

Appendix VI

Thoughts on the Relationship of Go to *On China* by Henry Kissinger and *The Protracted Game* by Scott Boorman

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Note: After seeing that Henry Kissinger's 2011 book, On China, completely omitted discussing the role of Daoism in Chinese historical and strategic thought, I was spurred to resurrect a review I wrote of Scott Boorman's 1969 book, The Protracted Game, which also omitted any mention of the Dao.

Many of the topics touched on in these reviews will be more thoroughly discussed in Appendix VII.

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I. A Review of *On China* by Henry Kissinger

Introduction by Jonathon Spence

The following is part of a review by noted Chinese historian Jonathon Spence that touches on Kissinger's use of go. It appeared in the June 8, 2011 edition of *The New York Review of Books*. The complete article can be found at

<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2011/jun/09/kissinger-and-china/?page=1>

. . . For Henry Kissinger, ancient China was a subtle place. That in turn led to its special resonance in the present: "In no other country," he writes, "is it conceivable that a modern leader would initiate a major national undertaking by invoking strategic principles from a millennium-old event," as Mao often did in discussing policy matters. And Mao "could confidently expect his colleagues to understand the significance of his allusions." How could it not be so? For "Chinese language, culture, and political institutions were the hallmarks of civilization, such that even regional rivals and foreign conquerors adopted them to varying degrees as a sign of their own legitimacy." "Strategic acumen" shaped China's earliest international policies; and to support its central position it could call on a remarkable series of potential followers and aides.

A good example was the Chinese scholar known in the West as Confucius, who taught by citing examples to a small group of loyal and dedicated students. They reciprocated by drawing on their conversations for practical examples that could create a legacy on his behalf—forming a canon that Kissinger describes as "something akin to China's Bible and its Constitution combined." Whereas in the Western world "balance-of-power diplomacy was less a choice than an inevitability," and "no religion retained sufficient authority to sustain universality," for China foreign contacts did not form "on the basis of equality."

Kissinger's reflections about the Western and Chinese concepts of strategy lead him to posit a stark distinction, one in which "the Chinese ideal stressed subtlety, indirection, and the patient accumulation of relative advantage," while "the Western tradition prized the decisive clash of forces." It is a good way for Kissinger to prepare the reader for a dualistic approach to two vast philosophical and military traditions, which he begins by summarizing the key differences between the Chinese players of the board game weiqi (the Japanese go) and those favoring the contrasting

game of chess. While chess is about the clash of forces, about “decisive battle” and the goal of “total victory,” all of which depend on the full deployment of all the pieces of the board, weiqi is a game of relative gain, of long-range encirclement, which starts with an empty board and only ends when it “is filled by partially interlocking areas of strength.”

Teachers and practitioners of grand strategy have studied these contrasts between the two for many centuries. The principles of weiqi are echoed in the haunting text known as The Art of War, by a certain Master Sun [Sunzi or Sun Tzu in the old spelling], writing around the same time as Confucius. Kissinger quotes Sun at some length, drawing especially on his insights into the concepts of “indirect attack” and “psychological combat.” (“One could argue,” says Kissinger, “that the disregard of [Master Sun’s] precepts was importantly responsible for America’s frustration in its recent Asian wars.”) As the talented translator of classical Chinese John Minford renders one of the maxims by Master Sun quoted by Kissinger:

*Ultimate excellence lies
Not in winning
Every battle
But in defeating the enemy
Without ever fighting.*

Master Sun succinctly lists his favored tactics for success in order of their priorities and effectiveness: first on the list is an all-out attack on the enemy’s strategy, second comes an attack on his alliances, then comes an attack on his armies, followed by an attack on his cities. “Siege warfare,” says Master Sun, “is a last resort.”

The Review

It’s already been noted in mainstream and Internet reviews and in the *American Go E-Journal* that Henry Kissinger’s new book *On China* prominently cites go for insights into how Chinese strategists think. However, both Kissinger and all the reviewers I have found fail to put the ‘ancient strategies’ that Mao and his advisors used into the proper historical or cultural context. Among other things, by failing to do so, they limit the extent that his readers will understand the reasoning behind future stratagems that will be used by Chinese and other Asians.

