

UNDERSTANDING CHESS: PART I

THE ART OF CHESS



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Foreword

This book is an oddity enough, but after all I want to push the envelope. This book is ultimately about Tao (yin and yang) and Qi (the combination of which is Te), as applied to the art of war... as applied to playing chess. All of its topics relate to these concepts at their core. The resulting purpose therefore is to convince you of, first, the brilliance of the Chinese sciences, and second, the ultimate reality of their supremacy beyond the veil of what you *physically* see, both on the board, and in life.

Qi, for example, has often been translated as energy. But it also has been translated as air or breath. Its properties are not entirely unlike dark matter, either. So we know, as the Chinese and Indians (with prajna) say, it is a *substance*. It is not something you can inject or bottle, but there is a science of finding, attracting, capturing, holding (as in a capacitor), and using or releasing. Qi must move, or it becomes stagnant, as if it expires. More likely it simply converts as the yang is subsumed by the yin. Humans, being a yang species, require fresh Qi (from ripe foods, cooked but not ruined, and from fresh water and air); or too much stagnant Qi and disease will follow, whether of the mind, spirit, or body.

Yin and Yang themselves are also things, but not substances - although all substances are divided into each classification to varying isotopic percentages of each - they are **forces** as well as **processes**. Their mutual, inexorable interactions, transformations, and regulations become the very source of the conversion of old/stagnant Qi into fresh, powerful Qi. Tao is merely this constant process and change, whether microscopic or macroscopic.

This is an important point, and something most especially difficult for westerners to understand, and embrace. Many of even the most knowledgeable in the west, even scholars, cannot help but frame these terms in the rote, standard, boxed-in ideas that were inherited from Victorian sinology, and therefore affected by the arrogant period of western post "Enlightenment" sciences which came to conclusions in a vain effort to eliminate mystery. Rather, we now see in western quantum-relativity that we have more mysteries for every 'conclusion' reached... however the effect upon other studies such as sinology, which then informed the media, has become near permanent. Qi equals energy is not accurate, but it is a pervasive and reasonable belief; however it is limited and ultimately: wrong.

One must come to understand that true, deep, understanding of the Art of War is *directly* related to these topics. Even very established bingfa experts, such as Ralph D. Sawyer, have made the mistake of missing this truth. For example, translating Qi as "spirit" (as in being 'spirited' or having exaltation/excitement) leads to all sorts of misunderstandings. They aren't the "end of the world" type, but just enough. For example, when a commander should ascertain the Qi of a city before deciding whether or not to siege it, the text literally means sense the presence of Qi (an amalgamation of supplies, morale, wholesomeness, wariness, etc...). If it meant only "does the city have spirit," that implies only either some kind of jubilation (as Troy had had just before burning, therefore disproving the concept), or will to fight. Many cities have had the will to fight but lost in a siege. The Qi is not this way. More to reality it is "is the Force with them?" to paraphrase Star Wars. Understood this way, in terms of having *something*, or not having it, anyone can understand the idea. In the same way that even a child can discern the difference between a bug that is alive (with Qi), and dead (without Qi). And a child, let alone a supposedly more advanced adult, can determine how much Qi they have versus that of an opponent (like a bug). A child knows an ant is no threat, but a spider, which has a nasty bite and even poison, is a threat, one that must be approached carefully.

The other related concepts in the book, most especially Shi, are directly related to having or not having Qi (and therefore Te, "inner power"). So, the difficulty of strategists, especially American ones, and scholars in understanding Shi is directly related to whether or not they understand this exact point about Qi. It is **real**. It is not merely nerves that are flowing with energy, nor just air in the lungs, nor endorphins. It is an invisible, semi-fluid, semi gaseous, substance, which can be gathered, and can be dispersed. **All** bingfa (arts of war) techniques were, like acupuncture, nothing more than ways to modify, moderate, and modulate the energy levels of the opponent and one's own armies.

What does this mean in the higher reality found while playing chess? It means that from the moment one wishes to play (or is made to play by another), till the end of the game, one must become aware of the various levels of Qi within the

pieces, the board, the environment, and the opponent. And anything that affects the Qi - even the lighting in the room, but most especially willpower, energetic feeling, and mental focus - will be important. It is sometimes, more important than the actual skill or techniques. Qi may actually lead to timing changes therefore enabling the weaker (normally) to triumph, or the average to appear mystically experienced.

More than anything I hope to impart this Chinese (and Indian) wisdom upon the reader, for they can use it for healing, career, self-defense, and raising a family. This is the most important outcome of coming to full wisdom of the Art of War and, in this case, as received through consistent play of chess. Therefore I say "Understanding Chess" is less about moves, techniques, and checkmates, as it is about mastering life's moves. A 'self-help-guru' of the 20th century once remarked that all situations were like cards: two sided. Solutions and problems. And that life was about "playing the right side of the card" at all times. That is a full mastery of chess.

~Shifu R. Careaga

"Knowing others is intelligence; knowing yourself is true wisdom. Mastering others is strength; mastering yourself is true power. If you realize that you have enough, you are truly rich."

— Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*

"If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.... The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting."

— Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

Introduction

This is not your ordinary Chess book. In fact, I've never read an ordinary - or any - Chess book. It's not that I don't read, I love to read, and read a lot. I just never read a Chess book. So maybe it's ordinary and I don't know it? Either way, I don't think it is common to combine Chess strategy and gameplay with the Art of War AND Gung Fu (and Tai Chi) philosophy. I guarantee you, no one is doing it with Zongheng theory!

But I'm not here to brag. Far from it. I'm not a ranked master, and never will call myself a Master (at anything). I know what a Master looks like and I am not it. Some will say I'm "trying" to be one by denying, or dressing, or taking the title Shifu (which means roughly teacher-healer). But the Western concept of a Master (and consequently what a western Master looks like) is different than the Chinese concept (more appropriately called a Zhengren, or Completely Real Man). In the West, a Master need not have any sort of control over himself but be in "complete" control of an external thing, skill, occupation, or a person (such as in slavery). So when a person in the West recognizes a Shifu as a Master, they will say it, and some will misunderstand.

No I am not that kind of Master, nor do I feel a Zhengren either. But rather I have found a path to mastery, and that is through the "Chinese System". By the study of Gongfu and Taoism and the Art of War texts, I have changed as a Chess player from what I call a tier 2 player to a tier 3, and as I go along my progress seems limitless.¹ I do not know if that is the case for Chess aficionados, but it is in my case, and this is wholly to do with Tao and with the Chinese concept of Shi. At any rate, I now wish to share this secret to anyone who wants to be a different kind of Chess player. Bobby Fischer was a Master in every Western sense of the word. And now he's gone and no one knows why or how, and why a guy with that level of skill couldn't hack it in regular life. Who wants to have that kind of power, and yet remain - in life - powerless?

I want to write a book for you that will give you not just a new style of play, an unlimited style (and truth be told probably the way the avant garde of masters of Chess really look at things, and not how it is portrayed and taught) that will empower your REAL LIFE. What I have noticed is how tier 1 and tier 2 players play reflects their behaviors in real life, much the same way with how people "stick hands" does. Are they too timid, imbalanced, aggressive, crooked, dominant in the wrong areas, indecisive, foolhardy, got a "loser's limp"², or armchair philosophers? Their chess style reflects the person, perfectly.

Regarding this book, my plan is to use images taken of live games, a few diagrams, a lot of key concepts, and to lay out a framework that will take even a complete novice from tier 1 to 3. The follow-up books will build upon "hidden" concepts that, again have been probably kept secret (I wouldn't know for sure, not being an "insider"), if known will free the individual from a western "wire framework" approach (lit: linear and limited) to an eastern "fluid framework". It will be like playing Go, but more interesting, and certainly more definitive (there is no checkmate in Go, it can last forever theoretically).

How shall a westerner use this book? I hope for more than a placemat. I hope for creating clubs, and having fun, or teaching Tai Chi, or by the end of Book III: doing Gungfu! But alas, the vast majority will be - literally - unable to understand this text. This is not some evil plot on my part, it is the mere fact that only "when the student is ready, will the teacher appear" and quite frankly... not all of you are ready. Most of you will have a "fog of war" surrounding you, in the form of distractions, other interests, preconceived notions, past history playing Chess, etc... Again: I'm not saying I can

¹ A tier 1 player is marked by a person who is not simply a beginner (they may have played for years), but cannot get past the me-ness of play. A tier 2 person can see both sides, and does, but often with a $a+b+c=d$ mentality that does not figure in the chance choices of the opponent. The typical tier 3 approach has been to calculate ALL possible outcomes of moves, countermeasures, and counter-countermeasures. But that is not a true tier 3 approach, but a mere extension of the illusion of ultimate control in the tier 2 level.

² I may at any time make a reference to textual concepts from various gurus and "sources"; I typically will not cite the source and expect the reader to Google it if they want more information. This is not a scholar's text, it is an engineer's text. A pragmatic manual utilizing philosophy to get results.

beat anyone, or any Chess Masters. I tell you what, though. I can play them, drink tea, read, and remain fairly certain I can make a good game of it, and I can do this in real life, as well.

Regarding myself, - little ole me - I was taught by my cousin to play when I was around nine years of age. I thought when I beat him (and he never played me again) I was pretty good. In college I had a roommate that used to dust me thoroughly after work. Just destroy and pillage my soul. It was glorious. He was a hacker, so he was quite a logic man. When I began to beat him over and over he quit playing me. Since then I've played Chess all over, and most importantly: in real life. I've made Chess moves in "sticky situations" up to four years in advance, just for that anticipation and payoff that comes from defeating a foe. Ever since I was little I've been the victim of aggression from expectant people who want to own my life and my Qi (Ch'i), and I have beat them off, and I want to teach you how, too. No one should be the victim of life and circumstance, and certainly not of their own bad karma. I'd like to set things aright for you, if you'll give me the time to help reprogram your mind. It'll take some "tilling" and some "fertilizing"... some foreign concepts will have to take root and grow (like mycelium) to repair the damage done by a toxic culture and toxic life-environment, but overall I think **anyone** can learn Chess, and can learn to win in real life.

Join me as we build a "house" brick by brick: foundations, then framework, then facade, roof, and finally detailed interior. We'll make a magic castle out of invisible clay. When we're done, you'll say "I did it myself." If you stick with it. If not, that's okay too. Not every path is for every person, even if anyone can trod upon it.

Disclaimer

Since originally writing this text, I've taken to using engines (such as Stockfish on chess.com) to analyze my games and those of the grandmasters and historical master games. I have a couple thoughts on this. First, it does of course force me to get used to the modern chess standards for movement and descriptions. Secondly, I am an average player online, because many of my techniques rely on personal touches/presence. Online chess requires pure calculation, there are time limits (which generates mistakes), and worst of all: some people are using engines to cheat. However, I do recommend this for a few reasons.

Firstly, when I first started using engines I had a minor perfectionist panic attack, as the engine analysis is brutal about every single mistake and "inaccuracies." I discovered that some of my instincts were good, or great, and some were terrible. Next, the analysis is based on a different, but compatible-with, theory in this book: the concept of "lines." So a line would be a series of pre-calculated and expected moves, which leads the computer to analyze a +/- value of your current score (rather than the points). A + score representing the advancement of moves for white, and - for black. So +5.45 would mean that black is 5.45 moves behind white. This is important because it also represents the concept of positional chess (vs. materialistic Tier 2 chess). However, I also discovered that grandmaster style chess, especially in modern games is both materialistic and full of unusual lines, based around pre-named openings and defenses.

This is **not** an easy or novice way to learn chess. Playing this way or learning this style dropped my rank as I tried to learn it. You can subscribe to youtube channel Agadmator to learn more about these styles. Funny thing: when I started to worry about this style I went on and played it and won 6 straight, including a 3 move checkmate. But, given my personal goal to reach the quality of a 2600+ ranked player, I keep learning the odd style of "lines" and the odd choices made which defy the engines, by the grandmasters. It may surprise and elate you to know that the world's highest ranked grandmaster, Magnus Carlsen regularly makes "mistakes" and even "blunders" according to Stockfish. That doesn't mean he was wrong. For example in one game I was down -8 or more to the computer, and by using the concept in this book of piercing a vacuum (due to shi, using instinct), I pushed a single pawn all the way till it was across, and rapidly went into checkmating the computer.

But, there's a more important lesson that I feel has escaped the vast majority of people about these pre-ordained lines and openings. The lesson is when looking at Stockfish analysis, and the momentum meter. What the meter teaches us is those games are often lost early on, within 10-12 moves, when an experimental move to go from the opening (which we are assuming wasn't poorly performed) into the mid-game. When that happens, I found that the engine is very strict about deviating from the line, and momentum can go against you. What that means is - to win - you have to add extra moves, perhaps 20 or 30 more moves to achieve the victory you should given your better overall position (Shi). This is a tremendous lesson. When you are learning these instinctual morphings, it's important to experiment. So play against the

computer and practice trying to overcome momentum, then open the analysis, find the moment where the momentum slipped, figure out your “inaccuracies” and mistakes, etc. and then try again *from that point on*. Keep both games open and you will find the better line saves time, and ultimately makes more Art of War sense.

As for inaccuracies, bear in mind these are deviations from the prescribed lines, they are minor but still possess significant value. For example if the computer advises a4 and you move a3. It isn't a mistake, per se, and grandmaster tournament games of hours and hours will invariably contain inaccuracies. But what you will find is that, for the most part, the winner is the one with the least inaccuracies, to say nothing of mistakes and blunders which cause the momentum to shift so fast.

Does a person need to learn this way to become a tier 3 player who enjoys the game? Absolutely not. But if you play for rank, in this modern age of analysis and engines, you will need every edge you can get. And remember what the computer's favorite dictum is: “move where I can get you and you can't get me to threaten the most pieces... in 4 moves from now.” Yes, usually when you experiment with a line, or the computer tries to hatch a mou (stratagem), it does so by dangling lures that you feel compelled to take, so that in 3, 4, or 5 moves it's able to place a piece (most often a knight) in a position you can basically do nothing about, but severely cramps your mobility. This isn't how humans play, and this book is not about either tournament play nor beating the computer AI. Personally I put it on level 9 or 10, and just let it **destroy me** so that I learn the quickest this “line” method and the styles of the tournament grandmasters. But that will probably not be enjoyable for most people, and certainly is not reflective of this book. With this book's style you will be smart, capable, and will win and learn while losing. But if you intend to be the next Magnus Carlsen: subscribe to Agadmator, and learn the way the engines see the game. It's also Art of War, but is entirely dependent on pure calculation, and not upon the multi-factorials of human interaction.

Prologue

To play Tier 3 Chess, you have to abandon your limited mind. This limited mind may already be a full cup. Fine: I don't ask you to empty the cup. I ask you to pour it into a big pitcher, and mix it with a new brew.

Most of the concepts in this book will be found elsewhere, but probably not in such an internally consistent manner. And certainly more "secularized" meaning dry, and without the rich content of philosophy and culture to aid in comprehension. I'm not critiquing a single other person's book. I'm just saying there's a reason no one buys and reads Chess books other than aficionados. Why would they? Memorizing moves? Memorizing strategies? It's not just dry: it's dead. Life comes from the interplay of yin and yang forces, which makes things anew and fresh. You'll read more about yin and yang in the body of the text (as well as the Art of War and of Zongheng theory, and Taoism, etc...). But I first want you to grasp this idea that no tall knowledge fits into one small cup. You don't have to abandon yourself to find a greater sense of self and purpose. It's not a stretch to think "my Chess play should reflect how I handle life".

If you can grasp and appreciate that concept, you can really skip the rest of the book and after ten years of play and teaching/research, end up with most of these answers. I still doubt you'd make all the connections, not because I'm a virtuoso (quite the opposite, unfortunately for me), but because I've reached into dozens of wells of knowledge to create one solid mixture for you. One medicine (or elixir). This medicine can teach you to play Chess or defend your family or heal your health. But above all it can help you to get Gung Fu, and that can be applied anywhere. Gung Fu is "excellence of skill" and is not specific to martial arts. Google: "Dao of Cow" to read the classic story of Chinese Gung Fu (from Zhuangzi/Chuang Tzu³).

Enjoy the text as a fresh spring stroll. If it ever becomes dull, heavy, or abrasive, then you need to put it down and go for a walk or do something else. For more information on many concepts, you can check out www.shifucareaga.com and subscribe for more learning and access to key information.

FYI, the Art of War consists of only four stages (according to Victor Mair):

“1) quan 權 “assessment,”

2) shi 勢 “configuration,”

3) ji 機 “which indicates the moment at which the “configuration” of the various influences is most propitious for action,”

4) mou 謀 “stratagem.”

This is a kind of decision-cycle Sun Tzu style. The first step "quan 權" is a slippery, yet essential, concept which conveys an array of meanings that range from 'power' to 'authority', 'right,' flexibility,' 'initiative,' 'expediency,' 'adaptability,' 'estimation,' 'opportune moment,' 'tactical balance of power,' and 'advantageous position' (in the last sense showing its close kinship to shi 勢 “configuration,”).

So we read in AOW 1:17-18,

"When an advantageous assessment has been heeded, one must create for it a favorable configuration to assist the war effort externally. A favorable configuration is one that signifies the creation of power in accordance with advantage."

Source: "The Art of War: Sun Zi's Military Methods," by Victor Mair (2009)

³ In general I strive to use pinyin, but in many cases the Wade-Giles is more recognized and common, and I will use it (eg: Tao Te Ching vs Dao De Jing, I Ching vs Yi Jing). Regarding concepts which have no translation I will use the pinyin (such as Qi), and those which have two to five words- I may hyphenate (such as Shi-position vs Shi-power). Those which sound alike but are different Chinese words I may include the character the first time, or simply use non-capitalization. For example, Shi-propensity versus shi-excess; I'll just write shi, or excess, and not capitalize it.

If a quote comes from another source it'll be [sic] produced. In the appendix to this book there will be a Romanized comparison chart. There will also be a brief glossary of terms with short discussions of each and bibliographical sources for more information, if so desired.

The History of Chess

Go, Go, Gadget Conquer

Go 圍棋, or Weiqi (wayy-chee) as it is called in Mandarin, is an ancient game. No one is certain how old the game is, but perhaps as much as 2,500 years old or more. It is referred to in Confucian texts of the Qin and Han era, and may go back to the later Zhou period (although it is certain that Confucius would not approve of the Go societies that later flourished as sort of “pool halls” of ancient China!). It is a relatively simple game of Yin and Yang conquering each other. Yin (black) moves first, representing the origin of things in darkness and void, and also Yin never stops moves (as it is always still). Yang (white) must therefore outwit the opponent, both seeking to become the Ba 霸 - hegemon. The game, though simple in terms of setup, is inexplicably complex, as the interplay of yin and yang leads “to the 10,000 [myriad] things”.

This book isn't about Go, but I want to encourage people to study up on Go, given that the style of Chess played in this book is actually Go-based. It is a style of becoming Hegemon, and winning an entire war, rather than a simple winning of a battle. The assumption in most Chess games is that “to win is everything.”



This is not the premise of Go, life, or this style of chess (tier 3 play). It is **how** you win, **why**, and **can you do it again if they attacked?** The game of Go has no “checkmate” as it has no “king” (you are the king). So it can literally go forever, although most people tire of it after the board is $\frac{2}{3} : \frac{1}{3}$ or about 45 minutes for most people. Westerners do not usually have the patience and egolessness to shamelessly pick off tiny amounts of faceless pieces until they have reacquired the board. Most have a Monopoly mindset, and if you aren't good at Monopoly, you never want to play, because you lose everything. This is a self-defeating mindset in life, because rarely is anything **all winning** or **all loss**. So it seems that gameplay does not match adult life (for most people) and they give up games. But in reality, all that is necessary is a more broadened perspective on what games can do for you; their ROI.

Go has no unique history to speak of, no inventor. It is played on a 19x19 board usually, though it could be larger or smaller. It can be “won” by counting captured pieces or evaluating territory, or by not quitting (forfeiting). But in reality a true victory is measured by who has conquered the middle and holds hegemony over the board. Over time, this would just rotate or flip back and forth, both masters sipping tea or drinking wine, perhaps reading poetry or reciting analects and couplets, waxing philosophic on Tao... it's quite poetic. And unfortunately, also anachronistic to the modern “online” world where short-term reward trumps the value of long term (hours long) gameplay with friends. It was made long before modern type games, so when people play games for hours they tend to play video games or modern cos-play/RPG games. Still, one may find a sense of nostalgia for a time when two sages relaxing, dressed in black and white, each taking the form of yin and yang itself could mesmerize the audience for hours as the whole world pivoted about these two fathomless masters who played a game of mostly unseen characters and players, rather than with such overt/obvious “pieces”.

Xiangqi, Chinese Chess

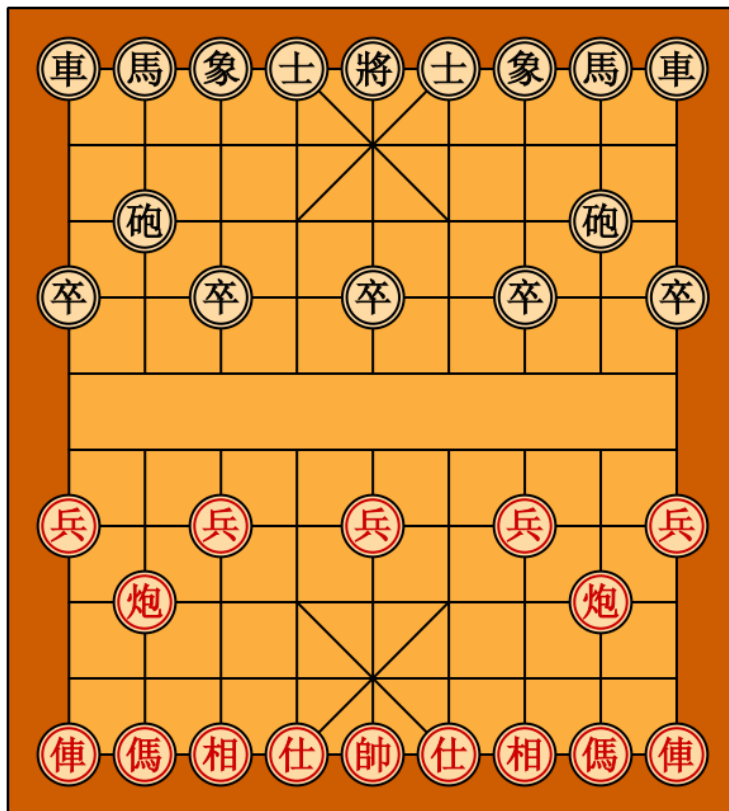
Xiangqi 象棋 (shee-ahng-chee), is a more advanced game that is also quite old, with the first version arising out of the Song Dynasty (1127–1279 CE). It was mentioned in a poem by Liu Kechuang. The game is still quite popular in China and Vietnam. It has three systems of play with seven types of pieces: General, Advisor, Elephant, Horse, Chariot, Cannon, and Soldier. Each has, accordingly, different values and uses (like International Chess), and various tactics.

