

The Game of Go: Speculations on its Origins and Symbolism in Ancient China

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*Changes have been made in February 2008 to paragraphs on pages 6, 11, 12, 14, 25, 26(2), 27(3), 30, 31, 32, 36(2), 38, 39, 44, 48, 49, 51, 52, 57(2) and 60. For easy searching, they have been marked with a double asterisk (**).*

A Note on the March 2007 Revisions to the October 2006 Version:

For those who read only the revised version that appeared in October 2006, there was a re-dating of the early literary record and other corrections stimulated by the generous commentaries of John Fairbairn, Loh Wai Fong and E. Bruce Brooks.

However, it is important to note that I did not take all their recommendations because this is a new approach to the history of go and is based on a structural anthropological approach, to which not all agree. However, to me, there is enough evidence that seems to fit into non-go work that has gone before, so that at least some interesting speculations can be made.

Also, I should say that for the last several years, I have not been able to keep up with everything in all the fields it covers. Instead, I concentrated on only a few new developments, mostly on the Confucian side, which I have written up in Appendices IV and V.

The paragraphs with major changes made in 2007 are marked by a single asterisk () for easy searchability. I am solely responsible for the opinions expressed and for all errors.*

The original article was 'The Earth, the Dead and the Darkness' which appeared in Go World No. 70; 1994. The next update and revisions

preceding the present article was 'Speculations on the Origin of Go' in R. Bozulich (ed.); The Go Player's Almanac 2001; Kiseido; 2001.

Since then, the main text has been adjusted and slightly edited to refer to its five new Appendices. The first two were written in 2003 and lightly edited in 2006, and the last three were written in 2006-7. All are now in separate files in the Bob High e-library.

As for the subjects of this essay, just as new thinking and new evidence have turned up in recent years to help strengthen the original theses, scholarship and excavations of the multitude of China's archeological sites that remain underground will undoubtedly influence future thought. I welcome communication and can be reached through the American Go Association.

Incidentally, there are shorter summations of the version that existed in 2003 and my other essays in Go! More Than a Game, my first book from Tuttle Publishers. It covers work on go and the 36 Strategies, go in Tibet, Japan and Korea, and Eastern and Western non-historical matters, such as go and cognitive psychology, computer science, mathematics, art and literature. (My second book for Tuttle, Go Basics, teaches only on 9x9 boards with the aid of professional tournament games, and a more simplified beginner's book, Beginning Go, has appeared in January 2008).

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Relevant Dates

Huang Di (The Yellow Emperor)*	c. 2600 BC
Yao, Shun and Dan Zhu*	c. 2100 BC
Xia Dynasty*	c. 2100-c. 1575 BC
Emperor Qiao	c. 1800 BC
Shang Dynasty	c. 1575-1046 (or 1027) BC
Zhou Dynasty	1046 (or 1027)-771 BC
Eastern Zhou	770-221 BC
Spring and Autumn Period	c. 710-476 BC
Warring States Period	476-221 BC
Qin Dynasty	221-207 BC
Han Dynasty	206 BC-220 AD
Three Kingdoms	220-265 AD
Jin Dynasty	265-420 AD
Southern and Northern Dynasties	420-588 AD
Sui Dynasty	580-618 AD
Tang Dynasty	618-907 AD
Yuan (Mongol) Dynasty	1271-1368 AD
Ming Dynasty	1368-1644 AD
Qing (Manchu) Dynasty	1636-1911 AD

* Legendary, mythical or semi-historical

Introduction

Modern Theories of the Origins and Symbolism of Go

Extolled by those who play it as a game unlike all others, go is thought to be the oldest board game of mental skill in the world that is still being played. Its simple rules draw the player into a complexity that baffles definitive analysis, and to play demands both art and skill. Since facts are few, fragmentary, and elusive, pursuit of its origins and history as a cultural artifact also requires both art and skill. (1)

*With a few exceptions, serious academic studies do not exist, although the situation has improved vastly with John Fairbairn's work, which appears on his highly recommended *GoGod* CD, available from <http://www.gogod.demon.co.uk>.

*However, much work still has to be done because of the many interesting questions that arise when traditional, apparently reliable hypotheses about the game's history and early symbolism, are critically examined. As part of this effort, Appendices IV and V build on some credible dates for the earliest mentions of go in early Confucian literature. I was unaware of the possibilities that recent academic work has presented until recently because, in the limited time I had, I was focusing, (as this paper will demonstrate), on the game's Daoist legacies.

* * * * *

*The presentation of the literary history of go in popular books usually begins with the myth of King Yao teaching his eldest son Dan Zhu to play the game c. 2100 BC. It was said to have first appeared in written form in the *Shi Ben*, a lost book of the Warring States period, with no further mention. However, this comment was noted long after the supposed origins of go had appeared in other stories about the Chinese Golden Age.

*For example, some Han writers described Shun, Yao's chief minister, as inventing it on Yao's instructions for the benefit of Dan Zhu. Another version had Shun inventing it for his own eldest son, following Yao's abdication in favor of him. A third variant told of Qiao, a later mythical king c. 1800 BC, doing the same for his first-born. The sons in all these versions were said to have rebelled and died fighting their father or whoever replaced their father on the throne.

On the other hand, several versions of the Yao cycle made no mention of the game at all and there are other versions in which go began with Huang Di, the mythical Yellow Emperor.

This led many historians to theorize that go-playing Han writers inserted the game into their accounts to endow it with an age and prestige greater than it possessed. This was done, it was proposed, because the Han scribes were promoting Yao and other Golden Age kings along with those of the semi-mythical Xia Dynasty (c. 2100-1575 BC), as exemplars of an idealized virtue.

*To buttress the argument that go is not as ancient as those early histories portray, it is usually pointed out that the oldest known go boards and stones were found only in sites from the Han period that began in 206 BC. The earliest discovery is now a scratched-out fragment of a tile board that was found in the tomb of Han Jing Di (r. 157-141 BC), and pictured in the October 2001 *National Geographic*.

*In addition to the lack of archaeological evidence of a great age for the game, there are the new, relatively late, dates for three Confucian references. As will be discussed in detail in Appendix IV and V, the first character (*yi*) that seems to represent go appears in three early works. The earliest is in the *Zuo Zhuan*, completed in 312 BC. The next one appears in Book IV of the *Mencius*. Mencius died in 303 BC, but Book IV appeared in c. 280 BC. The next was in Book XVII of the *Analects* of Confucius. Confucius died in 479 BC, but this dates from c. 270 BC.

*Most go historians have assumed that the early Confucians, like most of their Han counterparts, had 'little regard for go.' However, Appendix IV looks more closely at this analysis and finds it lacking in many respects.

*There are also non-commented mentions of the game that appear in *Mozi*, *Guanzi*, *Guan Yin Zi*, *Huai Nan Zi*, and perhaps in the *Shi Ji*. However, the 'Confucius' and 'Mencius' quotes are considered the most important and now that their dates are much later than has been traditionally assumed, there is even more reason to re-think the history of go.

** (Recently, an old theory has resurfaced that attempts to use literary references to show that the *yi* of the Confucius and Mencius passages refer not to go, but to a variant of the dice game of *liu bo*, and that go developed later, in the Han period. It has not been accepted by the overwhelming majority of scholars, as a future Appendix will discuss. For one thing, this will involve some Han period stone boards found in tombs that were not meant to be played on, along with early go stones. I saw

pictures of them in what must have been a regional archeological magazine in China in the early 90s. In those days, not expecting to be writing essays about go history, and thinking that these were well known, I didn't take notes and have been since been unable to locate them. I remember counting the lines on one which was 18x21 and seeing incised flowers on the sides of another. To say the least, any reader help would be appreciated.)

In any case, based on that earlier dating, most modern writers have concluded that the game first appeared during the Zhou, Spring and Autumn or early Warring States periods, c. 1000-400 BC. Most think it is likely to have derived from divination, and this is the general thinking about the development of strategic games in anthropological circles.

One theory is that it evolved as a game between rival diviners casting stones down on a board that mirrored the night skies and might have harbored a moveable compass. This idea followed the lead of the great Sinologist, Joseph Needham, who linked mysterious, moving magnetic 'chess' pieces together with the origins of chess, go, magnetism, astrology and divination in his monumental *Science and Civilization in China*.

An alternative thesis is that it could have been the children of diviners who made up a game using their parents' tools, as sometimes happened in North America.

There are some stories that add more to the idea that there were early shamanistic connections. One tells of a musician-sorcerer who suddenly sprouted insect wings and flew up to a mountain peak to play with Huang Di, the Yellow Emperor.

Another story has the Yellow Emperor inventing go to develop strategies for fighting a semi-mythical creature, playing it with a fairy, and then transmitting the game through a dream to Yao, who then taught it to Dan Zhu with the same results—that the lessons and his prowess at the game could not quell his rebellious spirit.

The idea that astral symbolism underlies the development of go seems to accord with another suggested line of thought—that the board was used to measure time as an early calendar. These theories followed on ideas first implied in Han commentaries and later presented fully in Zhang Ni's *The Classic of Go*, published between 1049 and 1054 AD:

The three hundred and sixty intersections correspond to the number of days in a year. Divided into four corners like the four seasons, they have ninety intersections each, like the number of days in a season. There are

seventy-two intersections on the sides, like the number of five-day weeks in a year. (2)

In sum, the prevailing thoughts of the modern go community and interested scholars have been:

1) That the game is unlikely to be as old as the myths of Yao suggest, and its presence in these tales reflects the caprices and biases of Han historians.

2) That its actual invention occurred at some point during the star-worshipping Zhou, Spring and Autumn or Warring States periods, or soon thereafter, leading to the board and stones' association with both the 'Sky' and the passage of 'Time.'

3) From this, it has generally been thought, especially in the West, that there has always been a 'spiritual aura' surrounding the game, because playing it seems to bring about moral and mental development as the players are brought into harmony with the forces of *yin* and *yang* and the flow of *qi* in the universe. (3)

A Thematic Overview of this Essay

There are several problems with the standard theories of the history of go, beginning with the evidence presented by Joseph Needham. Basing some of his work on the ideas of chess historian H.J.R. Murray, he wrote at a time (1962) when the literary and archeological evidence for the early age of Chinese board games was not available, or was being misinterpreted. Because the first examples of the use of throwing stones down on 'sky boards' (*shi ban*) dated only from the Han period, he found it easy to assume that Sky divination practices led directly to the invention of board games and therefore Chinese board games did not predate the Han period. The contents of his theories will be critically examined in Part II.

Since then, such things as an early Eastern Zhou period *liu bo* dice game board have been found and the literary evidence was examined more carefully. Additionally, the idea of chess and its representational pieces was disentangled from the surrounding principles of go, with the effect that, in what little there is of scholarly writing on the game, the origins were generally pushed back to the Spring and Autumn or Zhou periods, c. 700-1000 BC.

However, many lozenge-shaped pottery pieces dating as old as c. 5000 BC have recently been found near ancient homes in Yin (modern Anyang in Henan Province), the last capital of the Shang dynasty. Small piles of game-like stones painted in two groups of colors were also found at later sites in Shang tombs (c. 1575-1046/27 BC). Chinese archeologists say that these were 'probably' game-stones.

Also, at a 4,000 year-old Siberian site, small mounds of 'checker-like' stones shaped like Chinese go stones with one side convex and the other flat, were dug up.

Thus, one can easily theorize that pebble games—of which go is perhaps the simplest because it has only two basic rules—could have been played in very early times on boards scratched out in the dirt or drawn on perishable cloth or wood boards, or, as suggested in Appendix III, on shards of Yangshao 'net-patterned' pottery. Another plausible beginning might have been that, as in numerous games around the world, stones were put down on a board to keep track of the results of dice throws—and, in North America, the use of dice does not necessarily imply divining.

In regard to Sky divination, one must also pay attention to the fact, that, as attested by their oracle bones, the Xia and Shang civilizations were Earth- and not Sky-oriented like the Zhou and the Han.

However, no matter what religious significance was given or not given to the game, as I have shown in the teaching sections of my first two books, surrounding stones quite naturally develops into one-eyed go which easily morphs into two-eyed go and the concept of territory because go is like a phenomenological conversation—first I speak, then you speak. There is action and reaction and thus a game is born.

Another problem in untangling the history of go is that the writings about myths done by the Han followers of Confucianism have generally been taken at face value by go historians, with little or no allowance given to their political and propagandistic aims and how they distorted both myth and history. New analyses of history by structural anthropologists have confirmed that many of these writings were didactic and produced to advance the interests of the emperors whom the chroniclers served. For example, the original Yao myth cycle undoubtedly dealt with the 'control of the floods,' but was altered by the Han writers into a tale about the workings of a government very much like their own, and run by a virtuous emperor.

*In league with that Confucian aim of government control, a chief interest (that has continued until today), was that rival philosophies be also

misrepresented and undermined. In regard to go, it was the warrior/philosophers associated with what is generally labeled the Daoist School of Strategy, (although some label them Legalists), who would have had reason to advance a game that fully illustrated their philosophy of action.

*However, since originally writing this essay, I have developed some modifying thoughts which are discussed in Appendix IV. It is possible that in the time they wrote, the game had not developed enough skill and/or prestige to make it worth mentioning any more than military strategy books would not mention checkers in our day and age.

In any case, the Daoist Strategists' game-like attitude toward life was in sharp contrast to Confucian ideals, and their concepts. Almost fully developed by c. 250 BC, they laid the philosophical basis for almost all Chinese rebellions, including the present-day *Falun Gong*. (4)

Thus, it seems unlikely that these Confucian go players or historians would have cared (or dared) to publicly enhance the image of a game that, with few exceptions, was denigrated in almost all their early references. The underlying message appearing in their renditions of the Yao myth was that, although go might look like a worthy activity, it was ultimately a waste of time and aroused irrational passions usually associated with gambling and unfilial behavior. This lesson was so compelling and useful to the writers that, as structural anthropology has shown happened with many other themes in their histories (they have not studied go), it was repeated several more times when events were fabricated for the 'histories' of Shun and Qiao.

