

The most fundamental feature of New Fuseki was, in fact, not influence but this question of potentiality of territory. In Diagram 25, for example, it is not just the case that the position at the top can be regarded as having laid claim already to a territory of about forty-five points, whereas the one at the bottom, with the same number of stones, has only about thirty points. It is also the case that the position at the top will work much better than the one at the bottom in making further territory later (mainly to the right; the two positions can be regarded as much of a muchness in that respect on the left side).

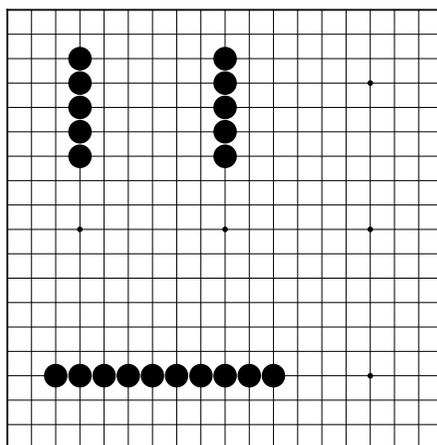


Diagram 25

These ideas were reduced to a simple concept still used today: a box is better than a tray. The game presented below has an example par excellence of a box.

More roundedly, these New Fuseki ideas can be summarised as follows: (1) Shimaris may be biased and therefore disadvantageous; (2) Ditto the third line; (3) Therefore go based on the principle of certain territories denies the organic whole and is nothing more than a collection of small, local battles. New Fuseki is holistic.

Theories of Equilibrium and Averaging

Yet that was still an abstract notion and needed experience to implement it. One approach believed likely to prove fruitful was to rely on a further theory of equilibrium, or “averaged” plays. This too is a prime feature of the game presented below.

The thinking here was that a play at the centre point has the most equilibrium, acting equally in all directions. Beyond that, imagine lines drawn diagonally from corner to corner. Any move played on these two lines has two kinds of symmetry—diagonal and orthogonal. Now imagine two lines drawn straight across the board from the midpoints on each side. A move on these lines (except the centre point) also has symmetry but only in one sense: orthogonal. Since the theory of equilibrium emphasises symmetries, the diagonals must be more important, having the most symmetries.

From that simplistic point of view, all points on these diagonals should

have the same value, but such abstract statements make no allowance for the life-and-death and other constraints of go. Common sense tells us that opening moves at the extreme corner points are bad moves. On the other hand, common sense traditionally had said similar things about opening moves at the three-three and four-four points. New Fuseki said they might be good moves.

It is crucial to note that New Fuseki did not disregard the corners. It simply queried whether the traditional shimari was the correct way to deal with them.

In New Fuseki theory, three-three and four-four were definitely moves to consider, but so also was five-five. Six-six was regarded as too far from the corner to be good. Three-three was actually too close to the corner according to the theory, but it was recognised as having other important attributes.

In theoretical terms the best corner move was four-four. The fact that it does not guarantee its territory was seen as proof that it is unbiased and is therefore the ultimate equilibrium move.

Five-five is biased away from the corner, but it certainly still affects what goes on there, and (for the brave souls who played it—including Kitani) it was regarded as more versatile than four-four in affecting what goes on outside the corner. Further, a shimari from five-five to A or B in Diagram 26 was regarded as not as biased towards the corner as the usual shimaris, unlike four-four and three-three, and five-five does at least offer a shimari. In fact, it is likely to create a desirable box shape.

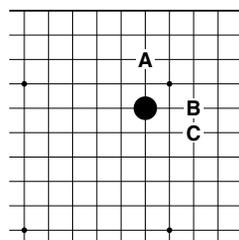


Diagram 26

One other benefit of five-five is that the shimari can go in two directions. Also once A or B is played, the other can follow and so restore symmetry. That judgement would probably be strongly challenged nowadays but then there was a feeling that the shimaris from five-five merited further study. This formation with Black A and B added actually cropped up late in 1935 in a game by Hashimoto Utaro, but its heyday was from 1938 onwards when Hasegawa Akira espoused it. In the militaristic way of the times then, it was christened *tochka*, from the Russian for pillbox. Oddly enough, the “biased” variant with extra stones at A and C cropped up first in 1933 and remained for several years more popular than the unbiased version (again thanks mainly to Hasegawa).

Incidentally, assuming a shimari at A or B in Diagram 26 for the five-five player, which side is best? There was nothing revolutionary there: the side where there are friendly stones.

