

- article. See Li Jiemin 李解民, "Supplement to 'A tentative interpretation of the Han dynasty wooden slip from Yinwan bearing the *liubo* board divination'" <<尹湾汉墓竹简木牘试解>>打補, WW, 2000:8, pp 73-4.
- [3] Lao Gan 勞幹, "The evolution of *liubo* and the *liubo* gaming board" 六博及博局的演變, *Lishi Yuyan Yanjiusuo jikan* 歷史語言研究所集刊 (Journal of the Institute of History and Philology), Academia Sinica, Taipei, 35 (1964), pp 15-30.
- [4] Lianyungang Municipal Museum *et al*, 連雲港市博物館等, *Slips from the Han Tomb at Yinwan* 尹灣漢墓簡牘 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局, 1997), pp 21, 125-126, 162-166.
- [5] As Li Jiemin pointed out, I mistakenly included two characters *jiu'an* irrelevant to the diagram in my 1999 article, but it does not influence the accuracy of decoding of the diagram.
- [6] Lianyungang Municipal Museum *et al*, 連雲港市博物館等, *Slips from the Han Tomb at Yinwan* 尹灣漢墓簡牘, p. 3.
- [7] Li Xueqin 李學勤, "Boji divination and the TL V pattern" <<博局占>>與規矩敘, WW, 1997:1, pp 49-51.
- [8] Li Xueqin and the authors of *Slips from the Han Tomb at Yinwan* have noted the similarity between the two.
- [9] As used in "if there is someone who dies on the road, then have him buried and erect a post 若有死於道路者, 則令埋而置路標." See Sun Yirang 孫詒讓, *Zhou yi zhengyi* 周禮正義 (Siku beiyao edition 四庫備要本, Taipei 臺北: Chung-hwa Shu-chü 中華書局, 1983), *juan* 70, p. 6b.
- [10] For instance, Mt. Emei was said to be the sign that marks the position of a nearby city called Quanyang 峨嵋, 則今埋而置路標. See Sun Yirang 孫詒讓, *Zhou yi zhengyi* 周禮正義 (Siku beiyao edition 四庫備要本, Taipei 臺北: Chung-hwa Shu-chü 中華書局, 1983), in Yan Kejian 嚴可均, *Quan Shanggu Sandai Qin Han Sanguo Luchaowen* 全上古三代秦漢三國六朝文 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局, 1958).
- [11] *Quan jin wen* 全晉文, *juan* 120, 頁2147-8.
- [12] *Quan jin wen* 全晉文, "chi" was used to describe "bending five fingers 曲五指." Yang Jing annotated that "chi" is the same as "qi". See Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Xinzi jicheng* 新子集解 (*Zhuji jicheng ben* 諸子集解本, Shanghai: Shanghai Shudian 上海書店, 1990), *juan* 1, "Quan xue" 勸學, p. 9.
- [13] Jia Yi once used the metaphor of steps and a hall to illustrate the relation between subjects and their ruler. He said, "when the *lian* is far from the earth, the hall is high 廉遠地, 則堂高... when the *lian* is close to the earth, the hall is low 廉近地, 則堂卑." Here, *lian* can be understood as either the raised angle of the steps or the height of the steps. If latter, *lian* means the opposite edge of an angle. See Ban Gu 班固, *Han shu* 漢書 (punctuated edition, Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局, 1990), *juan* 48, pp 2254-5.
- [14] (punctuated edition, Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局, 1990), *juan* 48, pp 2254-5.
- [15] The formula was thus a compilation of positions, instructing moves of chessmen: no verbs or adjectives, as Yang and Lao suggested, were interwoven to make the sentences comprehensive.
- [16] Another article on the Yinwan diagram came out when I had delivered mine for publication by the end of 1998. As Li Jiemin already pointed out, it reads the diagram as a mathematical document, making the corrections as I did, but it does not penetrate the relationship between the TL V divination, the *liubo* game and Xu's formula. See Liu Lexian 劉樂賢, "Yinwan Hanmu chuan shashu wenxian chutan" 尹灣漢墓簡牘數術文獻初探 (A preliminary investigation of the numerical texts unearthed from the Han Tomb at Yinwan), *A General Discussion of the Slips Unearthed from the Han Tomb at Yinwan* 尹灣漢墓簡牘數術文獻初探 (A preliminary investigation of the numerical texts unearthed from the Han Tomb at Yinwan), Science Press 科學出版社, 1999), pp 175-86.
- [17] *Yinwan*, A General Discussion of the Slips Unearthed from the Han Tomb at Yinwan, Science Press 科學出版社, 1999), pp 175-86.
- [18] 綜論 (Beijing: Science Press 科學出版社, 1999), pp 175-86.
- [19] I did not include these two corrections in my 1999 article. After Liu Lexian had noticed the oddity of 7 (*gengwa*) and 8 (*xinwei*), Li Jiemin proposed a remedy by moving only 8 (*xinwei*) to the position *lian* (*gengwa*) and 8 (*xinwei*). Li Jiemin proposed a remedy by moving only 8 (*xinwei*) to the position *lian* (*gengwa*) and 8 (*xinwei*). However, to strictly follow the moving path of the other six groups, we should also rearrange 7 (*gengwa*) to the west of the position *jie*.
- [20] Xiang Xinyang 向新陽, Liu Keren 劉克任, *Annotated Edition of Xijing Zaji* 西京雜記校注 (Shanghai: Shanghai古籍出版社, Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House, 1991), p. 203.