Thus it was that misunderstandings in both East and West regarding the nature of the debate between the early Daoists and Confucians have clouded the issue about the age and historical meaning of go playing.

When these problems are taken into account along with the archeological finds, a radically different interpretation can emerge from the physical and cultural evidence that is known today.

This new point of view can suggest why go appears in some versions of the Yao myth and not in others; why it could have originally been an 'Earth-oriented' and not a 'Sky-oriented game;' and why it could actually date back to the Shang or even Xia periods.

This is because:

- 1) It is quite probable that go and Yao were associated in at least some of the early oral versions of the myth because commentators would have noticed if it were simply a fabrication.

2) The Warring State author of the lost *Shi Ben* probably wrote before the promotion of Yao as the pinnacle of virtue, so, (although he might have had other motives), it is unlikely he would have had the same reasons as the Han to include (or eliminate) the game from his account.

3) Although no solid evidence has turned up that Yao actually lived, recent excavations have more-or-less established that a Xia dynasty of kings existed and that it was not a mythical invention.

4) Even though the game may not be as old as the Yao myths suggest, a strong case can be made that early symbolism of go would have been very compelling to the Earth-orientation of the Xia or the Shang who followed them. Throughout the ancient world square game boards were considered to be temple-like recreations of the earth.

While a Zhou, Warring States or Han practitioner of *feng shui* (geomancy) would have identified the objects mirrored on his go board as celestial, a Xia or Shang adept would probably have been paying attention to how the placement of stones and evolving shapes of groups were influencing, blocking, and capturing the forces of *qi* they would have believed to be coursing over the surface of the board. In congruence with development at that time of proto-acupuncture and proto-*yin-yang* theory, they would also think that this is what gave the stones 'life.'

**5) The lines on go boards could also be seen as channels of water (somewhat like those of rice paddies) which the stones are blocking, releasing and/or storing up. This idea would agree with early Chinese geography, which pictured a square world (i.e. China) divided into a 9-square grid pattern that was floating on flat oceans that surrounded it.

Appendix II explores this idea further with a comparison of sacred, field-like African mancala boards, whose pieces are put into the hollowed-out spaces of their symbolical, agricultural-based 'grids.'

6) These ideas about symbolism would have been culturally acceptable (and a reason for the game to survive that did not involve religious or divinatory reasons) because the principal of 'surrounding' (and not directly capturing as in chess), has always been central to Chinese culture, as exemplified by the development of early Daoist philosophies c. 500-300 BC. 'Surrounding' was the principle of early Chinese hunting,

which began with the use of nets and dogs to hunt large animals 5000 years ago.

In fact, as detailed in Appendix II, go begins as a hunting 'action' game and ends with the acquiring of bourgeois 'wealth' in the form of territory. This early development could have happened before or while spiritual symbolism was being attached to the equipment, as in North America.

7) Almost paradoxically, although go may have begun without religious intent or at least without a connection with divination, its place in early Chinese society and myth would be revealed further by investigations into the links that games of skill and chance have with diviners and shamans as they appear in stories from China, Tibet, Mongolia and Siberia. However, almost no work has been done in this field.

8) Looking at the idea of the Paleolithic-Neolithic thesis from a different angle, can the presence of go in the original version, or its interpolation at a time before or during the Zhou, indicate an initial recognition that a game of rational skill rather than chance signaled an advance in human consciousness? Could the 'control of the environment' theme also include 'control of the mind?' This idea might account for the position of the Shang game-stones being buried near the heads or right shoulders (of the game-playing hands?) of the occupants of the tombs.

9) Aside from the basic arguments between the Daoists and the Confucians, there are perhaps two explanations for why these Earth-centered possibilities have not been considered in traditional or modern go literature.

The two forms of *feng shui*—the one focused on the Earth, the other Heaven-centered—were not united until the Tang, around 900 AD, since which time the distinctions between the two strands have become less apparent.

Also, as evidenced by the new poetry-as-art form, after c. 600 AD, the playing of go began gaining favor as a worthwhile, ethical and spiritually-uplifting activity at the courts and among the Confucian *literati*. At this point, descriptions about the game became even more ethereal because Daoist and Confucian thought became blended with a Heaven-oriented Buddhism.

**However, a hint of go's true origins may lay in the fact that terms that players have used over the millenniums have never been

philosophically- or religiously-oriented (as I previously mistakenly thought). This is something one would expect if the game had developed from divination, but, in fact, only one Buddhist word, *ko*, has come into use and this only in Japan. (It was derived from the Sanskrit and it means ‘a long time,’ and not ‘eternity,’ as is usually thought).

10) Long before this sanctification of go playing, Mencius probably and Han Confucians definitely complained bitterly about gambling and the passions that were so easily aroused by playing. Though normally screened from view at traditional Chinese, Japanese, and Korean go clubs and almost never written about, this has remained a ubiquitous activity and, despite its aura of dignity, professional go is still an act of gambling, though the stakes are put up by a third party. (5)

11) The association of gambling and go leads to a further analysis of the game’s presence in the Yao myth. In traditional societies, betting on games is a very ‘sacred’ activity—one which takes the participants in their passion close to a state of divine transcendence. Seen in this vein, the Yao myth can be considered as a gambling myth similar to those told by the North American Indians (which may have even originated in Asia). Like Yao, some of the Indian gods came down to earth to gamble and created chaos, a situation which was only remedied by extreme measures.

12) Thus, if the idea that go was a sacred activity because of, and not in spite of, its association with gambling, then its presence in the Yao myth could, in a single cultural artifact, be seen as an artful way of combining and symbolizing not only the highest rational qualities of humankind, but also those of its most irrational.

13) In fact, as Appendix II shows, the harnessing of that irrational energy by rational forces in strategic board games can be thought of as necessary training tools in the cross-over from Paleolithic, clan-based hunting-and-gathering cultures to hierarchical Neolithic empires such as Yao in the myth—and the Shang in reality—imposed upon the Chinese people. This outlook may also give further clues for the presence of go in only some of the Yao myths and the appearance of Dan Zhu’s rebellion in all of them.

Part I

Han Historical Revisions, Structuralism and the Yao Myths

Yao, Shun and Dan Zhu

**Note: It is important to mention that suggestions have been made that it would be useful to list the various versions of the Yao myths, variants and stories I will be referring to in chronological order. As will be shown, there was probably an original core, but from that point on, everything becomes vague, because, as with other Eastern and Native American myth-cycles, the differences are not 'evolutionary' and do not develop in one direction. Instead, they seem to be regional and thus dependent on the circumstances that called for their telling and re-telling over the passage of time.*

**There would also be the question of when they were first written down, and, perhaps even more important, where, why, and by whom, and this would drag in many more problems. Because some of the versions that were within the oral tradition may have not reached print for a thousand or even thousands of years after their formulation, it would call for an unbelievable amount of expertise to try to untangle them.*

***Incidentally, many of these variations are not listed in the standard go references, probably because of their inexact provenance, but their existence has been confirmed by a leading scholar and all are readily available in English in China, where I read them more than fifteen years ago. However, I lost the exact references because I never thought I would be writing an essay such as this. On the other hand, since then, a respected Yao branch of studies has been developing. Although perhaps it will also be scrutinized by the government for propaganda purposes as other archeological interpretations have been, perhaps I can learn more when I return to China. For now, however, I am involved in other, non-go, projects, so I can't say more than that Yao and Dan Zhu played go in some versions and in others did not, and to speculate from other sources why this might have happened, and what the reaction was, once the record becomes traceable.*

According to many versions of the myth, Yao's reign occurred midway in a series of Golden Age kings. Associated with calendars,

agriculture, flood control and divination, he was identified as one of those who civilized China. No mention was made of his ancestry and he was said to have descended from the 'Heavens.' By many wives he had many sons, and the first-born, by his first wife, was Dan Zhu.

*In any case, Dan Zhu (Dan Ju in other spellings) was not an 'idiot' as was suggested in one version. The accurate meaning of the adjective ascribed to him is 'quarrelsome.' Some have conjectured that he quarreled with the sons of Yao's other wives, equally ambitious to inherit the throne. Another translation of the term is 'unruly.' One myth is after his father's ministers had succeeded in taming the floods, along the seasonally-dry river beds, Dan Zhu still partied with friends on boats pulled or supported by peasants.

After learning go from his father, in some versions, Dan Zhu became a 'good' or even the 'best' player. In one version, he lost interest, however, inventing his own form of chess by riding with friends on elephants and rhinoceroses through a grove of mulberry trees especially planted for the purpose. In another, he played so much go that he was good for nothing else.

Most of the extant versions of the myth concurred that Yao tired of his eldest son's wild antics and disinherited him. Then, after abdicating, Yao passed the kingdom on to Shun, a virtuous and hard-working farmer, first a good friend, then a trusted advisor, then an in-law, and finally an heir. Dan Zhu fled, allying himself with the primitive San Miao tribe, and died fighting for his rights, while Shun went on to found the Xia, the first semi-historical dynasty of China.

This tale seemed to be the first time in mythic Chinese history that kinship rights of inheritance were passed over because of the unfilial behavior of an eldest son and intended heir, and this cautionary story has been told and retold to their children by countless generations of Chinese parents.

There are, however, inversions of elements of the story that provoke some questions. In the case of one narrative, Shun is said to have usurped the kingdom from Dan Zhu by tricking Yao, and Dan Zhu is presented as being justified in trying to regain it. In another, some of Yao's ministers strongly objected to a commoner inheriting the throne. As a result, they were executed or exiled.

Questions regarding the presence of go come to mind. Of the versions that mention it in conjunction with Yao, none suggested its origin or that he invented the game, only that he transmitted it. If it came from the Heavens with him, did other mythical beings also play the game? Why was

it taught, and why was it that it was the only thing mentioned that Yao taught his son? Despite the thoughts of the Confucian writers that go would not subdue an unruly nature and was a waste of time, what is the significance that its lessons in strategy-making would be helpful for Dan Zhu to outwit his opponents for the throne and foster the rights of eldest sons? Aside from the general strategic questions, are there links between go and gambling that might have had a deeper significance when the tales were composed? And, why is it that most versions of these myths did not mention go at all? (6)

History and Chinese Myth

Myth scholars have noted that in contrast with the Greeks, who tended to euhemerize or mythologize their history, the Chinese—in particular the Confucian writers serving the ambitions of Han dynasty emperors—tended to historicize their myths.

Unlike the Grecian or Biblical myths, the recurring subject of Chinese cosmogonies, or myths of origins, was the gradual ordering of elemental forces in an environment where human beings played a very minor role. In conflict were the 'Heavens,' the 'Waters,' and the 'Earth.' Yao came from Heaven, whereas Dan Zhu was associated with Water. One of the various interpretations of his name was 'Red Pearl,' and when he battled Yao and Shun he endowed his San Miao allies—who lived in the middle regions of the Yellow River and whose descendants may have become seamen—with magical properties for walking and fighting on water.

Shun, the heir to the kingdom, however, was clearly of the Earth and human in origin. His parentage was an element in the narrative and, before ascending the throne, he labored at menial agricultural tasks.

When these stories are discussed, it must be remembered that any speculation about their meaning is just that—speculation. By the time of the Han, the mythical figures of these groups had become complex amalgamations of real persons, groups, concepts, lineages, totems, and history, and their original meaning had long been obscured. Even the concept of tribal groups was unclear in early China, as it was in North America, because conquerors often appointed artificial leaders of groups, where before there had been only loose, or even no associations.

Probably, the civilizing process even extended to the recording of the myths themselves, as demonstrated by the fate of many American Indian gambler myths, after they were recorded by hierarchically-minded whites.

It has also been noted that such myths—which may have originated in Asia—lacked formal plot structure. Instead, they were accretions of loosely interconnected clusters of action and motivation, pertinent first to one character and then to another, until the nature of each had been represented. There were no villains, no heroes, no minor characters, and the conflicts and battles waged by such contending forces as ‘Good and Evil’ or ‘Light and Dark,’ can be seen within a larger context of a search for equilibrium and resolution. Not only did oral versions of a given story vary greatly, but the act of narration could involve risk to the teller and thus cause entire portions to be suppressed. (7)

For example, in several versions of his myth, Yao is said to have been the first to bring civilization to China. Yet, to strengthen their claim to an ancestry more ancient than the Shang, the Zhou (who vanquished them in 1046 or 1027 BC) inserted the presence of others, including the Yellow Emperor, before him.

In the earliest written examples that survive—not necessarily the oldest or principal versions—Yao was not a king and there was no abdication. Only much later, with the rising influence of Confucianism during the periods of the late Warring States and early Han—and with the active encouragement of the emperors—did Yao become a popular prototype of the virtuous ruler of a government both bureaucratic and hierarchical, one depicted as resembling, not surprisingly, that of the Han.

Nevertheless, anthropologists studying this interweave of fact and fiction from a structuralist point of view have been uncovering what were likely to have been the original constructions and intentions of their first narrators.

Despite conflicting stories and lack of early written records, most of those Sinologists who accept structuralist theories have concluded that the Yao stories originally dealt with the ‘control of the floods.’ To illustrate this, they cite the portrayal of two of Yao’s ministers, Kun and Gong Gong by the most famous of the Han Confucian scribes, Sima Qian (c. 145-c. 86 BC).