The star points on the side have a similar significance to those in the corners. In Diagram 27, therefore, according to the theory, A corresponds to a three-three in the corner and B to five-five. However, in this case there is an extra dimension in that the side star point is in a position of equilibrium between the corner star points. The result has been that, even today, this sanrensei (three stars in a row) arrangement is very, very common for Black's first three moves, but the arrangement with A is very rare (Hashimoto Uтарo tried it in 1940) and the one with B is totally unknown in pro play.

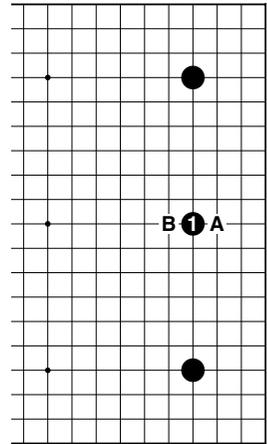


Diagram 27

Incidentally, the term even the Japanese now know as sanrensei was said to have been invented by a prominent go writer of the time, Mitani Suihei. However, in a transcribed 1966 conversation between Go Seigen and Kitani, who of course popularised the two-star (*nirensai*) and three-star opening arrangements, they call these *nirenboshi* and *sanrenboshi* respectively, which seems to suggest that this was the original intended usage.

In general, four-four became the favoured opening move. One difficulty then was in reconciling a move at the centre point with this. For example, in Diagram 28, a move at ① may not be the best equilibrium. A move at A makes an equilateral triangle, so maybe that is better? And if so, the same thinking (this was called the theory of averages) would mean Black's follow-up to that should be at B. It was soon recognised that all this was too abstract and not practical. A stone on the side at ① in Diagram 27 was at least seen as practical.

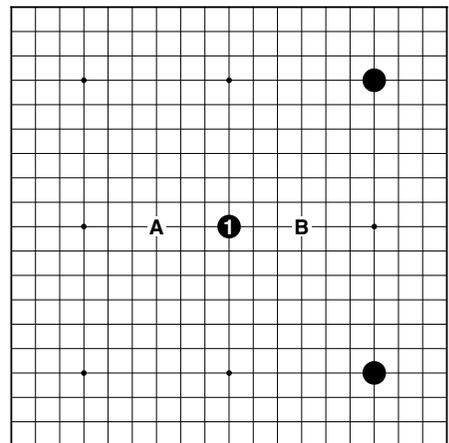


Diagram 28

To put some flesh on this skeleton of theorising, the perfect example may be a game published in January 1934 when Kitani played Go in a komi game sponsored by the *Hochi Shinbun* newspaper under the heading “Special Game between Leaders of the New School” (Diagram 29). We can as

Time limits were twenty-four hours each, with adjournments but no sealed moves, even though these were already being used in the Oteai. White had the privilege of adjourning play even before the closing time of four o'clock in each session. It will be noted that White on every occasion took up this privilege. According to Go, whenever the adjournments came, Shusai would invariably make some excuse such as having a headache.

The weekly schedule, adopted because of alleged concerns over Shusai's health, was adhered to except for the holiday break over the New Year (Christmas was not a holiday), which was extended by a week because Go fell ill. There was, however, no fixed limit on the number of sessions and, in Go's camp at least, there was considerable (and freely expressed) rancour at the way Shusai made his adjournments at critical points in what was a very difficult game where extra time was valuable.

This was technically a handicap game. The handicap appropriate here was 2-B-2. In other words, if the players were to play a series of three games, Go would take two stones in two of them and Black in the middle game of the series, with no komi in any of the games. This was the standard handicap for four grades difference. Go was still 5-dan. Shusai was the Meijin, which was equivalent to 9-dan. He was the only 9-dan in town, and even 8-dans were like hen's teeth. Go's 5-dan was therefore a rather high grade, significantly more than it would be today. Yet he still had to take a handicap! However, he was actually handicapped a little more because, at the newspaper's request, the series was changed to B-2-2 (nominally, of course—the other two games would never be played), and so Go began with just Black instead of the expected two stones.