SUSPICIONS REGARDING WHAT ARE ALLEGED TO BE SUI DYNASTY GLASS AND AGATE WEIQI CHESS PIECES

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In June 1986, in the course of excavating a Sui dynasty *sarira* tomb 舍利墓 located in the grounds of the Xi'an municipal government offices at no. 40 Changle Road 長樂路 in the city's eastern Yulin district 榆林地區, archaeologists unearthed 27 items that resembled gaming pieces. Thirteen were made of a green glass material, and the other 14 were made of agate, all being brown with the exception of one that was milky white in colour. They are roughly circular cones with flat bases, pointed tops, outward curving bellies and retracted necks. Twenty-four of the 27 pieces are 2.7 cm in height and 2.6 cm in diameter at the base; the three other pieces are slightly smaller, the glass piece being 1.6 cm in height and 2.6 cm in diameter at the base, and the agate piece is 1.5 cm in height and 2.2 cm in diameter at the base. The remaining white agate piece is 2.8 cm in height and 2.7 cm in diameter at the base. [See fig. 1.] [1] Such a group of unusually shaped gaming pieces (*weiqi* 棋子) had been rarely seen, and so their discovery excited wide interest; for some time they were on permanent display in the Shaanxi History Museum and were exhibited abroad on a number of occasions, attracting widespread academic interest.

Although the pieces were described in the excavation report as "chess pieces" (*qizi* 棋子), the author then expressed tentative caution in so defining them. However, when they were later labelled for display and catalogued definitively as "Sui dynasty glass and agate *weiqi* 圍棋 chess pieces" [2] this classification became accepted. I have examined relevant historical texts, unearthed relics and ancient paintings, in order to acquire a closer understanding of the original use to which these objects were put and believe that they are not Sui dynasty *weiqi* chess pieces for the following reasons:

Firstly, they do not conform, in either shape or colour, with the description of "*weiqi* chess pieces" in ancient texts, of which many are extant for the Sui-Tang period. *Weiqi* originated in China,

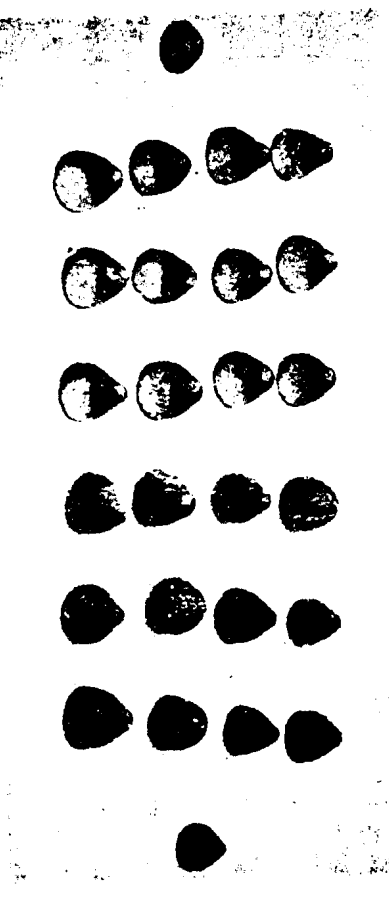


Fig. 1 26 of the 27 glass and agate playing pieces unearthed in 1986 in Xi'an

and in ancient times it was simply termed *yi* 弈. According to legend, *weiqi* originated during the period of the sages Yao 堯 and Shun 舜, during the Spring and Autumn period the game became popular. During three major historical phases—the Qin-Han, Sui-Tang and Ming-Qing periods—the game peaked in popularity.

From the Han dynasty onwards treatises on the game began to make their appearance and, with them, prose works discussing the game which were billed as "classics" (*jing* 經), as well as voluminous poetry in various genres. Descriptions of the *weiqi* pieces themselves appear in many of these texts.

The first prose work on *weiqi* to appear was *Yi zhi* 奕旨 (Prolegomenon of Chess), by the eminent historian and literatus of the Han dynasty, Ban Gu 班固 (CE 32-92). Ban Gu describes how, "The board must be square to demonstrate the regularity of the earth; the lines must be straight so that intelligence can reveal its virtue; and the pieces must be black and white so that they can be discriminated by [the contrast of] *yin-yang*". In the Cao-Wei period (220-265), Handan Chun 邯鄲淳 described *weiqi* as follows in the section titled "The Way of Chess" (*Qidao* 棋道) in his *Yijing* 藝經 (Classic of the Arts): "The board is laid out with 17 vertical and 17 horizontal lines, which form a total of 289 paths (*dao* 道 or *lu* 路), and there are 150 black and white pieces". The Southern Liang Emperor Wudi 武帝, Xiao Yan 蕭衍 (r. 502-548), wrote many treatises on the game. His "Prose-poem on *weiqi*" 圍棋賦 includes the couplet:

The round casket containing the pieces is shaped like Heaven
The square board for the play resembles the earth;
The board is wide and covered with ram's horn patterned lacquer,
The pieces are white jade and black precious stone.

圓奩象天，方局法地；
枰則廣羊文犀，子則白瑤元寶。

Here the character "元" is the equivalent of "玄", meaning "black", and so the pieces are described as made from fine black and white jade.

The founding emperor of the Tang dynasty Taizong 太宗 (r. 626-649), Li Shimin 李世民, was fond of playing *weiqi*, and he eulogised the game in two poems titled *In praise of chess* (*Yong qi* 咏棋), the first of which reads:

Fondled in conversation for their ancient beauty,
At leisure, the chessmen bespeak foretold virtue;
But then, they are interwoven as rival forces,
Guided down grid-lines in paired black and white.

手談標昔美，坐隱逸前良。
參差分兩勢，玄素引雙行。[3]

"Biography of Li Mi" 李泌傳 in *New History of Tang* 新唐書 recounts how Emperor Xuanzong (r. 712-756), Li Longji 李隆基, once commanded Zhang Yue 張詠 to compose a poem on the theme of *weiqi*, and the resulting work reads:

Square is the board,
Round are the pieces;
Moved, the chessmen come to life,
Stilled, the chessmen die.