Moreover, Kissinger, who has admitted he is not a go player, was not familiar with the game’s history, so his error is compounded by not putting

weiqi into its proper relationship with the strategies and their underlying principles. None of the reviewers touched on this point, either.

The strategies that Mao spoke of were developed and written about by the warrior/philosophers of the so-called 'Dark School of Daoism'—the *Guidao* or *Bingjia* c. 500-300 BC, of whom Sunzi's *Art of War* is the most famous. ('*zi*' means 'Master'). Despite their intensive use in the wars leading up to the consolidation of the Han dynasty (206 BC-220 AD), the works were suppressed by the emperors and derided by Confucian writers as forgeries, a conclusion only refuted after two thousand years in the 1970s by archeological discoveries.

Perhaps these topics were considered too esoteric by Spence (and maybe by Kissinger), but it is odd that they both discuss Confucius in some detail—he who shunned warfare and whose teachings emphasized the correct transmission of codes concerning ritual, tradition, social hierarchy, morality, justice and sincerity. As for statecraft, he and his followers until the time of Mencius (372-289 BC) argued that the critical factor rulers should observe and cultivate was 'the Will of the People.'

However, in the Han era (206-220 AD), the Confucian doctrine was distorted by the ruling hierarchy who altered history and imported some of the tenets of theories of Legalism, a philosophy that was adopted by the autocratic Qin emperor who emerged as the final victor of the Warring States period (475-221 BC). The Legalists had argued that people were born evil with thoughts that needed punishments to keep them in line and were created to serve the state and not vice-versa. This was a somewhat logical, though distorted conclusion of the underlying theories and practices of Sunzi and other dark Daoist warrior/philosophers who wrote about methods for training and managing large armies.

Thus, it is commonly said that Confucianism was for dealing with those you should trust without question: husbands, fathers and the Emperor—in short, your superiors. This guideline was deliberately embedded into the fabric of all the historic (and modern) hierarchical Chinese governments—'Respect those above you, have compassion for those beneath,' is an aphoristic example of the intertwining of this 'religio-philosophy' and politics, which is something else that Kissinger did not discuss.

Meanwhile, 'official' Daoism was turned by the Han emperors into a ceremonial, folkish, mystical 'religion' led by a court-appointed pope-like leader who was guided in his actions by dreams. This is the brand of Daoism one sees in temples throughout the Chinese Diaspora, particularly in Taiwan.

On the other hand, the darker tradition, actually a praxology or 'philosophy of action,' survived somewhat as a 'counterbalance' to State-sponsored Confucianism. Most Asians began learning its lessons as children since they were often disguised in folk expressions and tales. Appearing also in plays and novels (such as *Tales of the Historian*, *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and *Water Margin*), and now in *kung fu* movies, comic books and on TV, these ideas actually constituted a mental martial art. As such, they were applied, often unconsciously, to every aspect of Chinese life—war, politics, business and even the bedroom. The strategies and their legacy also formed the basis of all subsequent Chinese revolts, including the present day *Falun Gong*, (which explains the ferocity and urgency of its suppression, even though the present government is not Confucian-oriented). Moreover, as Spence mentioned, their use was not confined to China.

These strategies for dealing with those whom one did not trust were summed up in a book containing only 138 characters called *The Thirty-six Strategies*. They were first mentioned about 500 AD and were written down at least in one form around 1700, and then discovered as a tattered pamphlet in a street vendor's stall in 1941. However, military authorities considered its wisdom so dangerous that it was allowed to be made public only in 1979, after the Cultural Revolution had died down. Since then, in Asia, many hundreds of books have been written about the Strategies, but few in the West, though there is now an excellent site on the Internet that features them and many other classical Chinese works in Chinese, English and French. It is at

<http://wengu.tartarie.com/wg/wengu.php?lang=en&l=36ji>.

Featuring strange titles like 'Point at the Mulberry and Abuse the Locust,' 'Silk Flowers Grow in the Tree' and 'Find Reincarnation in Another's Corpse,' these ancient Daoist aphorisms emphasized cleverness and trickery in making things not as they appear. Thus, they are one of the sources of the Eastern 'relativistic' thinking that Kissinger (correctly) contrasts with traditional Western 'linear thinking.' As Spence noted, he also correctly discusses the 'concentration of force' advocated by Clausewitz as opposed to Mao's 'diffusion of force' that is reflected in the board games of chess and go. However, not being a go player himself, when he makes analogies about the game to illustrate instances of Chinese strategic thinking, he can only use shallow, superficial ideas, such as how the placement of the first few moves illustrate the 'encirclement' principle, and the idea that 'total victory' is 'not possible.'