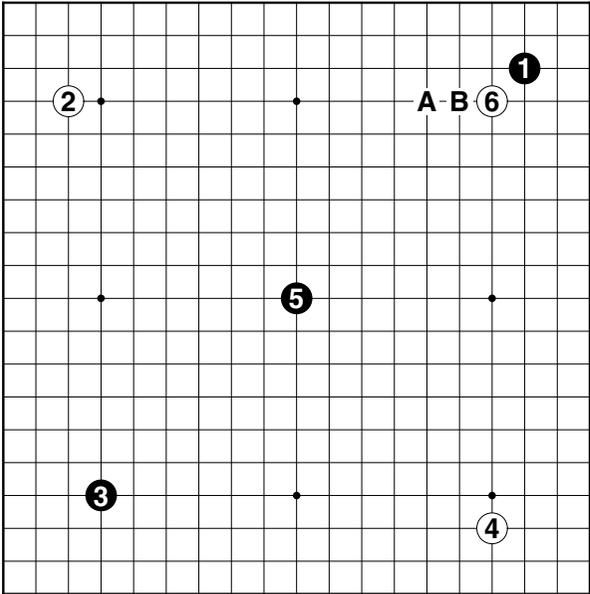
He did take a two-stone handicap when he first played Shusai in December 1928, shortly after he arrived in Japan. Then he was being tested for the provisional grade of 3-dan. There was an unusual special rule even in that game. To show respect to the Meijin, his opponent was expected to kneel at the board. As Go couldn't yet manage that he was allowed to sit tailor fashion, although even that was hard for him. In China that way of sitting was called Hu (or Muslim) sitting, so Go must have had a very mixed up feeling during this game—weird Japanese customs and clothing to which he had to adapt, plus sitting as if he were a tent-dwelling Uighur! At least he was not overawed by his opponent. He said, "I had heard in Beijing that the person known as the Meijin was a very great player, but I did not feel, as a Japanese would, any special pressure because of that name. In fact that was good for me. It meant I could play in a relaxed frame of mind. In the event, I won that game [by four points] and since the content of the game was also deemed very satisfactory, I passed."

tised as “The Invincible Meijin versus the genius Go Seigen”. He himself said, a couple of years later, “Frankly, this game was, in various respects, more difficult to play than the one with Karigane [the Insha game in 1926]. After all, Go was still a young warrior, barely twenty or so, and in nationality was a Chinese...”

One thing that got lost in the hype was that this was also a significant first for the still young Nihon Ki-in. It was the first major event between two of its own members. The Ki-in at least was in a win-win situation.

Go had already decided early that year, once he was promoted to 5-dan, to give up playing the Shusaku fuseki and to experiment with moves at the three-three and four-four points. Both Kubomatsu’s previous researches and the game above with Kosugi show that moves at the 10-10 point were already in the air, too. Go also said later that, given the sudden burst of New Fuseki activity in the autumn Oteai, Shusai must have had more than an inkling of how this game would begin.

It might also be worth a reminder that Go had only just turned nineteen at the time of this game. His decision to change styles was, however, not youthful exuberance but a calculated step to cope with the fact that, now that he was 5-dan, he was likely to have White much more often. It was a brave move to experiment in the Oteai rather than the less important newspaper games, but his record in the Autumn 1933 Oteai, notwithstanding the new style, was a staggering seven wins and one jigo (which was with White against Kitani; this also includes a default win against a sick Segoe).



1 – 6

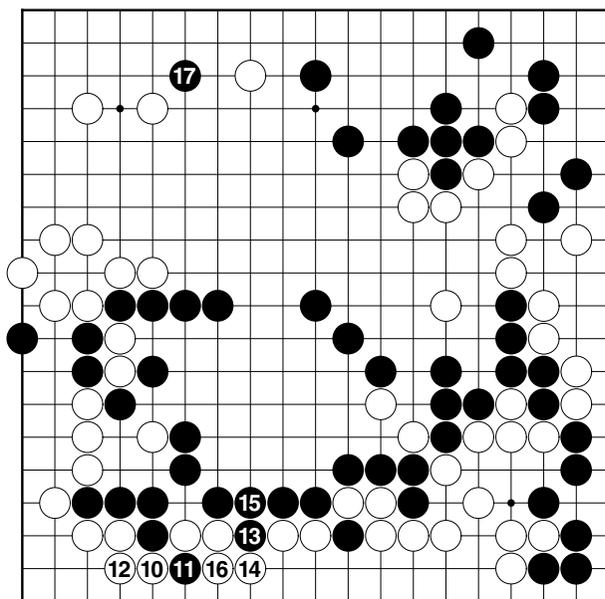
Shusai was supposed to have been surprised when he saw ❶ and ❸, but, as just indicated, Go clearly felt any surprise would have been a sham. However, he accepted that Shusai was surprised by ❺ at the centre point!