In Sima’s *Records of the Grand Historian (Shi Ji)*, which is considered to be somewhere between reliable and unreliable for the historic period, but entirely less so for prehistory, Yao appointed first Kun and then Gong Gong to control the calamitous annual flooding of the Yellow River that followed the snow-melt of the Himalayas. Both tried to block the waters with brute force by building dams, which eventually burst from the increased pressure of the waters. In response, Yao killed Kun and exiled Gong Gong. (8)

*Interestingly, it has been suggested by linguist William Boltz, (though not without argument), that 'Yao' derives from the word for 'mountain,' and 'Gong Gong' from the term for 'quarrelsome' or 'unruly'—the adjectives frequently used to describe the ragings of the Yellow River. The similarity of their fates, and the fact that in another version Kun gave a caesarian birth to Gong Gong, indicate that originally they shared the same mythological identity. Thus, Boltz and others have speculated that Kun and Gong Gong *were* the floods that Yao subdued.

This theory is provocative for go lore in that 'quarrelsome' was also how Dan Zhu, who represented Water, was described. The parallelism becomes more intriguing because the two other Confucian versions involving Emperors Shun and Qiao (or their ministers) of the Xia dynasty bundled together the same elements that constituted the Yao/Dan Zhu story.

In all of these tales, elders taught rebellious elder sons to play go, but it was implied or stated that the lessons either failed to discipline the young spirits or they spent so much time playing (and presumably gambling at it) that they were good for nothing else. In other words, they 'forgot their parents' and died fighting them or their inheriting friends.

As in the Yao myths, there were also 'reverse-versions' that approved the rebellions of the sons and presented the inheriting machinations as wrong. In no version did the son succeed in his aims and none of these anti-versions mentioned go.

Structuralism and Chinese Myth

Applying the structuralist theories of Levi-Strauss, Sarah Allan and others have investigated Han histories that recorded the transfer of power and their recurring patterns of themes, motifs, and artifacts. She discussed how the Han writers, with the exception of Sima Qian, were considered base hacks. Then she conclusively showed how they shaped their stories to illustrate moral points that fitted the Confucian conception of the nature, origins and aims of man, government, and morality that their rulers—their employers—naturally encouraged. Even Sima Qian was not exempt from this process, since he rendered the Kun and Gong Gong stories into early hydraulic failures of a virtuous, Han-like bureaucratic government. (9)

Didacticism in the furtherance of political and moral aims, with selective emphasis applied to what might seem minor in meaning, did not, of course, originate with the Han Empire. For example, in the 2nd century BC, Han Fei Zi, royalist advisor to the first emperor of China, wrote in

terms which made Kun and Gong Gong allies (or even cognates) to Dan Zhu:

When Yao wanted to transfer the rule over All-under-Heaven to Shun, against such a measure Kun remonstrated with him, saying, 'How inauspicious! Who would transfer the rule of All-under-Heaven to a commoner?' Yao never listened to . . . [Kun] but raised an army and killed him in the vicinity of the Feather Mountains. Likewise, [Gong Gong], the Minister of Public Works, remonstrated with him, saying, 'Nobody should transfer the rule over All-under-Heaven to a commoner.' Yao never listened to him but also raised an army and banished the Minister of Public Works to the City of Yu Zhou. (10)

As one observer commented:

Completely divested of their mythic attributes, and completely severed from their connections with the flood, Kun and Gong Gong are here made to embody the reactionary force against the promotion of commoners, or even against the system of 'rule by virtue' itself. The account quoted above may thus be regarded not so much as a faithful rendition of the myths of Kun and Gong Gong as a representation, within the framework of their myths, of the practice of non-hereditary selection which may have prevailed in historical times. (11)

There seems to be much at work beneath the surface in the Yao myths, even before Han historians began writing their glosses.

Unfortunately, however, Sarah Allan did not investigate *go* and there have been no other academic commentaries on the questions these myths pose for historians. Thus, there has been no attempt to account for:

1) The same attribute of 'unruliness' used to characterize Dan Zhu, Kun and Gong Gong

2) The mention of *go* in three versions written by Confucians.

3) Its omission from versions that are not Confucian, apparently of a greater age and from more remote regions.

For some possible answers to these questions, it is fruitful to consider the incongruities in the popular notion that Han Confucian writers inserted the game into their versions so as to promote its prestige.

Go and the Rivalry Between the Confucian Schools and the ‘Dark Way’ of Daoism

*From the surviving works written by those who followed in the paths of Confucius and Mencius, it has been usual to simply say that ‘they had little enthusiasm for go.’ And, as formerly written in these pages, it was said that the ‘actual’ Confucius and Mencius may have made those criticisms.

*However, weaving together the literary and historical evidence, E. Bruce Brooks and his wife, Taeko, writing in *The Original Analects* and on their Warring State Project at www.umass.edu/wsp/ have given much later dates to the sections where the go comments occur—c. 270 BC for the ‘Confucius’ comment, and c. 280 and c. 260 BC for the ‘Mencius’ quotes

*Moreover, these early Confucian quotes have been used carelessly, without regard to the context of the analogical arguments that were being presented. I think it might be more correct to say that these early Confucians regarded go as a casual pastime that was simply useful for illustrating points of their philosophy. These points are pursued in detail in Appendixes IV and V.

In any case, most prominent among those to challenge Confucian thought (and developing independently during the ‘Flowering of the 100 Schools’ at the time of the Warring States) was the *Bing Jia*, the School of Strategy, sometimes called the School of Thunder. Loosely allied with the Legalists of Han Fei Zi, and the Mohists (specialists in defending besieged cities and creating grammatically logical puzzles), the School of Strategy became known as ‘The Dark Way’ or ‘Way of Deception’ of what is now called Daoism. This early Daoism had little to do with the placid ideas popularly known in the West by that name. Over 70% of their early texts (including the *Dao De Jing*), seem to be secret military instruction manuals often written in obscure and mystical styles by warrior-philosophers.

Recent work by Chad Hansen and others makes it evident that, from the beginning, Confucians were steadfast clients and supporters of the feudal families who ruled the small countries during the Warring States period.

Opposing the Confucians in philosophical arguments (see work by the Brooks) were the Mohists, Legalists, and Daoists who generally

preferred the peace of a central empire. It was Legalist Han Fei Zi who urged the use of Daoist 'horizontal and vertical alliances' to Qin Shi Huang in order to put an end to the Warring States and unify China in 221 BC. (It was Qin who built the Great Wall, purportedly burned all the books except the *Yi Jing*, and buried alive all—presumably non-Legalist—scholars. The eventual opening of his tomb—purportedly postponed for fifty years to allow archeological techniques to improve—will no doubt turn many of our notions of those times, including those about the history of go, in astounding new directions, particularly if it turns out he had a secret library).

The Confucians also opposed the founding of the Han Empire that rose from the ruins of Qin's spectacular but short-lived efforts. Once established, however, it became advantageous for Han emperors to encourage the dissemination of Confucian beliefs advocating obedience and loyalty.

In contrast, it was Daoist generals and politicians such as Sun Zi, who wrote *The Art of War*, along with others more mystical in outlook, who became the inspiration for both the idealism and strategic methods of most of the great rebellions of Chinese history, including the White and Yellow Turbans and even the recent *Falun Gong*. (12)

Thus, it was probably inevitable that Confucian historians wrote with an animus when denigrating Daoist beliefs, interpreting them as an inexplicable and mystical form of a nature religion, and it was this impression that was passed on to the West by their students, the 17th century Jesuit missionaries. (13)

Confucian scholars throughout history also declared many early Daoist, Legalist, and Mohist writings to be forgeries containing dangerous ideas. Even when their works were conceded to be historically authentic, their writers were derided as hired mercenaries and propagators of 'effeminate' trickery unworthy of men of character.

By around 200 AD, the Han emperors succeeded in reducing the unruly and objectionable principles of Daoism to a state-directed religion led by a pope-like figure who was directed by dreams to rule a supernatural kingdom. Fittingly, it consisted of strict, submissive hierarchies that closely conformed with those of the ideal Chinese government, as conceived by the Han and the dynasties that followed.

While it is often said that a blend of Confucianism and the various types of Daoism occurred early on in the Chinese mind (to which was added, after the 4th century, Buddhism), it can also be said that the two philosophies represented distinctly opposing approaches to life. Whereas

Confucianism was concerned with socially appropriate behavior toward family and ruler, the teachings of Daoism pertained to dealings with strangers and those one did not trust. This system developed strategies, attitudes and behaviors applicable not only to go and war, but also for business, government and even the bedroom.

The Dark School's idea of gaining inner happiness with the least expenditure of effort amounted to getting what one wanted in the most efficient way. This was not achieved by balancing one's *yin* and *yang*, as in Western self-help books, or by the harmony with a mysterious 'One,' as in Confucian interpretations. According to the relativistic thinking of early Daoists, *yin* and *yang* were never a matter of being statically in balance, but were always in constant flux. Were one astute enough to ascertain the current state of affairs, there was not one *Dao* but many forms of *dao*, or 'ways' to learn how to take advantage of those imbalances or change them.

Thus, many Confucian Han writers expressed their feelings about 'the dao of go' in ways similar to those of Yang Xiong in the 6th century AD:

Some believe that criminal law corresponds to Dao because it too is spontaneous. But I say that criminal law, like weiqi, like fencing and magic practices which confuse the eye, although they are all spontaneous, still have a true Dao only generally speaking, but in their particulars they have a perverse Dao. (14)

In the 3rd century AD, Wang Yao wrote:

Limits are so exceeded that some even bet their clothes and personal objects . . . [as a go game progresses] tempers change, honesty and correctness are abandoned and expressions become not only choleric but even violent . . . the game is not included in the [Confucian] Six Arts . . . Adopting inconsistency and fraud as methods of play is a demonstration of the use of incorrect and disloyal principles, employing technical terms like jie ['invasion'] and sha ['killing'] means being devoid of ren [humanity]. Lastly, spending the day deserting one's occupation brings no advantages and so we may wonder if there is any difference between placing stones on a game-board and simply throwing stones . . . where can we find on the [wei qi] board any relation with a prefecture? And the three hundred pieces with an army of a thousand soldiers? Imperial robes, bells and musical stones are much more important than pieces and game-boards: who would exchange one for the other? (15)

Go and the Yao Myths

Requiring a constant flexibility of judgment in weighing present advantage against a future benefit, the ‘way’ of the game of go would clearly have been useful in achieving Daoist aims. As mentioned before, one interpretation of the Yao myth by a discerning Chinese audience would have led to the conclusion that a virtuous king was teaching his son go to improve his ability to deal strategically with hostile forces.

Because of go’s early association with gambling, another conclusion would have been that Dan Zhu was the world’s first gambler, and that the Yao story may have originally been a gambling myth similar in structure to some American Indian gambler tales (which may have even originated in China). In these myths, divine gamblers descended to earth to win first the property, then the women and children, and then the men, who had to sell themselves into slavery to pay off their debts. As in the Yao myths, extraordinary methods had to be taken by men and the gods to restore social equilibrium.

These underlying connotations of the Yao myth must have presented a conundrum for the Han Confucian writers. As mentioned, the *Shi Ben* Warring State author of the first surviving literary record probably wrote before the Confucian promotion of Yao as the pinnacle of virtue, so it is unlikely he would have had the same motives as Han period writer to include (or eliminate) the game from his account (although of course, there may have been other reasons to include it or exclude it at that time).

However, since some Han commentators said they didn’t believe that Yao invented the game, go must have been present in at least some of the circulating oral versions of the myth chanted out in the marketplaces and tea houses, or in now-lost written versions. If it had been inserted as a sheer fabrication in the Warring States period, it is likely it would have been noticed and commented on.

Thus, it seems that some Confucian storytellers tried to make use of its existence in their First Great Division story of the separation of Earth and Water, and the rebellion, and defeat of the quarrelsome Dan Zhu/Yellow River by Yao/Shun/Earth. It worked for them to present go playing as they did in other writings: as something whose ostensible purpose might have been to encourage mental discipline, but which only nurtured further rebellion and disrespect once the student learned how to win and grew old enough to gamble and apply these Daoist methods to politics and other activities. Even worse, as in some of the versions, Dan

Zhu formed an addiction and wasted all his time playing so it was the only thing he was good at. (See Footnote 31 for an example).

In order to drive the point home, this strange story about a good king teaching the world an evil pastime and atoning for his mistake by disinheriting his star pupil was significant enough to be repeated twice more in the Golden Age period. The question then becomes: If the Confucians found they could use go as a moral exemplar, why would it not appear also in non-Confucian, presumably earlier versions?

**Perhaps it was that in the period that the myths developed as oral stories, the teaching and playing of go might have been considered a remarkable feat that was worth mentioning in a story about the development of civilization. Later, by the time the myths might have been written down, perhaps learning at least the rudiments of the game had become part of every privileged education, as it has continued to be up to the present. Therefore, it might not have been worthy of special mention, especially since no 'moral' points could be scored with it. For example, in our modern-day biographies and war strategy books, how often is the the game and/or the ability to play checkers mentioned?

On the other hand, if there were moral points to be gained, the process might work in reverse. Assuming that there was an early negative association with gambling, mention of the game might have been dropped in the 'anti-versions' which promoted Dan Zhu's right to the throne, in order to overcome any objections that so much playing might have adversely affected his character and his right to the throne.

In any case, as in so much of the historical record of go, there are many interesting questions and few answers.

Part II

Sky-Oriented and Divination Theories of Go's Origins

If it was not as a consequence of historical revisionism by Confucians that go appeared in some Golden Age myths, what may be the cause? For possible answers, the second popular theory of go's origins—that it was created by star-gazing shamans at the time of the Zhou during the Spring and Autumn or Warring States periods c. 1000-700 BC—warrants a similar scrutiny.

The Zhou-Han Star-Oriented Cultures

The original Yao/Dan Zhu/Kun/Gong Gong story seems to be a 2nd millennium BC Xia and/or Shang myth that celebrated the First Great Division of Earth from Water. These groups worshiped and were guided by the authority of their ancestors, buried in the earth.