The game is most likely a derivative and modification of Chaturanga with conformity to Go type board (it has the Elephant piece as well, and is older, and many things were imported from India during the Song dynasty; see Journey to the West).

The whole point of creating more pieces is to have more room for tactical and strategic play. With this there is a tendency to become more focused on the board and on the pieces present, and less on the individual you are playing.

In Go, the interplay between the people playing is incredibly important, but as the structure of the game grows, the interaction of the people becomes less, since both sides are thinking more. This leads to less interaction and silent-interplay as much as

calculation. This is not to say it is bad, just a more localization of play, versus the gameplay taking place etherically or on another plane of consciousness that is still mutually shared.



This also happens to be a game you commonly see in Kung Fu films, rather than Go (although Weiqi was featured in the epic film “Hero” played just before the fight between Donnie Yen and Jet Li).

Shogi, Japanese Chess

Shogi 将棋 (show-gee), or General’s Game, is a derivative of Xiangqi, and ergo of Chaturanga as well. It has a number of various styles of play and is commonly seen in anime, manga, and popular TV and film. It was first recorded in the Nichureki (late Heian period c. 1120), but its present form arrived in the 16th century, making it roughly the same age as western Chess.

It also uses the white and black side (as king only), but plays inside the squares and eliminates the diagonal lines. It has two other unique features. There is a spacing between the two rows of koma (pieces) to start, and has something called a “drop rule” which allows the pieces to return to the board (mimicking Ronin who switched sides). It starts with 1 king, 1 rook, 1 bishop, 2 gold generals, 2 silver generals, 2 knights, 2 lances, and 9 pawns. In total, 20 wedge shaped koma.



Unfortunately the wedge shape with just characters on them has kept westerners from playing Shogi, and the Japanese have never “inherited” the shaped pieces from Chaturanga/Chess.

Chaturanga, Indian Chess

Chaturanga चतुरङ्ग; caturāṅga, or catur, is the ancient 6th-7th century game that became modern International Chess. It is played on the same 8x8 board, within the squares, and has the same basic setup, except with elephant pieces instead of bishops, and ministers instead of queens. Also, the ministers line up asymmetrically, as opposed to European Chess, and of course, some of the moves are different. The original pawns, like in Chess, could only move one space forward no matter what.

In particular, the Gaja or Elephant piece has several ways of moving which make it important: it can move like the Xiangqi elephant, up 2 over 2, and jump pieces; one step in any diagonal direction, or two moves in any orthogonal direction, jumping the first piece.

Being the oldest non-Go Chess game, it is considered the official grandfather of Chess, with a direct lineage to European Chess. It is also played in a four person variant called Chaturanji.



International (European) Chess



The space between the first known references to Catur and to Chess is not long, only a hundred to four hundred years depending on the source and location. In that time, the game migrated to Persia where it was known as Chatrang. It's not hard to see how the words for king in the languages eventually evolved into "check" and "chess" via the silk routes and sailors and traders of the Mediterranean.

Eventually, by the 9th century the game was being played in Moorish Spain and by 1000 CE it had spread throughout the Holy Roman Empire. The game, as said before had already spun off the Go-Catur offspring of Xiangqi, and both represent

feudalistic strategy-battle simulations. In the 13th century, Chess was written about in a manuscript on games called “Libro de los juegos (Book of the Games)”.

By the 15th century the game had been modified to include such advanced moves as Castling and En Passante, and not the Gaja-like moves for the Bishop, and it has been played the same way ever since the 16th Century when official rules were introduced. The game also had evolved to use a queen rather than a Vizier (as nothing and no one should come between Man and Wife, the Christians thought)* and a Bishop rather than extra cavalry (Elephants were not used in warfare in Europe).

In 1886 the first World Chess Championship was held, won by Wilhelm Steinitz. Since then innovations in the game have come more from the players' end, such as associations, tournaments, computerization, massive cultural fanfare, video gaming, and even iconic filmography such as “wizard's chess” in the first Harry Potter.

Chess is so appealing because, unlike Checkers, it is dynamic and versatile, with nearly endless types of games to be played... as well as religious, political, and social undertones which are old, but not forgotten. The tension between royalty and Church makes for some interesting supposition, such as why the Bishop is the piece that is more limited whereas the Queen can move as the Bishop and the Rook.

The downside to Chess is that it has not evolved much since the 16th Century in gameplay. I hope one day to introduce a method that unites some of the original Go magic, Xiangqi brilliance, with more pieces that allow a more versatile style of play. But to be sure, the original, classic Chess is not going anywhere soon, and will be lauded as a game masterpiece for probably another thousand years.

NOTE: Originally, in warfare, when a King assigned a Minister to war, the Minister did most of the decision making, moving, and had to be very versatile and powerful. Of course, this led to some famous coups, such as i the end of the Three Kingdoms Period when the Sima (Ssu-ma) family took over the Empire from the inept Cao family (Sima Yi had ministered to Prime Minister (Shogun, essentially) Cao Cao), and annexed the kingdoms of Shu and Wu (joining them with Wei), at the start of the Jin dynasty. It is likely it was this idea which turned off the royal families, and so an imperially mandated “reform” of the game which fit more in line with the idea that royal families could **never** be overthrown led to a replacement in the Vizier piece with a Queen.

Chapter 1 - Playing Chess

Those of you who already know how to play chess may completely skip this chapter. It is a fact, though, that many people still - still - do not know how to play. The vast majority of my friends, family, colleagues, professors, etc... are not even mere novices of the game, and could not name the pieces (in particular the Knight, calling it the "Horse").

This is almost as great a statement about our failing education system as the fact that many children cannot identify the first President or name common vegetables. Chess is ancient, and as you well know, culturally important. The battle between computer and master player Garry Kasparov in the mid 1990s demonstrates this, and there are a great many cultural and literary references to "checkmate" meaning "end of game" or "you're defeated". Yet, if you ask most people, they could not tell you what a checkmate is, how to achieve one, and how to avoid them.

But, lamentation be damned, we are going to **make** you into a Chess player, and a fine one at that. By the end of this chapter you will have a thorough understanding of all the pieces, the main moves, and the accomplishment of something called "scholar's mate" which you can mystify novice Tier 1 players at family reunions and frat parties. You'll be considered "great" although, for certain, you'll be practically nothing special. However, let me emphasize, the *attitude* behind achieving Scholar's Mate and it will make you ripe for gung fu, discussed in a later chapter.

The Pieces

There are six pieces in Chess, and these are their primary moves:

1. King - the object of the game is protect your king and capture theirs; he can move one space in any direction, except never into Check and must always be brought out of Check once put in Check (attack from opponent's pieces). If this does not happen (ie, is impossible), this is Checkmate. The kings can never, by definition, touch or Check each other. Also, the kings can kill pieces, yet never jump any piece.
2. Queen - the most powerful piece on the board can move any number of spaces (up to 8) in all 8 directions, kill anything, and can be killed. She cannot jump any pieces.
3. Bishop - there are two per side, one black, one white. They move diagonally only and never change their color. They cannot jump over any pieces.
4. Knight - two per side, also called the "horse" this is the only piece that "jumps" pieces. It moves in an "L", that is, always two spaces in one orthogonal direction, and one in the other orthogonal direction. For example, two up, and one right, or two right, and one back, or two left, and one forward. In effect, in an empty board, it can move to any one of 8 spots, and only kill pieces on the end of that L. To be clear: this piece cannot kill any pieces in the first two spaces it moves, only on the "leg" of the L. This makes it difficult for beginners to master, and powerful for masters to utilize! Please note, it may change color, and in fact will with each move.
5. Rook - two per side, also called a "castle" this piece is not actually a castle officially until Castled. It is a siege engine, a roving tower of destruction. It moves only orthogonally, from one to eight spaces. It never jumps a piece, and to get through an opponent must kill that opponent and then continue in a second move. It may change color and often should.
6. Pawn - eight per side (or row 2) a generally negative connotation for essentially infantry pieces. It certainly has become synonymous with weakness, being used or manipulated, and being easy to give over to death without remorse, pity, or fear. However, the pawn, after the queen, is the most advantageous piece to master. It has three primary moves and, like the Rook, one special move and one bonus move. It may move one space forward, so long as it is free to do so, or two for the first move in its column. If there is a piece one diagonal forward from the pawn it may kill that piece and occupy a new column, and there is no limit to the piece it can kill or check. The pawn may also perform En Passante under the right conditions, and if it reaches the end of the board, be traded up for any piece, presumably always a second (or third) queen (as it combines the rook and bishop in moves), or a knight. If no piece is able to "appear" as the new queen or knight, the pawn itself may remain and play on as if it were the said desired piece. It may not however, ever become a king, or jump any spaces, nor may the pawn ever move backwards, not even for avoiding death. How's that for a statement of the sterility of European warfare?*

* Notice the word Guerilla (pronounced by Westerners as “gorilla” and thus easily missed) is not an English word. In fact, the American Revolutionary “minutemen” were not known as guerillas but as “cowards” to the Redcoats who just wished they’d line up to be shot on a field. Luckily, Washington and company were not novices to “Unorthodox” tactics. These six pieces come together, sixteen per player, on an 8x8 board of death and destruction tiled in checkered white and black, or occasionally red and black.

But just because the pieces can move in such a way so as to create a bloody field of death and sorrow, does not mean they should. Verily, those who trade piece for piece will literally make the whole world go “blind” in that not a piece is left on the board to do the checkmate, and this is the absolute lowest form of warfare, according to the Art of War. Whereas the “highest” or most supreme Art of War, is to attack the enemy’s strategy⁴.

Characteristics of the Pieces

A Pawn For Your Thoughts

I described before that the pawns, after the royal pieces, are the most important pieces on the board. This is not merely a political “We the People” statement (although it is). It is a statement of strategic fact. The pawns are the most numerous pieces, the most defensively and offensively versatile, and the most useful end of game pieces. Every single tier 1 and many or most tier 2 players waste them like skittles in a dark movie theatre. Aside from being your average GI Joe, these pieces are not just metaphorically important like you and I are in the American (or western) civic way... they are the lifeblood of a good offense and defense. What good is a basketball team without a second string (bench) that can handle the game while starters rest and come in when injuries happen? An injury in Chess means an accidental loss. That’s common, and there’s nothing like having a great well-placed pawn to make it right as rain.

The following characteristics of the pawn make it a superb piece to master:

- It can be used to form a “magnot line”⁵ to block most pieces
- It can be used to lay “landmines” which stop or at least dissuade cavalry attacks
- It can be used to create “trenches” which bind up a game and alter the Qi (life-force) of the enemy⁶
- It can be used to judiciously shatter enemy defenses, test their intentions, or distract them
- It can be of course, hoarded and turn into a monstrous army of queens at the end
- It can be withheld for the purpose of creating fortifications that are difficult to siege
- Most importantly: they can be co-opted from spies into “double agents” which are used against the enemy commander



The pawn is, truth be told, my favorite piece. In Gung Fu, the pawn represents basic Karate (empty hand) techniques, such as punches, kicks, throws, or the use of staves and sticks. In Tai ji, the pawn represents Gung Fu - excellence of skill - itself.

⁴ Throughout this text I may say enemy when rather in Chess it is an opponent. But for our purposes, they are considered one and the same.

⁵ The Maginot Line was a French defensive measure against Germany which famously failed, much as the Great Wall of China failed to ultimately stop Genghis Khan. In this text I may use European references of such great value (double meanings, etc...) unless there is none or the Chinese offering is of greater value. In this case, the Maginot Line was a far more abysmal failure in more recent history. Also, the “Great Wall” strategy will be used to refer to something altogether different.

⁶ Discussions of manipulation of Qi, or life-energy, will come at the end of the text and be the main topic of subsequent texts.

Knights

The Knight is, after the queen, my favorite power piece. Why do I favor the queen? She's amazing. But who doesn't know that? The knight, however, is the piece you simply have to master to be better than other good players. And what's great is: there's two of them. Nothing says "I'll screw you three ways to Sunday" like a good fork. You'll leave the opponent saying "Fork you, too, buddy, and the horse you rode in on!"

In all seriousness, it's the **only piece that can jump**, making it ideal to keep for a long time and use judiciously. A few people try to play with knights to start. I don't think that is very wise, nor is it wise to end up with knights and not the other power pieces. This cavalry piece is born to come out, wreak havoc, and die judiciously... ideally destroying a defense or getting a pawn to the promised land. A knight at the end is another piece in the way. But, if you do not appreciate the character of the knight, and the role of the Scholar in history, you may miss the subtlety of this piece.

First of all it is the only piece with circular behavior. Which makes it ideal in a linear game to get around defenses and harry the enemy. It is, however, a bit slower to start up, so most tier 1 players never get them deep in, and end up with knights when they need bishops or rooks. By contrast, tier 2 players are so meticulous with knights they build whole offenses around a piece that consumes 3 moves - each - just to get them on the map offensively. Most therefore abandon it and keep them for defense... as makeshift pawns or worse: mere defenses for pawns in waiting.

No, there is a way to get the knights going, without losing the Keen (aggressive or bellicosity) of your game, and to make the enemy pay since they weren't willing to sacrifice a bishop for a knight (most aren't).

The bane of the knight is the pawn. You'd think it was the bishop, but actually most people don't sacrifice a bishop for a knight when they should. Why should they? A knight can replace a knight, but a bishop cannot switch colors, so eliminating a bishop means it cannot be replaced, except by the queen (or a pawn getting to the other side).

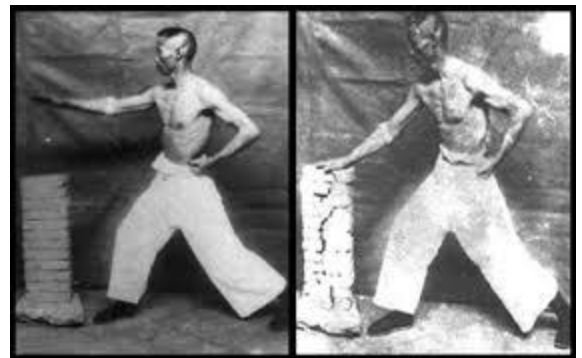
The knight is, in general, a tricky piece, and should be used as such. In gung fu it is drunken fighting, while in internal martial arts, it represents Baguazhang.

Bishops

The bishop is a bit of a let down, as compared to the Gaja/Elephant. But it is a hugely important piece, for its diagonal movement makes it a sharp-shooter, a long distance sniper. It is sometimes hard to see to the eye, and with two of them can really make the opponent feel pinned down. Its Qi is sharp, and it is analogous to weapons technique (especially sword), or ninjutsu, or chin-na (joint locking) or to Taijiquan in internal martial arts.

Rooks

The rooks are easily the most misunderstood pieces on the board. They are most commonly misused as blunt instruments, when in reality - though they are cannons - they are precision power pieces. Working in tandem under a deft master no queen alone is a match. The analogy in gung fu are fierce styles such as tiger, or throwing and wrestling arts. But in internal martial arts it is most definitely the power of an iron palm+xingyiquan master. (Shown right: Guo Yunshen "Divine Crushing Fist")



Queen

The queen is a great piece - the greatest. Suffice it to say, it deserves special attention, which it will get in the Queen's Mate section. Her power is like a fully realized warrior. In gongfu this piece represents mastery of gongfu itself, all sorts of styles, except bagua. In internal martial arts she represents Liu Xingquan - the meteor fist - which relies upon the dynamic power of xing yi's fa jin, the pressure points of dim mak (death touch), and the chaining of them in series, much like Chen taijiquan but all the more so. Thus we can say that the Queen is power itself, and represents the use of power. Do you use it discriminately, reluctantly, or assertive-aggressively, with wanton slaughter of the opponent? Do you send her into traps and lose her? Do you protect her? Are you jealous of her and hide her? All of this represents aspects of your mind.

King

The king is, face it, the least useful offensive piece on the board when used overtly. But there are times when he must be used, plodding along one space at a time, and can be used to great effect. The greatest, is perhaps in the advancement of

pawns to get a new queen, which will be discussed later.

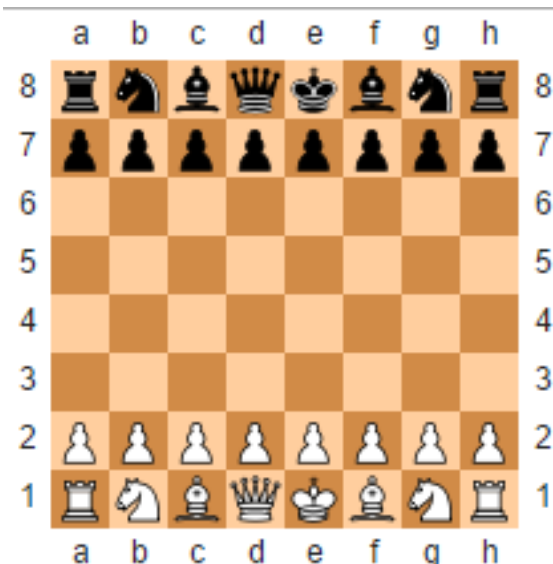
To know how to use the king requires a lot of losing and experience. But once mastered, it isn't hard to make someone spend a long time check mating you. But the greatest skill comes in first having to never move your king (but have the option to castle in either direction, and thus having never needed rooks), or, just before the first check, transforming the board and placing the king so far away from the possibility of check (and checkmate) so as to demoralize the opponent - repeatedly - increasing the stature of the king (and you) in their mind as untouchable. The greatest Bingfa are:

- ❑ To win without fighting (not possible in Chess, although it can be barely a match)
- ❑ To attack the enemy's plans
- ❑ To increase your Awesomeness such that your mere presence assures your victory (in their mind)

The Grid



Chess, among professionals and amateur professionals, is a “coded” affair. It looks like the below:



sources: Wikipedia

So, when you see in movies like Sherlock Holmes 2, the good guy and bad guy stating codes for moves, it's a fancy way of just saying they know the board so well that they don't have to even look at it or use pieces, they can just say the code.

Personally, I've never bothered to either memorize the codes until recently, or play using them (I don't do tournaments). Why? Because it is excessively Victorian/Enlightenment "logified". The Tao Te Ching (and Zhuangzi) long ago told us that the height of understanding is not logical, it is paradoxical. So I merely refuse to live my life by pure logic alone. I don't think this is a "bad" way to play, but it would be a bad way to live. Life happens in the pockets and unseen spaces, and you can't fit everything into squares (or circles). Things come out of nowhere and bad things happen to good people. What that means, to me at least, is that there must be a way to set up [life's] battles without relying on rigid concerns (such as chivalry, honor, loyalty, and "rules" which life never plays by anyways). The British, in losing the Revolutionary War (and 1812) used to complain that the 'damned' Americans never came out to fight a straight on battle. And they lost because of that fact. So I do not see much use in this beyond showing egg-headedness.

But... if you are or want to be an egghead, and play with eggheads in egghead games, there are some more codes you should probably memorize by going to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chess_notation. Now you have access.

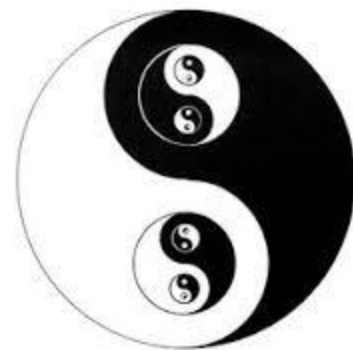
For this book, we will not need as much code as that, and will only occasionally need the above coded diagram. We will, however, make use of yin/yang notation.

Look at the board above. There is a yang-yang bishop at F1, a yang-yin bishop at C1, a yin-yin bishop at F7 and a yin-yang bishop at C8. I don't expect you to memorize my code either. But for instance, in a diagram I might mention a "black side black bishop"... that's yin-yin, so if I happen to say yin-yang you'll understand it's a black piece on a white square.

Mostly I'll just use the codes, if necessary. But in many instances, to explain what is **truly** going on I will resort to yin-yang dynamics.

For your edification, here are the 6 properties of the Taijitu (yin yang diagram):

1. Infinitely divisible (not in chess though)
2. Mutually generating
3. Mutually consuming
4. Mutually controlling
5. Mutually opposing/regulating
6. Mutually complementing



So in the diagrams of a move, which you will see are not merely pictures with codes on them, I may mention how the flux of a piece is extending from where the yin-yang bishop is at d5 all the way to h1, converting the bishop from a solid piece (yin) to an active sniper (yang). Or vice versa, a flux line may show some kind of hold, block, or something in the way of a yang bishop (in play), causing it to become yin in nature, and requiring the movement of yang vigorously (escape).

Now if this sounds confusing, that's okay, you don't have any diagrams to go by. But also, it should be confusing at first - even for those who skipped ahead. The reason is that yin and yang are mysterious and infinite, and yet the western dichotomized mind is so limited and dualistic: black vs. white. Here's the fact, all battles are a dance of partners (if they are willing to dance and play). In war, it's a bad relationship, but it is still a relationship. Your actions must be based upon this interplay of facts, or you risk the opponent controlling the Hua-transformations (化) and the Shu-pivot (樞). Any opponent that controls these, controls the game - it is theirs to win or to lose.

Suffice it to say, your gameplay will reflect your understanding, with or without codes. The codes merely clear the matter thoroughly. We will use them in "Assessment" of the opponent and self. A topic for later.

NOTE! Throughout this text I will use a lot of diagrams. Many players may not like my choices, or may know of specific "memorized" sets of moves for dealing with the setup shown. That is fine, it is just not my Way I am teaching here. For starters it ignores the non-board conditions that led to that setup and where the tendency is going. Secondly, they have no use or application beyond the game into real life. It is, as Bruce Lee would say, "dead kata". You may "know" a million things... but do you know how to live in This Moment?

