
the Chess of China
Dennis A. Leventhal

A
Mei Ya
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Man's fondness for intellectual challenge can be seen by his involvement with games utilizing military strategy and tactics in their basic structure. Today, there is a proliferation of such games. Many of the major wars and battles throughout history have been translated into game-board expression. These include Alexander's clash with the Persians in the fourth century B.C., the American War of Independence, Waterloo, the war between the States, WWI aviation battles, and some of the major actions in WWII. Throughout world history, however, the two most popular of such games are the Chess of the Western world, and the Wei Ch'i of the East.¹ This oriental game is known to Westerners as the Japanese game of "Go".

These two latter exemplify the two basic approaches to this category of games. Chess portrays the clash on a specific battlefield between two opposing armies. Wei Ch'i is a metaphorical expression of a war between two countries and involves broader strategic considerations of territorial encroachment. Both of these games, or, at least, their primary ancestors, appeared roughly around the second or first millenium B.C. Wei Ch'i, i.e., Go, was created by the ancient Chinese, probably during chou (1122?-256 B.C.) dynasty. The ancient form of western Chess was brought to light by the Indo-Iranian peoples who migrated into, and conquered northern India around the twelfth century B.C. — coming from an ill-defined region beyond the Caspian Sea.

The exact nature of the chess played by these Sanskrit-speaking peoples is not known. Sir William Jones, writing in 1790, states that this game was called Chaturanga, meaning the four divisions of an army, that is, elephants, horses, chariots, and footsoldiers. He further claimed that this ancient form of Chess

was introduced to Persia during the sixth century A.D., and thereafter spread throughout the Arab empire.² H.J.R. Murray, author of *History of Chess* (1913, reprinted 1962), adds that Western Chess is based on a variant of the ancient Indian game which arrived in Europe during the seventh century A.D.³ The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* makes the general, and somewhat inconclusive statement that chess “originated in India, or China, during or before the sixth century from ancient forms, derivations of which may still persist in certain regional variants, such as Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Malay, and Burmese Chess. The game spread westward through Persia to Arabia and thence to western Europe. . . .”⁴ The similarities among these many variants, including Western Chess, insist upon inference of a common source. For example, when my dear friend and mentor, Dr. Schuyler V. R. Cammann, Prof. of East Asian Studies, University of Pennsylvania, was traveling in Inner Mongolia in 1945, he encountered a variant called *shatara*, or “horse chess.” Its similarities with Western Chess were such that he was able to learn it quickly and enjoy playing it with Buddhist monks while a guest in several lamaist monasteries. Distinctive flavor was given by the unique shapes of the pieces, e.g., camels and tigers, Buddhist lions and Mongol Khan, celestial peacocks and terrestrial hens. According to Dr. Cammann, after the Indian version moved into Persia, it “spread east to Central Asia, where the Mongols found it at the time of their great conquests in the thirteenth century.” (See Schuyler Cammann, “Chess with Mongolian Lamas,” *Natural History* (Nov., 1946), pp. 407–411.)

The Chess of China, called Hsiang Ch’i (Yale: *Syang Chi*), is a highly unique variant of the ancient Indian game. It is sufficiently similar to Western Chess to suggest some link with it in lineage, but has differences which force its consideration as a separate entity. In fact, its usual translation, Elephant Chess, retains an Indian flavor which this writer and many Chinese believe inappropriate — a more accurate translation, supported by the dictionary and the historical evolution of this variant, being Symbolic Chess. Hsiang Ch’i evolved into its present form during the Sung (960–1279) dynasty, and subsequently achieved a popularity which, even today, rivals that of Wei Ch’i in the Orient.

This small volume is an attempt to give the Westerner an appreciation of the peculiar nature of Hsiang Ch’i, its origins, its methods and principles of play, in the belief that there is always room for one more game of strategy and tactics. This one has the distinction, when compared to the more recent creations in this general category of games, of being an expression of classical antiquity — as in the case of Wei Ch’i and our own Chess.