方如棋盤，圓如棋子。
動如棋生，靜如棋死。

These *weiqi* pieces are quite definitely circular, as they are in the following lines from Zhang Qiao's 張喬 poem "In praise of chess pieces presented to the chess playing monk" 咏棋子贈奕僧:

With these black and white pieces, you will enter the Realm of Mystery
Having, through cycles of rebirth, experienced heaven and earth.

黑白誰能入玄，
千回生死體方圓。[4]

Again the *weiqi* pieces are described as black or white, as well as round.

In the 1930s a Chinese scholar described a work titled "The Classic of *Weiqi*" (*Qijing* 棋經) (SS574) among the Dunhuang manuscripts held in Britain, which was regarded as being a Northern Zhou or at least pre-Tang work. [5] It includes the following passage: "The *weiqi* pieces were round to symbolise heaven, while the board was square to denote the earth. There are 361 lines on the board in imitation of the degrees of the heavens". Also: "The black pieces contend with the white, and to left and right is a box to hold them. Again we note the points in common with the texts cited above.

From the Song dynasty onwards texts proliferate, yet throughout these later works *weiqi* pieces continue to be described as round, black and white. In the preface to the Northern Song *Classic of Chess* 棋經 by Zhang Ni 張擬 [see fig. 2] we read: "The paths on the board are 361 in number, ... and there are 360 pieces, half of them black and half white, symbolising the forces of *yin* and *yang* ... The board is square and passive; the pieces are round and dynamic". This passage is typical. Although these texts are fragmentary, all demonstrate that the pieces used to play the ancient Chinese game of *weiqi* remained remarkably unchanging — round, black and white — even though the materials from which they were fashioned could vary.

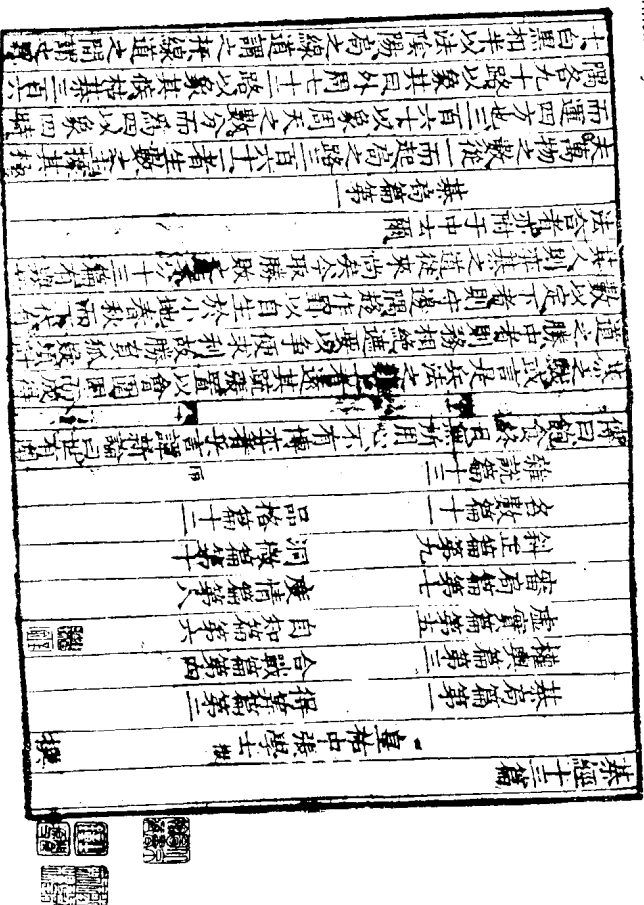


Fig. 2 Preface of *Qijing*, Classic of Chess by the Song scholar Zhang Ni, included in the Song dynasty *weiqi* manual titled *Heqin* on chess.

Although the quality of "roundness" is not elaborated upon in any early *weiqi* manuals, other texts clarify this. The Eastern Han dynasty prose-poem *Weiqi fu* 圍棋賦 by Ma Rong 馬融 praises the pieces: "Separated like the eyes of horses, yet linked in lines like migratory swallows" 離離馬目, 連連雁行. And in the Wei dynasty writer Ying Yang's 應揚 Chess Deployments (*Yishi* 奕勢) they are described as "fish scales linked like waves of swallows" 魚鱗雁峙 or "nebulae clusters in stellar nets" 雲合星羅. The poem "In praise of chess" (*Tong qi* 咏棋) by the Tang Emperor Taizong 唐太宗 speaks of, "Swallows in flight with no apparent wings. In formations of vapour not dispersed as clouds" 雁行非假翼, 彈氣本無雲.

In response to this couplet Xu Jingzong 許敬宗 (592-672) in his poem of the same title wrote, "As the swallows slowly migrate so are the clouds deployed. Like scattered dots pursuing chains of stars" 分行漸雲陣, 亂點逐星連.[6] Metaphors of horses' eyes, fish scales, the humped wings of migratory swallows or the stars linked in constellations all suggest a tangible roundness but not sphericity and so the *weiqi* pieces described by these similes resembled flattened spheres, much as they do today.

Li Dong's 李洞 poem *Playing Chess* (*Duiqi* 對棋) contains the following couplet:

The knocking of the moves on the chessboard* rouses me from my sleep,
As the stone pieces punctuate the intoning of poetry.

剛敲敲醒睡, 片石夾吟詩.[7]

[* The character "檟" meaning chessboard, originally signified the catalpa tree and its timber.]

