity for Gu Shuiru. 'If an elder player condescends to take up such a post, how can I object on my own behalf?'

Guo Tisheng had been won over!

So it was that on a blustery winter day in 1935 Guo Tisheng crossed the threshold of Lord Duan's mansion and formally became an employee.

After entering the Duan household, Guo Tisheng led a quite leisurely life. He passed the time either playing Go with others or playing over game records. One day, Gu Shuiru told him that he should prepare himself mentally, because sooner or later Duan Qirui would want to play with him. But he waited and waited yet there was no indication that Duan wanted him. He supposed that Duan Qirui held him in contempt, and had no interest in playing against him. He asked Gu Shuiru what was going on. Gu said, 'Don't be so anxious. Old Duan has always chosen tough fights, but he is also deathly afraid of losing face by losing a game. He knows you are strong, and being afraid of losing face, he still hasn't decided what to do!'

Just as Gu Shuiru had surmised, Duan Qirui had long wanted to test his mettle against Guo Tisheng. But he was worried that a young person might not understand, and just beat him unmercifully, leaving him in a difficult position. He wanted to gradually tone down Guo Tisheng's 'wild nature' to the pace of life in the Duan mansion, and especially for Guo to get to know Duan well. When Guo was servile and obedient, then would they play. However, while overtly, he showed no signs, he covertly sent someone to gather some of Guo Tisheng's game records. He began studying and preparing on an almost daily basis, just in case Guo Tisheng should play for real, trying to destroy his image.

After a while, Duan Qirui felt the time was about right, and ordered Gu Shuiru to notify Guo Tisheng he was ready to play. Gu Shuiru did not tarry. He immediately told Guo Tisheng the news. Guo Tisheng asked, 'Will he give a handicap this time as well?' It was well known that Duan Qirui had even once demanded to play White against Japan's visiting Honinbo Shusai and then insisted on taking

only two stones as a handicap. Otherwise, he would not pay for Shusai's passage back to Japan! Gu Shuiru laughed, 'You are among the ranks of the famous players now. What kind of handicap can he give you? Relax, it won't happen!'

Guo Tisheng still urged him, 'But, even without the handicap, I'm afraid I still have to be cautious when it comes to winning or losing. Duan Qirui is subject to sudden changes of mood. If someone makes the situation on the board difficult to fathom, making it hard on Duan, then he can become quite angry. It is better to be a little cautious and avoid letting the game get to the point it is resignable!' Gu Shuiru replied, 'Obviously for a man of your strength, you could be absolutely certain of winning. But all of your hopes could be dashed for just a moment of pleasure!'

'How could we be so stupid?' Guo Tisheng said with some good nature. It seemed he was a little perplexed by this old politico.

'What choice do we have? Are we more deserving of respect than Japan's Honinbo Shusai is?'

When Guo Tisheng heard this, his eyes widened and he stared blankly at Gu. He was both angry and amused. 'Who would have thought there could be such a person in the world?' Toward evening, he strolled alone in the garden, carefully considering how he would 'finish' that game of Go the next day. Suddenly, he felt a hand on his shoulder. He turned and saw Duan Qirui's eldest son, Duan Hongye. He was quite startled.

Duan Hongye was also a Go player, but one who had diligently studied Go theory as a formal apprentice. His Go skill was far better than his father's was. He had played two games with Japan's Takabe Dohei (6-dan) at a two-stone handicap, winning one and losing one. Others dared not beat Duan Qirui, but Duan Hongye won practically every time that they played. There was nothing Duan Qirui could do to him. He already knew that his father wanted to play a game with Guo Tisheng. When he saw Guo looking so gloomy, he was certain it had something to do with the next day's game. He smiled and said, 'Teacher Guo is enjoying the garden all by himself. That is really a life of leisure!'

Upon hearing himself addressed as 'Teacher,' Guo Tisheng quickly said, 'I really don't deserve that title.' He knew that not only did Duan Hongye treat people differently than his father, he was a

very strong Go player. He had all the virtues of a gentleman. Guo said, 'Tomorrow's game will not be an easy one!'

'Just as I thought,' Duan Hongye knowingly said. 'I think Teacher Guo should not worry himself over this. Play it as it should be played!'

'But...'

Duan Hongye highly disapproved of the domineering attitude of his father across the Go board. Being a serious player, his feelings about this ran very deep. Seeing Guo Tisheng's difficulty, he was very moved and decided to come to his aid, leading him to a secluded spot and telling him to listen closely. Then in quiet tones he instructed Guo Tisheng on how to act. When he had finished he could not stop himself from laughing out loud. Guo Tisheng had listened, incessantly nodding his head, and then, also, could not contain his laughter. But he was still a little hesitant. Duan Hongye said, 'That is that. So Teacher Guo should get some rest, and prepare for tomorrow's battle!'

The next morning, the game got underway in the Contented Pavilion in the garden of the Duan Mansion. Quite a few players had heard about it and showed up to watch. Surrounding the two players, they had, however, different feelings and interests in the game. The vast majority of Guo Tisheng's friends naturally hoped that he would make a showing on all Go player's behalf, but they also worried that, by doing so, Guo Tisheng's future would be difficult. On the other hand, Duan Qirui's hangers-on, including a few Go players who were always trying to ingratiate themselves with the old man, hoped that Duan would teach the youngster a lesson.