The powers that followed in the next thousand years—beginning with the Zhou—celebrated the Second Great Division, that of Earth's separation from the Heavens. The Zhou were more interested in the skies and wrote their histories like this:

Formerly, when King Wu of Zhou first attacked . . . the Shang capital of Yin, Jupiter was in Quail Fire; the moon was in Heavenly Quadriga; the Sun was in the Ford that Separates Wood; the New Moon was in the Handle of the Southern Dipper, Mercury was in the Heavenly Turtle; the locations of Mercury, Sun, and New Moon were all in the northeast corner . . . and Jupiter was in the region of the heavens allotted to us, the Zhou.
(16)

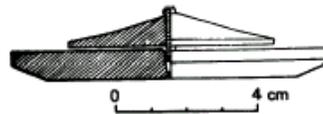
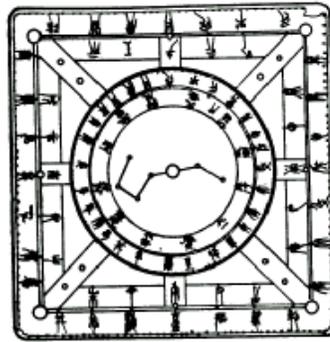
Going even further, the Han introduced the cult of the ruling Sky god, *Tian Di* (*Tian* means 'Heavens' and can also mean 'Emperor'). Intimacy with the gods of the Shang system had ended, and, according to one story, the ladder to Heaven was cut in two.

After this change, the Chinese began to challenge, displace, and relocate their gods. In the histories of the Confucians serving to consolidate the new empire through the promotion of rationalism and moral values, the great mythological beings that surrounded Yao's world were

organized into a hierarchical bureaucracy, with their new functions often suggesting the nature of their roles in earlier myths.

After this, descriptions of go regularly included Heavenly references if not regarding the board, at least to the stones.

The *Shi* Board Divination Theory



Drawing of a shih board

It has been suggested by many that it was on *shi ban* divination boards that the early casting of stones by rival shamans took place as an activity leading to the development of go. The circular lids of *shi* boards represented the Sky and could be rotated over the square base, which represented the Earth.

**As part the history of divination, in his great *Science and Civilization in China*, Joseph Needham put together what was known in 1962 of the history of chess and divination and then speculated on it. (<http://history.chess.free.fr/library.htm>).

**Needham noted that *shi* boards were used for divination; that they acquired magnets that worked like compasses, and that some ‘fighting chess men’ with dried blood and iron filings painted on their bottoms had been manipulated by magicians using magnets in some sort of game. These factors he put into the context of a mystical poem by a 6th century AD emperor, who invented a great ‘symbolic’ game called *xiang jing* (and not *xiang ji*—‘image’ or ‘elephant’ chess—which is the name of modern chess). (See the Dennis Leventhal translation at the above URL). No rules were mentioned, but it used astral and other universal symbols as pieces to play on an equally mystically playing field, (or on a square and round

one), that Needham suggested therefore ‘linked’ the game to the *shi* board and the emperor’s game.

**Using ‘chess’ as a broad name for many games, Needham didn’t acknowledge the vast differences between chess and go, or the ambiguity of the *qi* character—‘piece’ or ‘pieces’—that appears in the literature over this great stretch of history. Nevertheless, he postulated out of a lack of facts that a similar, symbolic game preceded all the rest of the Chinese games that he thought were derived from divination techniques. (He didn’t mention any that he thought were not).

**Needham summed up his views on pages 324-5:

. . . the important thing to notice is that in China, and in China alone, on account of the Yin-Yang theory of the macrocosm, could a divination technique or ‘pre-game’ have been devised which was both astrological and had a sufficient combat element to enable it to be vulgarized into a purely military symbolism.

There is no need to commit ourselves to any definite conclusion as to when and where the ‘militarisation’ of astrological image-chess took place; it may well have taken place in India in the following century.

**Unfortunately, on page 323, it turns out that Needham is referring to the 6th and 7th centuries AD, long after the period in question. Moreover, *shi* boards did not acquire magnets until well into the Han period.

**Nevertheless, with no evidence that such a symbol game existed before that poetic 6th century AD creation, Needham envisioned what the ‘pre-game’ that originated in *shi* board divination might have looked like more than a half a millenium earlier, and assumed from object-throwing divination practices (not used, as he says, until the later Han) that it would have included astral-oriented, chess-like pieces. (For further information, see Appendices I and III of this article and the new Appendix I of the Cognitive Psychology article, all at www.usgo.org/bobhighlibrary).

As for a direct connection between *shi* boards and go, it is important to note that there were no grid-patterns drawn on either the Sky or Earth sections of the earliest boards. The upper halves of the oldest ones found that date to c. 200 BC, displayed the Great Bear constellation (although the restorers made a mistake and put the Little Bear on this one).

The edges of the lower parts of the *shi* boards were engraved with the Eight Directions, or sometimes hexagrams or the Eight Trigrams. Even if only the bottom halves were used, they didn’t seem to function or resemble anything like a go board. In fact, a discussion took place in the

first few issues of the journal *Early China* over whether *shi* boards could be game boards, and the consensus was that they were not. The question of whether they were the first go boards was not even raised.

Furthermore, the earliest record of casting stones onto *shi* boards for purposes of divination did not appear until the first century AD, well into the Han period. Go stones, however, were not used for that purpose, and the pieces that were thrown were cast onto the upper, not the lower half. In outlying areas of China and Tibet, colored stones are still thrown on the earth for divining purposes, but these systems are time- and fate-oriented. Boards are not used nor is the process direction-based. In Siberia, also, as described in *The Tale of the Nisan Shamaness*, which is discussed later in this essay, stones were once cast for divination purposes, but into a bowl of water.

*Appendix III, an extended review of Shirakawa Masayoshi's deeply flawed book, *A Journey in Search of the Origins of Go* (Yutopian 2005), illustrates how un-go-like the operation of *shi* boards is, and brings up to date the reasons why other ancient Chinese divination devices and magic squares would probably not have inspired go playing.

Astral Symbolism and Go

Regarding the 'star theories' of go's origins, the misconceptions of some observers may have resulted from assuming that the great, later homilies about go expressed feelings that were always felt about the game. Readers or viewers of, for example, the great 18th century Japanese *bunraku* puppet play, *The Battles of Coxinga*, by Chikamatsu, may have simply misinterpreted the symbolism.

The stirring second act opened with some Immortals visiting China from their home on the moon. Seated atop their sacred mountain, they were playing a game of go, one of them commenting:

The ordinary man, confused of mind, takes it for a mere contest between go stones . . . the fish swimming in the water . . . mistakes it for a fish hook . . . the bird soaring above the clouds . . . is frightened, thinking it a bow . . . (17)

Although the two Immortals were observing that one can see on a go board anything one wishes, as they spoke they were not looking at the 'Sky.' The 'it' they viewed as mirrored on their mystical board referred to the waning and waxing of the forces of *yin* and *yang* over the land of China

displayed before them—the cause of the hero's exile in the face of the invading Manchu hordes in the 17th century.

The Immortals then discussed how their placement of white and black stones over the 361 intersections represented the passage of the days and nights of a year. However, it was by means of alternately placing black and white stones representing day and night (sun and moon)—not as the movement of stars and constellations on the board.

The number 361 that results from multiplying 19x19 does not support the notion of an original astral symbolism, either, since the first boards mentioned in the literature, as well as the size of the one portrayed in the *National Geographic* article were 17x17 lines.

In Tibet—whose early contacts with Manichean Persia gave them the symbolism of Black and White that permeates their thought—any astral symbolism underlying the game would be expected to have survived, yet the standard size in Tibet is 17x17, and, at least today, no one seems to care if the board is a line or two more or less.

In China, the board did not seem to have been standardized at 19x19 until around the 8th century AD. Edward Schafer once suggested that Tang astrologers may have drawn two extra lines through the center of the old-style 17x17 boards to conform with changes they were making in their astrological systems. (18)

Nor did Chikamatsu refer to the center point of the board as 'the pole star,' which is what several writers seem to have thought. In fact, the most popular early Chinese astral theory envisioned a heavenly canopy with holes to allow in starlight as the planets, sun, and moon roamed below. This is a bit inconsistent with the pole star-plus-sun-and-moon theory. Also, pre-Han Chinese saw only five planets and seven pole stars. It was later that two additional (invisible) pole stars and a planet were added by mystic Daoist astronomers.

A more telling argument against a Sky interpretation of the board's significance was the nature of constellations in ancient Chinese thought. In Zhou astrology, locations of constellations marked the seasons, but, as indicated in the earlier quote from their histories, it was the movement and location of planets and other roving objects in the sky that had importance. Such motions do not correspond with the principles of go, whose Chinese name is *wei qi*—the 'surrounding game.'

A Calendar Theory of Go's Origins

Another astronomy-centered inquiry was developed by the Japanese go player and amateur historian Yasunaga Hajime who suggested that go boards originally were heavenly calendars placed atop a representation of a square earth. He proposed that a survival of this practice might be found in Tibet. It is true that Tibetan go places 12 black and white starting stones around the board, which they say signify, among other things, astrological houses. Yet, although the size of their board seems irrelevant, Yasunaga tried to build a historical case out of a combination of this idea and the use of the duodecimal system in the northern Yin dynasty of China (1384-1112 BC). (19)

It was my experience while playing go in Tibet that these 12 stones are regarded primarily as mundane 'scarecrows' or protectors of their fields, the smaller ones being called *diu* (small, tough rocks, or anything small and tough). In Mongolia (which interacted politically and culturally with Tibet), small 'dog' stones surround and protect the six larger 'bull' stones.

**The central area of the Tibetan board is called *kong* ('empty') and belongs to everyone. The center point is frequently marked off with a symbol of *Vajra* ('Sudden Enlightenment'), much as the *yin-yang* sign presides over some traditional Chinese boards. Also, flowers are often sewn onto the borders (I saw only cloth boards there).

The 12 starting stones and the areas around them were thought to indicate the 12 regions of Tibet and the 12 palaces of the square city of Omolungring (the Shangri-la of the pre-Buddhist Bon religion, from whence the Good Kings will ride out at the end of the world). The symbolism of the board is also said to represent the 12-month calendar year, but this idea seems only coincidental with the sacred nature attached to the number 12.

As for their common practice of placing six stones each down on the third line before beginning a game (which also occurred in early Korean go, though these were put down on the fourth line), it is easy to theorize that this custom, besides according with the religious system, also made it easier for provincial players to enjoy the game by simplifying the opening and encouraging immediate fighting, rather than requiring the build-up of elaborate *fusekis*.

A similar practical reason can be found for the Chinese fashion of placing two stones each on the board before a game begins. In Tibet this development may have occurred after go was introduced or invented there

independently, since the practice of using twelve stones never appeared in China. (20)

**At a Symposium during the 2008 European Go Conference, I will be presenting a second appendix to the Tibet article that will discuss the possible religious symbolism operating in Tibetan go that further distances it from the Chinese variety.

In any case, the fundamental problem the Sky-centered theories seem to face is that they are based on a perception of the 'original' go boards as developing out of religious practices as counters of Time and not as measurers of Space. These ideas are further pursued in Appendix III.

Part III

An Earth-Oriented Theory of Go's Origins and Symbolism

Unlike the Han and Zhou, whose *shi* boards charted their skies, the Shang and Xia were peoples whose civilization was based on agriculture, and their primary interests lay in the basic divisions of land and water and how best to utilize them. A most compelling reason for thinking that go equipment and playing did not originally have to be agreeable to a Sky-oriented religious symbolism is that, throughout the world, square game boards not only represent, but are in fact, sacred re-creations of what was once thought to be the shape of the earth. For example, the four areas of Chinese boards have always been referred to in terms of East, West, South and North. Somewhat like a go board, China itself was thought to be square that was divided into a 9-square grid, floating on and surrounded by water.

**It can also be shown that the principles of go playing (or the play of a proto-go involving the capture of stones on a grid-like pattern) can be better explained by invoking Earth instead of Sky symbolism, if indeed the game was first involved with religion or divination at all, which its common-sense terminology would seem to indicate it was not.

Earth-Oriented *Feng Shui* and the Symbolism of Go

An element missing from most go histories is the consideration that in early China the game and its inherent symbolism were probably perceived very differently than is now the case. The separation of Earth from Water, the first Great Division in Chinese myth, was celebrated by the two oldest dynasties, the Xia and the Shang. The Xia, once thought to have existed only in myth, seem historically confirmed by recent archaeological discoveries.

In some myths of the Xia and the Shang, it was Yu the Great who finally controlled the floods after Kun and Gong Gong (or Yu's father) had failed to halt them with dams. Yu was assigned the task in some versions by Yao, in others by Shun, while in still other variants he preceded them. His method was a truly Daoist solution of 'accomplishing much by doing little'—in the manner of rice-paddy farming, he dug irrigation ditches to siphon off the unruly waters, thereby controlling and directing the flow in an

orderly fashion over the landscape on the way to the sea. After channeling these waters, Yu divided up the newly drained land (still afloat on water confluent with the surrounding oceans) into nine great square sections bordered by rivers.

On the grid of a go board, especially the 9x9 board that beginners learn on today (conceivably the original size of those used in prehistoric times), it seems not implausible that the first go players would have beheld, like Chikamatsu's Immortals, not a map of the Sky, but a map of China.

What players are doing on this board accords even more with principles underlying other efforts by the Chinese to control elemental forces as their civilization advanced. As recorded on the earliest oracle bones, proto-*feng shui*, *yin-yang*, and acupuncture theories were already being developed during the Shang dynasty as early expressions of scientific impulses.

In other words, it would seem likely that the players of the first games of go would have been characterizing their play as attempts to block and release *qi* by placing their stones down on the board according to the tenants of *feng shui* (literally 'wind and water'). (This is not the *qi* of *wei qi*—the characters are different—but the *qi* of 'energy').