Most go fans were unaware of New Fuseki at this stage—the big explosion came in 1934—and many interpreted Go’s play as some sort of Chinese style, since this was, to them, a Japan-China game. Shusai also said,

“It is said there are no national boundaries in art, and no doubt that is so. Yet can we perhaps say there is a feeling of national characteristics? That is rather more difficult to be sure about. As it happens, that autumn he [Go] began challenging tradition in the Nihon Ki-in’s Oteai tournament, having instigated, with Kitani, a revolutionary method called New Fuseki. At any rate, whilst it seemed initially like when I played Karigane, looking back, I think not being able to enter into new areas that transcended everything was due to my own lack of experience of it, and when my opponent played three-three, four-four, and ten-ten against me each straight after the other I did indeed feel I was losing my composure.”

A more modern kind of interpretation can surely be ruled out. This was not a case of Go trying to psych out the Meijin. Apart from the background mentioned above, another factor in Go’s thinking was that he had spent part of the summer at the mountain home of Kitani’s wife in Nagano Prefecture, where Kitani was working with Kohara Masahiro on a book about the integration of fuseki and joseki. There they had discussed various New Fuseki ideas, and both players experimented in the autumn on their return to Tokyo. We can see that mindset also in Go’s simple reply when asked by his teacher, Segoe, why he played this fuseki: “It was something I wanted to research.”

More specifically, though, the move on the centre point came to Go’s mind, he said, only because of the way Shusai had played ❷ and ❹. They meant that ❺ was at the centre of symmetry. ❶ and ❸ were pre-planned. ❺ was not. However, it was not played just to make a pretty pattern. It was still reasoned. Go’s explanation at the time was that he felt that if White approached the three-three move at ❻ (as in the game) or at A or B, he could only make a high, outward-facing position, and then the stone at the centre-point would come into its own. Go thought that White might not want to play that way, but instead would try to leave the three-three stone alone and low, emphasising the thinness of the connection between that and the centre stone. We must infer, therefore, that Go was a trifle surprised by ❻, although the very thinness of the relationship between this corner stone and the centre point compared to the relationship between that and



110 – 117

With 11 Go was unsure whether settling the position with just 13 and 15 was better, but in the end he decided it was worth finding out whether White was going to respond at 12 or 16. Clearly, the priority is to get sente here to prevent White from getting to the top edge first. Black achieves that in the game because for White to let Black capture at 16 would be horrendous (big in itself but also promising more to follow).

If, however, Black does not test White's response, we could get the situation of Diagram 89. White wins the dash to 4. Of course, Black can now make some profit with 5 and so on. Yet whether Black cuts next at A or B, White saves his two stones with the other move and leaves no follow-up. The small loss White does incur at the bottom is less than his gain at the top edge.

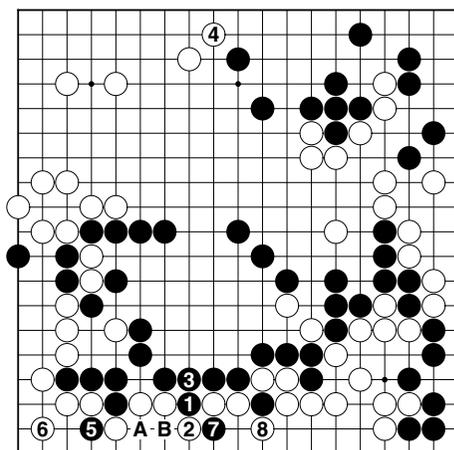


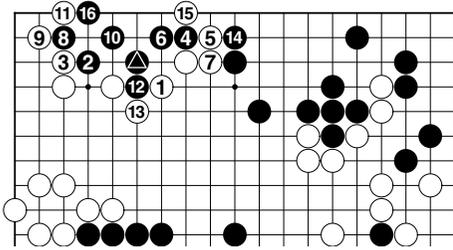
Diagram 89

Go thought 17 marked the decisive point of the game. Yasunaga said he felt a cold shiver run down his back as he saw it played.

Overall the game is close. White has thirty-something points of fixed territory at the bottom, and Black's centre territory about matches that. Black's territory in the lower right, at a little over six points, more or less matches

White's on the right side. The outcome therefore boils down to a comparison of what White might get in the upper left and what Black might get in the upper right. Shusai didn't specify the precise point of the game, but it must have been at about this stage when, he said "I recovered some of my composure after the mid-point of the game. It was extremely close. Normally in go you have a rough idea of who is in the lead after a hundred moves or so, but in this game that was surprisingly not so. It was close. Whoever was to win, it would likely be about a one point difference."

White has a range of possible responses to 17 (▲ in Diagram 90). ① in Diagram 90, trying to seal Black in, is perhaps the most standard.