In a first chapter footnote, for the justification of his approach, he refers to ‘East Meets West,’ an article that appeared in *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* (Vol. XIV; No. 1; 2002). But the authors, David Lai and Gary Hamby, are discussing a go game in military terms—the opposite of what Kissinger is attempting to do.

In the third chapter, when he gets to the Civil War period of the 1940s, his authority, also in a footnote, is the severely flawed work of Scott Boorman, whose *The Protracted Game* he suggests ‘recounted in compelling [go game] detail’ such ideas as: ‘. . . Chiang’s Nationalist forces opted for a strategy of holding cities, while Mao’s guerilla armies based themselves in the countryside. Each sought to surround the other using *weiqi* stratagems of encirclement.’

Except for pointing out that the Chinese take a long view of military and political planning, *The Protracted Game* is hardly ‘compelling,’ as many reviewers, including myself, (the only one who dissected its go content), have commented. Mao and Chiang did not choose their settings and they were struggling, *contra* go strategy, for complete domination. In 1985, I met some professionals in Beijing who had known Mao, and they told me it was only ‘a pleasant myth’ that he was thinking of *weiqi* strategies—in the many volumes that Mao wrote, go is only mentioned three times in very minor ways. Instead, he was thinking of Sunzi, Daoist folk sayings called *zhengyou*, and, of course, the Thirty-six Strategies, four of which were named by Kissinger but without mentioning their source and not at all by Boorman.

Moreover, if Kissinger was a go player, he probably would have known of Chinese champion Ma Xiaochun’s *The Thirty-six Strategies Applied to Go* (Yutopian; 1996), which, although Ma doesn’t specifically say so, would have at least indicated the correct direction of the movement of Chinese Daoist thinking.

The way Daoist strategical thinking works is that those astute in its ways develop an attitude to try to perceive in a situation the imbalances of *yin* and *yang* and then act accordingly. That is, to cite Sunzi’s military example, they had learned how to take into consideration what is strong and impervious and cannot be changed (*yang*), and what is weak and vulnerable and can be changed (*yin*). Their concerns included, to name a few, the conditions of the terrain, the weather, the spirit, formations and traits of the leadership of the enemy troops, and, most important, the information brought in by spies and observation. All this was balanced by a need to know one’s own strengths and weakness i.e. self-knowledge was as important as knowledge of the opponent.

Then, by successfully planning combinations of the ‘orthodox’ (‘standard’ or ‘fixed’ positions and strategies) and the ‘unorthodox’ (‘surprising’ and ‘unexpected’ methods), *shi* (*shih*) or ‘overwhelming’ strategic, psychological and positional advantage’ could be built up. In this way, as Sunzi metaphorically suggested, raging water could move along huge boulders, one could be poised like a finger on the hair-trigger of a loaded crossbow, and huge logs, immobile on a flat surface, could be made to roll down a mountainside.

However, Kissinger’s description of *shi* cannot escape being a single-minded, simplistic Western interpretation because the fluidity of Chinese strategic thinking is not conveyed—for example, Sunzi strongly emphasized that the orthodox and the unorthodox are ever-changing into each other as if they were joined together in a ring. Each situation is different and ever-evolving so that thinking in these terms is only advice to try to determine which is which at the appropriate time. This is why acquiring *shi* reflects a person’s general attitude towards the world and is not something that advises to ‘do this’ or ‘do that.’