Chapter 2

The History

Hsiang Ch'i is usually translated as Elephant Chess. While there seems to be some validity in this, it does not reflect accurately the classical Chinese perception of this particular game. It is true that the character for "elephant," i.e. *hsiang* (Yale: *syang*), is found in the game-title and carved on two of the chess pieces. However, this character can also mean "symbolic," depending on its context. Leaving the chess piece labelled *hsiang* for the discussion of the individual units in chapter two, an examination here of some Chinese literary/historical documents will suggest that the game title, Hsiang Ch'i, is more accurately rendered by the translation "Symbolic Chess."

The earliest clear reference to a chess-type game, other than Wei Ch'i is the Hsiang Hsi (Yale: *Syang Syi*) which apparently was invented by Emperor Wu (r. 561–577) of the Northern Chou (557–581) dynasty near the end of the Period of Disunion (220–589) in Chinese history. Since this epoch was dominated intellectually by the Buddhist influence coming out of India, one would suspect this game of having some resemblance to the Indian game of warfare. This, however, does not seem to have been the case. While the text by Emperor Wu, entitled *Hsiang Ching* (The Book of Symbolic Chess), written to explain the method and meaning of his game, is no longer extant, the preface to same is available to us. (A translation of this is given in 8.1). This short essay makes it clear that Emperor Wu's Hsiang Ch'i was a complicated game which represented symbolically many different elements and aspects of the Chinese world view at that time. Another reference to this early game is a prose-poem by Yu Hsin (513–581) entitled *Hsiang Hsi fu*, which praises Emperor Wu for his creation of a game which symbolizes all phenomena in human existence.⁵ While this

evidence does not permit us to understand how this game was played, it does support the assertion that the game which produced the name of what would eventually become the Chess of China had little or nothing to do with large, foppy-eared beasts.

It cannot be said that Emperor Wu's creation was the only such game of strategy and tactics available to the medieval Chinese. During the T'ang (618–906) dynasty, chess games were sufficiently popular to find mention in contemporary short stories. For example, Niu Seng-ju (779–847) records a legend from Szechwan about a curious and somewhat miraculous event which supposedly occurred around the beginning of the T'ang period. (8.2 gives a translation of this tale.) Although the protagonists were involved in playing "Hsiang Hsi", the nature of their game is not described. This is found in another tale by the same writer which tells of adream adventure in the year 762 A.D. (See 8.3 for a full translation of this story.) The Hsiang Hsi used as a literary device in this latter account of human contact with the supernatural is clearly an early variant of the war game for two players. In addition to having Cavalry, Chariots, and Infantry, i.e., Knights, Rooks, and Pawns, reference is made to Archers and Catapults. These latter elements are found in various later Chinese versions of chess, but not in the Western chess forms.

That this particular game was probably influenced by Undian tradition is reflected by the presence of a story character called the Golden Elephant General — elephants being a distinctly non-Chinese element. Furthermore, a modern Hsiang Ch'i expert, Chou Chia-sen, claims that there were at least three versions of two-handed chess popular during the T'ang dynasty, all of which bear close similarity to that described in Niu Seng-ju's tale of martial spirits. And, despite the fact that none of these games included an individual piece labelled *hsiang*, they all show evidence of Indian influence.⁶ As can be seen by glancing at Mr. Chou's charts of these three games,⁷ they also bear some resemblance to Western Chess, especially in the case of that labelled Japanese Chess. This latter was introduced to Japan from China during the last half of the T'ang dynasty, is described in a Heian (794–1160) period text, and is still played in modern Japan.⁸ Presumably the elimination of the "elephant" as a unit in these games was a preliminary step in their sinification.

That there was a conscious effort to create or retain a Chinese flavor is seen clearly in the Sung (960–1279) dynasty literature on this subject. Ssu-ma Kuang (1019–1086), one of the most influential historians in the Chinese traditions, actually invented a unique version of chess which avoided all traces of Indian influence. It was called Ch'i-kuo Hsiang Hsi, which meant literally, "the chess game symbolizing the seven (warring) states", and was a faithful representation

of politico-military affairs in China's Warring States Period (403–221 B.C.). (See 8.4 for a translation of Ssu-ma Kuang's essay describing this game.) this game permitted as many as seven players.