Chapter 2 - Gameplay

"If they ask you, 'What is the evidence of your Father in you?' say to them, 'It is motion and rest.'" ~ Yeshua

A little bit of philosophy before we "begin."

To be sure, all life is a yin-yang of action and rest. What Jesus was trying to indicate, is also a Chinese-Taoist sentiment: mankind (Adam) is made up of yin and yang forces, constantly vying for supremacy (see Taijitu above). Before the game has even started, it will have started.

Nancy: "Want to play a game?" (wants to play chess, but knows Steve hates losing, especially at Chess)

Steve puts aside phone, distracted, "Uh, sure. What do you want to play?"

Nancy pulls out chess board, basically ready to play. Her eagerness assures her that Steve will acquiesce. He winces.

Steve sighs, "OK"

The board is set up. Nancy coolly chooses the black side, knowing it is more powerful, and makes Steve feel the advantage. But unbeknownst to him, Nancy rotates the board such that she ends up with the strong black side. Her revenge for him belittling her driving and parking skills is at hand...

兵法 = Bing Fa, or Military Methods, aka "the Art of War"

I'm not specifically advocating playing unfairly or manipulating every person you play. Ethics is important, too. But it just isn't that important outside of tournament play. This isn't going to lead to bloodshed (hopefully). So I want you to understand that **you win by setting yourself up for winning**. Your Monday is determined by your Sunday. If you play with low energy (as in you hadn't eaten for awhile and also the weather is poor and you ache all over)... you will probably lose, even if you're pretty good. Even a novice can snipe a queen when a pro is distracted. And nothing is worse for a pro - not even losing altogether - than being the arbiter of your own demise. Tier 2 players are "eaten up" with their mistakes and tying their own nooses. Many would rather rage-quit the chat room, or lay the king down on his side, cursing themselves than finish an uphill battle. That's not the Way we want to play. If you "lose" the queen, then make it your secret, and immediate goal, to get another... or two or three. Punish them for catching you off guard; don't punish yourself.

All kidding aside, one time in real life, I did not set myself up for success. My wife and I went stargazing in crazy California on a New Moon night. When we pulled off the exit there was a man and woman storming off together to a secluded place. I could feel it was trouble. Not even five minutes into our stargazing he comes storming back - alone. He gets in the car and tries to drive out the entrance! Zips around and is gone... like a getaway. "Come on, let's go see if she's alright," I told my wife.

So we start walking. Wife is pregnant. I left the 0.357 at home. All I have is a LED Surefire flashlight, and my deadly hands, which in California might be considered concealed deadly weapons for all I know. We get halfway there and another car pulls up. I thought it was the boyfriend, but it wasn't. Instead, a crazy meth head listening to Grateful Dead at full blast starts asking for directions to LA going north, and he was almost an hour east of the highway he wanted. In other words: crazy. I cannot see in the car so I shine my flashlight down to the ground, just out of his eyes. He gets angry, and **slithers** out of the passenger window from the driver side, like a slimy demon. He starts coming after me over the flashlight. Now... I have a choice: punch this guy in the throat and kill him, or play it out. I decide to give him space and several beams of light, and warnings, asserting my territory. Under my feet I can feel the sidewalk, but know it isn't infinite. So finally after his Keen has died down and his fire is losing power (being far from his car), I stop and resolve I will take him out. He senses this, and stops.

Meanwhile the aforementioned girl has emerged. She is now - in my mind - a witness. I can't kill this guy, even accidentally, and get away without law possibly finding out. Also, I have to protect her and my wife from meth head. Luckily, nature intervenes. She comes up and distracts the crazy meth head, who decides I'm "not worth it" and he likes her long hair more than mine (seriously). He gets in his car and goes away.

Now I'm super pumped with adrenaline. Sure enough the girl tells us the boyfriend, drunk, choked her. Guess what: he shows up. At this point I've defeated the dark side but who knows what's next? Though we offer her safety, she goes with him. We leave.

So take it from me, you want to set up your game to win. For both sides' sake. **Win-win is a lot better than win-lose is a lot better than lose-lose.**

Scholar's Mate



White Side strong, Black Side weak



White Side weak, Black Side strong (Nancy's subtle victory)

The concept of a Chinese Shi-scholar (士, “sherr”) is more or less the English Gentleman. There are rules of behavior, dress, propriety, and decor. The idea here is that you are both too good, and too reserved to play with the uncouth. If they are novices, then destroy them quick, and demonstrate it is easy, mysterious, and zippy. Like an aikido throw, leave them wondering “where’d that come from?”

If they are in any way beyond this, it won’t work (except by stratagems that add moves). Otherwise this should take only 4 moves, but we’re going to play it with 5. There is in fact a faster Checkmate, where the person traps themselves, but this doesn’t require they move their king.

But before the scholar’s mate, let’s talk about the opening up of the board with the assumption they may know how to defeat this basic tactic (and also by not going for it immediately may catch them off guard).

The premise behind Queen’s Mate, in general, is you need to free your queen. But a free and single queen is easily stopped. So it is advisable, in general to free both the queen and a bishop. This requires then moving the pawn that blocks the queen diagonally as well as the same colored bishop. So for the white side, the bishop at F1, and for the black side, F8. This means moving the pawn at E2 or E7. What this does is provides immediately open movement. I am not saying both sides should open this way, but for the white side there is almost no reason not to.

Now if you can move two spaces here, safely, you should. If you are on the strong side there is no reason not to. If you are on the weak side, you may consider moving only one space, and for move two move the other pawn at D2 or D7 two spaces.

Why should one side get to move two spaces with both pawns, and the other have to play cautious? Because of the queen. When you move two spaces, although you free more pieces there is no backup, so in another move when the pawns meet, one will take the other (yin consumes yang), and this invites the queen to the middle of the board (yin turns to yang) and now the weak side is made weaker. This is prevented using a standard half-wedge formation.



Black side played cautious, no reason not to bring forward two pawns



If black had played aggressively (left), it would invite a pawn take (middle), but white should be careful lest they invite the queen! (right)



This opening is sufficient for the White side, it stymies Black, and dissuades the Black queen on the weak side of the White board. However, it leaves open the possibility of Scholar's Mate. For the Black side, there will be a tendency to advance powerfully, which should be done, but not to the point of forgetting defense (as one is still one move behind).

So, regardless of this, both strong and weak sides can go for Scholar's Mate⁷.

The moves are then as follows (using above coded diagram, from white perspective):

1. F1 -> C4, black fails to prevent
2. D1 -> F3, black fails to prevent
3. F3 -> F7, checkmate (see right)



Note, the pawn moves are not listed, so it would take 4 (or 5) moves. Also note, this is predicated upon the Black side failing to prevent. If the opponent has any sense about them,



⁷ So long as they aren't blocking themselves (see below, a "misfire" opening for White, and advantage for Black)

they have 3 or 4 chances to prevent this from happening. Luckily for you, this is just a drunk frat party and no one is paying attention, and you're about to be a certified genius/egghead badass.

Below are some diagrams of reactions possible in the Scholar's Mate, and some reasonable blocks.



Left: the Wikipedia version of SM... bad idea because it invites the block (middle). On the right is the (second⁸) most obvious block of SM as shown above.



Left: One other obvious type of block, however not as good as utilizing the corner (middle); Upper Right: Another approach is to aggressively use the queen to assert dominance. This is not very good though because it a) can lead the queen into a quagmire, letting the White side drive towards the left of the board, b) pigeonholes the offensive queen (yang) into a still position (yin), sapping power when already you are behind, hence eliminating the morale message it sends, and c) invites the Queen Swap, which we will discuss in the next section. Right: A better option is to use the Queen more subtly, leaving an escape route via both white diagonals. Now one says "but then the bishop will attack from B5, or first a pawn move to A4, then that. The answer is a) death



⁸ The most obvious is to do this after the Bishop arrives, or leave that pawn alone and early

and b) pawn to C6, and queen still has options. Once the White Queen abandons the position, Black queen can invade the Vacuum, and maybe get to G2. But on the following pages are some more interesting Bishop options. Why use the bishop? Well that way you retain the yin power of Black (stillness), and blunt the Keen of White naturally and not by being drawn in. It's a morale thing as well as a skill thing.

Plus, their own white pawn at E4 protects the rook at A8 from the queen, so the yang-yin bishop can mobilize freely. Also, if the queen lines up in front of the bishop as in the bottom right, their line -of-sight aims away from the White King, and weakens Black's Offensive possibility. In general, we want - as the Black side - to blunt the Scholar's Mate and head towards Reversal where subtly the Black side ends up with the move advantage (or two or three moves⁹) making White feel foolish for using such weak tactics. Finally, if Black gets luck, White will fail to see a switch into a reverse Scholar's Mate. This will take several extra moves on the Black's part, but is doable.



Left: The Bishop to E6 is a subtle repulsion, but powerful as it is both mobile and direct. Now, suppose that the play had opened with White pawns as shown in Middle. The logical thing when the White Bishop comes forward is to "clip the wings" of the White queen by pawn to H5. Why? Because it limits the White queen's yang with Stopping Qi. Now when the White Bishop comes up, the White side thinking they are about to get the Scholar's Mate, the bishop to E6 combined with the clipped wings will force the White side to rethink, with a > 50% chance they will run the 3rd street over to the left. This would make it easier for Black to defend. So... If White side knows this when they open, they move pawn to E3, do everything the same, and if the Black side uses the bishop, then White Queen can go F3 -> B7. The result is at maximum a rook, at minimum, a knight, possibly a check. (Right).

⁹ The secret of Reversal is nothing spectacular. First blunt the Keen, second play perfect defense (itself is the difficulty), and third take advantage of every "mistake." The idea of mistakes will be covered in another section on Dynamism.



Left: Naturally one must protect the bishop, this is one choice (another being to simply go check the king). Then their next move may be D6 -> D5, and then you move E4 -> D5. My problem with this defense of the bishop is a) the jig is up, SM is not likely, better to move on, and b) the pawn at B3 blocks 3rd street. Middle: If the bishop is safe though, one can change the queen and await the black bishop to leave so one can attack Black's weak side and give them "The Black Plague". Right: If the white side does decide to move forward the pawn, it is good to have clipped the wings so you can be able to legitimately threaten the queen. If the player is foolhardy they will invade the Vacuum, but seeing as there is no real entry, the Black side can accomplish the first step of Reversal by pushing the White queen left, thus defending the Black weak side and limiting the White queen and freeing the Black queen to invade the Vacuum and make for the White's weak side. All of this is one more argument for White to either check at B5 or make the middle move.

Discussion

Scholar's Mate is a great way to start whether you are new or old, with any stranger. If when you move that first pawn, or the bishop, they immediately block you, then you know they are no slouch.

As you can see, though, it is fraught with a lot of variables, and if one sets it up wrong or reacts emotionally, quickly, or without foresight, it can land in a world of difficulty. I wouldn't expect you to memorize the above methods, as the more pieces there are in play, the more combinations of changes required. So what do I recommend?

Something from the more advanced chapters and texts...

>>Sensing & Spies<<

- Sensing means reading the intent. If the White side is playing fast they are aggressive and bellicose, they will make mistakes. Black side should be patient. If the Black side is moving quick or makes a mistake, they are inept or unable to Assess their situation: they will be easily beaten by using Hua-transformation, divide & conquer, and diversions (see chapter on Stratagems). However, if White is cautious and methodical, and never makes hasty moves, or in the case of tricky play makes fake moves then retracts them to distract and do the right moves, then Black side must be doubly cautious. If however White side makes mistakes, the Black side must turn defense into counter-offense into offense as above right. To fail to do so is in the Art of War "the height of stupidity". It means one actually cannot sense the moment, and deserves to lose.
- Spying means use pawns to test the opponent. A regular spy is sent to die in order to test their strategy or even distract them from a suspected plan (by giving them bait); a disposable spy is similar, except the intention is merely to see if they are confused and have nothing better to do but kill your spy. The difference is that a regular spy will be killed fast, and a disposable spy slowly, after much waffling and indecision. Either way, you know the intent of the other side. A double agent means that you sense they are using a spy pawn, and so you utilize that

pawn to make a defensive fortification and block them out, or ignore it completely and use a distraction - especially if their spy was “on the mark” and you don’t want them to know it is in the way, nor block your own progress. The best way to make a double agent is to blind them, meaning you use your own spy and return the favor, confusing the opponent. To sense at this stage requires much practice and stillness.

By learning to Sense (so as to properly Assess) and Spy, one can almost always start out with Scholar’s Mate and not get into trouble, and only occasionally use Knight’s Mate or Bishop’s Mate to change up and practice as well as not become one-dimensional. But for all serious matches, you can honestly rely on the opening that was shown above. If one learns to sense the Shi-configuration to develop the Shi-power of position dynamically, there will be no “sterility” of this opening.¹⁰

Queen’s Mate - the Scholar’s “Dark Side”

In general, Queen’s Mate is anytime one side (usually White), takes advantage of the empty board (and weak opening of opponent) to wreak havoc on the weaker opponent, making them draw out pawns, creating openings, and then slipping into them.



After a brief opening, the Queen takes center stage. “Let’s Play!”

It has distinct advantages and disadvantages, The foremost thing is proper sensing of the appropriateness of Queen’s Mate play.

Pros:

- ★ It demoralizes the opponent, making them chase a potent “ghost”
- ★ It can be used to draw out power pieces into bad configurations - such as using the queen for a defense or aiming their line-of-sight away from your King’s weak side.
- ★ It may lead to sniping a rook (or even a rook and a knight).
- ★ It can lead to giving the opponent the “Black Plague” which eats up their “body” (defenses), racking up losses for them and no losses for yourself,
- ★ It may force them to move the king
- ★ It can lead to the inadvertent loss of 3+ of their pawns, thereby reducing their end game survival chances

Cons:

¹⁰ The stratification of these two is subtle and unimportant linguistically. After the Shi is “established” (i.e.sensed and Assessed), the Ji or pivotal-play takes place. This Ji-pivot is like the rotating cam on a compound bow. It launches the arrow powerfully and what’s more, automatically. This differs from the Shu-pivot which remains inside the player’s mind as a constant interplay of yin and yang, which also informs the Shi.

- ❖ The queen is generally unable to checkmate by herself
- ❖ The queen can be led into a trap or bogged down or even be placed in a dungeon situation where she remains in neither an offensive nor defensive capacity because she becomes irrelevant to the game
- ❖ She can be chased effectively, like a fox, leading to a loss of advantage and the opponent ending up in a position with good Shi, and yourself with bad defenses, no Shi, and no way out
- ❖ The queen can be lost accidentally, or forced into a swap, or even a disadvantageous queen swap.
- ❖ The queen may be unable to return home to provide adequate cover/defense due to Maginot Lines
- ❖ The queen, being worth so much can be easily guided into dungeons which become Pits of Despair, meanwhile she is unable to jump and a well made Maginot Line will stymie her, even if temporarily, causing false Keen to lead to real losses.
- ❖ The queen piece, if arrogantly used, can become a form of spy by giving away valuable plans and details about intentions, plans which can then be attacked.
- ❖ The queen piece is reluctant to return home - it is a sign of a mistake made, yet this is often the proper thing to do early on if Queen's Mate was initiated incorrectly
- ❖ For these and other reasons, Queen's Mate is not popular at all with any ranked or professional players that I am aware of.

The Queen, being a dynamic Mike Tyson of sorts is, well, fallible in a Mike Tyson sort of way. Its aggressive character invites calls on bluffs or reversals, and Stopping Qi. Stopping Qi is very bad for Queen's Mate, which favors both a Full Court Press and Run and Gun style of play, constantly changing shape. In essence, the Queen "mates" with King, the dynamism of a dragon (yin & yang in form) is born and endless transformations are possible, without end. But this situation has to evolve both quickly and naturally. Like a true Chinese dragon, which symbolizes a cyclone. It has to become an unstoppable force. This is not easily done unless the opponent is weak and/or tired and makes mistakes. Once it starts, the coiling and uncoiling power of the Shi possessed by the queen will generally guarantee a well earned point by point victory.

CAUTION: Queen's mate that eliminates pieces and followed by sacrifices made on both sides, freeing the board up... if the queen dies or loses the Shi, it automatically invites the opponent's queen to become the dragon, and wreak even more havoc with a vengeance. Thus the initial queen must never lose the Killing Energy!

More will be discussed in **Queen's Mate vs Queen's Mate**

Advanced Moves

Before going any further, you need to know about a couple of “Advanced Moves” (which are actually pretty standard) that can make the difference between a novice, a pro, and a master. To be sure they are done by Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 players alike, but the reasoning behind them will differ completely depending on your mindset!

Castling



Castling is really, really standard. Probably 70-80% of games have a castling occur, and if one does it more than likely the other will, too. Here's the deal: it is all about timing.

As for the move, here are the rules:

- ❑ There can be no pieces between the King and the Rook to be castled
- ❑ Neither piece can have been moved previously, not even if they returned to original positions
- ❑ The King cannot be in check, move through check, or of course land in check. It is not a direct escape!
- ❑ The King must move two spaces from his position
- ❑ The Rook must end up on the opposite side of the King immediately next to him, and it can move through a threatened attack



Here are some benefits to Castling (aside from feeling cool knowing how to do it):

- ★ It can provide better defensive cover - literally a castle for the king
- ★ It can change the dynamic of the game
- ★ It can be used to check the opponent
- ★ It can be used to link up the two rooks or to defend another power piece threatened along the same row
- ★ It can be used to save a rook from a bishop-sniping (or queen, though this is ill advised)
- ★ It can be used to make the king a defender of a diagonally placed piece
- ★ It can “attack the checkmate” plans of the opponent, and shift the king from his weak side to the strong side, instantly

In short, a well timed Castle can ruin the opponent's day. However a **poorly timed castling almost assuredly leads to checkmate** by a) placing the king in a easily targeted and confined location too early or b) weakening the defense or c) castling the wrong way!

En Passante

En Passante is even more pedantic for the puissants of Chess. But, nevertheless, it is both legal and annoying to deal with, making it a great move!



It is relatively simple to explain, but almost no Tier 1 or 2 player ever remembers how to do it.

Basically, because the game evolved the two spaces (optional) pawn forward rule, this rule was created to “capture” that pawn. If the pawn in the adjacent column is on the fifth space from its own side (above left), when the defending pawn moves two spaces out the offending pawn can cross behind it diagonally and take that pawn (above right), just as if it had moved one space. Lame? I know, but it is a rule since the 1600s. Furthermore, it can be used to check, checkmate, and it required to escape checkmate, must be done.

Some great reasons to use En Passante:

- ★ It can badger or annoy the opponent
- ★ It can move the pawn potentially to only two spaces from the lauded “Other Side” for an upgrade
- ★ It can be combined with Forking and Discover Check to really screw an unaware opponent
- ★ It can lead directly to a checkmate
- ★ It can disrupt plans to use a pawn for defensive purposes, such as laying landmines or making a Maginot Line

Learn it, use it well. Like a butterfly knife it comes in handy.

Forking

A fork is not so much a move as an opportunity to force a player to make a costly decision. Rarely there are escapes from forks that can save both (or all) pieces, or even reverse the situation, but more often than not, a Fork is a reliable technique. A Fork is caused, usually with a bishop or knight by making the player decide between two or more players. If one is a check, the player is forced to save the king (and cannot castle to do so!) This means that you can trade up a player like a knight for a rook, or queen, pretty readily. We'll show plenty of forks later on.

(Right: Triple Forked!)

Discover Check, aka Virgin Works the Shuttles/Loom

Discover check is caused when a piece is moved, hopefully into a Fork, revealing a check that disables the player's ability to save





the piece you moved to threaten (hopefully the queen). If done correctly, the threatening piece cannot be killed, and there is no downside to the discover check. En Passante and Castling can create a Discover check, and are the pinnacle of those moves' use (especially if it is checkmate or will be shortly). One way to accomplish a checkmate is to have the Queen pinning down a king using the Great Wall technique - where he is unable to approach the queen or cross her force field in a column - then castle and discover check the king, forcing him continually towards the edge. If no pawns or other pieces block or save the king, within two moves it is mate, and if the king was already pinned against his own players (especially an old Maginot Line that was useful before the king was forced out of the castle by a knight or bishop), it can be an instant checkmate! Another way is to set up your En Passante so that the pawn checks the king, and yet cannot be killed (due to a protective piece), the king has to move away, and the pawn is freed up to make a dash to the other side, become a queen and if the king is caught in the trenches (a narrow pass), it's curtains for him. (Left: Discover check, nearly mate! do you see the escape?)

In Taijiquan this ability to strike without being seen, and thus appearing spontaneous to the enemy is called Virgin Works the Shuttles, and is one of the most important postures taught in Yang Taijiquan. It can also be known as the "No Shadow Punch" or the Cannonfist in Xingyiquan.

Creating a Maginot Line (not to be confused with "the dragon's back" or the Great Wall)

Although this is not technically an Advanced Move, it is sort of difficult for people to do it correctly. What people really tend to do, especially novices, is make a "dragon's back" which is nothing more than pawns moved into wedge formations. The only one which I tolerate is the W formation. When people make a literal sawtooth ridge out of 4 pawns, I have to stop them, I feel bad playing these people. They don't know what they're doing (besides wasting 3 moves).



Left: "Dragon's Back"... more like a newtl; Right: W-wedge defensive formation

The problem with the traditional W wedge isn't the wedge, but the fact that you have to spend moves to set it up, and in the end, you end up with a weak castle (too much space). It is far better to have made the wedge by repelling the enemy's advances and incursions, reducing their aggression and forcing them backwards into their own territory. And why stop there? Move the wedge forward like a marching army, with flanks that take advantage of the middle pieces. Then you end up with a really great morale-draining effect. But it has to be done naturally, spontaneously, and in such a way that the person doesn't



realize it but they went from playing Queen's mate or Knight's mate to retreating and castling and BAM, you can start moving your pieces rather freely, even rooks! But these situations rarely evolve, as most experienced players recognize that if Queen's mate isn't working they switch it up before becoming stuck in the dungeons of pawn hell.