All this is the background behind the maxim that Spence quoted—why, paradoxically (and *contra* Clausewitz), the goal of a commander should be to achieve peace by psychologically unnerving his opponent and/or by treachery in the diplomatic process and at the banquet tables. (It is no wonder that during the hundreds of years of perpetual fighting that was the subject of continual popular conversation, one commentator noted that, ‘Every household has a copy of the *Sunzi*.’).*

And even if Kissinger and Boorman had discussed ‘the Dao’ in terms of the reasoning behind Chinese strategic measures, they most likely would have made the mistakes of modern writers that stemmed from the misunderstandings of early missionaries induced by the (perhaps deliberate) misunderstandings of the Confucian *literati*. That is, there is no one *Dao* or ‘Way’ (capitalized as in ‘God’) as is popularly supposed by readers of the *Daodejing* (*Tao Te Ching*), nor is the object in life to ‘balance’ one’s *yin* and *yang*. That book was probably a manual for waging war (‘patiently,’ for example) and its thoughts, along with those of the mysterious *Yijing* (*I Ching*—the *Book of Changes*), are the primary sources for the *Sunzi* and other classics of Chinese military thinking that discuss taking advantage of the imbalances of *yin* and *yang*.

And actually, there are many ‘ways’ or *dao*—each ancient Chinese philosopher had a different conception although they all used the same word (and the word *Daojia* (‘Daoist School’) was coined by the same Han Confucians who adulterated Confucianism). For example, the Chinese

word for 'know' is *zhidao* ('jer-dao')—'to know the way to . . .' Thus, for example, one of the *daos* of Zhuangzi (Chuang Tzu) (369-286 BC), a later Daoist, means something like 'advancing skill' without the process ever ending. His best known example is a butcher who, after many years, never had to re-sharpen his knife yet, though he had a *dao*, still envisioned improving it. The 'Dao' was not an absolute, whole, abstract 'Something' or 'Nothing' as commonly supposed in the West. What was meant was that the lowly act of butchering can become an art form and great rewards equal to a feeling of spirituality can result from doing real things well in the real world. In other words, true Daoism maintains that we all live in *nature*—there is nothing else—and we should act accordingly. This is the connection between the *daos* of Laozi the philosopher and Sunzi the warrior. And thus, also, there is a *dao* of *weiqi*. Both 'ways' concern the art of responding and manipulating the forces of *yin* and *yang* that are encountered as one goes through life.

In conclusion, the dualism of Daoism philosophically stimulates the conceiving of strategies so the resulting dualism of the Thirty-six Strategies and Sunzi can be applied to go as Ma did—but applying go to military and political events, as will be shown in detail in section II, is the wrong direction of thought.

*An example of the adroit manipulation of these elements of Daoist strategies in a famous Warring States battle, as well as extended discussions of many of the topics in this section, will be in Appendix VII.

Readers interested in dao (adding 'the' is incorrect) can find excellent descriptions in Roger Aimes' introduction to his translation of The Art of War, and in the writings of Chad Hansen, particularly in Language and Logic in Ancient China (Michigan Studies on China 1983) and A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought (Oxford 1992). Hansen is also filmed discussing his latest book at <http://www.lifeartsmedia.com/chad-hansen-taoism-and-tao-te-ching>

Many thanks to Chris Garlock and Roy Laird for help in editing and improving the clarity of this section.

II. From a May 1987 *American Go Journal* May 'Talking Stones' Column—A Review of Scott Boorman's *The Protracted Game*

Note: I did some light editing, added a diagram and, for the sake of continuity, repeated some of the points noted above.

Scott Boorman, now a professor of sociology at Yale, wrote *The Protracted Game* in 1969, when he was 19. On page 5 he stated his purpose:

. . . It is safe to assume that, historically, there had probably been considerable interaction between the strategy of wei-ch'i and the strategy used in Chinese warfare. If indeed wei-ch'i and Chinese Communist strategy are products of the same strategic tradition, wei-ch'i may be more realistically used as an analogic model of that strategy than any purely theoretical structure generated by a Western social scientist.

This is a far-reaching thesis and the academic reviewers (all non-go players), while generally finding the book “interesting”, saw a number of problems with it. I would like to review their findings and point out some of the other difficulties from my own point of view as a go player. Boorman has never replied to his critics and for six months he has declined to be interviewed for this column. However, these pages are open to him should he care to reply.

Some of the reviewers were chess players and were familiar with similar attempts to equate chess with war. They pointed out that even if Boorman's thesis was valid, its predictive value was limited because knowledge in a board game is highly specific to that game. One learns to play go/chess by playing go/chess; one learns to fight wars by fighting wars.

In Boorman's type of sociological model making and theorizing, as one critic pointed out, the definition of what constitutes the “playing board” becomes so arbitrary and fluid that it requires a proliferation of boards to accommodate the incongruities of fact.