However, this particular continuation ends in a ko where White has a lot of cutting points on the outside. That seems like folly.

Diagram 90

White could therefore consider letting Black live unconditionally but making a very thick position on the outside—that is, a different ⑨ as in Diagram 91.

At first blush, the simplicity of this plan suggests it is better than Shusai's choice in the game, but Shusai considered this position carefully and felt his choice had something extra. More to the point, he thought his move was the only way to keep up with Black.

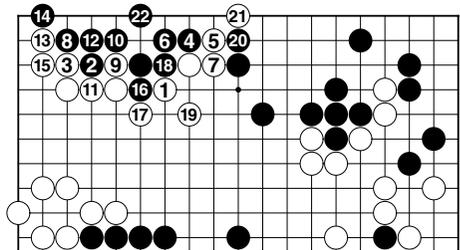
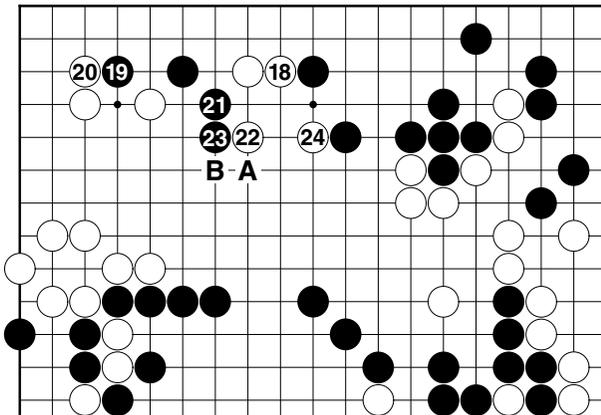


Diagram 91



118 – 124

Another possibility for ⑱ may seem to be ① in Diagram 92. Fancy footwork like this by Black often ends in a pratfall, but here Black can live easily enough.

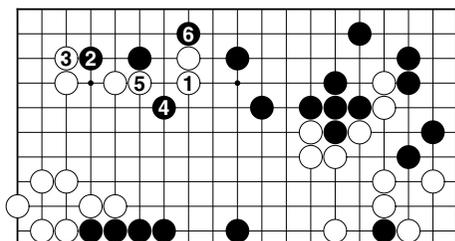


Diagram 92

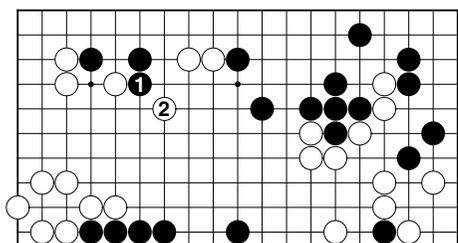
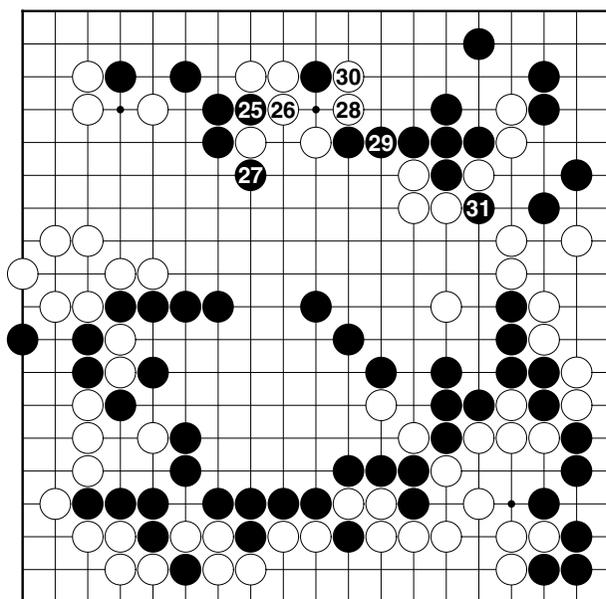


Diagram 93

On 21, Go felt inhibited about trying ① in Diagram 93 because he feared ②, though there was at least one commentator who thought this ① was better.

21 and 23 are solid and safe (and 22 is also the correct shape move), but what Shusai had in mind was the clever tesuji at 24 which sets up a much admired trade. Since play was adjourned after 21 we may safely infer that Shusai double checked his tesuji in the interim week. 24 at A would give Black B and then White's group is in serious danger.

If Black responds to 24 on the right, White will extend to A and Black will be in the same sort of danger as in Diagram 93.



125 – 131

31 marked the adjournment of Session 10 on 18 December. The outcome is still unclear. The trade up to 30 was regarded as fair for both sides.