In his essay, Ssu-ma Kuang states clearly that the Indian elephant has no place in a Chinese chess game. Besides having units called catapults (*p'ao*), a unique feature retained in the present Hsiang Ch'i, all the pieces move and come to rest on the junctures of the lines on the board (just as in today's Hsiang Ch'i), thus differing from the aforementioned T'ang dynasty variants and Western Chess, the units of which move on the spaces between the lines, and which do not include missile-throwing pieces.

Ch'eng Hao (1032–1085), a contemporary of Ssu-ma Kuang and a noted philosopher of his time, wrote an ode to chess, using the older term "Hsiang Hsi," which describes a game different from both the T'ang variants and the Sung historian's creation. (See 8.5.) His reference game seems to have been an important stage in the evolution of the present Hsiang Ch'i. except for two units which are also found in the "the chess game symbolizing the seven (warring) states," all the pieces mentioned are found in the modern version. (it should be noted that the catapult is not referred to.) Furthermore, the historical allusion in this poem not only indicates that this was a game for just two players, but also corresponds in meaning with the allusion found printed on most modern Hsiang Ch'i playing boards, i.e., "*Han-chieh, Ch'u-ho*", meaning "the border of Han and the river of Ch'u." This refers to the battles which culminated in the creation of the Han (201 B.C.–A.D. 220) dynasty.

The third Sung reference is another ode to chess, which uses the newer term "Hsiang Ch'i." It was written by Liu K'o-chuang (1187–1269) and seems to be describing the game as it exists today. (See 8.6.) For example, this poem mentions that there are a total of thirty-two pieces, each side has a four-walled command post, and the two opposing armies are divided by a river border. such elements are basic to today's version. furthermore, the missing missile-firing unit, the *p'ao* (Yale: *pau*), found earlier in Ssu-ma Kuang's chess game, has returned, and is written with the character which represents cannon, which is found in present-day Hsiang Ch'i.

The Ming (1366–1644) dynasty gives us another ode, by Ts'ao Tzu-chi (1378–1425), which also offers a description corresponding with the modern version. (See 8.7.) It is also the Ming which gives us the first chess manual for Hsiang Ch'i. Chou Chia-sen states that the first written study of Chinese chess-play was completed in 1632 and was entitled *Chü-chung pi* (The secrets in the Tangerine).⁹ This title is an obvious allusion the short T'ang dynasty tale by Niu seng-ju mentioned above. (See 8.2.)

The most famous of the many Ch'ing (1644-1911) period manuals is called the *Mei-hua p'u* (The Plum-blossom Manual). This was written by Wang Tsai-yueh (?) during the K'ang-hsi (1662-1722) reign-period. Two curious variations of the game were created in this last period of Imperial China by redesigning the Hsiang Ch'i board to permit *three* armies to engage in battle. One of these variants added a piece called *ch'i* (Yale: *chi*), meaning "Banner," to give the game a more Manchu flavor. This term has a distinctive place in the Ch'ing dynasty's Manchu military organization.¹⁰

It can be seen by the evidence thus uncovered that Hsiang Ch'i most probably reached its present form during the Sung dynasty. Its evolution was affected by three basic factors: (1) a predisposition for games of strategy and tactics among the Chinese as evidenced among the Chinese creation of Wei Ch'i in B.C. times, and the Hsiang Hsi (Symbolic Chess) of Emperor Wu of the Northern Chou dynasty in the sixth century A.D.; (2) the introduction to China, probably some time around the Sui - early T'ang periods in the sixth or seventh century A.D., of one or more Indian versions of chess; (3) a strong desire on the part of Chinese thinkers to mold chess into an accurate reflection of warfare as conducted by Chinese armies. The effort to create a *Chinese* chess is demonstrated (1) by the elimination of the elephant in the various forms popular in the T'ang; (2) by Ssu-ma Kuang's creation of a wholly new chess game symbolizing ancient Chinese politico-military conditions; (3) by designing the board for two-handed chess to symbolize the battles leading to the establishment of the Han dynasty (which is regarded as so glorious by the Chinese that even today they refer to themselves as the "Sons of Han"); and (4) by the addition of a chess piece which represents artillery, a Chinese invention. Thus, while the ancient Indian game constitutes a legitimate "foreign" line of descent for Hsiang Ch'i, the "native" elements add a Chinese lineage which permits Hsiang Ch'i to be truly regarded as the Chess of China.