So, how does one create a truly useful Maginot Line? First of all, you will need to borrow their pawns. Secondly, you need to actively make sure your Queen is not behind your line, and that the line does not block all routes towards their king, **even if he should castle**. But, it should, obviously block advances on your king, even before you have castled, let alone after you fortify and place knights in a "double-headed snake" formation (one L apart from each other, and defending 5 - 6 other pieces).



Left: Whoops! Queen must return to start; Right: A freed white queen, a safe King, and Black queen is in the dungeons!

You should not seek to make the Line to start, but let it evolve out of the happenstance of defense. By locking your pawns into their pawns, with no ability to kill each other, you do two things:

- You reserve the ability to unlock pieces and defense later by moving a pawn forward to be sacrificed at your leisure; technically, they also have this right, but you're going to do it first.
- You create a demoralizing boundary where you become "untouchable" at least for a long while. In one instance I could recall I co-opted so many pieces of the opponent, that despite their winning (having captured my queen in an "ambush")* that although they had advantage they couldn't take my king, and while they tried to figure a way around the Line, I was able to "Besiege Wei to Rescue Zhou", get a new queen and through a fork, take their queen. By using a Maginot Line, I was able to get a side pawn all the way to the end, which is rare, as usually it is the pawn in rows 2, 4, 5, or 7 that makes it deep.



*An ambush is when the Queen, in the normal duties of offense and defense gets into a situation where she can move, but all places lead to death, and she is forced into a swap with a lesser power piece, usually a bishop or a knight, but could be a rook or queen (swap). It is very bad for morale, and lowers the odds of winning by almost ¾. Notice in the Plate on the left, the Black Queen fell for a trap, whereby a rook was given in order to lock the queen in place for the next ten moves. This enables a bold White Queen + Knight raid. The Queen could have been taken, but it's much better not to attack a tiger that is closed in. The Art of War says do not surround the enemy on all sides, as in, do not attack them where they are. As for escape, the Black Bishop should be freely sacrificed for a handy profit. As it happens, the Castling led to a worse situation for Black.

>>What is the Great Wall?<<

A Great Wall is the force field line emanating from rooks and queens which prevents the King from crossing. (see Right)

This is typically used at the end of the game with rooks and queens, but can also be used (through castling usually), to prevent the opponent from castling.

Technically bishops make a sort of line, but it is easily side-stepped: one needs two bishops to make an ironclad Great Wall.



Chapter 3 - Assessment



Quan (chwen) or Assessment relies on several factors of “knowing”, which itself is slippery as nothing is knowable in the western sense of “grasping”. All knowledge in Chinese science is inferred - not assumed - but is also to be remembered to be paradoxical.

In Quan, knowledge relies on:

- Terrain
- Trends/History
- External Variables
- States of Mind (of self and opponent)
- Overall Awareness or “Presence” (Prescience?)
- Shi-configuration
- Timing & Change or Hua-transformations [of the Ba Gua]*
- Probability vs Possibility vs Ambition vs Willpower
- Luck or the “X-factor”

Proper Quan, according to Sunzi, starts with Self-Awareness, and by extension leads immediately to assessment of Terrain. Now, I am assuming you want to play, and you want to win, so as long as you’re calm and eager, then we can avoid the Self-awareness (and save it for Book 2: Mystical Chess), and get into Terrain.

*The discussion of the Ba Gua (not to be confused with Baguazhang the style) and the I Ching as strategy methods will be briefly mentioned in the Stratagem chapter, but mostly covered in Mystical Chess.

Terrain

The subject of terrain in the Art of War is both long and arduous. It was extremely important, especially in the old days, because of how terrain, environment, proximity, and other factors of battle affect the outcome of the battle.

In Chess, there are only a few types of terrain to consider, whereas the majority of the board should be considered in terms of Shi-configuration.

However, as part of Quan, we should discuss a few “terrain” setups to be aware of and to use. As for concepts like Hidden Terrain, Deadly Terrain, Deep and Shallow, etc... or how to cross Terrain, those are advanced terrain topics that while they pertain to the Art of Chess, require knowledge of the Qi and much practice to “sense” the “right” thing to do. For now, we’ll stick to physical types of terrain.

Passes

Classically, there are two types of environmental features to beware of. One is water (rivers), and one are narrow ravines (passes).

In real life, a pass is somewhere one does not wish to travel, as it is narrowly guarded, and can lead to death.

There are three types of passes in chess:

- Parallel sides - this type of pass is narrow, but easily “forded” or crossed by power pieces such as rooks, queens, and occasionally, bishops. But it is hard for small pieces to cross, or to enter at all, especially the knight and the king. Most critically, a King must not be caught in the back row of the board, with three pawns blocking escape should a rook or queen arrive to check



the King. Knights simply cannot handle the area, and pawns are used up easily.

Please note the Black King's position: precarious!

- Narrowing sides - this type of pass is difficult to describe, it requires understanding how several pieces together form a narrowing area. It is not a region for a piece to enter, except purposefully to sacrifice the piece to death.
- Opening end - this type of pass only appears to be dangerous, and would be if one stopped within it, but at the end opens up to a wider area that is safe, or will be perceived as such. By allowing this configuration of terrain, one can, however, bait the enemy to rushing in headlong, most presumably to put the Queen in a dungeon, or trap



another piece.

Above: As you can see as the game progresses, the King, previously moved left, is now in a deadly situation, and the checkmate is instantaneous.

Left: The pass in the middle opens to the white side, but closes towards the black side. This is advantageous to the Black Queen, but should not be taken by the white side. However, the invitation being ineluctable, the white side can rely almost 90% on the Black Queen to move forward, and spring an ambush.



Minefields



A minefield is a more modern term, but actually the concept is relatively old. In the ancient days the use of caltrops was for the purpose of entrapping soldiers and especially cavalry. That is definitely the case here.

The placement of minefields in Chess takes up a bit of time (and moves), but is most dissuasive and discombobulating to the opponent. It requires two knowledges, and a host of pawns and knights (for ambushing). The first knowledge is of the "Shining Piece"¹¹ (or a relatively reasonable calculation of the enemy's intentions). The second is the places he/she wishes to land the piece they move, why, and within reason, their motivations and probability to move it in the way you envision (mostly by thinking you'd do the same thing¹²).

¹¹ The Shining Piece is a matter of Qi, and Sensing. One must be able to read the Shi of the board and immediately know what piece the Enemy must use in the next move, or what piece you must use to forward your Shi and decrease theirs.

¹² To know the Self, is in most cases is to know the enemy. By existing in a contemplative state, one may insert a thought and cause the enemy to move. This in zonghengjia is known as speaking to the spirits and commanding the ghosts.

Left: With 3 pawns, the twin knights are unable to move to 4 spaces, and their killing potential is halved.



Left: Can you see the Shining Piece? It will break the landmines. Also, note the parallel pass diagonally laid from center to upper right; Right: A very simple landmine field, note the clipped wing on the right totally stifles the Black side.

From there, one merely needs to place the pawn in such a way to prevent movement. This is a superior technique! If they read your move, they will fear you. If they do not they will fall into a trap. But beware! The enemy can use this to their advantage as well, either “exploding the mine” (killing their own piece), or pretending to land into the trap or ambush accidentally, while masking their intention. Even more superiorly, they may pretend to fall into the trap, and one will be unable to execute the ambush on account of a Discover Check in another location!

The main method I recommend to start laying landmines is to “clip the wings” of the queen and bishops whenever they open up, by pushing pawns from A and H forward, protected by the Rook. No one - except the fools - will kill the pawn or stay in front of the pawn, unless they desire to capture your rook and sacrifice a bishop or knight to do so.



Left: Do not be over-anxious to “clip the wings” of the queen, and risk losing a landmine; Right: by moving the other piece, both the queen and the knight are blocked. Compare with Left, which invites a later attack, or “harrying” from the enemy.

Trenches

Trench warfare was an abomination when it was invented, but it was invented to save lives. How did it save lives? By protecting the infantry. Thus in chess, trench warfare refers to the creation of pawn saving structures, mostly diagonals which protect each other, with tight spaces behind and most especially a protecting piece to guard the rear, and Maginot Lines. By creating these structures one can compound landmines into a situation seemingly impossible to overcome (but can be overcome with patience and the right moves with the right pieces). But if one allows the enemy to create trenches and slow down your game, your chances of victory will drop by half or more.



Left: A fairly common example of trench warfare where the pawns are unable to get at each other; Right: combination of trench and landmines creates a slowed game. In this case, the “Shining Piece” is the Black Knight which takes the bishop at D4 and breaks the line or advances to B3, or allows the queen to advance to B3!

Over the next few pages, please enjoy analyzing these diagrams with me with your new knowledge.



What do you see? Aside from the obvious threat to the bishop at B4. Notice the passes, trenches, and landmines. If you were the Black side, how would you move? As you can see, the choice was to move queen to H4. Why? The bishop, if killed, would be worth the loss of a move on the part of the white side. Their reaction was to move out their bishop to castle (as protection), which enabled further entry of the black side Queen. Don't be afraid to let pieces die for greater causes.



Take in this diagram. First note the power of the well placed knight at F6, guarding four pieces, maintaining a Maginot Line. Meanwhile with the white side's clipped wings in column A, the one thing that we wish to change is the entry for the black Queen (can you see it?). Ideally, they would utilize their own knight at A3 to protect a pawn at C4. But because of the direction of the game, the Shi, and the Qi at this point expanding, they were unable to see this, and chose to move F2->F4, avoiding F3 for fear of capture. This led to En Passante:



Left: En Passante leads to incredible Maginot Lines, The pawn "frightens" the Queen, and in this case, the player, again (because of shaken Qi) made an emotional and confused decision. This invites the black Queen forward to C3 without fear of reprisal. Right: After taking the rook, and avoiding various threats, the black Queen appears neutralized, while the white Queen moves forward.



Here the Queen moves to avoid being pressured in the corner, but also because the white side's strongest on the right. Stagnation is death. As for the Black side's defenses, note that in the previous diagram, though there was a pass that was usable, in theory, for the white Queen, it was all death. The dissuading power of strong defensive Shi enabled a complete stopping of white side's advancement.

Originally, there were only two "logical" moves, pawn to F2 or two moves bishop to B5. However, before that can be successful the knight needs to move so that it can become bait at A5. Why? That draws the opponent into a belief that FINALLY they have an entrance... but actually it only moves them further from the left side castle, where the greatest threat is the end of the Maginot Line, the death of the knight at F6 and the giant vacuum there. Remember, the goal is to get the black Queen to E2, but the white knight prevents it. So a diversion has to be created. See the Stratagems chapter for more information.



Above Left: Find the pinch point... where is it? It's at E6! Problem: there's a Queen there. So the knight pushes her left, seeking green pastures via a weakness at the knight at E4. Immediately this prompts double protection, and further draws the queen to B5. Perfect? Not quite. We want to draw the black knight from G7 out, as it is a thorn in our side. So now we use a little bit of "mind trickery" and "burn a move", creating a phantom opening on the left. Why would the enemy fall for this? Number one: you must do it casually, nothing suspicious, number two: the offensive issues on the right side encourages the enemy to infiltrate to the left, especially now that the castle appears to have an opening. By creating "a mistake" to invite the black queen and then the black knight moves, thus we unravel the defenses of the pinch point.

[Watch this video to explain how the puzzle then plays out. \(http://bit.ly/2PHpPqF\)](http://bit.ly/2PHpPqF)

Using Trends to Predict the Future

“Those who forget the past are doomed to make the same mistakes.” ~Or Something Like That

You'd be surprised how many people can make the same mistake over and over. Or make it, then two games later, do it again. The brain is like that. It repeats itself. The brain is like that. It re... wait.

The trouble with the mind is that it is a one-track machine. The best model for it that I know of comes from the Secret of the Golden Flower, a Quanzhen Taoist text which states that what activates the senses so that the mind cognizes data that constantly comes in through them is a “golden light” emanating from the xin (sheen) or heart-mind. This light “grasps” the data and then makes it knowable to the intellect.

When a mind has not been used in a certain direction, it enters into the path of knowledge like going through a fog. In the case of playing chess or thinking strategically, it is a “fog of war”. This inability to think clearly is the first trend to overcome.

Most of the time, you can win a game simply by playing it out a long time. This may be a boring way to win, so I don't recommend making it so long the reward of winning disappears. Rather... allow a few distractions to take away the concentration of the golden light in your opponent.

Play a few games in this way, and then the first important trends have been established. That is to say: a trend of losing on their part, and you winning for your part. The relationship thus established, even with a poor setup, most of the time the opponent will beat themselves, or even give up on the way (even while winning), for their mind is already in a groove.

The next most important trend to consider is the trend of style of play. To “know thy enemy”, one has to know how they like to play. One should come to the point of knowing which piece they will open with 70-80% of the time. And also, one should consider their trend of behavior. How willing to sacrifice important pieces? How do they value their troops? Do they throw away pawns? A person who wastes pawns, even if focused, can be outlasted pointwise (remember, pawns become queens) 60-75% of the time. Do they use their knights well? Do they know how to create the “pincers”? Do they know how to build a good defense? Do they know how to deal with castling? Do they castle often or early? Can they be frightened into a corner? Do they act rashly with their queen? Do they use mixed pieces well together? Do they see diagonals well? Do they forget pieces if they don't move? Do they look too forward, and not enough backward? Do they see in 1, 2, or 3 dimensions? Do they handle discussion during gameplay well? Do they become angry or excited? Do they get bored easily (and lose their Keen?) Etc...

The next most important trend to consider is actual gameplay. How adept is the enemy in the past? How adept are you? What are your weaknesses, and what are your strengths? In the past, what mistakes did you tend to make and what corrections did you use to know that they avoided? Also, what pieces are you strongest with (and does the enemy know this?) What pieces are they strongest with (and do you already know?)

The next most important trend to consider is that of repetitious or predictable behavior. He or she who notices the repeated behaviors of the enemy will realize the way to bait or ambush them. And the one who knows these are known, can “make the mistake” one or two more times to convince the enemy that it is a fatal flaw, and rely on it for a most surprising reversal.

The next most important trend to consider is that of wisdom versus foolishness. If one tends to make wise moves, it is a safe bet that one will in the future - in a pinch - also make instinctual moves which make sense. However, if one tends to make bad life decisions, or repeated mistakes, it is a safe guess that in the game one will make fatal mistakes which one after another, add up to a losing game. Lose by an inch or a mile, the mind then loses self-confidence and the repetition will lead to future failures. Contrarily, if one makes trustworthy decisions which return excellent or acceptable results, then one will inch by inch, find a way to win. And when one loses, occasionally, after all it is just a loss, and just a game.

The next most important trend to consider is the habits of play, in terms of playing well, or giving up; of striking fast or failing fast; of good mid-game or poor mid-game; of closing the game or failing to close games which should be closed. Does one really know how to play like a winner?

The next most important trend is the matter of intelligence (and use of it). Intelligence means knowing, sensing, and thinking. It also, of course, means the **correct** use of these things. If one tends (trends) to be an overthinking person who is indecisive, then one will be incorrect in applying firmness. This is not correct flexibility, it is laxity. And if one tends to think too little, be impatient, hasty, or gregarious, then firmness will be excessive, and that is also not correct flexibility, but rigidity.

Either of these trends is enough to destroy the hope of victory - both in the game of chess and the games of life!

In conclusion, when it comes to making Quan-assessment, the past is one of the most important considerations to take in. It should be done before sitting down to play, or within a short time, and instinctively.

External Variables, Mental States, and Prescience

In the Art of War, controlling external variables in spite of the chaos that arises, is a matter of perspicacity and willpower. Willpower comes from the Kidneys (in Chinese Medicine), and so one must activate the Kidney Qi to be a fierce leader. To do this, please refer to the Mystical Chess book for a fuller discussion of Qi.

For our purposes, we merely need to say that willpower is a matter of focused concentration and insight. What is Chinese insight? Literally it means to use the inner (3rd) eye of the mind: inner sight. The use of insight requires stillness. Proper stillness leads to both calm and open awareness. Open awareness sees opportunities, and avoids panic. Avoiding panic is to remain timely and perspicacious. To maintain perspicacity is to maintain level-headed focus, and to not dilute or disperse concentration. That leads to the development of a kingly mein and Awesomeness. When one has Awesomeness, whether on home turf (strong side) or away (weak side), one will be victorious 95% of the time. The game becomes yours to lose!

The ability to choose to win or lose, is a matter of superior Qi. If one is already intimidated by the enemy, one cannot be said to have the Qi. If one is anxious to win or afraid to lose, the Qi is scattered (literally, not consolidated in the Kidneys). If the Qi is lost there is not ability to build Shi, as there is no Te (De).

So as you can see, for life as well as for a simple game of chess, it is vital that one control the external variables. The rule is this: the level of importance (or haste) is determined by the proximity to the board's epicenters (the kings). First of all, controlling the distractions of children, phones, television, music (at least distracting, loud, or abrasive music), and schedules. If one has strong Qi, if there is not enough time to finish, the game will be interrupted, and the Qi lost. There may not be a time to return yet again, and this is a draw. One may however, use such distractions to advantage. Children, or girlfriends, or drunk friends all represent excellent ways to sap the opponent. This may seem like overkill, however, I have a story to relate.

A long time ago I played a chess match which may have been a precursor to fate. I played it against a good friend, in the presence of another good friend. Of the two of them, there was no comparison of skill. The one I played was far more dedicated than we to the martial arts, but was not a match in understanding to us. And the one watching was later to become a rival, and a dangerous one at that.

To be clear, though, the danger I speak of arose from the player I played, who was a friend, to be sure. But also, later in life, a danger to self and others through his bipolar disorder and extreme behaviors. By defeating him mystically using the triple-barrel technique (and at other skills, such as sticking hands), he remained ever at contest with me, and yet wary of me. And when he became a danger to himself and others, it was not hard to dissuade him to be in my life (as now I had a family and business to protect). To be sure I do not think he would have consciously sought to hurt anyone, but at the end of his life, before taking it himself, he was on so many medications, alcohol, and not on lithium: many shootings have been attributed to such a deadly mix.

The winning of that game was only a mere link, but the final analysis was that he would not come near to my home (where we played), and start trouble, as he was both a friend and a bit in awe. It was a dangerous time, but I miss him dearly. As for the watcher: he was one who would never play, but played the game with people in real life. A narcissist with real skill. Later on, however, he was unwilling to ever apologize to anyone; and yet he did to me. Why? Application of moral force. That led him to despise me (who will always in his eyes be below him), and thus eliminated another threat to health, happiness, and success. That day he watched, he was not aware of it, but I was not reading my enemy's thoughts. Already his mind was so focused on himself and not on the surroundings, that his loss was assured (and the first and only time we ever played). Rather, my mind was reading the thoughts of this narcissistic friend, who imagined with humor how much better he was, and also my thoughts dwelled on him looking for approval, when actually, my thoughts were demonstrating to him to not be so conceited in his thoughts of me. He did not finish to watch the game's end, and left feeling sure he had whipped us both without ever playing (wu wei). Such disdain, with nothing behind it, is exactly why he was later defeated in a contest of wits.

How can one know the future? How can one predict the behavior of others when their hearts and minds are far from yours? In general, this operation is the treasure-house of sage strategists. As for us peons, we must only guess. When I played that game, I could not know almost ten years earlier that it represented something greater, something pivotal. Of all the games I ever played, it is one of the 3 I think over from time to time. The actual game was only a third of what was really occurring. How mystical, how ironic!

As for the externals, how does it relate? One must not consider the outside world as different from the inside world. If one plays seriously, and not to teach or pass time idly and unfocused, but to win: one must win, to protect the heart-mind. To unfold the destiny.

Now, regarding the movement inwards, to the board, there are still "external" factors to consider. The stability and angle of the board, the alignment of the characters, the types played, etc...

For example, one "dark side" technique, using mentalism is to place the pieces off center, so as to confuse the brain. But if one rotates the piece (if not round), it will stick out in the mind rather than remain hidden. If one does these two things, one may, after 100 moves, consider 2-5 moves to be mistakes on the part of the enemy. If the enemy is fastidious, and corrects the pieces as above, then play brusquely, and slam the pieces down just loud enough to "snap" the mind of the anal-retentive player. In between moves, then slowly tap your fingers or drum, in a way that slowly antagonizes the spirit of the enemy. Make it look like you are doing it absentmindedly to slowly drain their Qi (perhaps turn a piece over and tap it on the table, once every two seconds). If you want to make them laugh, to disperse concentration (laughter is Fire, so is Golden light), then tap in an obvious way, and when they realize you are doing it, they will look up. If they are annoyed, a smile will annoy them more. If they are amused, you can laugh together: you own them 99%!!

If the person repeatedly corrects the placements, then disarrange the taken pieces, and slowly misalign the pawns on the board. If one has a straight pass, a crooked row of pawns will look like a saw-ridge. An experienced player will catch on, or at least subconsciously take more time to assess the moves, trying to predict all the potentially dozens of outcomes.

This drains the Qi, and as the game continues, one can whittle away pieces at a time, scarcely un-noticed.

One of the other 3 games I never forget is one I played with my uncle. It was a game I lost, but not because he was better. It was lost because it was a new (and pretty) board, whose pawns looked almost identical to the bishops. Failing to take this into account, I lost a crucial bishop, and this was all he needed (it was his board), to finish, because the queen was taken. That means that I defeated myself by failing to consider the external factors of the pieces' looks.

Can this show up in life? All the time. I wonder how many people underestimated upstarts that later took their jobs, or spouses, or failed to see the pedophile predator next door... merely because one cannot see what is under the nose if it is inconvenient or assumed. That is dangerous!

Such a lesson was well bought, and was heightened by the embarrassment of losing due to such a failure in self-assessment. What's more: he refused to play again. Why? He knew I was better and would win! but he wanted to remain the victor! LOL! That is a great chess player!

Moving now from these externals to the most internal of externals, one needs to consider one's own state of mind in relation to the environment. How is one's health today? How is one's mood? How is one's confidence? How is one's emptiness? How is one's pride? How is one's vigor and will? How is one's time?

If none of these are in place or proper proportion, then the ability to win is 50-66% less, then one should not even consider to play. It would be only for the sake of making one's mind more loser-ish, and what good is that? Only if one's teacher commands it, knowing one is afraid and lazy, should this be allowed.