Interestingly, there were two spheres in which *feng shui* operated. Based on astrology and numerology, one concerned matters of time. Among its aims was the determination of auspicious days on which to act, probably by using *shi* boards (where, as discussed further in Appendix III, 'the male was slowly moved to know the female').

The second, called the School of Earth Forms, concentrated on ascertaining the most favorable alignments for situating buildings for both the living and the dead by charting the flow of *qi*. In the most ancient literature extant on the subject:

The Classic says, Where the earth takes shape, qi flows accordingly, thereby things are born . . . For qi courses within the ground, its flow follows the contour of the ground, and its accumulation results from the halt of terrain . . . Veins spring from [low] land terrain; bones spring from mountain terrain. They wind sinuously from east to west or from south to north. Thousands of feet [high] is [called] forces, hundreds of feet [high] is [called] features. Forces advance and finish in features. This is called integrated qi. (21)

In short:

. . . Water is the blood and breath of the earth, circulating as if in vessels and veins . . . (22)

Today, too, when a *feng shui* expert examines a traditional Chinese landscape painting or takes a stroll in the countryside, he will point out how the *qi* is furiously coursing along the ridges of the hills and down through the valleys of the streams, and how its positive and negative forces are being blocked or attracted, influenced, deflected, trapped or repelled by the shape of the features that impinge on a site. As Stephen Field noted:

Terrestrial features that block the wind are necessary to prevent the dissipation of the natural flow of qi in and along the ground. Flowing water, like wind, also attracts qi like a magnet, and the auspicious lair [burial site] is one that encourages water to linger in its vicinity. The terrestrial features serve to block the wind—which captures qi and scatters it, but also to channel the waters—which collect qi and store it. Feng shui . . . is merely shorthand for an environmental policy of hindering the wind and hoarding the waters. (23)

In the *feng shui* School of Earth Forms, good and bad shapes are ‘convex’ or ‘concave,’ ‘hollow’ or ‘pointed,’ ‘open’ or ‘closed.’ In a similar fashion, *yin-yang* theory measures the ‘maleness’ and ‘femaleness’ of shapes, and the earliest of the Daoist ‘Dark Way’ philosophers continually spoke of the ‘emptiness or fullness’ of troop formations relative to the formations of land and water. Beyond this was the basic early Daoist tenet that no shape or situation was ever permanent—one had always to keep adjusting to take advantage of the changes in the balance or imbalance of *yin* and *yang* that were encountered.

As go players engage in surrounding and capturing groups, and accumulating territory, the most important consideration is whether their groups of stones have good or bad shape, i.e. how they are controlling the *yin* and *yang* of the *qi* of the moment. Most of the other terms—‘influence,’ ‘walls,’ ‘solid territory,’ ‘light and heavy,’ ‘alive or dead groups,’ etc.—merely expand on this governing idea. In fact, beyond the concepts of shape, it seems likely that the earliest go strategies would have been heavily influenced by *feng shui* principles.

The Go Board as Sacred Space

Anthropologists have noted that, like playing fields, game boards began as altars to the sacred. Within the silent confines of these temple-like precincts consisting of marked-off spaces, nothing seemed fortuitous and everything was significant. It was there that magicians, priests, and gamers could commence their work.

[Here] duality is inherent . . . reflecting Nature itself. The processes are composed of opposites seemingly working against each other: day-night, summer-winter, male-female, birth-death. Games were played to bring harmony to those forces continuously fighting for ascendancy . . . the thrust and parry of the polarities characterized by the Chinese yin as the female principle and yang as the male. (24)

It is likely that ancient go players would have been observing not the stars, but how the forces of *yin* and *yang* were creating Space from Time and Time from Space, as they funneled through the ritual discipline of the rules made manifest on the board. Chinese go boards (but not Japanese boards, which are slightly rectangular to preserve the illusion they are square) have always measured almost exactly one square *feng shui* 'foot' (about 17 3/8 inches), the unit by which practitioners measure indoor objects. On it, the *yin* of space would have included the setting of the lines (*yang*), and the resulting squares (*yin*). The material and the shape of this area was *yin*—source of the present 'wood' radical used in the character for go. Depending on the shape of the bowls, boxes, and stones, they were *yin* or *yang*. The stone material was *yang*—source of the earliest radical for the word 'go.'

From the primordial chaos within the boxes or bowls to which the stones would eventually return, the adepts would select their stones. White would have been advantaged and characterized as *yang*, Black as *yin*. As the game progressed, the *yang* of Time, the Past of the game (and their games—also *yang*) would be leaching the chaotic *yin* of the Future. After their groups had formed, the interiors of which would be *yin*, the exteriors *yang*, they would live with what we now call two 'eyes' (*yang*), similar to their belief that every human had two souls—a concept that was beginning to emerge at least by the Shang.

Conceivably it was under the influence of such a tradition (more strongly felt in China than in Japan) that the contemporary Chinese genius Wu Qing Yuan, (known as Go Seigen in Japan), commented that, while

playing go, there are not four directions he considers, but six, taking into account such intangibles as the 'heaviness' or 'lightness' of stones and groups.

In China, deep-rooted feelings regarding *feng shui* may also account for the puzzle of why ancient Chinese games, until the early 20th century, began with two white stones and two black, while the Japanese for nearly a thousand years have started with an empty board. Besides the fact that they seemed to want the fighting to begin early, for Chinese players, the feeling aroused by an empty board with no *feng shui* might have been akin to those of a medieval Christian encountering someone who had no soul.

In conclusion, some of the scholarly confusion over the symbolism of Time and Space, and Earth and Sky, on Chinese go boards may have resulted from two factors.

One is that by the 9th century the two schools of *feng shui* had fused, developing changes that led to modern *feng shui*.

Almost simultaneously, by the time of the Song, c. 1000 AD, the blending of Confucianism with forms of Time- and Heaven-oriented Buddhism and an altered Daoism was sufficient to have led to the development of Neo-Confucianism, which approved go as a worthwhile activity for the *literati*.

An indication of this changed attitude was the c. 1050 AD appearance of *The Classic of Weiqi in Thirteen Chapters*. Although other, problem-oriented go books had appeared before, its vast accumulation of information meant go was beginning to be spread by texts and not oral teaching, which would have certainly de-mystified many of the obscure aspects of playing the game for a much larger audience.

**Also important for its acceptance among the Buddhists were the go boards' dramatic illustrations of, among other things, 'small' and 'large' deaths and the '27 Veils of Ignorance'—the desires that obscure the 'true reality' of a go game which slowly lift as one gains proficiency. These feelings about go were added to the feeling of 'Oneness' of the Neo-Confucian system, and ideas about the 'Harmony' of *yin* and *yang* which were inherited from the Daoists. This blend can be seen in my essay *Doers and Dreamers* in this e-library.

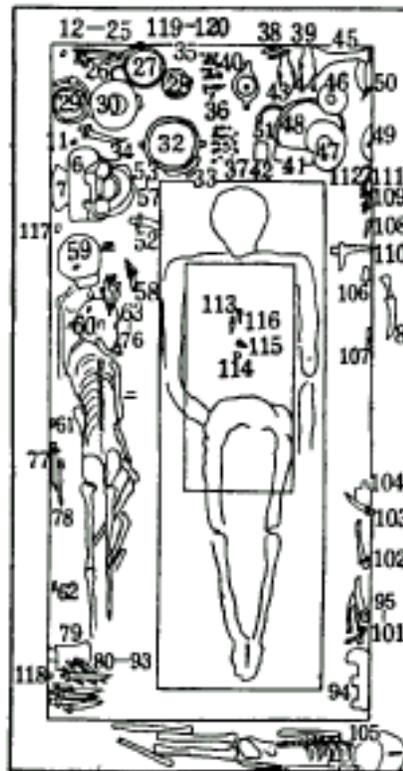
**To conclude, the game's sinister associations with Warring State philosophies might have come to an end in China, along with the possible 'collective memories' of its earthly origins, symbolism and associations. In a process that began in the Tang dynasty and intensified by the time of the Ming, c. 1350. As also illustrated by *Doers and Dreamers*, go became accepted as one of the four Great Accomplishments of the cultured *literati*.

Part IV

The Age of Go

The Archaeological Record

Archaeologist Tang Ji Gen was a visiting scholar at Harvard's Yen-ching Institute when I met him in 1994. He was on leave from being in charge of excavations at Yinxu, near Anyang, Henan province in northeastern China, the last capital of the Shang dynasty before it fell to the Zhou. Tang is a strong amateur go player and he described some mysterious stones that have turned up in about 25 of the tombs. (25)



Tomb 1713

In Tomb 1713, about 25 stones were found near the head (No. 37), and in other tombs as many as 50 have been located near the right shoulders. All are about 2.5-3.5 cm in diameter. Slightly more than half were painted off-white, while the rest were painted red, but the colors may

originally have been evenly distributed since the paint could have faded or been washed away. Pointing out that the stones were always found near the right shoulder, perhaps the 'game playing' hand, he said, 'Although no boards have been found so we cannot definitely call these go stones, most Chinese scholars would agree that they were probably used for some kind of game.'

Tomb 1713 is the tomb of a nobleman and is important because from inscriptions on bronze vessels it can be accurately dated to about 1040 BC. The body was placed within a second inner wooden coffin, and two other bodies, conceivably servants, were interred as well. However, the appearance of stones in both single- and double-coffin burials suggests that, irrespective of their meaning or function, the significance of the stones was not confined to the aristocracy.

Another mysterious series of Shang and pre-Shang objects were pieces of pottery, lozenge-shaped and orange-painted, about 4 cm. in diameter. A number of these have been dated to before 5000 BC. Several are colored on one side, others on both, but mostly the color has not been preserved. Unlike the stones, these were found alone and in pairs, not only in tombs but also in and around houses. There is no mention of game stones or pottery pieces in Shang oracle-bone inscriptions, but, whatever their purpose, they remained in use into Zhou times since they were found in Baoji, Shanxi province, the site of the ancient state of Yu.

Compounding the mystery is the following passage from the *Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, referring to the remains of a Neolithic settlement on the Bay of Pkhusun in Siberia:

. . . Most curious in this stratum are small discs cut from soft stone, one side of which is convex, the other flat. What these stone 'checkers' were used for remains a mystery. The settlement is especially interesting because it has been dated by the radio-carbon method and proves to be 4170 +/- 60 years old. (26)

Traditional Chinese go stones have this shape. However, according to the editor, Dennis Sinor, both the author, A. P. Okladnikov, and translator are dead, there were no footnotes, and the original (Russian) manuscript has vanished.

The Origins of Go?

**Today, a casual tour of any Chinese city will reveal at least a half-dozen varieties of pebble games being played out on simple, dirt-drawn grid boards, so there are many possibilities for how these stones were used. (One of these games is illustrated in Appendix I of my Tibet article in this e-library).

Thus, go may have just been 'discovered,' say by children, from a simple process of idly surrounding stones and taking them off the board, like the modern game of 'capture' that is used to teach Japanese youngsters the principles of go. As illustrated in Appendix III, their board might have been inspired by a shard of 5-3,000 year-old Yangshao 'net pottery.' Once the idea of capturing more than one stone is changed to the more interesting task of capturing as many as possible, the idea of two eyes making 'living' (or 'eternal') groups and territory naturally evolves, as shown in my two books. (27)

A game like go could also have evolved from the use of the stones as markers to keep track of dice throws, as happened in North American Indian games. Another possibility, which will be discussed in greater detail later, is that go may have originally been a hunting game based on the principle of surrounding prey.

**In any case, the earliest games may have been played on boards no larger than 9x9, This is the size that beginners often learn on, at least in the West. Possibly it was not until later in history that play would have become sophisticated enough to warrant bigger and/or more permanent boards of wood or silk, like an almost entirely deteriorated *liu bo* dice game board found at Mawangdui from the early Han period.

Part V

Go, Divination, Shamanism, and the Cultural Matrix of the Yao Myth

If go did not result from diviners casting down stones onto boards representing the Sky—or the Earth, for that matter—paradoxically, some of the clues of its place in the early cultures that played it can perhaps be gleaned from stories that relate the game to divination and shamanistic activities. Unfortunately, as with other mysteries about the game's place in the Yao myths, little study has been done.

Go and Divination

King Yao was the first 'civilizer' in many versions of Chinese mythical history. Besides bringing go down from the Heavens and teaching it to his son, he was credited with introducing the art of divination to the Chinese. Along with go, divination was frowned on by the Han rulers and their writers as being 'un-Confucian.' Perhaps this was because, as in the Hellenistic Greek world, diviners and their clients could develop dangerously independent ideas about what they should and should not do.

Again, as with the presence of go in the Yao myths, a virtuous king was associated with an activity that was not so virtuous. It is just a suggestion, but it is quite possible that this was the source, in Han times as well as in Joseph Needham's time and afterwards, of the early symbolic association between go and divination. After all, in a strategy game, knowing the 'future' is all-important.

On the other hand, divination in traditional societies is not really about 'telling the future.'

Philosophy in early China and Tibet was generally of a dualistic nature, indicated by, among other things, oppositions of color. In Tibet, for example, as discussed in my article on Tibetan go in this e-library, Black is the color of death, evil, night, the darkness within the body, wild yaks and the Underworld. White is the color of the stone they place atop their houses, the bones within the darkness of their bodies, the snow on their mountains and the yaks they breed with cattle in order to tame them. The

first mortals in their dualistic, probably Persian-based system were Black and White.

To interpret and manipulate the meanings of these and other symbols in these cultures, a special class of men and women were needed. In Tibet, these were the *Bon* (a designation of the practitioners, not their religion)—rivals of the invading Buddhists from India. Today, they retain a strong presence in parts of rural Tibet, claiming many of the more esoteric practices of Tibetan Buddhism were borrowed from them. (28)

In China, (where, incidentally, the color of death is White) the men who read the oracle bones and turtle shells for the Shang and later kings eventually became known as the *Fong Shi*. Some lived as hermits, others became attached to courts, performing alchemy for many kings with the aim of achieving their immortality (but often resulting in their deaths).