In this description of a recluse playing *weiqi* chess the pieces are made of stone. However, *Youhuan jiuwen* 游宦紀聞 (Anecdotal Chronicle of a Roaming Official) describes Daoists playing *weiqi* using tile fragments as pieces.[8] In Tang poems by Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779-831)[9] and Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫 (772-842).[10] deployed chessmen are likened to jade plaques, sheets of ice, and sandy expanses, metaphors all showing that the chess pieces sat low on the board, while a passage in the Tang dynasty essay collection *Yunxian zaji* 雲仙雜記 (Miscellaneous Records of Immortals among Clouds) describes how if Li Shao 李杲 were to lose a game of *weiqi* he would scoop up several pieces and swallow them; clearly the pieces had to be no larger than the largest tablets that could be swallowed.

Wangyou qingjie ji 忘憂清業記 (Manual for Forgetting Worries in Quiet Pleasure), the Song dynasty *weiqi* manual written by Li Yimin 李逸民, contains ancient board diagrams of the Three Kingdoms, Western Jin and Tang dynasties that are identical to those we see today.[11] [see fig. 3] Thus, we can conclude that since ancient times *weiqi* chess pieces have been flat, rounded black and white movers, quite unlike the green and brown conical pieces discovered in the Sui dynasty tomb in Xi'an.

Weiqi had widespread popularity in ancient China, played by all strata of society, the boards and pieces came in materials of different value. Pieces could be made of either stone or tile as mentioned above, but seem to have invariably been of a fairly fixed design — black and white flattened discs. Even if the Sui dynasty set of conical playing pieces were mortuary items (*mingqi* 明器) for burial in a tomb, they would nevertheless have still conformed to conventional designs familiar to the living. No ancient text mentions tall conical *weiqi* pieces of diverse colours, and so they must have been pieces, tokens or counters used in a game other than *weiqi*.

The pieces recovered from the Sui tomb in Xi'an are also quite unlike any *weiqi* pieces previously excavated or depicted in ancient paintings. In recent years archaeologists from the Shaanxi Provincial Archaeology Institute discovered a Western Han dynasty ceramic *weiqi* set in the course of excavating the southern tower-gate (*qumen* 闕門) at the Yangling 陽陵 (mausoleum) of Emperor Jingdi 景帝 (c. BCE 171-141) in Xianyang. The board was square and each side was incised with a

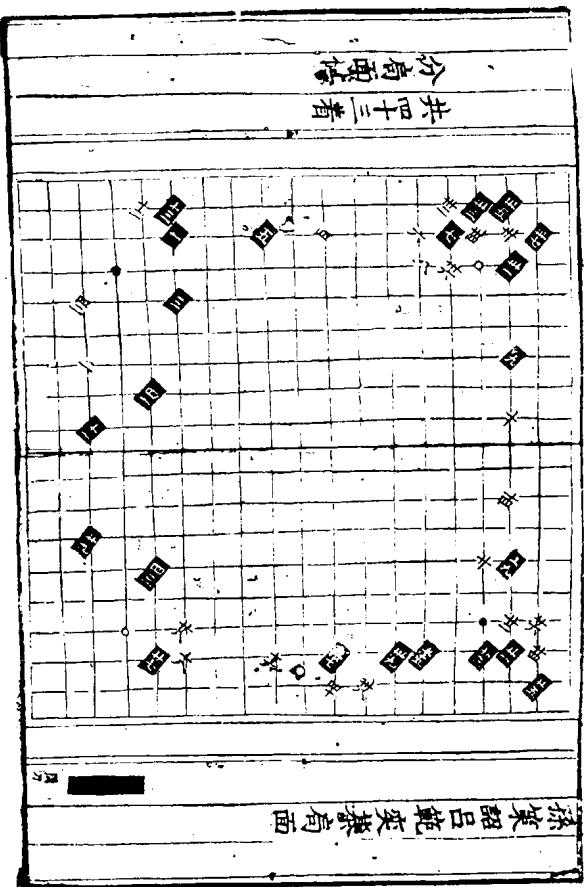


Fig. 3 Game layout from the Three Kingdoms period in the Song *weiqi* manual *Wangyou qingjie ji*

regular grid of 17 lines (*dao* 道) in each direction; 289 playing pieces were found.[12] To date, this is the oldest *weiqi* chessboard discovered in China, and, as a prototype, it is remarkably similar to the *weiqi* sets used for play today.

In May 1959 a green glaze porcelain (celadon) *weiqi* board was found in the Sui dynasty tomb of Zhang Sheng 張盛 in Anyang, Henan. [see fig. 4] The board is incised with a grid of 19 lines running in both directions; at the corners where the external lines meet and in the centre of the board are five small holes; these "five stars" 五星 demonstrate that the base of the board was supported [by five legs] in a manner similar to some boards today. Moreover, the layout and dimensions of the board were the same as those of today's boards.[13] Although no playing pieces were found, the identical nature of these ancient boards and today's boards would suggest that the pieces themselves were also the same.

In August 1978 a team from the Sichuan Provincial Museum, excavating the tomb of the early Tang dynasty prefect (*cishi* 刺史) of Yongzhou 永州, Ran Rencai 冉仁才, in Wanxian 萬縣 [county], Sichuan province, unearthed a celadon (green glaze porcelain, *qingci* 青瓷) *weiqi* board and five glass chess pieces. The board was square and incised with a grid consisting of 19 lines running in each direction, but there were no "five stars"; the pieces were flattened discs measuring 2 cm in diameter and 0.4 cm in thickness at the centre.[14] Again, the design of the sets was completely consistent with today's *weiqi* sets.