The Guiguzi (Ghost Valley Master) says, "Therefore it is better to control others, than to be controlled by others."

Shi-Configuration



I am sure by now that the reader is very intrigued as to this "Shi" (Configuration) concept, and how to build it, and how to assess it, and to take advantage of terrain to maximum ability. How does one know whether one should spend a move to "clip the wings" versus attack quickly with fast moving pieces?

What is Shi? It is not merely the configuration in terms of the actual layout of the board. That is certainly a part. But if one uses a photograph of the board and sets up the board, can it really be said that it is the same game?

Certainly it is a different game, different day altogether. After all, new people, new thoughts new Qi. So what is Shi? It is an invisible House of Cards, a setup which is imperceptible to the naked eye, but as palpable as the look in the eyes of a lover.

It is not mere layout, nor is it merely the House of Cards. It is position, leverage, tension, tendency, potential, all wrapped up into one concept which means, inevitability.

To create a game for oneself that is inevitable, such that winning is "as easy as turning over the palm of one's hand", one must be able to imagine and sense the invisible. As for how to train this, I say only desire and ambition can make it so.

Most of the discussion of Shi will be contained in Mystikal Chess (Book 2). Suffice it to say, I want to speak, shortly, about the conditions which may lead to one detecting unique opportunities.

First, there is the need to know yourself. If you can see outside yourself, even for a moment, in the game, then you will know the Shi as surely as you know your heart and emotions. This is an ability which takes time to develop, because it means avoiding getting tunnel vision. If you notice you are breathing shallowly (because all stress causes this reaction, no matter how trivial), then the Shi is against you **or** you are showing your ambition and getting excited.

Next, please, from time to time, sit back and look at the board in several new ways. When you practice this, you will eventually do it every move. But in the beginning, it will suffice to simply practice sitting back, and looking at the board (with your mind's eye): from above, from their perspective, from yours again, from a side view, asking yourself, "how would the viewer play my game?"

Also, ask yourself, "Where are my weaknesses? Where are their weaknesses?"

Look for the Shining Piece, the Pivot Point, the Shatter Point, and the head of the Sword of Shi¹³.

Also, now take a look at what you've analyzed: what is the state of order? Is it too ordered, to the point of stifling oneself (but not the enemy)? Is it disordered such that one is unable to mount offense, or even defense? Is it disordered on their side? And if so, is it disordered in a way that opens them to attack, or actually in a way that will stifle all good offense from both sides? Is the board ordered in a way that will lead to a sudden opening, or is it ordered in a way that slows the game and leads to drain on both sides?

Also, regarding the order, who does it favor in terms of points? The order, is it too symmetric or too asymmetric? Is the order amateur and predictable? Is the order hidden order within chaos?

¹³ The Sword is an invisible extension that extends from the home king, and "thrusters" outwards towards the enemy king. If it is short, dull (rounded), or weak, how can the check be very strong? If the check is without solidity, there is no potential to checkmate. Consider this: what is it about Arthur that enlivens the Ages and frightened his enemies? It was not Excalibur, it was the metaphor of Excalibur. A sword from a stone that built Camelot. A place so hallowed and unassailable - full of knights of great renown - that only a corrupter from the inside could destroy it! As for the Shatterpoints and Pivot points, those will be discussed later.

Did the game start with order and lead to chaos, or start with fake chaos and quickly become a game of wits? Is this a game where one can make a mistake or two, or do you have to play perfectly?

Speaking of the gameplay, is it casual, serious, open, closed, tight-lipped, distracted, or Special; in a Special game, something great is felt and even in such situations like basketball they will call themselves “instant classics”. I have played games where both sides appreciated the game so much pictures were taken, and the moves afterwards discussed for fifteen minutes.

When you are looking at the Shi, you have to remember the interpersonal politics, which is far more real than the “politics” of the game (bishops and gentry). For example, is this a family member, a friend, a competitor, a stranger at a chance meeting, some guy over the internet (whose influence you will not be able to have), or a computer? Remember, there is no influencing something without a soul, but there is still a Shi.

Speaking of tension, and of tendency, can you see: is it right, is it left? Is it forward, or backward? Is it round, or is it triangular, or is it square? Is it hollow, is it full? Is it united, is it divided? Is it false, or is it true?

Speaking of position and of power: does one guard the king with anxious worry, or with too little deference? Does one remember to protect the king at all, or does one forget and chase around the queen, worrying about her “day and night” (when things go well, or go badly). Does one castle out of fear, or out of Justice¹⁴. Does one “command the troops” with the air of a King, or with the indifference of a corrupt official, acting as if the troops will last forever (unlike Go, Chess has limited pieces). In short: of what mindset and **vibration** does one use to play?

Speaking of transformations, and how they affect the game... one must be mindful in assessing the situation to not be stuck in the present, and become deluded by the situation as it stands. Things change quickly, and one moment one may be equal - points wise - and within 4 moves, lose 90% of his or her powers. One must also not be stuck in analyzing the past moves of the game or the play history. One must not be overly confident in the next future moves, or else fall victim to many deceptive schemes and stratagems! In short: be mindful of the interplay of yin and yang (in terms not of black and white, but offense and defense). For example, if the game setup requires Orthodox now, be aware if it changes to Unorthodox (such as guerilla warfare).¹⁵ However, the game may also proceed from start to finish as Orthodox or Unorthodox, depending solely on the Shi and Qi!

These are all methods for analyzing Shi. And much more needs - no must - be said, but in length in whole chapters in Mystikal Chess. However, I would recommend reading various texts on the Art of War (such as Tao of Deception), as well as Francois Jullien's books: The Propensity of Things, A Treatment of Efficacy, and The Silent Transformations.

Timing, Yi-Change, and Hua-Transformation

“Timing is everything,” as they say. Whoever ‘they’ are, they aren’t wrong, and quite possibly, have not said enough!

The Yi-changes of Heaven are never ending and unfathomable. They seem to come from nowhere and end up in mysterious places. Who knows what a change will be 100% for sure? But also, just the same, there are plenty of Chinese (and other cultures’) sciences which make fairly educated guesses. The Art of War was no different. By taking advantage of an advanced, and yet simple concept of Shi, many predictions of changes can be made.

Still, though, the changes of the game are many and difficult to predict. However, if one makes moves in a certain, measured way, one can usually attain certain, measured results.

¹⁴ Justice in Chess or strategy is not a moral issue. It is simply thus: when you should strike, to not do so is injustice to Tianyi - Heaven’s Will. It will lead to demise. Indecisiveness, flaccid or lazy play, and misuse of troops is all injustice to the Kingdom. Here judgment from “Heaven” means simply that the rules will lead to destruction and loss.

¹⁵ Orthodox means logical and fair play. Unorthodox means doing the unexpected. Guerilla warfare in Chess means simply using the knights to snipe players, bishops skirting through passes, and en passante.

For example, if you threaten with a pawn, you can make power pieces move aside - most of the time. If you threaten a bishop with a knight, you can make it move. A rook with a bishop, and make it flee. A queen with any piece, you can instigate her to action (good or bad). If a person is checked they are more likely to flee than block, more likely to block than attack, and more likely to attack than sacrifice. If they are experienced it may go the opposite way.

As for Timing, the key is in delivery. Most of the time play in an even, regulated way. Calmly moving. When a piece threatens you aggressively, either a) chop it off and assertively kill it or block it or b) be still, wait, and move as if unconcerned. If you wait several moments you are indecisive; if you wait several minutes you are stumped. Thus you must either move decisively or in a measured way, so as not to demonstrate incompetence or fear or confusion.

When you time the moves of taking a piece, you have to use the Killing Energy, which arises when the moment's right. This is how you "capture" or "grasp" - de - the Qi. When you are choosing a defense, you must sense danger and move according to the times. Castling too early is death, and so is castling too late. Etc...

The Yi in general goes from yin to yang and yang to yin. If the game is left it will go right, and right it will go left. If front it will go to back and vice versa. If the player wishes to defend to the southeast, they should press the game towards the northwest. If the player feels hollow they should borrow Qi (pieces) to fill the board and make it full. If they feel full, they should quickly sacrifice pieces - in a measured way - on both sides to empty the board and free the Qi of powerful pieces.

By using good timing, the board drains slowly and the Shi is revealed as an advantage to one side or another.

The Hua-transformations are numerous (and written in more detail in Mystikal Chess), but in short I will describe them here:

- Advance - This describes a stable state of forward movement of multiple pieces, not necessarily only pawns, but always represents the Orthodox, and therefore more powerful, assertive form of play/warfare.
- Evolution - The movement of the game and Qi from simple towards complex, often leading to a sort of "Mexican standoff", but sometimes more of an unexpected shift from yang to yin, or yin to yang (rights and lefts, forwards and backwards).
- Reversal - The unexpected change from offense to defense, or defense to offense. Or perhaps from orthodox to unorthodox, etc...
- Repulsion - The pushback of normal Qi from the player, onto themselves, as if a peel has been folded back onto itself.
- Stopping/Halting - Sudden, ending of aggressive advances, orthodox or unorthodox.
- Seizing - When an opportunity arises, moving forward decisively to capture the moment, without reservation.
- Parrying - When an opponent makes an advance, and that advance is deflected in a right or left direction relative to the vector, usually also with a repartee to their own side.
- Harrying - Rapid, successive advances from two, three, or even four directions which stifle the opponent into crushing losses and weakening defensive positions.
- Dodging - Before the arrival of a threat, moving away. The enemy cannot attack your "emptiness". The subtle fact that you read their intent will also attack the morale, even if no return threat takes place.
- Absorbing - When the Shi builds into a sword/lance and the Qi swells, but you find a way to swallow it and they have losses which become your gains. Often by tricking them into narrow passes, or ambushes.
- Expanding - The growing of bubbles on the board which create vacuums but on the outside high pressure which often forces ill advised moves or quick decisions..
- Contracting - After a vacuum, no matter how large is created, the rapid contraction to spring a trap, ambush, or make a dungeon.¹⁶
- Draining - Similar to Bogging, but here this speaks of moving in such a way that through successive losses, depletes the Keen and Awesomeness of the enemy, leaving them will-less. Even if they are still winning they may be tricked into believing they will lose.

¹⁶ One may wonder if one can make a dungeon why not simply kill the queen or rook, etc...? Simple: if it exists they can be lured into making moves with losses, or into distracted thinking, or even into ease (if they are oblivious to the reality of the dungeon).

- Exciting - Causing or participating in growing, rapid, and accelerating heightened moves, each more potent than the last. If one causes excitement in the enemy, it can be used to create mistakes, however, it may also backfire leading to growing Awesomeness (through expansion) which becomes like an avalanche: unstoppable.
- Distracting - Making moves out of the ordinary or away from the “action” which pull their Qi into separated places. Not necessarily offensive. This can be important when one has much more firepower than they do, to weaken their remaining defenses and retain strength (for example, to make it easier to do Queen’s mate, without knights or bishops or rooks.)
- Mesmerizing - Making moves which mystify the enemy, leading to complete confusion and a total inability to defend. In some instances, able to checkmate the king with one or no casualties in either side.
- Bogging - Creating defensive shi which sucks the player into bad positioning, such that you can “borrow their strength” like “foraging on the enemy”... gaining extra pieces from their own which act like trenches and passes.
- Concealing - Though the board is in plain sight, one may hide plans and moves through a concealment of nonchalant behavior, leading to forgetfulness, later regretted which all is suddenly unfolded. “Opening a can...”
- Hiding - pretending to be weak, when really strength is ready to be revealed into overt, orthodox advances.
- Revealing - The actual process of unfolding the hidden.
- Avenging - When one has losses early on in the first stage in the game, one can make it a secret wish to “Avenge” the losses by getting even or replacing with pawns crossing the board. If one loses one’s queen to a brilliant ambush, plan to use a fork later to force a sudden loss. Even if behind in points or losing, the opponent will be demoralized and in awe of your tenacity.
- Punishing - When an opponent becomes arrogant over capturing the queen, they may speak or move with braggadocio. They will make a mistake, and at that time you punish them severely, and by retaining several pawns, may even end up with three or four queens, grinding them into dust.
- Dispersing - The enemy may amass sudden, unexpected Awesomeness early in the game, by luck or the unfortunate management, or slow management of pawns. Disperse them by slowing the game down and make their Qi scatter, and they will slowly lose Keen (and interest). You may then pick them apart piece by piece, slowly Draining them till you win by small odds.
- Owning - When you play with Queen’s Mate or Knight’s Mate, and take pieces without mercy, coming and going without the ability to be stopped, giving the Plague, seizing all moments without fear, hesitation, and even as they move snatching the pieces from their hand as they set them down, building your Excitement and Keen to the sharpest blade.
- Willing - When one is able to, by sheer force of willpower, bear down upon an area of a board to achieve an end. For example, moving three pawns across a board with the king, retrieving one or two queens, demoralizing the opponent who may have still had a bishop and/or knight and/or rook- but was unable to- at the setup due to the loss of the queen an advantageous Shi (usually due to landmines and trenches unswept up). Another example is when one plans a triple fork out three moves in advance, and despite the obviousness of it, one hides it long enough to reveal and the opponent feels still inside them that they could not stop your advance. The demoralizing power is worth more than the actual capturing in the fork.

The key for all of these transformations is a keen sense of timing and of the precise nature of the Qi in the moment. Remember: where is the pinch point? Where is the pivot point? Where are the shining pieces? What are they thinking? Know these things, and one can master Shi, and master the Art of Chess... and life.

The Effort of Man is worth 3X the Blessings of Heaven

“Man contends. Heaven confounds” ~ Chinese proverb.

At one time in Chinese history, and indeed in most warfare throughout the world, before heading to war, mankind would try to divine the future. Later, this was not only ignored, but even discouraged. Still, from time to time, one will be confounded in one’s plans. This is as the universe moves, and cannot be stopped. However, let us talk, briefly in this book, about the following topics: ambition, willpower, probability, possibility, luck, and chaos.

Chaos

The game of chess, ideally, should be played in a quiet environment, so that nerds can think. However, I am going to recommend one plays in the potential for chaotic environment. Why? For starters, to train a distracted mind. Secondly, one may capitalize on “unexpected” chaos to create hidden or concealed plans, or make moves which are mesmerizing or even escape through a noose with highly risky moves by simply saying “Oh, I moved” and the person does not stop to consult the board closely to see the changes. Life is like this... making changes while one sleeps, mysterious and aggravating. So becoming accustomed to chaos or even using it will benefit one a hundredfold.

Luck

Some people, it's true... have all the luck. Luck is not a good strategy to rely upon. Still, if one has a lucky day, (or knows how to create one), it may become beneficial to play. Then again, why waste one's lucky Qi on a game? Only when one knows there is a good benefit to winning. Still it may more than likely appear that one is playing against a lucky player. Sometimes this means one just made a few mistakes and they are already in advantage. To deal with another's luck, is really a matter of treading on thin ice, or baited breath and life and death! One must first drain the enemy, disperse their Keen and Awesomeness, slow them down, Absorb their Shi, conceal plans, summon willpower, and finally... not make a single mistake. Only then will it be possible to overcome luck. It will help if one can make the person demoralized or disinterested to win through repeated distractions, especially real life distractions (see chaos).

Possibility versus Probability

What's possible, in life, is endless. On the board, there are also thousands of transformations and moves, setups, etc... However, one may not live in the fantasy of possibilities, but in the reality of probability. 95% of the time, one should rely on probability, and yet, 5% of the time one must remember that *anything is possible*. Never give up, never surrender, never lose sight of the goal! If one can imagine it, who knows what may happen?

Ambition & Willpower

Without ambition, really what can one become? Without willpower one cannot accomplish one's ambitions. Therefore, it is my advice that one cultivate the two to the point of near-excessive potency. In general, this means sharpening it, but also it means making them flexible and receptive. For example, in chess, if one gets to the point of being able to bend the opponent to their will, then they should cease to use it in this way, and begin either teaching (allowing others to win), or to play in ways that handicap one (playing with one's weaknesses). This will “round” out the willpower and ambition to temper them and bring about patience. One cannot always play with aggression. Awesomeness is not a mere matter of ambition and force! Awesomeness is not Keen. Awesomeness comes from an enlightened position, and expansive Vision. In other words, too much willpower will lead to weakening of Awesomeness, which is that which takes chess play into real life for use in other matters.

Ambition will, if expanded, but controlled, encompass chess play and life into one continuous training. Rather than “playing” chess, one approaches it with rapt seriousness. And from there, life then becomes as easy as the game, rather than the other way around (which is painful). A warning: try not to gloat or always crush frenemies... you have to have people to play with sometimes!

Chapter 4 - Inevitability

In the last chapter we spoke of Assessment and Configuration. By all rights we should talk next about Ji - the moment that movement goes into action, unstoppably. However, not just yet!

Rather we need to expand on styles of play, because these will determine the Way in which one plays, and thus how the Ji actually unfolds, and which Mou-stratagems one will use.

The following is not an exhaustive list (I am certain), it is merely the list of styles with which I - your humble servant - is aware of and familiar with.

Offense versus Defense

The old tagline "The best offense is a good defense" has always been easy for people to reverse: "The best defense is a good offense."

So which is more important? One clearly must be the method, even though one shall play both and even simultaneously, there must be a bias in one direction or the other. Which is it?

I want here to introduce the reader to the common martial solution of wise and wary fighters: be counter-offensive... Chinese style.

Typically, to be counter-offensive, one merely awaits a move from the enemy, and then deflects, absorbs, or negates, and returns the attack ten or a hundredfold. This is the way of Taijiquan and other martial arts (such as Wing Chun). And it is an excellent way to play the Black Side. But what about the White?

In this case I want to introduce the idea of Chinese counter-offense... if your offense is good, it produces a defense which unfolds in a way that counters their offense. They call it "anticipating the moves".

You see, in the beginning a player will naturally play defensively (being timid and unsure). As children they learn to form a "dragon's back" which for a time serves them to prevent bishops and knights. Then the player learns to use the power pieces and plays recklessly offensive. That is also not the best. Then comes the learning of counter (and counter-counter) offense. The result is that even though an opponent is as ferocious as a starved tiger, he cannot help but feel the brunt of brutal repulsions.

Now the real fun begins: learning to play sometimes offensively, sometimes defensively, always thinking of counters and counters to counters... this is how the game turns into a highly ratcheted and elaborate setup!

So again, which is better? Overall, it is better to *control the pace* of the game, which is, after all, an offensive idea. If I control when they come, when they go, where they move, where they defend, who they save, who they sacrifice, then I control the game, and this is the offense of Awesomeness. There is no need to constantly reveal the Killing Energy, and one can capture or free at will; can control their Keen, and advance or withdraw, retreat or transform, and perform at will all the marvelous Hua-transformations.

To attain this skill, one must first learn the perfection of defense. So first comes defense, and then comes prominence of unrelenting offense. And when this arrives, one can decide whether to be merciful or merciless.

Choosing A Primary Piece

Queen's Mate

Should one wish to play primarily offensively, there is nothing like using a Queen to dismantle the enemy (give 'em the plague!)

She exerts a vast amount of De (inner power) from her presence [ie: a Queen Force] anywhere on the board (even in a dungeon or minefield!) Why is this? It's because she's a game changer. If one knows how to use such a powerful game-changer early on - and one cannot be stopped from this use - that means certain victory by overwhelming force.

The main problem is the tendency to make reckless moves that lead to her loss. If one can avoid this, and make perfect moves with her (only sacrificing when necessary), then one cannot be beaten: period.

Pawn's Mate

Strictly speaking, I do not expect one to really play as though they mean to win solely with pawns. No... that's not really reasonable. But what I do mean to say here is that if one considers the Pawn offense and defense to be one's orthodox and unorthodox arms, like a sword and shield, creating unstoppable phalanxes.

How is this achieved, though, practically speaking? Rather simply: kill their pawns faster than your own, and try to retain 2, 3, or even 4 at the end to convert into Queens.

So you see here, the strategy is quite opposite. By eliminating their pawns with whatever pieces you can, and avoiding having yours killed (through parrying and dodging), we slowly build an almost insurmountable Shi that simply outlasts the enemy. They just... run out of pieces. Meanwhile you retain your power for a miracle at the end. You even sacrifice queen for queen, rook for rook, bishop for bishop, and knight for knight - on purpose - so that at the end, only the factor of pawn's and the current king's position remains of vital importance.

This brings up an important point. The king remains a vital implement in the survival of these two to four pawns. Even if only one should remain, the difference between survival or not to the other end is usually dependent upon those who have the better defending king, who is able to protect against the upgrade from pawn to Queen.

Another point that must be considered is whether or not the pawns are being used for defensive formations and positions, and can participate in forward offensives. This is a really common problem for people: how to move the pawns forward into offense, and yet retain strong defense?

Here is the secret: use the knights and bishops, rather than for offense, instead for defense!! Defend the pawns, which are worth less, and make it difficult for the enemy. One may wonder "how do I keep them from sniping the back pawns and ruining the defensive phalanxes? Easy! Move the piece just beforehand! And one may wonder "what about their pawns which will block progress or even kill my offensive phalanx?" Easy as well (though not always as easy): kill their back pawns with your knights and bishops before they are moved into defensive positions, and before the enemy has the opportunity to form Maginot Lines and landmine fields.

This sounds - naturally - harder and more complicated than Queen's Mate. That is because it requires more patience, more skill, and more ability (talent) than Queen's Mate. And yet it is far more successful. Why? Because it is relying upon the power of math over the power of arrogant skill. So it is all the more important to excel at it.

Using Bishops and Knights in Tandem

Another common style of play is to rely upon the four pieces of knights and bishops, working like Taiji and Bagua, dismantling the opponent's defenses early, robbing power pieces, and demoralizing, burning them up only after taking 6-12 pieces. This relies upon a deft hand, for alone the pieces are weak, but working in tandem they are like a quartet of death.

To do this, please open with two pawns, and then move first the knights, and then the bishops, protected by the knights which also take pawns, but being protected by the bishops, and repeating this until by forking the enemy repeatedly, their defense is in shambles, their offense disarrayed and without consolidation, and their hopes already quite dim. By moving

these four pieces out, and then now comes the queen and pawns: even if they had hoped to mount an offensive, now what can they do? If they even sneeze at you, you can castle away, and your castle is as vast as half the board already!