For example, Boorman draws an analogy that Mao played the “corners” (mountains) and “edges” (deserts) first, in keeping with the “corner-side-center” principle of the proper order of opening moves in go. Mao, however, certainly did not select his first battleground and staging

areas. (Last issue I quoted a Chinese analogy placing the mountains and deserts in the center of the board.)

Of course, as the critics have noted, the Nationalist Chinese and Japanese played go also. Their military tactics did not resemble go nor did Mao's, really. He was fighting for the whole of China, not striving for the winning portion of a balance of territories, as is commonly mentioned as the difference between “chess think” and “go think”.

Scholars more familiar with Mao's writings pointed out that in all the volumes and volumes of his work, there are only three references to go. These were extremely minor and one had to be footnoted so that his Chinese readers would know what he was talking about. On the other hand, Mao's writings are full of quotes from the various Chinese masters of war, the most famous being Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*. Sun Tzu's aphorisms are also applicable, in a broad way, to go strategy and formed the basis of every popular war fought in China, not just Mao's. For example:

The highest form of strategy is to thwart the enemy's plans; the next best is to prevent the junction of enemy forces; the next in order is to attack the enemy's army in the field; the worst policy of all is to besiege walled cities.

Sun Tzu and his followers, of course, wrote long before there were go strategy books. Moreover, there are no go terms in Chinese borrowed from the language of war. No Chinese general I know of has ever laid out strategy on a go board. We hardly need go to understand Mao. When I was in Beijing in 1985, I interviewed some of the top Chinese pros who had played or known players who had played with Mao. I asked them if Mao had ever thought of go strategies in planning his campaigns, as Boorman seems to imply from, time to time. They just laughed, saying it was an “old tale”.

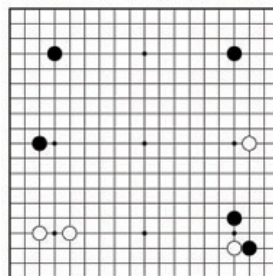
So Mao doesn't seem to be actually playing go on the board of China, but Boorman delicately maneuvers his thesis to say that if Mao was playing “revolutionary wei-ch'i”, then we can understand what he was doing. Thus he takes the position that it *doesn't matter* if the Chinese leaders were conscious of playing go in their war. By studying go as an analogy we can still understand the grand pattern of events in China. It is part of their cultural heritage.

Without any concrete proof of his thesis, Boorman tries to cloud the issue with his definition of “analogy”. What he does, unconsciously, is to

use Thomas Aquinas' "Theory of The Analogy of Proportions", but he tries to conceal its use with several pseudo-erudite references, including citing a manuscript never published or mentioned again by its author. Aquinas declared that we could discuss the ineffable divine traits of God by likening them to human traits: human goodness, for example, then becomes an "analogue" for Divine Goodness.

Of course the Divine cannot be properly discussed, named or known at all, and this approach can never be used to really *explain* anything. A more modern view of analogy as put forward by W. V. Quine and others is that the two ends of an analogy are linked only by words, or at best, categories of the mind. Anything can be "like" anything else, depending on how we describe or view it.

Boorman's theory strains credulity even further when he presents the rules of go alone as if they constituted motivation or strategy. Leading examples are his descriptions of "encirclement" in Manchuria and "connection" in the Shantung campaign. When he tries to go beyond this, his examples are weak. He likens the opening of the Manchurian campaign to a *fuseki* pattern in which Takagawa 9-dan had noted that White had fallen behind.



*Manchuria, early 1946, according to Boorman
The Communists are Black and the Nationalists are White*

However, the accompanying diagram makes its point primarily because White's last move has been omitted from Takagawa's original diagram. In addition, the single White stone on the bottom-right has no relationship to Boorman's text. Looking at this, one wonders how useful it is to compare highly formalized games with the realities and complexities of troop movements.

In another example, Boorman neglects to mention that the game he compares to the Manchurian campaign from Lasker's *Go and Go-Moku* was played by two low-level amateurs. Thus, he doesn't mention (or perhaps doesn't know) that there might be alternatives for a trapped group

in the center, such as using it as a sacrifice to gain some large-scale plays on the side, which any higher-level go player would consider. However, this alternative certainly was not available to the trapped Nationalists' real-life armies.