Three stone *weiqi* pieces — flattened spheres, one white and two blackish-navy blue, and each measuring 1.5 cm in diameter and 0.8 cm in thickness at the thickest central point — were unearthed in 1984 at a Tang dynasty tomb in the grounds of the Cotton Weaving Plant in Fengxiang 鳳翔 county, Shaanxi.[15] The Shaanxi History Museum has in its collection a group of 94 white stone *weiqi* pieces unearthed from a Tang tomb in Xi'an; again these are flat round pieces that swell

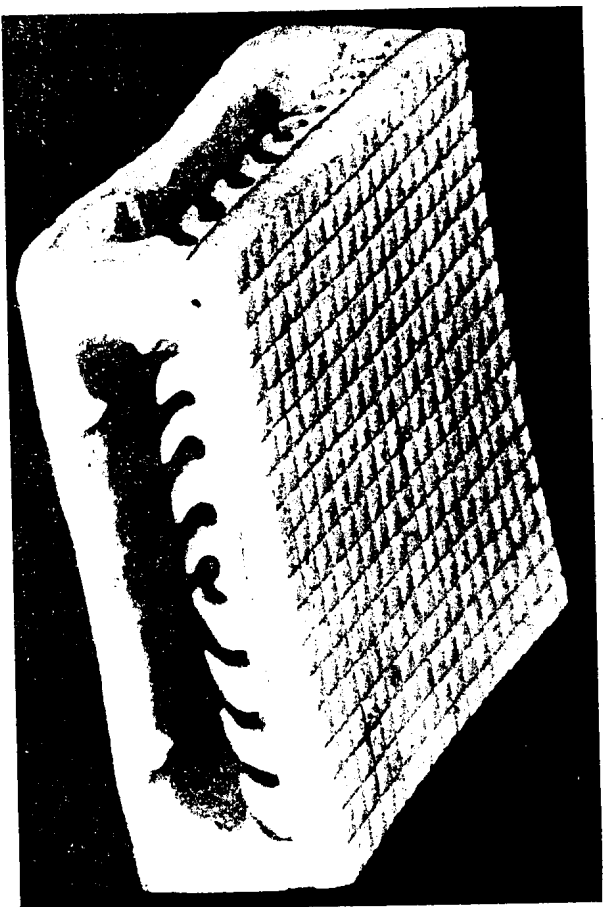


Fig. 4 Porcelain *weiqi* board from the Sui dynasty tomb of Zhang Sheng unearthed in 1959 in Anyang, Henan

slightly at the centre of either side. They measure 1.5 cm in diameter and 0.7 cm in thickness.[16] They too resemble pieces used in the modern game.

A painting on plain silk (*yuan zhi*) depicting court ladies playing chess was unearthed in 1972 from the early Tang dynasty tomb of an aristocrat surnamed Zhang 張 in the Astana 阿斯塔那 cemetery in Turfan, Xinjiang. [see fig. 5] The painting is a life-like depiction of a group of eleven ladies at the centre of which two are seated across a chessboard: the right hand of the lady on the right is extended as she goes to place a black chess piece held between her index and middle fingers. Behind her, waiting in attendance, stands a maid holding a container for chess pieces (*qiyu* 棋盂). The board consists of a grid comprising 17 vertical and 17 horizontal lines, and black and white pieces, resembling those used in the modern game, are spread across it.[17] The collection of the Palace Museum in Beijing contains another painting depicting a *weiqi* chess match — the Five Dynasties artist Zhou Wenju's *Chongqing huai tu* 重屏會棋圖 (The *weiqi* game before the double screen) [see fig. 6] One of the players is identified as the Second Emperor (*zhongzhu* 中主) of the Southern Tang dynasty Li Jing 李璟 (r. 943-961). Play has progressed to the point where there are eight black pieces, seemingly flattened spheres, lined up on the board, which is the regular square grid.[18] This pictorial evidence supplements that provided in ancient texts and confirms that, although *weiqi* chessmen could be made from different materials in the Sui dynasty, they conform with modern sets in shape and colour, quite unlike the playing pieces discovered in the Sui tomb in the eastern suburbs of Xi'an.

In purely practical terms, given that the boards on which *weiqi* was played in the Sui were similar in size and shape to those used today, even though the number of vertical and horizontal lines and each vary between 17 and 19 in parallel, creating either 289 or 361 intersections, respectively, and that the pieces in play were roughly the same size as those used today, large tall conical chess



Fig. 5 Section of silk painting of the Tang dynasty showing an aristocratic woman played *weiqi* (unearthed in 1972 at the Astana cemetery, Turfan, Xinjiang)

pieces would have impeded play, colliding into each other when a move was made and obstructing the players' overall view of the board, unlike small flattened discs which are ideal for play. One of the aesthetically stimulating aspects of the game for the players was the slap of the pieces on the board, and a number of poems on the subject of *weiqi* play contain lines like "the sound of chessmen fills the quiet of the blooming courtyard" 棋聲花院靜 [19] or "the striking of the chessmen complements the rhythm of the music" 棋聲聲與律呂相應 [20]

One of the characteristics of China's chess games — *weiqi* and *xiangqi* 象棋 — is their consistency throughout several millennia of their history, in terms of the sets with which they were played, demonstrating that once the forms of these games had been determined in terms of practicality, they were able to endure and remain unchanged. It factors quite clear that the sets of



Fig. 6 Detail of painting *Changping huoyi* by Zhou Wenju (Five Dynasties) in collection of Palace Museum, Beijing

glass and agate conical pieces of different colours unearthed in the Sui tomb in Xian could not have been *weigui* pieces.

The question then arises: If the Sui glass and agate playing pieces were not *weigui* "chessmen", then what were they? After having examined records of all ancient Chinese games, I believe that they are pieces once used in the game of *shuanglu* 雙陸 ("double sixes"), in that they conform with descriptions of the game and are consistent with archaeological evidence regarding this other early form of Chinese "chess".