What is the method for dealing with this style? It is none other than combining the queen and pawns. Only by striking hard and ruthlessly lonely officers (with the queen) and laying difficult terrain, can one hope to severely limit the advance of the Quartet of Death.

As for keeping these pieces alive: should one rely upon the queen or not? I say yes and no. Yes one can use her as a defensive piece, but never solely so, she must remain a threat to be mitigated against. We keep her ready to strike, hopefully checking the enemy, at any time, and only if this is possible, can she become defense. This is the way to “save her” or “retain the potency” of the Queen. If done correctly, one expends the nobility and officers first, and then has rooks to use and then after the rooks take out any straggler pawns, one retains the ability to have two, three, or even four queens!

Such power: your Awesomeness will “shake the realms”. It will be long ere the opponent considers to play you again!

Using the Rooks - correctly

For Pete’s sake: do not use the rooks in the beginning of the game.

I say that, and most assuredly someone will do it. Why? Because they are strong, and people get bored of waiting, “But I want rook practice” one might say. Then get good at your middle game, and avoiding losing the rooks for a long time. If you can do this, then you will have the opportunity to learn to use the rooks.

And what about the rooks? What shall we do with them?

Here is just a simple list of what you can use these tremendous pieces to do:

- ★ Castle into check (or to prevent a castling)
- ★ Castle to escape from future check
- ★ Castle to protect or “link” the rooks
- ★ Defend against the advance of the pawns trying to become queens
- ★ Create the Great Walls to keep the enemy king from escaping
- ★ Prepare tandem attacks to deal with the enemy queen, perhaps even forcing a sacrifice of the queen through a fork
- ★ Push the remaining forces of the enemy into a corner

The main thing is that people feel awkward using them, and so lose them , or fail to use them, or worse: lose because of them! If one can realize the right sphere of influence for the rooks, where they are near to unstoppable, one will never taste defeat, save by unfortunate placement of the king into accidental traps.

Speaking of the king, it is incredibly important to make the king stick close to the rooks, at least one of them, as much as possible. This protects the king and the rook. meanwhile while a king cannot easily checkmate the enemy with a bishop or knight as his partner, he can easily do so with a single rook. Savvy use of the rook can boss around the enemy king while protecting the backline from pawns turning into queens. By remaining “defensive” in this way, it is often than people cannot “get at” the rooks save by accidental placement or diagonal sniping of the rooks.

Gathering Awesomeness: the correct use of the King

What is “Awesomeness”? In English the word Awesome has two connotations: fear-inspiring (dread), and admiration. This is near to the mark. But in this the concept is that one can garner (and lose) Awesomeness. It is a concoction of:

- ☐ Charm
- ☐ Leadership
- ☐ Timing
- ☐ Winning tendency
- ☐ Openness (approachability)
- ☐ Magnanimity

- ☐ Benevolence
- ☐ Fear (of punishments inflicted or better, to disappoint)
- ☐ Inspiration (to go further, do more, become more)
- ☐ Potency (as opposed to impotency)
- ☐ Shi-Efficacy
- ☐ Li-virtue
- ☐ De-integrity+power (moral force)
- ☐ Attainment of one's own Way
- ☐ Focus
- ☐ Concentration¹⁷
- ☐ Intelligence
- ☐ Wisdom
- ☐ Experience¹⁸
- ☐ Enlightenment
- ☐ Patience
- ☐ and Humility (do not forget it!)

One might say “well that's the Perfected Man” ; yes, you are correct! This is what a full Knight or General (士 Shi) would try to embody. It is both rare and difficult to maintain (thus humility is most needed!)

What would one say of an “Awesome” General (or King)? They would say what Confucius said:

Chi K'ang Tzu asked Confucius about government, saying, 'What would you think if, in order to move closer to those who possess the Way, I were to kill those who do not follow the Way?'

Confucius answered, 'In administering your government, what need is there for you to kill? Just desire the good yourself and the common people will be good. The virtue of the gentleman is like wind; the virtue of the small man is like grass. Let the wind blow over the grass and it is sure to bend.'

Lau [12:19]

This is surely the highest form of Awesomeness, and most assuredly the highest Art of War.

How does one achieve this? First: still your heart-mind. That means both the heart beats (calm breathing!) and the mind (empty the desiring “monkey mind”). Second: think magnanimously... what is the needed outcome for both parties of the game? Who needs to win more? What's at stake? If you have not thought this far in the game, and you play on account of mere competitiveness, you are still an immature westerner. Immature westerners have invented great things, but also wrought terrible destruction and senseless violence upon Indians, Africans, Asians, Black Americans, Aborigines of Oceania, and the environment. They have come up with amazing theories and philosophies, and simultaneously abandoned those in favor of profit, selfishness, and mutually assured destruction! So let us not do things that way. Let us remember the Moment. Who is this person you play? Do you **need to win** as much as **you want to win**? What will you really get out of this game? Out of this contract? Out of this political victory? Out of this debate (or mere social media argument)? Out of this life?

What is the winning really about? Is it fulfilling the needs of the moment, the relationship, the Other, or only to please the temporal (and un-Absolute) ‘self’? Some may say “this is hefty philosophy for such a little game! I compete to win!” Well I commend you... if you already know how to “win” in all circumstances, and know what you are winning. Are you winning another sycophant, an admirer, a girlfriend, a job, what? What are you winning beyond the fleeting moment?

¹⁷ Concentration means increasing the density of the Inner Light (as a substance of the heart-mind); Focus means attuning it to blazing potential (like a laser, or a magnifying glass as it were)

¹⁸ Wisdom in Chinese culture is something you can gain and store up, literally meaning cultural knowledge or knowledge with unknown source (intuitive, rather than rational); Experience means practical wisdom, the use of knowledge in application knowing inwardly the effect that comes because of having seen and felt it before.

Once you answer that question, you have attained at least half of ultimate victory and Awesomeness: you are transcending simpleton's victory. "Well, Shifu, what do **you** play for?"

I play to win, and winning means I improve every game. If I win, great. If I lose I want it to be that they beat me and I learned something, not that I beat myself with a poor attitude, violation of the Arts of War, and being supercilious (or super serious!)

For me, winning means constructing harmony out of the moment, out of the game. When someone gets the game and goes on to win at life, then I am winning beyond the game.

As for those who wish for simple Awesomeness [in the game] let it be known as simply these maxims:

- ❖ Do not castle except to remove all possibility of victory from the enemy
- ❖ Or to attack
- ❖ And only if one is needing a rook - truly in need
- ❖ But never to flee
- ❖ Win with as few pieces as possible
- ❖ Transform pawns into Queens
- ❖ But only at need
- ❖ Or when the player has played aggressively and "needs a lesson"
- ❖ Remain a good "sport" and gracious
- ❖ Refuse to accept admiration
- ❖ Fake humility if you cannot be really humble and empty
- ❖ And if called on it, give examples of one's weaknesses point by point
- ❖ Do not let the opponent place you on a pedestal. Refuse to be placed upon it
- ❖ Effect emptiness and spontaneity
- ❖ Effect harmony, and not animosity at the end of game - do not brag
- ❖ Allow the enemy to get one, or even two, free kills to soothe their ego "pity kills"
- ❖ But do not tell them you are letting them do it, remember: be humble!

There are any number of small methods *in the moment* for one to practice building Awesomeness. One might ask "why do this?"

Two reasons. Firstly it will extend into one's own life, and this is a good way to live, or at least on the way to Goodness. Secondly, in your play it will transform you from overly aggressive to passive (which for others seems plainly assertive); or from too passive or passive-aggressive (inwardly cowardly) to confident (which will seem to you as aggressive). This is "attaining the mean". How this will manifest is that one is able to keep one's king in place longer, and protect him longer, and this will in time give way to using the king for strong defensive and offensive moves.

Attacking Another's Awesomeness

It can, in fact, be robbed or "forced to lose". The subtlety of this will be covered in the Mystikal Chess book. Suffice it to say, there is one simple technique that one may use, and it will guarantee victory in 98% of games, the remaining 2% belonging only to Tier 3 players who know how to deal with the humiliation of this unfortunate turn of events.

Can you guess it? It is really quite simple.

>>Make them move the king, and make them do this early.

One cannot claim to be Master of his/her house if one can be moved or forced out. That means that one needs to be stolid, stalwart, stoic, and other st words (staunch, stubborn even), in keeping one's King protected, centered, and **reserved**.

Manifesting One's Awesomeness - the Killing Energy

Storing up awesomeness is like storing Jing-essence (semen), it means nothing if it doesn't do anything. One famous "self-help" guru stated that 95% of men don't succeed before age 50 merely on account of being unable to control their Sexual Energy (Qi that radiates from Dan Tien, 3" below the navel; in the west, roughly Testosterone). One must be able to transform this potent power into use, to be successful at life (sales, family, being an entrepreneur).

Similarly, having a lot of De-power means nothing if one impotently retains it and lets enemies win all the time.

Don't get me wrong: I am not advocating fighting every enemy. Far from it Most people, I have learned, are no threat and have no **legitimate power**. Most can be ignored.

But in the game of chess, you are practicing a constant life and death struggle. You should approach it as if you are Mufasa (the lion king). If you fail: Scar takes over and gets all your female lions. (If you're female, you can be the Little Mermaid and the enemy can be Ursula, work with me!).

What this means is you have to get your hands dirty. You have to kill. And not reluctantly, and not out of pure enjoyment. You have to kill like a **Cat catching a Mouse**. Seize the moment, and seize the piece. When you take the piece, fiddle with it, or set it down with soft (but audible) force. Or put it on your side and rack up their pieces in a way that shows your dominance. Kill early, and often, and mercilessly, but without straying from your objectives (such as chasing their Queen and thus falling into traps).

Snipe the rooks, ruin their Maginot Lines, fork them till the cows come home, and constantly, constantly check and maintain check. Move their king, and refuse to be moved.

This Killing Energy, learn to use it well, and one will manifest and maintain opportunities in the game, and in life. "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" It is the sound of winning at life because if you win at chess, it is one sound penetrating all.

The King will never be your "primary piece" of offense, but this is why it must be your complete root of all offense. It must be your center, your very being. Then all the pieces will be made to serve you, even theirs. This is what it means to play using the King.

Martyrdom

This may sound like a rather random topic, but actually it is quite important. In real life wars, a martyr is as important, if not more so than spies. Why? Spies are in the dark, secretive. But a Martyr is a lighthouse, a beacon to all the army. When Patrick Henry said "Give me liberty or give me death" and Nathan Hale said "I regret I have but one life to give for my country" these words were more potent than 10,000 soldiers (in the Art of War). Many generals and kings would die for the chance to have such sincere men in their army, and Washington had at least these two heroes! What eloquence, what selflessness! This potency is in affecting the morale of both sides.

OK, sounds sanctimonious? After all: this is just a game, isn't it? Ah, not so, not so. When you sacrifice a piece this is a weapon all the same. And now let's step through the main seven sacrifices one should be familiar with, and when to use them to manifest devastating transformations that shake the opponent's plans, confidence, as much inwardly as if your Guandao were to strike an iron spear!¹⁹

1. Pawn takes pawn (with certainty of death) - this is for two occasions. The first is easy to understand. When they have an excellent defensive position, and they are stymying your offense, one may exact a martyrdom of the pawn to a) ruin their defense and b) spring an offensive attack.
The second time is a little more Mystikal... you must surmise when you (and they) have reached Fullness, and who will benefit most from avoidance of death and who most from ensuing death. At that time, one should use the Killing Energy and send one's own troops (pawn) to death and gladly so. Just think: if Churchill and Roosevelt hadn't done this, we'd all be speaking German right now!
2. Knight Rides to Glory (versus pawn or bishop) - when the Knight rides to glory there are three things one should consider. One: do you need him anymore (ie, has he outlived his need)? Two: Can you make it look accidental? The best method is to set up the martyrdom a move or two beforehand, rather than land the knight in obvious

¹⁹ The Guandao is a massive scimitar on the end of a spear-pole.

danger. Three: Will the enemy fall for it (or can you force them to take the knight?), such that in the end, the ends justifies the means (of losing a great piece?)

3. Bishop Becomes a Saint - this is obvious, when one “wastes” the Bishop on seemingly “dumb” moves, or even allows a pawn to take him. Why? For opening or exposing. However, bear in mind it is best to align your attacks such that the attacking pawn would reveal a check upon the enemy, and thus the martyrdom becomes a “symbol of faith” and rather than lose the bishop, one gets instead a better objective!
4. Sacrifice a Castle to Gain a Fief - When one has neglected the defense of the rooks (usually through not seeing diagonally but also just not enough time, and rook gets stuck behind a knight), rather than lose one’s calm and cool over it, turn it into a win. Set a trap, or ambush the offending piece. Or, use the fact that they have done this and lost a move to put them in check. Or simply ignore it and go ahead and put them in check so that they never can take the rook, or if they do, trap their queen in the corner!
5. Sacrifice a Rook to Keep Nobility - very rarely done, but this is best in order to save a bishop, queen, and less so to get a knight. Why would one do this? Mostly because one needs the other piece to keep the the pressure upon the enemy. How should one do it? For nothing less than an officer. If you’re sacrificing a rook to a pawn to keep a knight or bishop alive, you’ve done something wrong somewhere.
6. Sacrifice the Queen to a Queen (Queen-swap) - You do this to eliminate a great threat, and most importantly, because you know you can get another one and/or they needed their queen more than you did. Don’t be afraid to lose the queen. Calculate the swap: who ends up with the most losses? Simple pros & cons.
7. Sacrifice the Queen to the People (Let them eat cake!) - Most often Tier 2 and 3 players try to get nothing less than a rook out of such a swap. But actually I say train yourself to be willing to lose her even for nothing more than a pawn. IF the move leads to checkmate, this is the right move to make, and there is nothing wrong with doing it. In fact, I recommend this training to make any other martyrdom seem easy and trite - everyday business.

The king is not allowed to martyr himself, hence only 7 types.

Why does martyrdom work so well? It goes back to the proper use of the Unorthodox. Orthodoxy says “I wish to win and not lose pieces”, so the yin to that yang is “I am willing to win by losing pieces”. It is great technique, but a covetous mind of a Tier 1 player has a hard time coming to grips with it. And even if you are Tier 2, you can learn a couple things above, Tier 3 players already know all about this wonderful, necessary mode of thinking, and have no compunction. Just remember: you are not doing yourself or your kids a favor when you only give them the sweet in life. It is the bitter which hones and improves upon things. Vinegar and salt preserves. Sweet rots. Take the bitter with a grain of salt.

Chapter 5 - Attack by Stratagem

Stratagems (Mou)

“III. ATTACK BY STRATAGEM.

1. Sun Tzū said: In the practical art of war, the best thing of all is to take the enemy's country whole and intact; to shatter and destroy it is not so good. So, too, it is better to capture an army entire than to destroy it, to capture a regiment, a detachment or a company entire than to destroy them.
 2. Hence to fight and conquer in all your battles is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting.
 3. Thus the highest form of generalship is to baulk the enemy's plans;
- ~translated by Lionel Giles

The use of stratagems, in chess, has in general been reduced to this idea of “see four or five moves ahead.” There are two very significant problems with this theory. Firstly, it presupposes that all the players think alike, and should, in theory react the same way so that one knows they will make a move mechanically (as in the case of “going for points”). This is, in fact, not how people play at all, and ignores complex structures of thinking to favor mathematical or cold-rational thought. Secondly, it ignores chaos. If it ignores it, how can chaos be harnessed? How can chaos be used with a risk versus reward mindset? And, how can one avoid falling into traps of thinking by ignoring the chaos that will, inevitably arise?

I want to undo all of that thinking right now, for both Tier 2 and Tier 3 players, veteran players. It is only a partially true thing. Some people, chess savants, can make multiple calculations of variables beyond three or four moves, knowing the counter to counter to counter (to counter etc...) move for all moves. But considering how this exponentially increases, it is a rather ridiculous belief that one **should** be able to know all of these moves ahead of time. *That is quite beside the point of real strategy.*

Real strategy lives in the fog of war, even weaves its own fog, and then unfolds from there. It utilizes the Shi-tendency of things, and relies upon the relative strength of the Qi (of terrain, of the people, etc...) to decide upon a reasonable course of action.

If one is unable to sense and follow the Qi flow of the game, and tries to fight it, more than likely one will lose because one is fighting against the hidden Shi of the game. That is foolish, and egotistical. It is egotistical to imagine you know everything your opponent will do, although very often we want them to move in a certain way.

Creating a stratagem should be primarily, a matter of spontaneity (so as to be indiscernible), and secondly presupposed (by perhaps memorizing moves, or using the strategies listed in the following sections.) If one knows how to transform endlessly, there really isn't an end to the number of strategies.

Let me describe for you the game I had last night. I was coming back from teaching Taiji. I was tired, but wanted to teach a student the Art of Chess. I was low on Qi. I made the mistake of - lazily - bringing out the Queen. Mistake 1: I wasn't able to harness her correctly... I should have built my Qi up. Then the player moved well and combining this with my hand being in front of my line of sight to their player I lazily put her in harm's way, and lost her early. Mistake 2. Now I snapped to attention, and using the tactics in this book, I created a situation that limited their ability to use the queen. And though the king had been forced to move already (they played really well), I was able to escape through a small hole (following the flow of Qi), locking their queen away on the other side of the board from my castle. From there, by maneuvering the rooks and king in the right way, and using bishops to snipe their rooks, I was able to get their king out in the open, harassed by the rooks and quartered with pawns into a checkmate. Why? Unorthodox stratagems. I did also learn several new things, one of which is : don't let your hand block your line of sight, especially if you are tired (change hands). And also, I learned a new move I call “saving a check”.

>>**Saving a Check** involves, contrary to the usual method of constantly checking them to keep them off balance, saving a move for later to check the enemy at a moment inopportune to them, simply for that purpose. To induce Stopping Energy not by repulsing the area of current threat, but by stopping them from seeing the area of current attack by forcing them to think about their King's vulnerability. The ultimate goal: get them to waste a move or even fall into a trap or checkmate by over-focusing on the king and your [supposed] attack strategy.

Now, in the following sections we are going to utilize *some* of the official 36 Stratagems and 100 Unorthodox techniques to analyze board moves, together, and decide which moves would make the most sense. Most of the time I will just name the strategy, but if it is so good I have to quote it, I will.

The 36 Stratagems

“Thus, everyone covets strength and power, but rare are those capable of using soft and weak appropriately. If one can use them appropriately, he can protect his life. If the ruler can use them appropriately, he will be adaptable to changes. Such principles can be promoted throughout the land, and do not need a storage space to store it. Using these principles, one can make enemy states submit.

Military Pronouncement states: “If one can be soft and hard, the future of his state will be increasing bright! If one can be weak and strong, his state will be increasing prosperous! If purely soft or purely weak, his state will inevitably decline. If purely hard and purely strong, his state will inevitably be destroyed.”

~Three Strategies of Huang-Shigong

In this chapter we will utilize some of the 36 Stratagems (and even pull from the text “The Thirty-six Stratagems Applied to Go,” by Ma Xiaochun) to come up with some fantastic strategies for dealing with chess opponents. Please remember, this is neither an exhaustive list, nor comprehensive, as the real complete list would be many thousands of board setups. Instead we discuss the principles of the stratagems, and then use a **single** board setup or two as the case may be, to utilize it. It is worth noting that the 36 Stratagems are anonymously created, although maybe created by more than one strategist. When they were considered complete, then they became canon (Jing). But before that they were basically just ideas.

The first stratagems are the classical ones, “Crossing the Sea by Treachery” and “Besiege Wei to Rescue Zhao”. They also happen to be the two I wish the reader to most fervently adopt as techniques. These are part of the series of “Superior” or Taiyang strategies.

Winning Stratagems, 勝戰計:

Crossing the Sea by Treachery, 瞒天过海, Mán tiān guò hǎi

aka “Deceive the Heavens to cross the ocean” aka “cross the sea under camouflage”

Each of these titles has subtly different meaning. Heaven here really means “everyone”, so basically you are hiding your intentions publicly, and thereby keeping it a secret. The most common use in history is a politician refusing to seek office or lordship and thereby receiving it (example: pontiff from second Da Vinci Code movie).

“Prepare too much and you lose sight of the big picture; what you see often you do not doubt. Yin (the art of deception) is in Yang (acting in open). Too much Yang (transparency) hides Yin (true ruses). This stratagem means that you can mask your real goals, by using the ruse of a fake goal that everyone takes for granted, until the real goal is achieved. Tactically, this is known as an 'open feint'; in front of everyone, you point west, when your goal is actually in the east. By the time everyone realizes it, you have already achieved your goal. Harro von Senger notes in the German-Language "Die Liste" that to grasp the full meaning, it would be something like "to deceive the holy virgin Mary" in the West. This stratagem makes use of the human failing to become unaware of common everyday activities, or events that appear normal. The best secrets are carried out in broad daylight. The best hoax is to repeat it so often that people are convinced that the next move is also a hoax. When this happens, it is the best moment to carry out one's previously hidden true objective.” ~Wiki

“The original meaning of “crossing the sea by treachery” is to conceal a secret plan in the middle of some open affair. Some extremely secret contents are held in an extremely public form” ~Ma Xiaochun

You get the idea. Now how do you use it?

The most obvious thing is simply this: do what no one expects you to do because it is obvious to everyone you are going to do it, or should do it. But your motivation in doing what is expected is to a) place doubt in their minds, b) make them think you are after something else (as they are used to you being more tricky by now, relying on their knowledge of you), and c) because it is distracting.

The best I can think of is the goal of literally “crossing the sea” vis-a-vis a pawn reaching the other side. It’s obvious, and yet you’d be surprised how often you can “force it down their throat” because firstly they can’t be bothered defending against a pawn when they need to defend from your offense and mount their own offense, and secondly they cannot be bothered to imagine the repercussions of you getting a queen (even if she were to die, but serve a purpose). Only Tier 3 players recognize this danger immediately. Tier 2 and especially tier 1 players do not think about the future, they only react to the now.