In Siberia such people were known by the catch-all term ‘shaman.’ Now often used in a general sense, they acted as liasons between this world and the next, while, among other things, interpreting signs to divine the auspicious moment for action.

In ancient China, questions were asked of the dead and the answers were interpreted by the patterns of cracks on burnt oracle bones and turtle shells. Today in Taiwan and other parts of the Chinese Diaspora, Daoist mediums still travel by way of trances to the Underworld in order to pose questions.

The dead, however, only know the past, and while they are thought to understand the causes underlying present matters, knowledge and control of the future is beyond their power. The questions asked usually concern the correctness of current or contemplated actions—and if ‘yes,’ or ‘no,’ what bearing the choice will have on present circumstances.

A recent ancestor might be consulted regarding the correctness of a potential marriage, or asked whether current financial problems are a result of failing to perform a burial according to the protocols of *feng shui*. A more distant one would be concerned with more abstract issues, such as the weather, floods, invasions, etc. They were not gods by our definition and by implication only were their answers predictive.

A Tibetan story involving go illustrates the concept of the future in a dualistic society.

A young boy’s father had been murdered and the boy and his mother wanted revenge as quickly as possible. At last, when she felt he had grown old enough to take action, she took out a go set to see whether the moment was propitious. As he played out a game with himself, his right

hand taking White, his left playing Black, at crucial moments the mother shouted Bon power-mantras at him, and the boy's guardian-spirit sat on his right shoulder offering timely advice. Finally, White (that is, he) won, indicating the time was auspicious for finding and killing the man, which he promptly did. (29)

The mother and son were not fortune-telling, nor seeking omens or trying to read the future in our sense of it. They were ascertaining the state of the universe at that moment: was the time auspicious or ill? Who was playing the black stones? Who was playing White? No one. It was the stones that were 'playing' the boy, just as a shaman might be 'danced' by powers greater than him- or herself.

This was not fatalism as Muslims or Christians understand it—it was not the future that had been decided. Nor was it a Tibetan Buddhist salvation-event occurring within a cycle of ever-recurring *Kalpas* in the Hindu manner, where certain stages are good or bad depending on their position in the continuous creation, destruction, and re-creation of the universe. The game was taking place in a continuous present—a Black win would only have indicated that the moment was unpropitious and, therefore, it would be dangerous to proceed.

Go and Shamanism

There are other interesting tie-ins between go and some of the religious features of the ancient dualistic societies of Asia that provide many more questions than answers about the role the game may have played in early myths.

For example, there is the shadowy role of Huang Di, the Yellow Emperor, in the game's development. In one story, (which was also associated with the invention of the compass), Yao fell asleep and dreamed of Huang Di inventing the game and playing the fairy Yong Cheng to develop strategies for his battles with the rebel monster, Chi You. After he learned the game, Yao taught Dan Zhu with the same results as in the other stories. (30)

Another Yellow Emperor tale involves the abilities of shamans to 'fly.'

Mr. Chang, musician-companion to the Yellow Emperor, assumed wings and was given the name of Teacher Huang Yai. At the summit of Chung-nan Mountain he played go. (31)

This is arguably the oldest mythic reference to go (the game most likely being described) and, although not recorded until the later Han, it is reasonable to assume that the story speaks from a very early period.

Needham and others have argued that this kind of 'flying' was done with the aid of psychedelic mushrooms. In this passage, the insect wings of Huang Yai can be identified with the gossamer-winged insects that feed off Siberian magic mushrooms and figure frequently in their shamanist lore. Psychedelic mushrooms have been shown to be cultural motifs in many different cultures throughout the world. For example, in China, the species of deer that appear so frequently in Daoist iconography is the same that Siberian shamans use to locate their magic mushrooms. And, unlike Japanese stones, the shape of Chinese go stones are mushroom-like, as are the small piles of 4,000 year-old Siberian stones.

Also to be considered in the relationship between go, shamanism, magic mushrooms and divination is *The Tale of the Nisan Shamaness*, a Tungusic Manchu oral folk epic that was not written down until the early 1900s. It came from a Siberian area where mushroom-trance divination was replaced by alcohol, perhaps under reverse-cultural pressure, following the Mongol conquest of China in the 1600s.

Teteke was a high-spirited, young, and beautiful shamaness, beseeched by an assistant of a rich official to retrieve from the Underworld his patron's dead son. Before deciding to undertake the trance-induced journey to the accompaniment of drumming, she cast a handful of go stones into a bowl of water and 'observed' them.

*This was translated as an 'act of divination,' but, as in the Tibetan case, Teteke was not seeking to know the future. Instead, she was ritually asking about the state of the universe before proceeding with an action, in this case, a piercing of the earth. She could also be said to be 'reversing time,' or at least a small portion of it.

In Tibet, flying female spirits played go on natural stone boards or during storms with black and white clouds, but how important was it that the shamaness in this story was female? The reversal of many kinship roles in the story indicates that she was representative of the earlier Manchu matriarchal system that was opposed to the patriarchal Sinofication of the Manchu culture.

In this tale, Teteke would presumably have been using Chinese go stones, which are flat on one side and round on the other. In Tibet, similar decisions about impending actions were often based on the number of go stones cast that fell on one side or the other, and this is how go players

also formerly decided Black or White in games—certain combinations meaning different things. In Tibet the color of the stones—unmentioned in the Siberian tale—seemed of no importance.

On the other hand, for the Manchu listeners hearing it unfold, the story's interest would not have been with the stones but the water into which they were thrown. The frequency of references to water—the rivers crossed by the official's assistant to find the shamaness, the several rivers she forded to arrive in the Underworld, her tears, the washing of her face before and after her journey, and, not least, the bowl of water into which she cast the go stones—suggested a motif of separation of the irrational from the rational, marking an individual's transition from a state of ignorance to greater knowledge. Whether it was usual among the Manchus to use go stones or even ordinary stones in such a manner, or whether this also was a Chinese (or Tibetan) custom, has not been commented on. (32)

**There were a number of motifs in the story-telling of Mongolia and Tibet that functioned like those of water in the *Tale of the Nisan Shamaness*. Although go is not mentioned in *The Secret History of the Mongols*, important events in Genghis Khan's life were marked off by the appearance of the number '9.' In this fashion, in some versions of the longest folk tale in the world, the semi-mythical early Tibetan frontier warlord Gesar, (cf. the Byzantine word 'Caesar'), played a divinatory go game before making important decisions. (Although the title of the first chapter of the Buddhist versions is 'The Nine-square Divination Board,' this refers to the Tibetan form of Nine Star Divination, which is discussed in Appendix III).

As in the Yao myths, there are many tantalizing questions and few answers about how go interwove itself with shamanism, magic mushrooms, and divination in Asian belief systems. This is unfortunate because such studies could lead to more information about the physical and symbolic origins and foundations of the game.

Games and Rationality

Anthropologists suggest that games represent something their society values. For games to survive, they had to be games that not only *could* be played, but ones that players, especially parents, thought *should* be played. Recently, these principles have been expressed in Meme Theory, which considers cultural artifacts to be like 'genes' that pass 'horizontally' through generations and 'vertically' through social relations. (34)

Looked at in this way, go survived because it was adopted as something 'good to do' by every major power group in Chinese and Japanese history. This process probably began with the earliest Chinese, who might even have thought of the game in terms of hunting and war and only later attached religious significance to the equipment it was played with. This would have been easy to do because games relate to questions of the Past, Fate and the Future. 'Recreation' was not always an idle word.

Perhaps inspired by the shapes of Daoist divining blocks (see Appendix I), Anthropologist Edward Tyler suggested how religion can become bound up with gambling and divination.

. . . (By) inventing a little game around the number of two-sided dice falling solid-side, black-side, or convex-side up . . . the binary quality of these pieces began to be associated with 'yes' or 'no' . . . Before long, players attempted to appropriate the future by risking something of value against it. The two activities passed into one another and in many cultures were practiced as one and the same. The magician drew lots to learn of the future and the gambler to decide the future; the difference between them was that of 'will' and 'shall.' (33)

It was discovered rather recently, for example, that the dice game *liu bo*, which survived for perhaps more than a thousand years before vanishing, had a mystically patterned game board which appeared on the back of sacred bronze 'TLV' mirrors in the Han period.

However, *liu bo* was largely a game of chance, like backgammon, and go was a game of skill. They differed in the ways they created the ideas of the 'future' in the shared consciousness of the players.

In the case of the Tibetan boy playing go with himself, it would not have mattered if he was playing go or throwing dice, because the universe was 'speaking' through the game. Nor did it matter for the gods of China, who were gambling their immortality on *liu bo*, or the Immortals whom Chikamatsu and the Chinese so lovingly described playing games on mountains that could last as long as 100 human years. They could not foretell the 'future' in terms of who was going to win any better than a human diviner. (35)

However, strict medieval Muslim theologians and rulers often punished chess players who were 'thinking they were thinking' they could outwit God's Fate on their boards. On the other hand, dice playing was approved because the players were humbly accepting 'His Will,' which was speaking through the numbers that came up.

In Christianity, 'Chance,' however, was the 'Enemy.' Medieval Christians generally frowned on dice, since it brought the 'Chaos' and 'Passions' of the Devil into one's life, but they often thought that chess might be good for the development of the rational part of the mind.

Tibetan and Indian Buddhism, (unlike the Chinese style), frowned on its monks playing games of skill which took their minds off their studies. Instead, for recreation, they sanctioned the old Indian dice game of snakes and ladders because its goal was the 'salvation' of the player and the goal of Buddhism.

These types of interactions between cultures and their games can change in the course of history. If it is postulated that the Yao myths were composed in the context of the Earth-oriented, ancestor-worshiping Xia and Shang peoples, one finds a number of elements in the stories that might have been of primary concern to them, but which might not have been so noticeable to later generations, when the tales were written down.

The Yao myth's 'reverse-Oedipal' elements, for example, might point to the idea that Dan Zhu, in refusing to obey his father, could be seen as 'making' his own 'future' or 'destiny.' This would be notable in a culture where, as evidenced by their oracle bones, their ancestors were still advising them on how to live. In fact, as some scholars have proposed about this same period of time in the Middle East, the cognitive development of the concept of what the 'future' was, as we think of it, might not have even evolved yet. (36)

Thus, if the Yao myths were composed during the Xia/Shang period, in the act of teaching a strategy game to Dan Zhu, Yao could have been seen as passing along, not only the mechanics of a game, as it might have been with *liu bo*, but a whole series of principles of action that could be seen as applying to the conduct of life. The irony was that in doing so, he would have been seen as also casting away his own immortal future. The cost of 'coming down from the Heavens' to marry and teach humans their civilization was his own mortality. Depending on which version was being listened to, the cost of throwing aside his eldest son, who might have learned his lessons too well, would be that in his grave, he would have no one to look after him and no one to advise.

In short, this was a time when the emerging ability to even play a strategic game of deliberation might be looked on as a very significant event, with many resonating consequences, especially after it began to live on through the generations of humankind.

Of course, go could have been interpolated at a later date into the myths because these cultural concepts fit so well. However, while awaiting

the evidence of future archeological excavations, can we still speculate that the presence of go in the Yao myths signified that a certain jump had been made in the evolution of consciousness in early mankind? Along with the increasing control of Nature during the Great Divisions, was the 'rational control' of the mind also being celebrated?

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier and discussed in detail Appendix II, the shift from Paleolithic to Neolithic culture might have encouraged the development of strategic thinking games that were distinctly separate from the concurrent processes of 'irrational' divination and which, besides being 'fun' and gambled at, would aid in the process of the developing rational powers of the human mind.

Go and the Irrational

After c. 600 AD, as evidenced in the development of the new form of poetry-as-art, the Confucian attitude about go playing began to change to one we are familiar with today—that go playing is a high and spiritually uplifting art, one of the 'Four Great Accomplishments' (or 'Pleasures') along with painting, music and calligraphy. Scrolls with calligraphy of three Confucian 'virtues,' *Li* ('Propriety'), *Chi* ('Wisdom'), and *Ren* ('Human-heartedness') were first associated with go by a late Tang emperor, and now adorn the walls of many go clubs. (37)

Another signal of its new reputation as a worthy pursuit was the appointment of champion go players to official positions in the 8-10th century AD Tang court. If they could manage the micro-world, it was felt they could certainly govern the macro-world. One, in fact, even became a 'shadow' emperor for a short time.

Along with the blending of the two *feng shui* schools came the amalgamation of changed forms of Daoism and Confucianism with Time- and Heaven-oriented Buddhism and the 'sanctification' of go was complete.

As the 17th century Catholic missionary Mateo Ricci wrote in one of the first descriptions of go playing to reach the West:

Most important among them is a . . . game. On a board of three hundred cabinets, several play together with two hundred stones of which some are white, others black. . . . Upon this game the Officials pounce most eagerly and often they spend the major part of the day on playing . . . He who is experienced in this game is, though he did not distinguish himself in any other matter, respected and invited by all. Yes, even some

also choose them as teachers, according to the customs usual to them, in order that they may thoroughly learn from them the theory of the game.
(38)

This was a far cry from the early Confucian complaints and the citations in old Japanese, Chinese and Tibetan chronicles about the pervasiveness of gambling in the game. In fact, as early as c. 6-700 BC, a character for 'gambling' might have been synonymous with the character for *wei qi*. Today, as seen in traditional Korean, Japanese and Chinese clubs, and so vividly demonstrated in the modern Korean novel, *First Kyu*, the go culture is still actively involved in this activity. It just stays out of sight and under the tables and is not generally talked or written about, especially in popular go histories (and not at all in academia). (39)

As in Ricci's time and, of course, long before, go has always supported a whole class of players who could make a good living as professional gamblers, just as in the Western realms of poker and horse racing. In professional go today, the fact a third party puts up the prize money does not change the situation. In fact, putting a stake on a game and losing against a stronger player has always been regarded as how one paid one's teacher. (40)

However, what modern players might consider to be a dark background of denial about gambling on what they think of as a 'sacred' game can, when an early cultural setting is taken into account, also be seen as something which actually enhances go's sacred qualities.