The documentary record provides evidence that the game of *shuanglu* originated in India, and entered China through Serindia. The game first became popular in the Cao-Wei period, and it flourished in the Liang, Chen, Wei, Qi, Sui and Tang dynasties. It began to decline in the Song and Yuan dynasties, and in a more pronounced manner in the Ming and Qing; its demise was complete by the 19th century. A number of ancient collectanea, and of course manuals, contain materials on the game, e.g., *Shuangpu* 雙譜, *Leiyao* 類要, *Shilin guangji* 事林廣記, *Shantangsi kao* 山堂肆考, *Lanyan changyu* 蘭言長語, *Shiwu ganzhu* 事物紺珠, and *Geshi jingyuan* 格致鏡源. From *Pushuang* and other works we learn that *shuanglu* had a number of variant names, i.e., *shuanglu* 雙六, *dashi* 打雙 and *Bahosai* 波羅塞戲, and that it was a gambling game played with pieces called horses, a board and dice. The board "was half as long again

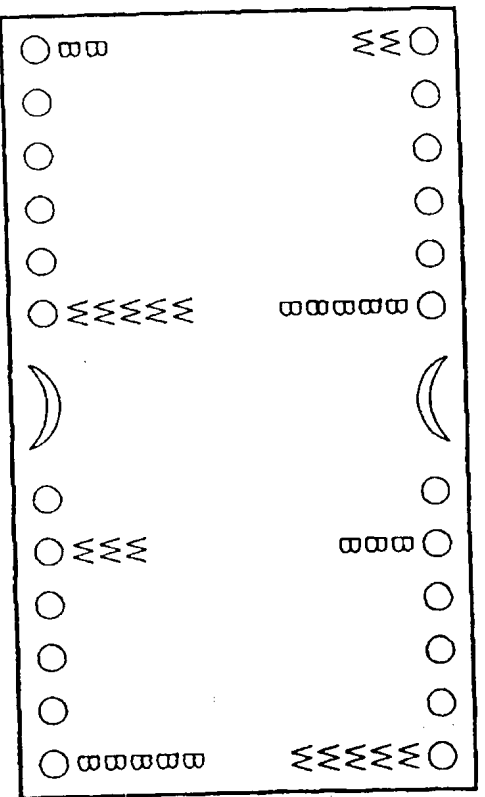


Fig. 7 Diagram showing layout of *shuanglu* board (after Chen Zenghi)

as a *weigui* board, and on it two portals (*men* 門) and 24 pathways (*lu* 路) were incised". [see Fig. 7] The game was played with two dice-shaped cubes, each face of which was marked with from one to six dots. "The tallies used by the players to record wins and losses were not fixed in number, the amounts at stake being agreed upon in advance by the players". The game was played according to different rules in different areas, demonstrating that it had a very wide geographic spread. From texts we know of regional varieties of the game called "northern *shuanglu*" 北雙陸, "Nampi *shuanglu*" 南皮雙陸 (from Nampi in Hebei province), "Panyu *shuanglu*" 番禺雙陸 (Panyu being the ancient name of Guangzhou), "Zhenla *shuanglu*" 真臘雙陸 (Kampuchean *shuanglu*), "Shepo *shuanglu*" 闍婆 (Javanese *shuanglu*), "Dazhi *shuanglu*" 大食 (Arabic *shuanglu*) and "Riben *shuanglu*" 日本雙陸 (Japanese *shuanglu*).

Chinese materials referring to *shuanglu* are terse and it is difficult to find detailed accounts, but in the Tang dynasty *shuanglu* was introduced from China to Japan and a fairly detailed description of the rules of the game is contained in the Japanese text in classical Chinese titled *The Brocade Sachel of Double-Sixes* 雙陸錦囊 (*Sooriku kinno*):

Twelve lines run the length of the board, and there are 15 black and 15 white pieces. The black pieces are moved from the upper left of the board to the right, and then back from the right to the left; the white pieces are moved from the lower left of the board to the right, and then back from the upper right to the left. The players sit facing each other and they take it in turns to throw the dice and make their moves. The game is played with two dice, and these six-sided cubes have dots ranging from one to six in number on each face, the sequence of dots running from the top and down around the four sides and then from front to back. If a player throws a "2" and a "3", he could move one piece two spaces and another three spaces. More than one piece of the same colour could be deployed on the one path, and if there were two pieces of the one colour on a path, the other colour could not enter it otherwise the piece would be taken by the opponent. The seized piece could be played by the opponent with the next throw of the dice. If the captured piece was not played by

the opponent, then the opponent could not play any other of his pieces. If a player was unable to make a move, then his opponent had the throw of the dies. If one player's pieces had all entered the six paths (black having the lower six paths and white the upper six), then he was the winner.[21]

From the above description we can see that *shuanglu*, in terms of playing moves and end-game, is similar to the modern game of draughts. The pieces moved in playing *shuanglu* were variously designated *shuangluzi* 雙降子, *shuangma* 雙馬, *gucha* 姑茶 or *ya* 撥. One text describes how:

The white horses were made of white wood and the black horses of black wood (ebony), while the weathly would have pieces made of rhinoceros horn and ivory. The bases of the horses were circular and flat, and for "play" (*sha* 殺) they were raised, being three *cun* 寸 and two *fen* 分 in height; the upper part of each piece had four flanges and these extended down the piece for one *cun* and one *fen*, greatly resembling the clothes-beaters used by washerwomen with which we are today familiar.

And:

In Panyu (=Guangzhou) the white pieces were made of *huangyangmu* 黃楊木 (boxwood) timber and the black of *guanglangmu* 檳榔木 (gommuti palm, which is purplish-black in colour); the pieces had flat bases and short "handles" resembling rounded persimmon halves or stupas.