Gu Shuiru and Duan Hongye's thoughts were subtler. Basically Gu also hoped that Guo Tisheng would win, but weighing the pros and cons he knew that losing was the better option. This result would be more advantageous for both Guo Tisheng and himself. Based on the discussion he had had with Guo the previous day, he felt that Guo understood the situation. He hoped Guo would not go back on his word halfway through, making it hard on himself and on old Duan. He also hoped Guo would not make trouble for himself by ignoring his own plight. But the game had not begun. After all was said and done, would Guo Tisheng act impetuously? There was no way of knowing, so for now Gu was in suspense!

Duan Hongye was also in suspense. Would Guo Tisheng apply the advice he had given him? Would Guo Tisheng act as Duan Hongye wished? Would Guo Tisheng suddenly wake up and have second thoughts? This was what he was worried about.

At last the game began. Duan Qirui had not suggested giving Guo Tisheng a handicap. This surprised both Guo Tisheng and the on-lookers. Guo Tisheng looked up at Duan Qirui, and saw that he looked relaxed, with a slight smile on his face. He seemed to be in a good mood. By starting the game in the traditional Chinese fashion of placing two White and two Black stones down on alternating corners and not insisting on a handicap, Guo Tisheng was given a little face.

In return, to give the old man back a little face, Guo Tisheng played the opening with great care, making very cautious moves, keeping the game on 'low heat.' At his level, he could have played quickly and rapidly stirred up a wild fight by cutting up Duan's groups. Instead, he let his opponent take a few obvious 'big points' and gain territory while giving the false impression that his own territory was insufficient. All of this made Duan Qirui quite happy. Unexpectedly, Duan even got up from the board and started some small talk. Guo Tisheng continued to pretend to think hard. Eventually, as if drunk, he staggered into the endgame.

At this point, the situation on the board was very unclear. It seemed Black and White had equal shares of the board. Actually, Guo Tisheng stood slightly better, and the initiative belonged to him as well. But then Guo Tisheng's mental conflict flared up again. He needed to make a speedy decision as to whether he would win or lose. If his heart was a little soft, then the situation was extremely simple. He could just offer his resignation and there would not be any 'regrets.' If he hardened his heart, he could win easily, but this would become an 'incident' that would rock the world of Go.

That was because, in all of the previous games Chinese masters had played with Duan Qirui, only the elder Guo Xuchu had defeated him, and that was in 1925. For that he had earned eternal enmity from old Duan. As for the other masters, who dared to bother him? Even a person like Gu Shuiru was not immune. Once, in order to 'butter up' Duan Qirui, he gambled on a three-game match in which he accepted a two stone handicap from Duan. The score was two wins and one loss in Duan's favor. Also, there was the case of the

national champion Wang Yunfeng, whom the Japanese had once called 'the strongest player in China.' To gain Duan's favor and a reward, he allowed Duan to give him a three-stone handicap, and proceeded to split a two-game match. Duan was ecstatic, and gave him a one thousand-dollar reward to show his 'appreciation.' Compared to them, Guo Tisheng was slightly inferior in fame, position, and skill at Go. Then wouldn't that be pretentious for him to rashly win? Thinking of this, he suddenly tensed.

Standing behind Guo watching the game, Duan Hongye saw Guo's change in mood. Ever since they had entered the endgame, Duan Hongye had been quietly counting up the points, secretly admiring Guo Tisheng's excellent hard work 'managing' the game. The idea he had given to Guo Tisheng the previous day was that he should strive to keep the game very close in the opening and middle game, even to the point of allowing old Duan to gain a slight advantage. Then in the endgame, he should win by a small margin, and try his best to make it the 'weakest' possible winning advantage.

It seemed that this was what Guo Tisheng was doing, but at this crucial moment, why did he hesitate? If he turned about and lost, wouldn't he be wasting all his hard work? Duan Hongye wanted to give Guo Tisheng the eye, but Guo's head was lowered. So he nudged Guo in the ribs with his arm. Guo suddenly snapped out of his deep thought, and the nudge made him suddenly decide on winning. He carefully calculated the sizes of all the endgame plays on the board, and prepared to win by as small a margin as possible. Through his accurate calculation and a few skillful plays, in the end he won by just one stone.

This one stone was like a stroke of thunder. Everyone at the scene was scared stiff in speechless despair. They all looked at one another, as if a great calamity was about to fall upon them. Suddenly, they didn't know what to do. They looked at Duan Qirui, who was sitting upright in front of the board, looking somewhat embarrassed. But he still seemed at ease. He had not hit the ceiling in a fit of rage, like the last time he lost a game. On the contrary, he began to replay the game with Guo Tisheng, making some frivolous remarks about Guo's plays, and heaping praise on him. This certainly defused the tense atmosphere. Gu Shuiru, Duan Hongye, and Guo Tisheng all breathed a little easier.

The next day, the news of Guo Tisheng's win had spread across the world of Go. Out of nowhere, copies of the game record appeared in every tearoom and Go parlor all over Shanghai. Everybody took part in a discussion of the game as it was played out in front of them. Some added inflammatory details to the story as it unfolded. Up until Duan Qirui passed away in 1936, there were people continuously recounting this story. There were also essays in the newspaper, extolling the high level of skill and intestinal fortitude of Guo Tisheng, who had the nerve to provoke a man far above his own station.