**Many of China's early gods were addicted to gambling on *liu bo* and their stories of lost immortality illustrate the sacred irrational passions that gambling induced in traditional (and even in modern) societies. Like drinking to excess or taking psychedelic mushrooms, gambling, especially with extremely high stakes, furnished a traditional ecstatic transportation out of the mundane and ordinary into the divine. As mentioned, in India, Shiva and Shakti continue to play an on-going strip-game of Pacheesi that is the mainspring of the universe. Also, North American Indians' gambling games were often performed in a ritual manner at certain times of the year. Sometimes even the equipment was ritually sacrificed. Incidentally, compare this practice to the ritual enshrining in glass cases of some famous old go boards at the Nihon Kiin.

In any case, when this marriage of sacred and not-so-sacred qualities of gambling is added to the sinister Daoist philosophical associations made about go by the Confucians, it becomes even clearer how misperceived the ancient history of the game is.

It was only in the last thirty years that archaeological finds of early Daoist writings have been made. Only seeing copies, before this, most of them had been thought by Confucian *literati* to be forgeries. The new discoveries have helped give a better understanding as to how the *Bing Jia* or *Gui Dao*, sometimes called the 'Effeminate' or the 'Dark Way,' intertwined itself in unacknowledged ways with early Chinese thought.

One problem was that Confucian-oriented scholars were encouraged to accept the idea that the spheres of *wen* (the civil) and *wu* (the military) were separate and that a strategic system of action was not fit for cultured *literati* to study, although everyone was aware of its tenants.

However, and in contrast with the other 'Ways,' by the 4th century BC, the Daoist system of strategy was almost fully developed. One of its first teachers was Sun Zi, author of *The Art of War*. He was a deviser of tactics familiar to all players of go: 'One should first prepare a counter to the enemy's strategy, attack his alliances (his connections), then his armies (his solid groups), and last of all, his walled cities (his territory).' Most important, Sun Zi usually wrote that the idea of managing successful warfare was to maneuver oneself into a position of numerical and strategic superiority, so that '10,000 could defeat one.'

Another was a mysterious personage called Gui Guzi, whose name translates as: 'The Master of the Valley of Death.' He was said to have lived 300 years and, along with his student Wu Qi, who lived around 100 years later (c. 400 BC), he was the true founder of something that did not evolve in Europe (and in a different form) until more than 2000 years later—Chinese praxiology, or a philosophy of action in how to get something done.

Gui Guzi and Wu Qi only appeared to be Confucian-oriented in advising that, in the same way a good go player captains his game and can kill a large group with one well-placed stone, generals could properly manage affairs with correct 'spiritual attitudes' (and organizational skills), so that 'One could defeat 10,000.'

'10,000' in Chinese literature has never referred to merely soldiers, but alludes to general world phenomena—'The 10,000 Things and Affairs of the World.' Since '10,000' can imply '10,000 Dangerous Entanglements' to be avoided, this manner of thinking can paradoxically be labeled a method for seeking not war, but peace. In China, one who triumphed by not fighting was a true winner because one who always battled was one who was exhausted and therefore vulnerable. This thinking extended into all spheres of life.

For example, the mystical Dark Lady came at night to teach the Yellow Emperor in his bedroom about how to succeed in love and war—the winning stratagems were the same. She declared that the first to relinquish his *qi* would lose. All go players will recognize that: ‘One must spare one’s own force while utilizing that of the opponent,’ and ‘One must begin by yielding in order to catch the enemy unawares thereafter.’

Again, *wei qi* is the game of ‘encirclement’ and it has been shown that these Daoist techniques derived from early hunting strategies which always avoided direct involvement. Instead, the idea was to lure large beasts down from the mountains to the plains where they could be surrounded and weakened with nets and dogs and then easily killed.

These techniques common to war, go and the bedroom were expressed more explicitly in an early Daoist text (with glosses by its Ming commentator):

While I am in no hurry, the enemy is hard pressed for time and throws all its forces into the battle [and keeps climaxing]. While the arms clash, I advance and withdraw at will, using the enemy’s proviant and exhausting its food supply. Then I practice the tactics of the Turtle; the Dragon, the Serpent and the Tiger. [The four techniques to delay emission: The Turtle withdraws into itself; the Dragon inhales; the Serpent swallows and does not let go; the Tiger lies patiently in wait for its prey]. The enemy finally surrenders its arms and I gather the fruits of victory. This is chi-chi [Completion] and ensures peace for one generation. I withdraw from the battle-field [descend from my horse] and dismiss my soldiers. I rest quietly to regain my strength while I convey the booty to the storeroom [the bone marrow where the yang from the unreleased semen is stored], thereby increasing my power to the height of strength [in the ni-huan point in the brain]. (41)

Even when practicing the art of painting, one marshaled one’s equipment and resources like commanders preparing for battle and dealt with the same order of *feng shui* conditions that gamers, lovers, politicians, and the military contended with: ‘emptiness,’ ‘fullness,’ ‘form,’ the ‘formless,’ ‘absence,’ ‘force,’ ‘straight action,’ and ‘maneuver.’ Thus it seems that sometimes, even for those who considered the art of war *yin* and worthy of contempt, the *yang* methods could still be considered worthy of approval.

Even social relations and psychology were not exempt from the Daoist gaze. Master Zhuang, one of the rediscovered Strategists,

extended the precepts of Daoism into the realm of psychology, writing of everyday life in terms recognizable to anyone who has played in a go club:

In [human] relations and unions, everyday fighting of the minds is going on, sometimes irresolute, sometimes sly, sometimes secret. While those with little fears are careful and trembly, those with great fears are deliberate. Some bound off like an arrow or crossbow pellet, certain that they are arbiters of right and wrong. Others cling to their position as though they had sworn to be in league with it, intending to defend their position until victory. Others fail like autumn and winter, such is the way they dwindle day by day. Others drown in what they do, you cannot make them turn back . . . Joy, anger, grief, delight, worry, regret fickleness, inflexibility, modesty, willfulness, candour, insolence—music from empty holes, mushrooms springing up in dampness, day and night replacing each other before us, and no one know from where they sprout. (42)

The tactics of the Dark School were best summarized in an anonymous book of the early 17th century called *The 36 Strategies*, although it could have first been written as early as the 5th century AD. Lost until 1941, it resurfaced as a secret military manual of the Chinese Communists and was not released to the public until after the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution had died down in the late 1970s.

**On the surface, its advice seemed simple. For example, ‘Fish in muddy waters’—in other words, complicate the situation. This is, of course, standard advice in go manuals for what White should in a handicap games. ‘Sacrifice the plum to save the peach’ might just as well describe the enticement in a *tesuji* and the benefits of sacrifice. ‘Kill with a borrowed knife’ may refer to playing on one side of the board in order to attack on the other. A Chinese champion, Ma Xiao Chun, wrote *The Thirty-Six Stratagems Applied to Go* to illustrate the use of these principles in the fluidity of middle-game fighting and I described them with more simplified go terms in a chapter towards the end of *Go! More Than a Game*. (43)

The natural affinities between go and the principles of the School of Strategy are evident in the writing of the *Zuo Chuan* around 315 BC.

Ning-tsu is dealing with his ruler not carefully, as he would at go. How is it possible for him to escape disaster? If a go player lifts his stone without definite object, he will not conquer his opponent. How much more must this be the case when one tries to take a king without a definite object? He is sure not to escape ruin. Alas that by one movement a family

whose heads have been ministers for nine generations should be extinguished! (44)

*This passage is discussed in detail in Appendix IV and why it is possible that these early connections between war, go, and philosophy went largely un-remarked by the Daoist military writers—that full-board go strategies may have not have developed until the Han, when playing had advanced enough that go's tactics began to be considered dangerous training grounds for rebellious spirits.

Another reason is that their strategic writings were generally kept inaccessible to scholars and the general public until, in time, they were assumed lost or forged. As a philosophy, these teachings were passed on orally, sometimes by using deliberately enigmatic and mystical language.

On the other hand, the use of their tactics were readily available in historical books such as, *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *Water Margin* and *The Records of the Grand Historian*. The last was Sima Qian's stirring chronicle of the complicated warfare that swept through China after the fall of the Qin, and which the writer(s) of *The 36 Strategies* often dipped into for examples. These strategic lessons were summed up in what is called *cheng yu*, or folk expressions, and one book listed over 1000 of them.

Nor were the illiterate masses excluded from this knowledge base since stories from these books and others were hugely popular. They appeared in comic books, novels and New Years' cards, and were chanted in ballads and acted out in plays performed in theaters, teahouses and marketplaces.

Even in modern times, Mao Ze Dong's explanations of his strategies as being based on *cheng yu*, and descriptions of the often unconscious use of the 36 Strategies by Chinese negotiators in commercial dealings with Westerners, are indications of how the Strategies were simply part of the culture that could go largely unnoticed by their users. (45)

So it might have been with the history of the playing of go. Probably since well before the written history was largely recast to exclude mention of Daoist influences, go was part of the education of relatively every member of the upper and military classes and apparently considered not important enough, or the required skill was too low, to warrant much notice.

**That scarcity of early written records on go must have concealed the interesting developments of which we today have only hints—for example, the feat of being able to replay an entire game from memory, perhaps first mentioned in the 6th century AD, or the development of the

ideas underlying *joseki*, the first sign of which appears in a probable 13th century forgery of a 2nd century game.

Thus it was that in the effort to ignore or denigrate as nonsense and un-philosophical the Dark Way's rival view of reality, the Confucians managed to hide one of the great achievements of early Chinese thought—the recognition of the game-like and protean qualities of war, art, and life—something the West has become aware of and begun to study in the form of game theory and philosophy only within the last century.

Meanwhile, written about positively, negatively or secretly, or not at all, throughout the game's long existence, it was only within the precincts of gaming boards that the remarkable creative and syncretizing impulses of the abstract Chinese mind could come alive without hindrance of rank, age, sex or, with the remarkable handicap system, even skill.

There, this mind was driven to exercise its utmost powers of rational thought by its most unruly passions and vice-versa. In finding that 'life is to go as go is to life' or, as Nobel Prize winner Manfred Eigen once said, ' . . . all the universe is the play of probability,' it seemed to be discovering an amazing synthesis of rational and irrational pleasures that was perhaps once known only by the gods. (46)

FOOTNOTES

(1) This essay is intended to be informative without being tedious. Since nearly every paragraph and often every sentence could be argued about and footnoted, space limitations and reader interest have necessarily kept references to a minimum. I have tried to indicate where the thinking is original and, if an opinion is not generally accepted academic thought, whose it is.

(2) Paolo Zanon; 'Qying Shisanpan (The Classic of Go in Thirteen Chapters): Its History and Translation'; *Annali Di Ca ' Foscari, Estratto XXXV No. 3; Rivista della facolta di Lingue a Letterature Straniere Dell' Universitadi Venezia* 1996; pp. 382-3.

(3) For a scholarly background and bibliography of the history of go see especially John Fairbairn's webpages at <http://www.msoworld.com/mindzine/news/orient/go/go.html> and at <http://www.harrowgo.demon.co.uk>. These have been supplemented by his GoGod CD.

For a 'star-oriented divination' theory about the Zhou origins of go, see: Donald Potter; 'Go in the Classics'; *Go World* No. 37; Autumn; 1984 and No. 42; Winter; 1985-6.

For the origin of that theory, see Joseph Needham; *Science and Civilization in China*; Cambridge Univ. Press; Vol. 4; 1962; pp, 315-32.

For a calendar theory, see Yasunaga Hajime; *Chugoku no Go (Go in China)*; Jiji Tsushin-sha; Tokyo; 1977.

For shamanism (as separate from divination) and go, the only reference seems to be: William Pinkard; 'History and Philosophy'; *The Go Player's Almanac*; Ishi Press; 1992; pp. 7-8.

(4) By c. 250 BC, there seemed to be four loose groupings falling under the general label of philosophical Daoism: the 'mystics' and 'individualists,' who laid an emphasis on personal cultivation; the 'primitivists,' who opted for a revival of an older, simpler society; and the 'rationalists' or 'syncretists'—those who realized the inevitability of conflict in the search for peace and unification during the Warring States period and thus combined inner potency with actions in the civil sphere to realize the Dao and general peace. See, for example, Christopher Rand; 'Chinese Military

Thought and Philosophical Taoism'; *Monumenta Serica* No. 34; 1979-80; pp. 171-218.

For a detailed exploration of the School of Strategies agenda both ancient and modern, see especially Krzysztof Gawlikowski; 'The School of Strategy [*bing jia*] in the Context of Chinese Civilization'; *East and West* 35; 1965; pp. 167-210 (which supplements his work with Joseph Needham in Vol. 5, No. 6 of *Science and Civilization in China*) and Chad Hansen, *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought: A Philosophical Interpretation*; Oxford; 1992 which considerably updates the conflicts between the Confucians and the Daoists.

For a recent overview of the field, see: Karel van der Leeuw; 'The State of Chinese Philosophy in the West: A Bibliographic Introduction'; *China Review International* (U. of Hawaii); Vol. 6; No. 2 Fall, 1999; pp. 312-353. Also available at <http://muse.jhu.edu/demo/cri/6.2leeuw.pdf>

For recent bibliographies, see works by Thomas Cleary and Ralph Sawyer.