And:

In Srivijaya (an ancient kingdom in Sumatra), Java, Annam, Kampuchea and Nampi ... ivory is used to make the white pieces, while *wumeimu* 烏梅木 (black peachwood timber) or ivory dyed red (*hongya* 紅牙) is used to make the black pieces.

However Japanese pieces were made from blue or white glass (*luli* 琉璃) or they followed the Chinese type.[22]

These various sources show that *shuanglu* pieces were of two colours, generally black and white, but sometimes blue, red, yellow or other colours.[23] The material could be natural timbers, rhinoceros horn, ivory, glass or jade. The pieces could be conical like clothes-beaters, rounded like the upper halves of persimmons cut horizontally through the middle, squat like stupas or even only slightly raised like *wetui* pieces. [see fig. 8]

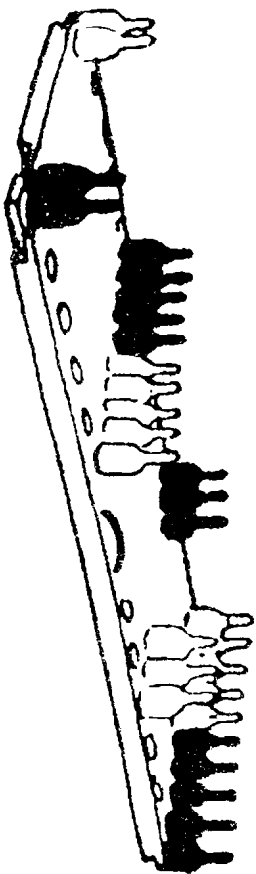


Fig. 8. Shuanglu board set up for play (after Li Hua, 1973)

material and shape to the "chessmen" unearthed at the Sui tomb in Xi'an; they are of two colours, and "have flat bases and are like rounded cones", or are rounded like persimmon halves. There can be no doubt that they are *shuanglu* pieces.

Moving from texts, an examination of unearthed and provenanced *shuanglu* pieces provides corroborative evidence of the identity of the Xi'an pieces. To the present day a number of *shuanglu* sets, especially of the Tang-Song period, have been unearthed. An artefact described by its excavators as a "table-shaped item" 案形器, unearthed from the tomb of Ran Rencai in Wanxian [county], Sichuan, which is mentioned above, has been examined by the author. This "celadon" funerary item, measuring 9.5 cm in length and 7.3 cm in width, is in fact the earliest example of a *shuanglu* board unearthed in China to date. The rectangular board has curled legs and the skirt of the table is decorated with alcove-shaped (*kumen* 窠門) decorations; [see fig. 9] the upper surface of the board is incised with twelve opposed pathways with two fenced off areas at the middle of each long side. At the centre of the board a boundary is marked. It conforms with textual descriptions of *shuanglu* boards, but unfortunately no playing pieces were found.

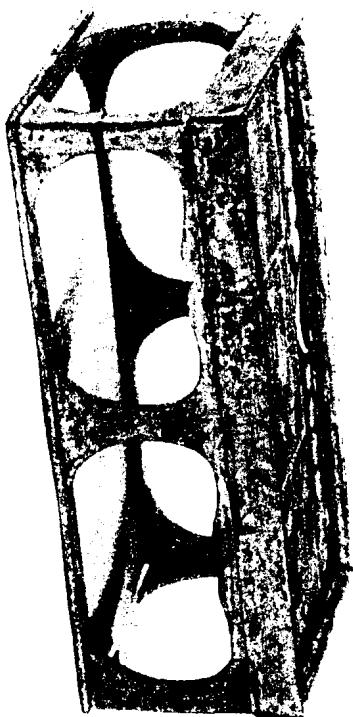


Fig. 9. *Shuanglu* table with *kumen* openings and mother-of-pearl inlay unearthed from a Tang dynasty tomb at the Astana cemetery, Turfan, 1973

In 1965 a mural depicting a person moving a *shuanglu* board set up for play was discovered in a Tang tomb at the Astana cemetery in Turfan, Xinjiang. The board is rectangular, and incised with lines for play. On the board are more than ten rarely seen "peach-shaped" playing pieces.[24] The collection of the Shoosoo-in in the Todai-ji temple in Nara contains two 8th century sets with stupa-shaped pieces. The pieces could be readily handled, allowing a clear view of the board and facilitating a leisurely aesthetic game. These sets were designed with the same considerations as are required for a modern set of draughts (*taozqi* 跳棋). The painted *zitan* 紫檀 timber *shuanglu* boards come with yellow, indigo, dark green and light green pieces made from crystal or glass. The boards are rectangular and 24 grooves are incised into the playing surface. The pieces are flat, round and raised like Tang dynasty *wetui* pieces.[25] as described in *Pushuang* 推雙

In 1974 archaeologists unearthed a *shuanglu* set at a Liao dynasty tomb at Yemotai 葉茂臺 in Faku 法庫. The top section of the board was missing; it was rectangular, measuring 52.8 cm by 25.1 cm, and by form it was very similar to the two sets preserved in the Shoosoo-in.

Archaeologists found 30 paying pieces made of lacquered timber; half of them are black, the other half white, and all are shaped like small stupas. [26]

A Northern Song dynasty painting of court ladies shows two aristocratic women playing *shuangliu*; there are more than ten black and white *shuangliu* pieces shaped like clothes-beaters on the board. [27] In 1977 archaeologists excavated the early Ming dynasty tomb of Xia Quan 夏觀 in Jiangyin 江陰, Jiangsu. Twenty-two *shuangliu* playing pieces were unearthed from the tomb, and these are also shaped like clothes-beaters. [28] A number of *shuangliu* chessmen in the collection of the National Museum of Chinese History in Beijing are also shaped like clothes-beaters; these belong to a Ming-Qing period *shuangliu* set, of which 22 pieces remain — ten black pieces made of *zitan* timber, and twelve white pieces made of *baiyangmu* (boxwood). [29]

These archaeological discoveries and paintings make it clear that *shuangliu* sets were of many different types: they could be made of wood, crystal and glass, or they could be black and white, or even yellow, blue and green. The pieces could be shaped like *weiqi* pieces, or resemble stupas or clothes-beaters; the more recent the pieces in time, the taller they tend to be. The pieces found in the Sui dynasty *sarira* tomb in Chang'an conform with ancient examples.