To successfully use this strategy, it will be necessary to control your “tells”

- ☐ Do not suck in your breath
- ☐ Do not lean in too far
- ☐ Do not appear too suddenly distracted or uninterested
- ☐ Do not draw attention to the piece by hastily moving it, as if you can already imagine having a queen
- ☐ Do not move it when you very obviously should have moved another piece in offense or defence; ie move it when you have time to kill, or better, it appears like an offensive or defensive move
- ☐ Do not hesitate either, unless you can make it appear like you don’t have any better options (usually before row 6)

Another very good way to use this stratagem is in generating a fork. By moving the knight, which has a certain circular and oblong movement to it, you can temporarily exit the “sphere of engagement” to make the opponent forget the piece, then re-enter and by creating a discover check and a fork, achieve a great goal “crossing the sea” (such as killing a queen).

Finally, a very good way to “cross the sea under camouflage” is to place the piece you wish to advance to a certain position, as in the stratagem, “on a boat”. This boat is a series of pawns, usually two or three, sometimes four, that support each other - like an island in the board - moving bit by bit forward. The player must assume you want a queen, and sure you do, but actually you are just waiting to reveal the rook, bishop, or knight. This is far more rare, as after all, it should be reserved for the transition from mid-game to end-game. Unfortunately there is no hiding at the end of the game... you want queens and everyone knows it.

Besiege Wei to Rescue Zhao, 围魏救赵, Wéi Wèi jiù Zhào

“When the enemy is too strong to be attacked directly, then attack something he holds dear. Know that he cannot be superior in all things. Somewhere there is a gap in the armour, a weakness that can be attacked instead. The idea here is to avoid a head on battle with a strong enemy, and instead strike at his weakness elsewhere. This will force the strong enemy to retreat in order to support his weakness. Battling against the now tired and low-morale enemy will give a much higher chance of success.” ~Chinese Wiki Project

The main gist of this stratagem goes back to the historical account given in the Sun Bin Bingfa*:

“The **Battle of Guiling** (桂陵之戰) was fought between the states of Qí and Wei in the Warring States period of Chinese history. In 354 BC, an army from Wèi was laying siege to [Handan](#), the capital of the State of Zhao. The next year, Zhao turned to Qi for help. Tian Ji and Sun Bin, acting as co-commanders of Qi, led an army to save Zhao. Sun Bin moves south intentionally to make an unsuccessful attack on Pingling, intending to convince Pang Juan that the Qi Army was too weak to achieve victory. Pang Juan, falling for the ruse, pooled more of his forces to besiege Handan. Although defeated, the Zhao Army fought desperately and suffered heavy losses to the Wei Army in the subsequent battle. After feigning defeat at Pingling, Sun Bin led his army directly to the Wei capital, Daliang. Wei scouts reported that the Qi Army had committed small groups to attack the city. Upon hearing the report, Wei general Pang Juan took his crack cavalry and left his infantry and supplies at Handan, making a mad dash in an attempt rescue Daliang. Pang Juan's troops were exhausted as they crossed the Yellow River and were ambushed and destroyed at Guiling by Sun's numerically superior army. Pang Juan managed to escape alone to Wei.” ~Wikipedia

This battle is both very famous and well studied. It is, in all likelihood, very accurately retold as compared to most other battle accounts from the Warring States period. Sunzi (Sun Tzu) was a rather mysterious character, but his grandson was a well known inheritor of the Sun family war strategies, and was a colleague/contemporary with Pang Juan, his jealous rival. This means their story was retold quite a bit, and in detail in many classics.

Regardless, it is a very excellent example of the basic idea contained in this stratagem! There isn't much alteration to memorize in this section, it is pretty simple “divide and conquer.” The essence of this stratagem, as employed in chess, is twofold: **timing** and **attacking something they hold dear** (itself another stratagem).

The most common attack is made to the Queen, in an attempt to distract from a checkmate. But, one can just as easily besiege the rook in an effort to disguise a fork on the other rook, or the taking of a queen, or the movement of a pawn across the board.

The important thing to remember is to surprise the opponent but not arouse suspicion. That's why you need to go after something important they hold dear. Therefore your move a) makes sense and b) isn't suspicious. As for “Rescuing Zhao” you can use this technique to “save” a piece, or more likely rectify a plan that has slowly started to go south. But it is all

about the timing. If your timing is off by even one move you'll either expose your hand, or be inept and not strong enough (or too far behind) to accomplish it. It takes some deft skill to pull it off.

From the "36 Stratagems Applied to Go,"

"In general, the way this would be used in Go is: when some of your isolated stones are surrounded, then take the opportunity to attack your opponent's isolated stones. While the opponent is dealing with his isolated stones, grab the chance to extricate your stones from danger."

As you can see, the basic point of this stratagem is to escape a danger. By "attacking something they hold dear" you cause them to loosen their stranglehold upon you and this gives you a "second wind" and a chance to win. It also enables you to initiate another stratagem, or to even launch a major offensive in another location. The importance of this stratagem cannot be overestimated!

To Kill with a Borrowed Knife, 借刀杀人, Jiè dāo shā rén

Now originally this stratagem had to do with borrowing the strength of another - an "ally" - in order to a) strengthen your weaknesses and b) shift the blame of attack (and therefore the just rewards of their revenge) onto your "ally". We're only talking about two player chess in this book, not Chaturanji nor two board chess, but still there is a meaning here we can take from.

To "kill with a borrowed knife" means quite literally to utilize the strengths of their pieces' offense as a defensive advantage. You cannot make their offense become your offense, but you can use the fact that their power pieces have inherent value against them, say with a pawn. If they are essentially unable to attack for fear of losing a piece, then you have killed them with their own knife.

Wait at Leisure while the Enemy Labors, 以逸待劳, Yǐ yì dài láo

This is a relatively easy stratagem to understand. It comes from an Art of War concept where one should rest and be prepared and meet the enemy when they are tired and relatively unprepared (of course, assuming they arrive tired and not stirred with spirit).

There are three ways to apply this in Chess (at least).

First, in the style of play. If one makes a vigorous, anxious, or hurried player move all the time, and one takes a half moment longer to do everything, it may incite the player to make a hasty move and a mistake, at which time one should hurriedly take advantage, suddenly changing the pace and causing doubts to enter their mind.

Second, in a move, one can create a long term strategy, such as setting up the queen ambush with landmines and trenches, then once the trap is set, make a different decision than expected. Whereas the opponent may think that you will spend time trying to kill their beloved piece... actually you are going to use the extra moves to forward your own agenda. Or perhaps you like toying with their queen and getting them focused on the subplot?

Third, one can use a general attitude of waiting. For example if they play very offensively, they are bound to waste pieces, and so long term while they are "laboring" you are storing your power up for later use. This, I feel, is the most important of the three, because it follows with an earlier principle I mentioned that the game begins before the board is set. If one can adopt this attitude at each game, the odds of success will increase play by play, daily, and forever.

To Loot a Burning House, 趁火打劫, Chèn huǒ dǎ jié

This is a great strategy, and it is not performed (generally) on the board. It literally means to take advantage of the situation. Of course, this is the name of the game, and you are always trying to take advantage of the opponent. If they are doing poor moves, then you should (as a rule, if you are not teaching) maximize your damage, and not miss any opportunity. You should not fall for any obvious bait, but you should not avoid taking a good move (such as a knight for a rook), simply on the basis that it *might* be a trap.

However, what I want you to do here is to await the time when the reality you are in distracts the person across from you, and when they are “putting out fires” (like phone calls or crying kids or work), then take advantage to “loot the burning house”. That is the proper attitude to have with this stratagem. Become a wraith of wrath in their mind, and before the game is over, it will be over.

Make a sound in the East to strike in the West, 声东击西, Shēng dōng jī xī

There is nothing subtle about this stratagem. It means literally to distract and make a move. If there is anything subtle about it, it would fall in the Mystikal Chess chapter about “mind tricks”. Distraction is useful in all ways, on board or off.

Dealing with the Enemy, 敵戰計:

Create Something from Nothing, 无中生有, Wú zhōng shēng yǒu

This seems to be the favorite stratagem of the CIA. Or at least something like it is usually shown in the movies. It basically means you just lie and create an illusion of attack. But actually you had nothing. This stratagem is best used when basically you have set up a bad board, and you need to stall for time. So you mount a fake attack. Under no circumstances should you trade more than one piece or a couple pawns in this fake attack. If you do, you’ll be revealed as a fake attack, a “paper tiger,” and then you’ll be in trouble.

To create real attacks, focus on attacking that which is dear to the opponent. Chase the queen, or have a knight battle. Usually you can do this for about four to eight moves while you make small adjustments to your defenses to make yourself unassailable. Once you have done this, then you’ll be free to *poof* this fake attack and you’ll then be able to be real, and the real offense can begin. If you take too long, they also may have used a stratagem, partially out of frustration creating need, and partially out of guile hidden from you while you create illusions. So be careful.

From the “36 Stratagems Applied to Go,”

“The meaning is about the same when used in Go. That is, making a probe in a place where it seems there is no problem. Real is fake, fake is real, and hidden within is a murder plot. By the time the opponent discovers it, there is nothing he can do.”

Pretend to advance along one path while secretly getting along by a hidden path, 明修栈道,暗渡陈仓, Míng xiū zhàn dào, àn dù chén cāng; “This tactic is an extension of the “Make a sound in the east, then strike in the west” tactic.”

This tactic is extremely important. It is an improvement of Create Something from Nothing, because in this case, there *is*

something. In this case you are not a Paper Tiger. You are a Qianlong - Hidden Dragon 藏龍.

What is it that you have? A Plan. Most importantly: a hidden plan. One that is understood by only you (or an observer who is of your level).

Now, I'm going to save you a lot of time in trying to become a master of this mystical chess technique. But there is only a small likelihood that you will understand this. You'd have to be not only an experienced chess player, but also spiritually effective, intact, and aligned. Those are topics for the next book, not this one - what those topics mean in respect to chess and how to strategize ethically.

So here is the "secret". Your plan cannot be a plan in the typical sense. It has to be spontaneous, open, freely evolving, unpredictable, with a kernel of desire and an energy of willpower that is like a coiled snake, ready to strike. Waiting. Watchful. Hidden. This may seem quite *unethical* or two-faced, but as opposed to being Machiavellian, you are not going to force an agenda, you are in a situation where there is only one outcome: victory for yourself or your opponent. Even a draw (stalemate) is a victory for the party that was losing and a loss for the one who botched a victory.

How does one create a hidden plan? Let me remind you of the story I shared early in the book, of my match against my friend who later took his life (and thankfully no one else's).

When he began, he was all yang, which for him was totally normal. The observer was a subtle person of discernment, but not really a true hidden dragon: everyone knew he was skilled beyond normalcy. I myself entered the moment with a two-fold pressure: to not disappoint my elder brother, and the full-on frontal assault of the opponent, a very yang, angry individual.

As the match unfolded and my pieces began dying, I knew that very soon he was going to sew the seeds of his own destruction: so long as I castled correctly. By reserving my queen, she was not lost. And within a few moves, suddenly my plan was revealed: a three column tsunami of Shi: two rooks flanked by a Queen. There was literally nothing he could do... his queen was not in place to defend, and died a useless death, and bishops could not withstand the power of what I call the "triple barrel shotgun". So one moment he was smiling and winning points left and right, tasting victory in hand. The next minute was a complete Reversal, and a stunning checkmate, that only my elder brother and I could understand had to do with our taijiquan (Tai Chi) sticking hands methods, and little to do with chess.

You must **become** something large and unfathomable... behind yourself, hovering over the board. You must overshadow the enemy before the enemy feels the shadow even there. When the moment arises "I don't hit, it hits all by itself" (Bruce Lee).

Practically speaking, this will usually involve sacrificing pawns (making it of course, very painful), perhaps knights, even without scoring a point! It will involve a bit of medium to high risk, and possibly losing face completely. It will involve knowing everything about your plan, and their plan, and also their mental and emotional state (through sensing). How will you know you are sensing correctly, and not just having an ego-filled moment of megalomania? You will know in your bones, and your organs, not your prefrontal cortex. You will be calm, able to breathe easily, able to focus on the real battle of the spirit, mind, and will. You will be able to read through them like you are reading this paper and these words. There is no easy way to describe the sensation. The best part (and most frustrating in life) is that they will not only be unaware of you, but may actually treat you with scorn or condescend to you. And when the Reversal comes, it will be unstoppable, and leave an indelible impression upon their psyche. This should satisfy your ego. Do not fall for the honey of killing

pieces indiscriminately early on, becoming addicted to Queen's Mate.

Now another story. I had a roommate in college. He was brilliant. Actually he was a programming master, and was learning to be a hacker of rare degree. Quite prolific. But maturity wise there were decades between us. I remember early on warning him about his fiancée, and us going to restaurants and him "feeling sorry" for the regular people because they weren't working at the [DOD]. His words. I used to have debates with him late at night and one night he said "have you ever had a logic's class (a type of math course), you'd benefit from it."

At any rate, when we first started playing I was terrible at chess. I owe a lot to him to this day because I had no idea how terrible I was. He creamed me. Everyday, sometimes multiple times, and showed me quick and easy victories. But he was addicted to Queen's Mate.

One day, after having progressed like this for about three months, using my martial arts skills... I laid traps and ambushes and I pounded him into dust. Not on the board, it was actually a close game and could have gone either way. But he was exasperated. Frustrated. Stymied. He was mad at himself, flabbergasted. He actually tried to quit before the end of the game and I held him, saying "Oh no, you destroyed me all those times, you have to finish this." So he committed seppuku and allowed me to mate him quick and easy.

He never played me again. He never laughed at my martial arts again. He even started hiding from me because of the fiancée relationship falling apart and then he knew I was more than he'd expected. He realized there was more than brains in this world, even if he couldn't verbally admit it. His soul and spirit knew, and his mind was afraid. Not of me, but of the real me. That is the power of becoming a hidden dragon.

This was actually before the previous story took place. So I really do owe him a great debt of gratitude. For three months or so I was his plaything on the board. But at the end I was able to play in a way that gave me a mental edge with literally dangerous people. There is no price to be put on that. So study it well and buy *Mystikal Chess*, where I will talk a great deal more about the power of the dragon.

Watch fires burning from [safety] across the River, 隔岸观火, Gé àn guān huǒ

The meaning here is to get one's enemies to expend themselves fighting amongst each other and then take them both out. This is more appropriate to the discussion of Chaturangi. In dualistic chess, the only way to look at this is if there are a few people helping each other against you, in which case it is possible through speech to confuse them and get them arguing about possible strategies. Truth be told, two people are easier to defeat than one.

Hide a knife behind your smile, 笑里藏刀, Xiào lǐ cáng dāo

This is very simple: flatter the opponent. The key is not to be caught doing it. If caught, replace with humor and self-deprecation.

Sacrifice the plum to preserve the peach tree, 李代桃僵, Lǐ dài táo jiāng

Again, very simple in chess. Sacrifice weaker or strategically less important pieces to preserve the plans or the lives of stronger pieces. Do not be emotionally attached to one piece; also do not hate using any kind of piece, or you will be weak in a certain style and range of play.

Take advantage to pilfer a goat, 顺手牵羊 / 顺手牵羊, Shùn shǒu qiān yáng

The meaning here is obvious, but the use profound. Obviously the advantage of a general to having one extra goat is not

even a day's worth of food for an army. Luckily you do not have to feed an army; you only have to *unfeed* their army. That is... to consume a pawn.

The simple fact is that my style of play I am advocating does not allow for even one single wasted move. That means, towards the beginning and the end of the game, he or she who pilfers a pawn en route to setting up their plans or their checkmate will likely be the one with the extra pawn to convert to a Queen!

So how do we go about making this change in mindset? Firstly, avoid chasing pawns trying to become a master of chess. That is not the point.

The point is that while there is nothing *e/se* that has to be done, very likely there is a pawn on their side that is a thorn in your side, or about to become one. Why wait for "the young boy to grow up and take revenge"? Eliminate the source of trouble to start. "He who waits to dig a well until he is already thirsty is a fool". You begin winning the endgame in the beginning, and you begin converting a pawn to a queen or extra queen (or a knight) by planning to do so in the beginning... and then not telegraphing that intent.

On your way across the board, you must eliminate rivals and obstacles. What better way than to "eat" the enemy?

The key to taking this to the next level, however, is not just the ruthless elimination of all their pawns, but the elimination of all their pawns they *hope* will make it. If you eliminate hope, you put the game "out of reach", and their Qi will deflate immediately. It is said that last of all skill in bingfa is to "siege walled cities." You could take that to mean a castled king behind pawns. Or you could take it to mean those who have a defense in their heart and mind, also possess a will to struggle against you.

Attack Stratagems, 攻戰計:

Beat the grass to startle the snake, 打草惊蛇, Dá cǎo jīng shé

This stratagem involves employing an unorthodox move in order to cause the opponent to doubt their solid base, and make a move hopefully outside of their plan or to reveal something about their plans or intentions. You could straight sacrifice a player (usually a pawn), however I want to suggest combining this technique with the earlier ones such as Besiege Wei to Rescue Zhao. If you can make an unexpected move that takes them a bit by surprise, hopefully even makes them think less of you or your plans, then you will know the truth about their situation and their plans.

Borrow a corpse to resurrect a soul, 借尸还魂, Jiè shī huán hún

All this implies is doing something very unorthodox, perhaps forgotten. It could mean moving a piece you haven't for a very long while. Or it could mean using a technique unexpectedly like "en passant". It could very well mean changing your style suddenly to one they have not seen or forgotten but you knew how to do. My favorite switch ups are to use two knights, or two castles early and bring out two rooks (requires a large vacuum of Shi in the middle of the board and few pawns in play). Most people just prefer to use bishops to checkmate instead of queens and rooks, which is a bit surprising when both work together.

Entice the tiger to leave his mountain, 调虎离山, Diào hǔ lí shān

This is a very important technique and may mean the matter of life and death on the board (if you are losing badly) and also in real life in a hostage/kidnapping situation. Pay close attention.

When you are in a precarious position, this requires being adaptable. However, you may find that you are required to be extra patient as although the enemy has you cornered and has all the advantage (here you must know yourself well). They are taking their sweet time preparing to destroy you. This should issue from you an “uh oh” signal. If it doesn’t, then you haven’t understood the Changes and yourself well enough.

Rather than go forward excitedly, slow down. In fact, throw an object at or in front of yourself. For although you can sense the enticement and the traps, you don’t actually have to commit to them. You don’t have to just go in like a labrador to a dog-fight with pitbulls. Instead, use cunning, slow down, and create baits, diversions, and lay your own traps. Create smokescreens, however false they may be. Put on a confident air, perhaps cocky, and give them the sense that you are completely running scared (as you should be, but aren’t). By making them slowly extend their coils, eventually they leave their solid base, and they’ve waited too long. At that point perhaps your side ruses yield results, or perhaps their attacks fall shorter than they expected. Then you must be prepared to unleash the hellfire in a mad, desperate dash to finish them off faster than they you. It really is a mongoose luring out a cobra and then, in a risky move, bite their neck only mere millimeters from their fangs.

To capture the prey, let it go, 欲擒故纵, Yù qín gū zòng

This is also very important, so please pay close attention. It may have happened that you have made a tremendous victory, but not yet total. The game isn’t over until checkmate. There remains the moral victory for them of stalemate. The smart and cunning enemy will lure you into a sense of “ritual suicide” as if they plan to just lose but in fact they are hatching covertly a brilliant (for them; accidental for you) stalemate. Take your time at the end to still think two or three moves ahead, and set up a well played end game. The third and final act must be delicately played. My suggestion is use this time to eliminate straggling, hopeful pawns. Don’t be impatient! Once you have let them go (for they must make moves unlike in real life where a prey can be still), they will relax and then you can finish breaking their hopes and spirits for victory.

In real life this can mean life or death survival in animal encounters.

Throw away a brick to get a piece of jade, 抛砖引玉, Pāo zhuān yǐn yù

This is an improved version of “beat the grass” and “entice the tiger”. Here, however, great mental mastery and subtlety is needed. What you must do is make yourself easy going and less competitive. Make yourself *affable*. But, not so far that you are pandering, flattering, etc... which will make them suspicious that you are doing it to be cunning. Rather I mean completely, sincerely affable. To do this, find a neutral or friendly topic; a non-sequitur. Now if they won’t engage in conversation after three attempts, they seriously want to beat you. You should cease and use an alternate strategy while secretly gathering your Sha Qi (bloodlust).

But, if they do fall for it, then continuing playing a few moves under this guise/play then lay up a “mistake” that any fool would not be wise to take. The key is be calculating enough to know what better piece or position you will get. As soon as they have moved and taken your piece, they have let theirs go, then swoop in and make the swap. They will now be struck three ways. First, they have yielded a piece of “jade” such as a queen, rook or an inability to castle. Second they now know they were controlled and this will reduce their confidence and Shi back to the center and alleviate their pressure. Finally, it will make them doubt any plans they had, and this is the pinnacle of skill.

A word of caution to the wise: if you do this often you will not be trusted, and it won’t be considered uncanny anymore.

Then you will lose this tactic to lack of conversation. Also, you yourself may become the victim and though you get a piece of jade they steal your gold and diamonds!

Take the king to capture the enemy, 擒賊擒王, Qín zéi qín wáng

Now, of course the point of the game is to capture the enemy. So this seems rather useless to say. However, there is subtlety here, still. Remember what I said before about how your job as the king is to be the center? To not move, be stoic, and impenetrable? Obviously, it follows then that a great goal (almost as great as capturing a queen (and thus historically his heirs) is to move the king. Preferably before castling, and if not then, then out of all defenses.

I have this brother-in-law. When my wife and her sister first met us, he always wanted to challenge me at everything. Grappling, basketball, and yes: chess. Now, a bigger man, a wiser man, might have let him win at these things. However: I am not that man (or wasn't). Firstly I am of noble lineage and too proud. Secondly, he annoyed me. Aside from being argumentative (like my old self), he talked a **lot** of trash. A lot.

So one night he wanted to play chess. By the third game I had him so completely flummoxed that he actually was forced to move his king out from the back row and into the middle of the board with no defense or cover, and he was forced to barricade himself to the right of my position. His lack of confidence was palpable. Now this was years after I had to choke him out grappling and beat him at basketball, so I probably didn't need to do this. But I wanted to make the point.

The difference in our lives is palpable, and although I am sincerely interested in helping this man, I find prideful people a wearisome task. At the time I hoped that he would stop and go "wow, that's unbelievable, I'd like to learn that power." For a short time he considered learning gongfu, but at this point I don't see that happening.