For a military-based interpretation of the *Dao De Jing*, see, for example, *The Dao of Peace: Lessons from Ancient China on the Dynamics of Conflict*, Wang Chen; Ralph Sawyer (trans.); Shambala; 1999.

For comparison with the Western point of view on subjects such as cunning, see Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant; *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society* (Janet Lloy, trans.); Univ. Of Chicago Press; 1978.

For modern, often unconscious use of the 36 Strategies in China, see: Tony Fang; *Chinese Business Negotiating Style*; International Business Series; Sage Publications; 1999. (His description of the relation of early Daoism to Confucianism seems slightly flawed, however, perhaps because of his Confucian sympathies).

(5) For a riveting example, see Hong Sung Hwa; *First Kyu*; Good Move Press; 1999.

(6) See FN (30) for a variant tale.

(7) Kathryn Gabriel; *Gambler Way*; Johnson Books; 1996; pp. 21-5. Most of the North American Indian game and gambling observations come from this unique book.

(8) See for example William G. Boltz; 'Kung Kung and the Flood: Reverse Euhemerism in the Yao Tian'; *T'oung Pao* LXVII; 1981; 3-5; Lo Chung

Hong; 'The Metamorphosis of Ancient Chinese Myths'; *Journal of Oriental Studies* XXXIII No. 2; 1995; and Walen Lai's cross-cultural writings in *History of Religions*.

(9) Sarah Allan; *The Heir and the Sage: Dynastic Legend in Early China*; Chinese Materials Center; San Francisco; 1981.

(10) Lo Chung Hong, *op. cit.* p. 192

(11) *Ibid.*

(12) See Footnote 4.

(13) For example, capitalizing the word 'Dao' was a missionary-inspired device that mirrored their concept that there could be only one God, therefore, there could only be one *Dao*.

*(14) Paolo Zanon; 'The Opposition of the Literati to the Game of Wei Qi in Ancient Times'; *Asian and African Studies*; Slovak Academy of Sciences; Vol. 5 No. 1; 1996; p. 72.

For the reference to criminal law, see <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/comparphil-chiwes/> and do a word search for the second appearance of the word 'punishment.'

(15) Zanon, *op. cit.*; p. 74.

(16) D.W. Pankenir; 'Astronomical Dates in Shang and Western Zhou'; *Early China*; Vol. 7; 1981-2.

(17) *Four Major Plays of Chikamatsu*; edited by Donald Keene; Columbia; 1961; p.120. For the importance of *yin* and *yang* in the play, see C. Andrew Gerstle; 'Circles of Fantasy: Convention in the Plays of Chikamatsu'; *Council on East Asian Studies*; Harvard; 1986; 109-111.

(18) I have misplaced the reference. Appendix III discusses why an apparent 19x19 Sui Dynasty board might have been played on as 17x17.

(19) Yasunaga *op. cit.*

** (20) See Shotwell; 'Go in the Snow'; *Go World* 69; Autumn; 1993 and in the reedited version in this e-library: *Go in Ancient and Modern Tibet*. Another interesting anomaly of Tibetan go—that one must wait a move before killing a group or before playing on territory where a stone has been killed, would seem to stem from the influence of later, benevolent Buddhism. But there may be more to this than meets the eye—see the recent Appendix II.

** (21) Stephen L. Field; 'The Numerology of 9-Star Feng Shui: A *hetu luoshu* Resolution of the Mystery of Directional Auspice'; *Journal of Chinese Religions*; Vol. 27; 1999; pp. 13-21 especially. See also his website at <http://fengshuigate.com> and my commentary in Appendix III of this article.

(22) *Ibid.*

(23) *Ibid.*

(24) Gabriel *op. cit.* pp. 14-5.

(25) *China Archeological Journal*; August; 1986. Mr. Tang was very generous in sharing his unpublished thoughts about these findings, which I published originally in *The American Go Journal* 30, No. 3.

(26) *Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*; edited by Dennis Sinor; Cambridge; 1990; p. 91.

(27) See Peter Shotwell; *The Games of Go and Chess: Reflections in Language, Philosophy, Psychology, Computer and Educational Studies*; pp. 1-2 in this e-library for a fuller explanation.

(28) A Bon challenged an encroaching Indian Buddhist to a game of go in a best of three match. The Bon won (presumably because he had played the game more than the Indian). See Yian Zhen Zhong; 'Symbolism of Black and White in Tibet'; *Tibetan Culture Magazine*; 1992. (In Chinese) and Shotwell; 'Go in the Snow'; *Go World* No. 63 Winter 1993, revised edition: *The Game of Go in Ancient and Modern Tibet* on this website.

(29) From Yian Zhen Zhong; *op. cit.*; translation by Sonam Chogyi.

(30) *[Emperor Yao] had a habit of touring his kingdom with the company of his administration and observed the need of his people. One day, he came to the Xuan Yuan Mountain of I County (Anhui) and was tired. Yao fell asleep and had a dream. He dreamt of Emperor Huang Di playing a game of Weiqi against a fairy Yong Cheng. Yao had never seen this game before. Huang Di explained to him that he invented this game in preparation for a battle against the fierce tribal leader Chi You. Black and White stones represent soldiers from both sides. With this game, Huang Di defeated Chi You. Yao asked Huang Di to teach him the game. After he woke up, Yao reconstructed the rules based on his memory. Because of this, Zhang Hua of Han Dynasty wrote in Bowuzhi, 'Yao created Weiqi.' Dan Zhu was the son of Yao's concubine San I. After Yao grew up, he loved to play and had no interest in studying. To enlighten Dan Zhu, Yao taught Dan Zhu Weiqi. Due to Dan Zhu's playful nature, he was quick in learning the game and soon beat his father. Zhang Hua recorded in Bowuzhi, 'Dan Zhu was great in Weiqi.' Unfortunately, Dan has no interest in anything else besides Weiqi. When Yao was advanced in age he decided to elect a Tiandi Official to replace Yihe. His followers recommended Dan Zhu but Yao disagreed, stating that Dan was no good in anything else other than Weiqi. Yao appointed Shun as his successor, giving his two daughters to Shun as wives. Eventually Dan Zhu was exiled to Yan (Yan Zhu Cheng of Shandong).*

From <http://www.yutopian.com>

*Perhaps this non-standard variation is a later-period tale. On the other hand, perhaps it reflects a non-Zhou regional variant. (The Zhou transposed Yao ahead of the Yellow Emperor). Along with its strong Daoist folktale-like overtones, it retains the Confucian Han-like prejudice against go and the idea that Yao did not invent, but only transmitted the game of go.

(31) Pinckard, *op cit.*

(32) Margaret Nowak and Stephen Durrant; *The Tale of the Nisan Shamaness: A Manchu Folk Epic*; Univ. of Washington Press; 1977.

(33) From Edward Tyler; 'The History of Games'; *The Study of Games*; Avedon and Sutton-Smith editors; John Wiley & Sons, 1971; pp. 63-76, quoted in Gabriel, *op. cit.* p. 11

(34) When it comes to details, Meme Theory is very controversial, but the basic ideas seem sound enough to use as an illustration of the process of transmission of cultural artifacts.

(35) The Tang poet Meng Qiao wrote a Daoist-inspired poem after visiting the Stone Bridge area. The rainbow the woodcutter sees indicates he is coming back from the 'Other Side.' When he returned to his village, everyone he knew was dead and his name had been forgotten.

*In the immortal world what one day sees
For the human world a thousand years lacks*

*Two qi players have not surrounded their positions
While 10,000 earthly matters have emptied*

*The woodchopper turns to the path home
His axe handle rotten from the wind*

*The only thing left is the Stone Bridge
He alone sees across an orange-red rainbow*

(36) For an interesting commentary on the subject, see the controversial 'historical psychiatrist' Julian Jaynes; *The Origins of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*; Houghton-Mifflin; Reissue Edition 1990. Although Jaynes did not include China in his survey of early consciousness (which seems to fit his case perfectly), his theory (which has been heavily criticized by historical scholars) is related to other 'non-traditional' attempts to link the changes in religious worship and culture to changes in the evolving nature of consciousness and the development of writing.

(37) For a general overview of these attitudes, see Donald Potter; 'The Three Virtues of Go'; *Go World*; No. 41; Autumn; 1985, Paolo Zanon; 'The Opposition of the Literati to the Game of Weiqi in Ancient China'; *Asian and African Studies*; Vol. 5; No. 1; 1996; pp. 70-82, Zu-Yan Chen; 'The Art of Black and White: Wei-Qi in Chinese Poetry'; *Journal of the American Oriental Society*; Vol. 117; No. 4; 1997; pp. 643-53.

See also, Peter Shotwell; 'Doers and Dreamers: The Go Poetry of Su Shi and Chi Yun'; *American Go Journal*; Vol. 33; No. 3; Fall; 1999, updated

and expanded on this website, which extends Chen's discussion of the Daoist 'peaceful' elements in Shi and Yun's poetry to include what seem to be implicit and subtle motifs of revenge.

(38) Japp K. Blom; 'Go in Europe in the 17th Century'; *Go World*; No. 27; Spring; 1982 p. 51 and in his expanded version in Bozulich (ed.); *The Go Player's Almanac 2001*; Kiseido; 2001.

** (39) The second oldest reference to go, if it is authentic, states:

Pu Song (or Wu Cao), an immortal or a learned person of the Warring States Period (c. 700 BC), (played?) (made?) (gambled at?) wei qi.

This was written down during the Ming dynasty c. 1300 AD by a writer who was quoting an earlier source. As John Fairbairn pointed out in a private communication, this quote is a highly debatable subject, the complexities of which are too vast and too detailed to go into in an essay like this—perhaps he will discuss this in his *GoGod* CD.

(40) Before his death, Dr. Hong Sung Hwa, author of *First Kyu*, commented that the Korean practice of *bagneki* betting—the greater the win, the greater the amount won—also results in a wilder style of games. Stirred on by 'trash-talking,' the player who is ahead wants to win by a lot and the one behind tends to take greater chances on long shots, deepening the drama and psychological involvement.

(41) The text and Ming commentary in Chinese appear in Robert van Gulik; *Erotic Colour Prints of the Ming Period With an essay on Chinese Sex Life from the Han to the Ch'ing Dynasty BC 206-AD 1644*; 2 folio 91/12; Tokyo, 1951 as quoted in Gawlikowsky, *op. cit.*; pp. 194-5. Much of the material presented in this section comes from his article.

(42) Translated by Watson, Pozdneeva and Gawlikowski in Needham, Yates, Gawlikowsky, McEwen, and Ling; *Science and Civilization in China*; Vol. 5 No. 6; 1994; p. 90.

(43) Ma Xiaochun; *The Thirty-Six Stratagems Applied to Go* (translated by Roy C. Schmidt); Yutopian; Santa Monica; 1996.

There were more subtle meanings that could be extracted from the 36 Strategies, often by looking at the hexagrams that accompanied them—at least some in the *Yi Jing* have always been thought to have contained war instruction.

For example, on the surface, the 15th Strategy, ‘Lure the tiger down from the mountain,’ seems to mean that it is easier to hunt a tiger on the plains than in its mountain jungle habitat, or as the go proverb advises, ‘Do not play where your opponent is strong.’

In a larger sense, it could also mean that it was wiser to net a tiger than to try to meet him head-on. Once this was done, dogs rather than men could be used to finish the tiger off. As mentioned in the text, this was the technique of early Chinese hunting which evolved into war techniques as demonstrated in A.A. Serkina; ‘Znacenie oboty v Kitae v epobu gadatelnyh kostej’ (‘On the Significance of Hunting in the Oracle-bone Period’); *Kratkie Izvestija Instituta Narodov Azii AN SSSR*; 1963; no. 61, pp. 88-95, cited in Galikowski; *op. cit.*; p. 188.

Since the strategies were Daoism in action, they did not focus on giving set answers to specific situations. Rather, their purpose seems to be for awakening the reasoning powers when analyzing a situation. The point of the 15th strategy seems to call attention to who is the hunter and who is the hunted. Consequently, who thought they were the hunter (and acted accordingly) and who thought they were the hunted could be used by the astute strategist. As happened continually in the war that Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Ze Dong fought in the 1930s and 40s, it might have been the important thing was not the tiger, but the tiger’s home in the mountain, which would be left defenseless when it was down on the plain.

The 23rd strategy, ‘Befriend those far-away while attacking those near-by’ (and whose hexagram is ‘Fire on the Lake’) was one that Qin Shi Huang was advised to use in order to forge the first empire of China out of the Warring States.

However, since the intention is that those far away will soon become neighbors, the idea of this strategy is to imply that, in order to remain strong, it is best to create suspicions as to who is a friend and who is not. That way they will fight each other and become weak. In other words, as on the go board, the advice is to ‘think globally, act locally’ and steer the opponent towards contradictions and self-destruction in a true Daoist fashion.

(44) James Legge; *The Ch’un Ts’ew with The Tso Chuan; The Chinese Classics V* (reprint); Southern Materials Center; Taipei, 1983; p. 517, as

quoted by Donald L. Potter; 'Go in the Classics'; *Go World*; No. 37; Autumn; 1984.

(45) See Fang, *op. cit.*

Scott Boorman's book, *The Protracted Game: A Wei-Ch'i Interpretation of Maoist Revolutionary Strategy*, Oxford; 1969 maintained that Mao's strategies were 'like' go strategies, however there were many flaws in his reasoning. Mao himself said his thoughts were based on *cheng yu* (beginning with *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*) and Chinese professional go players told me that it was only a pleasant 'myth' that he was thinking of go. Surprisingly, although there are many references to go playing as warfare, there are very few tales of warriors laying out battle strategies with go stones.

(46) Manfred Eigan and Ruthilde Winkler; *The Laws of the Game: How the Principles of Nature Govern Chance*; Harper and Row; 1983.