In terms of the practicality of play, *shuangliu* pieces and sets also changed over time. *Shuangliu* is played like modern draughts, and so apart from each player's pieces being a distinctive colour, there also needed to be a fixed number of pieces on the board; to facilitate moving the pieces on the board, the pieces needed to be few in number and the layout of the board clear to players so that the complex multiple moves and jumps could be executed. [see fig. 10] The clothes-beater and halved persimmon shapes were ideal. The *shuangliu* sets in the Shoosoo-in collection belong to an



Fig. 10 Yuan dynasty Woodblock illustration in Chen Yuanjin, *Shilu shuangliu*, showing two men playing *shuangliu*.

earlier period in the history of the game, and the pieces are flatter discs resembling the pieces used in playing *weiqi*, the far more popular, as well as older, board game at that time.

The number of pieces used in the game also varied over time. The ancient texts cited above mention a total of 30 pieces, but other texts mention 12 or 18 pieces. A note by Hu Sanxing 胡三省 on a passage in Sima Guang's 司馬光 *Comprehensive Mirror for Aiding Government* (*Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑) (juan 208) describing events during the 1st year (705) of the Shentong 神龍 reign of Emperor Zhongzong 中宗 notes that *shuangliu* was a dice game, in which there were twelve playing pieces, each player having six pieces, hence the name "double sixes" (*shuangliu*). The Northern Song scholar Yan Shu 晏殊 in his work *Lei yao* 類要 describes *shuangliu* as a game that came from India and was called *Boluo saixi* 波羅塞戲 (Sanskrit: *prasaena*) in the *Nirvana sutra* (*Niepan jing* 涅槃經). An independent work by the Tang master Dharmakara (Fazang) 法藏 titled *Fangang fazang shu* 梵網法藏所 describes the game of *prasaena*: "Prasaena was a military game played in the Western Region (Central Asia), and two players each have more than twenty small jade tokens which serve as elephants or horses and these must take strategic command of all roads on the board". *Pu shuang* 譜雙 mentions each player having 15 pieces. In texts discussing the game the number of pieces can vary, but the number of pieces also varies in unearthed sets - as many as 30 have been found, but sets with fewer pieces have also been discovered.

Shuangliu was played over such a vast geographic sweep that the ways in which the game was played varied greatly. More or less than 30 pieces could be used in a game, and the number was determined by the form of the game and the rules of play. Generally there were between 24 and 40 pieces, but never as many as the several hundred "chessmen" deployed in *weiqi*. The 27 chessmen discovered in the Sui *sarira* tomb would thus fall within the range of *shuangliu*. Judging by the appearance of this set, the 24 glass and agate uniform pieces would have formed the set, while the two stunted pieces were damaged, but because they were of a valuable material had been ground to form new pieces. These two, with the large agate piece, were used as back-ups.

We can only conclude that the "chessmen" in the Sui dynasty *sarira* tomb in Xi'an were used in the game of *shuangliu*, not *weiqi*.

Notes:

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- [6] See [3].
- [7] *Complete Tang Poetry* (*Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩), juan 772.

- [8] "Yiqi bu" 弈棋部 (chess section), "Yishu dian" 藝術典 (The Arts) in *Gujin tushu jicheng* 古今圖書集成.
- [9] "Chou Duan Cheng yu zhuliu huaisu bishe jianzeng ershi yu" 劉段丞與諸流會棋合見贈二十韵, *Complete Tang Poetry* (*Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩), *Juan* 406.
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- [11] See: Li Yimin 李逸民, *Wangyou qinglu ji* 忘憂清樂記 (Manual for Forgetting Worries in Quiet Pleasure), Zhonghua Shuju 中華書局 1985 facsimile reprint of Song dynasty block edition.
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- [20] Feng Zhi 馮贇 (Tang dynasty), *Yunxian zaji* 雲仙雜記, *Juan* 2.
- [21] *Everyday Encyclopaedia* 日用百科全書 (in Japanese), vol. 25 "Weiqi and Jiàngqí" 圍棋與將棋, 大原芳藏編, *Soofuku kinnoo*.
- [22] *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書, Zi Division 子部, 187, "Zajiale" 雜家類.
- [23] Li Zhao 李肇 (Tang dynasty), *Gauchaoshihu* 國朝史補 (Addendum to the history of the dynasty), *Juan xia* 卷下 records: "There are 15 black and 15 yellow playing pieces"; *Complete Tang Poetry* (*Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩), *Juan* 821 provides an explanation of Jiaoran's 皎然 "Xue Qingjiao changxing ge" 薛暉教長行歌 (Ballad of the long journey of Xue Qingjiao), a poem in praise of *shuanglu* which reads: 黃楊文局龜蜻蟻, 琢成頭子雙琅玕. ... 有時彩玉非所希, 笑擊單于出重圍. This passage makes it clear that *shuanglu* pieces were either yellow and black, or they could be made from various types of coloured jade.
- [24] Museum of Xinjiang-Uygur Autonomous Region 新疆維吾爾自治區博物館, "Brief report on the excavation of the Hara-Hodja ancient cemetery at Astana, Turfan" 吐魯番阿斯塔那—哈拉和卓古墓群發掘簡報, *Wenwu* 文物 (W.W.), 1973:10.
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