I say all that to say this. The secrets I am imparting are secrets that can be used for good or evil. They can tell (especially) a man where in life he is, and how much potency and personal power he has. At that time my power was less than half it is today, and while I grow exponentially, his own future and destiny fall flat. Recently I was in his apartment. He has no job, no car, and the place is awash of children out of control and wall art. His wife even sleeps in the living room. Bad things befall a man who cannot maintain his center.

I am not to blame, however, what's to blame is a lack of self-awareness and lack of humility. But at the same time, by using such Shi power he was subsequently too embarrassed to learn much from me. It wasn't an immediate change and growing resentment, but it grew more as I grew more.

This is a true story, so beware whether you do good or evil with your power.

Chaos Stratagems, 混戰計:

Steal the wood from their fire, 釜底抽薪, Fǔ dǐ chōu xīn

Literally, "to steal someone's thunder" this stratagem has to do with timing. Before someone checks you, you check them first. Before they castle, you castle first and prevent them from doing it. Before they take your piece, you take their queen. Etcetera. The goal, of course, is to disrupt concentration and schemes.

Disturb the water to catch the fish, 混水摸魚, Hún shuǐ mō yú

Not much different than "Beat the grass..." except here you simply hope to create chaos. This should be done when you

are confused. By creating confusion, you level the playing field. But while you could move random pawns into weird places, that might cause you toil later. Rather, instead you should use ninja-esque or marine-esque “cover fire” to hide your escapes. You generally only have 2 or 3 moves to do this in. This is known as **Golden Cicada Sheds its Shell**, 金蟬脫壳, **Jīn chán tuō qiào**.

Shut the Door, Catch the Thief, 关门捉贼, Guān mén zhuō zéi

We have previously covered this concept before, both in “laying ambushes” and in enticing the tiger. The key concept, therefore is to carefully lay hidden plans, and spring traps suddenly when they least expect it.

Behind an ally, attack at a distance, 远交近攻, Yuǎn jiāo jìn gōng

This game is a two player game, but this tactic can be used quite well in Chaturangi. Secondly, one could consider using “allies” of the environment or variables (like smartphones and television) to “attack at a distance” as in first you let these allies distract, then you can win easily. Now, most people have too much pride and don’t want to win a game this badly. In which case, just remember this tactic for your life and refer to “To kill with a borrowed knife” (not literally, but as a metaphor).

Attack Guo through your neighbor, 假道伐虢, Jiǎ dào fá Guó

Once again, not as important here except in the four player chess where your captured pieces are your allies’ and vice versa.

Proximity Tactics, 並戰計:

What follows are mostly mid-game stratagems.

Replace the beams with rotten timbers, 偷梁换柱, Tōu liáng huàn zhù

The main strategy being here described is in the interference of operations. This, in chess, could range from interfering with thoughts and flow (perhaps through humor) to interfering with pieces, which is illegal in the game of chess. The most commonly performed way of doing this is to wait till they get up, or look away, and then move one of your pieces. If there is time, you can also rotate their pieces, move them to the edges of squares, especially focusing on their most important pieces and also pieces you want them to forget (therefore don’t move them too obviously).

Finger the Mulberry tree, curse the Locust tree, 指桑骂槐, Zhǐ sāng mà huái

This is a method to reveal problems within your ranks or allies. The only plausible reason for this in the game is if you suspect a strategy or two of theirs, so you talk about one of them you least suspect and a third one you’ve made up and read their facial expressions. The further you get from the truth the more their face will reveal through bemusement (or anxiety) the truth. For this to work one has to be extremely good at reading faces and feelings.

Feign madness while staying in control, 假痴不癫, Jiǎ chī bù diān

This is the most famous technique in drunken boxing. However, it is a bit difficult to pull off in chess (without convincing your friends to play while drinking, which can never be considered a serious game). But it is not impossible to convince your opponent that you’ve “gone mad” or at least “lost touch with reality” by making a series of strange, unpredictable moves that at first seem to go nowhere and only slowly start to gather momentum and power, all the while ignoring

aggressive incursions by the opponent. This only works if the opponent's attacks are kept at bay, or perhaps they need some time to put together their complicated attack plan. Either way, make every effort to conceal your brilliance and do not hold your breath or act in any way other than casual and without artifice or seriousness.

Remove the ladder beneath their feet, 上屋抽梯, Shàng wū chōu tī

A comical image but illustrates the proper use of deadly terrain; not for avoiding it, but precisely to put your opponent in it and take him/her out. In this book we have already talked about creating deadly terrain, now all there is to do is direct the opponent into the ambushes, trenches, and landmines.

Adorn the tree with fake flowers, 树上开花, Shù shàng kāi huā

Nothing complicated here. Make a piece seem valuable to you, get them chasing it, then sacrifice it and reveal your master plan.

Exchange the roles of host and guest, 反客为主, Fǎn kè wéi zhǔ

There are many ways to “get ahead, lag behind” to avoid “taking the lead, one goes astray.” However, none better than at the very start. First, be the one to offer the game (as host). Second, use the placement of the Queen to decide whether you are on the strong (right) side, or weak side of the king. If you are on the weak side, then change the color pieces you pick up to the opposite color. If it is switching from white to black side, and this is unusual say, “My guest should be allowed to go first.” If switching from black to white, say only “I’ll go first, everyone always knows that the black side is stronger,” which is semi-true and humorous to boot. By altering the pieces visibly you take control. If you do this too many times though, it becomes too obvious, and you should get used to doing it almost subconsciously. The main reason is to open the flood gates of both d & e pawns right from the start.

Desperate Stratagems, 敗戰計

The Female Honeytrap, 美人计, Měi rén jì

So called desperate because only a fool (and his board of advisers) would fall for a real life honeytrap. In the game of chess, you *could* send your friend pretty girls to distract him, or just his wife or girlfriend, but this is a rather dirty and specious tactic. What if your opponent is female? Rather I recommend using words which have honey in them, such as flattery, humor, etc... to divide the opponent and his/her “allies” (plans). In most gaming circles this method is known as ‘meta’ and is hated for its efficiency.

The Empty Fort Strategy, 空城计, Kōng chéng jì

This is the most famous strategy in the entirety of the 36 Stratagems. It is historically significant, so I will briefly explain it. A famous genius strategist named Zhuge Liang, styled Kongming or Sleeping Dragon was the first to pull this off. In a nutshell he defeated his most dangerous enemy, Sima Yi, with no real power, just an empty fort with a lone soldier sweeping in front, gates open, and the proper flags raised. Most importantly, he personally sat atop the fort and played his Qin (a lute) with perfect relaxation and without missing a single note. This told Sima Yi that, as one might suspect, he had an ambush laid in the empty fort (usually fire). Sima Yi was so convinced, and so spooked, that he retreated, and only later regretted that Kongming got away. This, however, is not Zhuge Liang’s most famous or brilliant strategy, believe it or not.

In chess, the way this is used is in defense. It helps if recently you either a) had a good defense that was costly to the opponent, or b) have a messy defense that is distracting to the Shi of the opponent. Secondly, you need to, as the story relates, calmly challenge your opponent (in your mind) to enter into the “trap” you have laid (in his/her mind). Finally, you need to get them to move differently, and do not reveal (if you can) that you’ve tricked them.

Use a double-spy to sow discord, 反间计, Fǎn jiàn jì

I do not advocate strictly cheating in games, for example cards or Scrabble, by having a person look at their deck and tell you how to act. This is dishonorable, even in Chinese circles. Rather I would suggest using a pawn. A normal behavior when a piece gets too close (to a king or to the other side) is to react. The speed of reaction, the type of reaction, the level of aggression or feigned stupidity, all of these things can teach you precisely what the enemy intends (just like a “spy”).

The question is how the spies become double agents? Allow the opponent to also do this trick, only do not kill the spy but rather feed the opponent bad information about how you feel about the spy-pawn. Make the opponent feel that you are calm when really you are scared, or scared when in fact it means nothing to you. You have only one move to do this right, so be precise.

A third way to use a spy of theirs is unwittingly. This was the case with Zhou Yu’s unfortunate childhood friend whom he used to trick Cao Cao at the battle of Red Cliff. Use a pawn they have sent (to be a pain or test you) to instead shield you from the opponent’s own forces. Be careful against an en passante, but it should go well.

Injure oneself to win their trust, 苦肉计, Kǔ ròu jì

There isn’t a lot to do with the game of chess and this strategy. The only time one should injure themselves is a purposefully sacrificed piece, and always for a better take. I will say, however, you must be willing to sacrifice even a queen with no benefit, if it sweetens the honeypot trap and leads to checkmate. This is called using a **Chain stratagem**, 连环计, **Lián huán jì**, to achieve the maximal effect.

If all else fails, retreat, 走为上, Zǒu wéi shàng

In the game of chess there is always a victor. Thus this strategy involves retreating as far as possible, when the game is at the end and one has no plays, has lost a major piece, has too few pieces to mount an effective attack, or needs to consolidate to move pawns across the board to protect the king and him to protect them. The idea here is to wait in case of a mistake, or to take out pieces, or to get your own pieces across the board and change the situation favorably. Realistically you need to extend the game by 8, 10, or 12 moves for this to work. Therefore as advice to the player who has an opponent who tries to do this is try to finish the game in 4 or 5 moves, because it may take 6 or 7 to finally finish it off.

More information about the stories behind the 36 Stratagems can be found online on websites like Wikipedia, or in books list in the Appendix for more reference.

Chapter 6 - Plates

Analysis of Sets

Series 1



These three plates are from the same game. This is either a child, or a rank amateur. Since it is a child, which presents great teaching opportunities in classic scenarios, if your game looks like this then you're in trouble. Note that the white side started on the powerful side, but by now has fallen far behind. The Shi extends far up into their territory. The difference here is obvious: pawn game. My son has lost four pawns, and has not utilized his advantages to open up any power pieces. On the right we see that his solution to one move checkmate was to block the rook with a knight. The problem is that as he is in defense mode and he is unable to stop the Keen of my advancing pawn force. In the right panel we see that now he has to make a choice between saving a rook, a bishop, or ending up in checkmate. Unfortunately because of my rook, he is unable to use his queen to any effect, and so she is log jammed into a defensive posture. In the end, he saved his queen by saving his rook first. I took the bishop, which he took my new queen, and I then took the knight for a check. Remember, this is a child. He is learning by first making lots of mistakes.

As the game progressed, another interesting situation presented itself. Notice the complete transformation of the pawn line. Also note the powerful bishop reinforcement (unplanned) which saves the backline from the queen advance.

The choice he had to make here was whether to save his queen or make a swap. The main reason I advised him not to swap is I didn't need my queen, and he did. However, if he had had more pawns, one could argue that to take my queen in this crucial, painful (for him) position, he'd have landed me a heavier blow due to my powerful use of the queen. But because of the sheer reserves I had, he'd have been throwing away his most powerful piece, and I'd have gotten myself two



queens instead. By saving his queen, moving to the black position at D1, he will be able to backup his rook. Here I want to emphasize: if you are losing this badly, there is no excuse whatsoever because you have 3 power pieces sitting in reserve on the wrong side of the king, who should be in his keep. This means you're playing catch-up, all the time.

Series 2



This plate, I call "He Who Knows Does Not Speak" seems like the Black Side has pretty good defense, and yet there is already pause for concern. First note the soon to be revealed onslaught of forces. This is like the preparation of encamped soldiers, the Qi of battle is rising behind a mask of complacency (although assuredly the opponent feels pressure already). Second the contrast of encampments, between confused mind with self-stymy as well as of the enemy, is easily contrasted to full emptying of power pieces with utter reserves of pawns. Statistically this game is not "in the cards" for Black.

Series 3



This next plate series shows a crucial Tipping Point, with color analysis of Shi to show why the opponent was forced to making the wrong move.

What do you see here? What would you do? The difference in power levels is obvious and palpable. Black has used their strong side advantage to create massive wall-to-wall compression of Qi. This increased pressure will reveal shatter points and create multiple Shining Pieces. What is the right thing to do? The most important aspect of Black position is the use of the King to lure White into a foolish "Deadly Terrain" (see below for Art of War quote). But all this pressure to fill the vacuum creates a subtle lie. Because the problem that must be addressed is

actually the main Keep (pawn E3 move to E4). The White Queen is being lure/forced out, but reluctantly (due to fear) so that the Black Queen can enter and kill. Ultimately there aren't so many good choices for White because of Compression it feels like time is running out, and excellent other choices are missed from making forced, hasty decisions. Look at the colorized analysis:

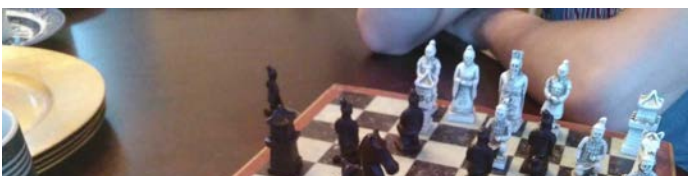


The circles represent holes and vacuums. The bent lines indicate the flex of the “feeling” (created in the opponent’s mind) of the Shi, despite the pieces moving linearly. See, unlike checkers, chess pieces have *Influence*. Believe it or not the White Queen was not needed to stay in the defense, and it was quite alright to make the bishop swap. However, White balked, lost its bishop anyway, then the rook, and although a path behind existed, the Black King had long moved into a new encampment, when a knight and two rooks protected it. This illustrates the point of a) exerting your Shi and b) not being hemmed in by the enemy’s Qi, so that you can see why it is important to make bold decisions. **I believe this is the missing understanding in most executive boardrooms.**

“The strategy for employing the military is this: There is dispersive terrain, light terrain, contentious terrain, traversable terrain, focal terrain, heavy terrain, entrapping terrain, and fatal terrain.

In antiquity those who were referred to as excelling in the employment of the army were able to keep the enemy’s forward and rear forces from connecting; the many and few from relying on each other; the noble and lowly from coming to each other’s rescue; the upper and lower ranks from trusting each other; the troops to be separated, unable to reassemble, or when assembled, not to be well-ordered. They moved when it was advantageous, halted when it was not advantageous.” Chapter 11, The Art of War

Series 4

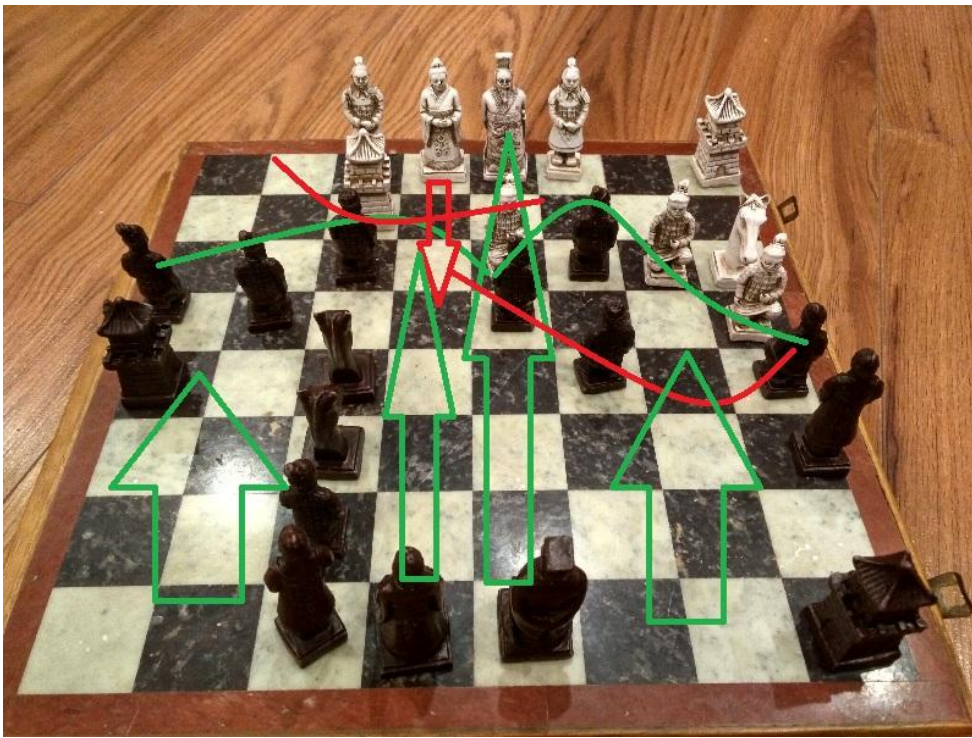


I call this plate, “Tooth Decay.” It requires no major analysis to

know how this game would end.

But, just for fun, let's see how this is analyzed. It illustrates the Art of War quite precisely, and why Shi is so important. Notice that the most important aspect of Black's position is the seeming lack of good options for White. The White Queen is completely stymied and the Rook also seems stymied. Though there is some bubbling of the White's Shi (shown with red curve)... it's equally pushed back by the massive inflation of Black's Shi (green curves), which is so massive and invasive it feels as though there is one massive pressure extending from the one side to the other shown by arrow. This indicates a complete imbalance in opponents. To quote the Art of War,

"If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle." - Sunzi



What's the proper move for white?, then? Clearly bite the bullet, pay for the poor pawn play, and do a queen swap. You have to relieve the pressure and then work on hopefully drawing that inflation to a critical mass. If the black pawns were eliminated, and not allowed to be in a perfect formation as they are, and the white pawns stopped stymying White's own side, then the Shi would deflate quickly and the Black defensive situation would collapse. However: easier said than done without a Queen swap. Oh, what a difference it makes not having a rook lined up with a queen.

That perfect pawn setup both right and

left illustrates exactly why master players work their pawn play almost more aggressively than anything else. Compare to Series 2 and notice here, "He Who Speaks Does Not Know" (Tao Te Ching) or the opposite. Instead of speaking, the pawns "got busy." Thus the "Efforts of man exceed the blessings of Heaven."

Rare Checkmates

These plates show you odd, or little unexpected checkmates you may not have known were possible (and so should be beware of). As for achieving them: first build your Shi and await the Ji to spontaneously reveal your prowess.

Double Knight (bagua) Pincher - one more reason to leave yourself an escape hatch. (This is checkmate)



Rooks Gambit - it's White's turn: do you go for checkmate or come play for pieces. Set this up and try at home.



Chapter 7 - The Unorthodox

The Unorthodox 奇 (Qi)

Secrets of the sagely warriors and generals

Most of the unorthodox strategies will be discussed in the second part, “Understanding Chess: Mystikal Chess”. However, there may be a few ideas to clear up ahead of time.

The character 奇 qi (ch’i) actually does not mean “unorthodox” in the western sense. This translation is a throwback to the Wade-Giles translation of the Art of War, still considered a classic and in some places, standard translation. Hence you will typically see Qi translated this way. The word actually means unusual or odd, or more pointedly, *not* straightforward.

Therefore, it is the most important concept in understanding the difference between eastern and western traditions of military strategy. For thousands of years the west has adhered (right up until “special ops” was “invented”) to the Clausewitz²⁰ style of warfare: regiments lined up for the slaughter. That is, until they got wise and saw the historical proof of ch’i in revolutions (like the American Revolution), in guerilla warfare, in terrorism, and of course the ever-increasing cyberization of warfare. Also, it is important to note that all of the brilliance of Sunzi’s Art of War became proven in the growing use of “intelligence” (aka “spies”) in the Cold War and War on Drugs and War on Terror.

So what does ch’i really mean? It means doing things in a misdirecting and unusual manner, to achieve results which would not be possible if one were to use the orthodox (cheng). The main reason? Because the opponent will have thrown up energetic and literal blockages to effect limitations in the pursuit of obtaining a victory over or “from” them. For example, if one has to extract money from a corporation that owes you money, then clearly they do not plan to pay easily, and have the resources to fight such an extraction. This means that it will take extraordinary reasons or efforts to force the corporation to give up the money it does not wish to give up willingly. Hence the reason to approach via non-obvious or straightforward means.

In chess the advantage of this is most acutely obvious (as it is in martial arts). The more serious the situation, the more important that one be familiar with the laws of unorthodox versus orthodox.

So what are they?

Suffice it to say the principles governing the overall use of either come directly from the laws of yin and yang. Therefore, one should know that (1) each generates the other, (2) each controls the other, (3) each divides into both, ad infinitum. This is incredibly important, and has never been revealed in modern studies of the Art of War. That the moment to use each will be a highly variable, situation dependent on the moment (this is well known), but the moment to switch from each to the other will also be highly dependent, fluid and only discernible in the moment. This is a problem in a world where literally everything has to be proven quantitatively and pre-planned with (what seems like) engineering precision. Even more important, is the fact that within each orthodox strategy there is an orthodox portion and an unorthodox portion (such as in a war there are overt and covert ops), and vice versa is also true. In fact, within those orthodox and unorthodox portions are both orthodox and unorthodox methods, as well.

What does this mean in chess? Primarily it means that whilst you promote your obvious strategy and moves openly, at the

²⁰ <https://antilogicalism.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/on-war.pdf>

same time always have side plays and unusual moves. And when you do the side moves, have an obvious play, and also a more secret/hidden agenda.

In the west, chess is taught with points, and to calculate moves ahead of time. In the east, strategy is taught to be in multiple layers of information operating on different levels. Although this may seem daunting, at first, actually it is quite a bit more simple and fast, as it relies on intuitive senses, and a mounting strategy that “rolls” from one move into another. The Yi-changes happen as the game gets going, and if you play correctly the game becomes either a dance or a hunt. If a dance, then you have a fine time. If it is a hunt, then as the game progresses your Keen will increase and your play will, too. Either way you’ll have a fun time, much more than calculating and planning it all out like a control-freak. In reality such a style of play perfectly reflects the mentality of European gentry, and the killing on their fields of battle. Not that the Art of War was pretty, but it was designed to make things go quick and be easier on the population. One must remember the technological improvements to warfare reflected in it was the result of Chinese feudal wars that last centuries. Yes, the scars of the Dark Ages of Europe that are only so recent to fade, in fact were experienced in China over 200 years prior to the birth of Christ. Therefore Sunzi, and others like him of the “wandering persuaders” developed techniques that took full advantage of the situation, rather than only calculate odds by sizes of armies. Many in China still used such methods, but they were all considered mere Pi Fu (brutes, or man-children), child’s play for geniuses like Kongming or Sima Yi.

You, too, can be a Kongming in chess.

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