These problems with tactical analogies lead in turn to confusion in Boorman's larger schemata. On page 56, we have the Communists playing White against a number of players taking Black in 1927. Against the Japanese on p. 110, the Communists are playing Black with a handicap, while another construct is offered in which, "the Japanese are the handicap player with Black". On page 155, we find that the general position of an insurgent is that of a player without a handicap. On page 157, the game between insurgent and contra-insurgent seems to become an even game.

Boorman has never publicly revealed his playing strength and most go players I have talked to seem to find his writing naive and full of the excessive enthusiasm of a novice.

On the other hand, at the time he wrote the book, he was somewhat of a China expert. He was born in Beijing in 1949 on the day the Red Army entered the city, and had co-authored an article with his missionary father on Mao's tactics. He also seemed to be obsessed with Chinese expansionism and delivered a number of lectures on the subject of the book after it was published. After this, quite a large number of uncritical references to the thesis of *Protracted War* appeared in the literature on Asian warfare. However, the book's influence has waned in recent years. The only military authors writing about go now are computer experts working for CIA-fronted companies that are dealing with satellite systems. Yet in many academic libraries, Boorman's is the only book on go, perhaps because of its prestigious publisher (Oxford University Press).

A book has just appeared in the best-seller lists in Japan called *The World of Go*, written by Nakayama Noriyuki, author of *The Treasure Chest Enigma*. Aimed at both players and non-players, it focuses on the game's cultural, social and historical aspects and even includes chapters on go in the West and computer go. The translation of such a book and its appearance on the shelves of academic libraries would do much to present a more balanced view of go's proper place in the history of ideas.

III. A Note on the Historical Non-relationship of Go to Sunzi and Other *Bingjia* Daoists

Note: These arguments are related in much more detail in Appendix V and are also summarized in the Revised Edition of my first book, Go! More Than a Game (Tuttle 2011).

Another one of the curiosities of both Boorman's and Kissinger's books is that, while they devote several pages to an explanation of the game and point many times to the importance of the sayings of Sunzi in Chinese strategic thought, neither of them mention that the game does not appear in any of the Dark School volumes. This puzzled me for a long time.

However, I found out that new dating of the passages containing the earliest mention of go playing (547-8 BC) and the earliest comments on the game by Confucius (551 BC-479 BC) and Mencius (372-289 BC) were actually written later in a narrow time frame of c.313-260 BC in a small, Confucianist-concentrated area of north-east China.

When the correct historical location, time and contexts of the writings are considered, it appears that the go was used to illustrate evolving Confucian ideas about filial piety, and that the feelings about the game were largely neutral and not negative, as has been traditionally thought.

Moreover, there are no explanations of how the game was played, which would mean that 'everyone,' at least within the range of their books—which was considerable—would have known about the game.

Taking these factors into account, it probably means that go during the warrior-philosophers time was likely a very primitive game quite possibly played on small boards and that the Daoist deep strategies would not have been seen or were considered not worthy of inclusion. Perhaps it was regarded as we regard checkers or 9x9 go—I could write about simple beginner's go strategies in *Go Basics* (Tuttle 2008), but who would or could write about military strategies using these games as examples?

As for anything more than tactics on bigger boards, perhaps for a long time, it was like when I learned to play before the Internet and the spread of the game in the West. For many years, I knew nothing of the world of go and the people I played with were self-taught, so we thought only in terms of the next moves while we chased groups around, and certainly not in terms of grand 'strategies.'

However, the latest passage written by someone writing as 'Mencius' around 260 BC indicates there was a 'go master' but he was called the master of a 'small art.' I think this gives us some slight insight into the

evolution of skill (and perhaps the size of the playing boards) in the gaps of time between this last Confucian mention, the date of the oldest known go board (179 BC) and the honorifics poured on it in Han times after c. 200 BC. The period in between was, after all, a horrendous, war-torn period that featured the rise and fall of the Qin dynasty (221-207 BC) and the burning of books (except the *I Qing*) and perhaps the (live) burial of all leading scholars.

As for the lack of other archeological evidence, who would want to be buried with a go set of simple stones and (especially a 9x9) board that would be so unlike the many exquisite divinatory *liu bo* sets that have been found in China? To invent a modern analogy, who today would want to be buried with their set of checkers?