It is amusing to note that the Chinese themselves have been so insistent upon clarifying the meaning of the term *hsiang* as *not* referring to the Indian elephant that some theorists have produced rather bizarre explanations of how the game's title originated. For example, responding to recorded assertions Wei Ch'i was invented by the legendary, or at best, semi-historical Sage-Emperor Yao (3rd millennium B.C.),¹¹ it has been claimed by some that Hsiang Ch'i was invented by his immediate successor to the throne, Shun. According to this point of view, substantive evidence is found in that Shun's younger brother was named Hsiang.¹² The assertion has also been made that the term *hsiang* in Hsiang Ch'i, refers to *hsiang-ya*, i.e. ivory, because it was common for chess pieces to be carved out of elephant tusk.¹³

While such claims may be regarded as somewhat dubious, that they should be made at all is significant.¹⁴ This reflects the ethnocentric tendencies which fostered both conscious and unconscious sinification of non-Chinese cultural elements. It was only through considerable modifying and remolding of earlier forms that Hsiang Ch'i became a symbolic representation of the Chinese mode of warfare, and thus able to achieve wide popularity in the Chinese world.

Chapter 3

The Units

... The MILITIA: The translation chosen here marks a departure from that used in most English language references on this topic. As demonstrated above, the term *hsiang*, as used in the title of this game, does not refer to an elephant in the classical Chinese mind, but to this amusement's being a *symbolical* representation of the Chinese mode of warfare. This character appears again here on this piece, but only one side uses it. *The other side uses the character which defines this unit militarily in the Chinese context.*

象 - pronounced *hsiang* (Yale: *syang*)

相 - pronounced *hsiang* (Yale: *syang*)

A superficial dictionary check on this latter character — looking for an official title of some sort, might turn up the term “Minister of State.” W. F. Wong’s

Chinese Chess actually refers to one army’s *hsiang* 象 as “elephant,” and

the other’s 相 as “Premier.”¹⁵ If you accept the idea of ecclesiastics wielding battleaxes in a medieval conflict, as suggested by the bishop in Western Chess, you might accept readily the idea of civil officials receiving appointments in a military capacity. In actuality, this was fairly common in the Sung period.

However, a more basic meaning of this character, i.e., 相, reveals the true nature of this as a military unit, when interpreted within the Chinese military context.

The more basic meaning referred to is “to aid” or “to assist.” Keeping this in mind, and comparing this unit’s game function to standard, historical Chinese military units (seeking a close similarity), we should find a reliable characteriza-

tion of this unit. In game terms, the 相 is a defensive piece which has just enough mobility to serve in a limited support role when launching an attack. However, it may not be sent into enemy territory, i.e., across the centerline of the board. Each of the two *hsiang* units on either side is stationed initially between the headquarters garrison and the powerful, mobile attack units on either flank. Their two prime functions are (1) defense of the command post, and (2) defense of the border region.

Turning now to traditional Chinese military units, we find that from the Sung to the twentieth century, the period covering the evolution and rise to popularity of Hsiang Ch’i, the standing armies of China usually incorporated militia units when on active duty. While Chinese generals realized usually the relative uselessness of most militia troops available to them, certain units with better than normal armament and training (for militia units, that is) would be given special status as “Provincial Forces” and employed in (1) garrison duty and (2) routine border defense. The traditional practice has come down through history even into the present century. To give only one example of this, during the late President Chinag Kai-shek’s “encirclement” campaigns against the communist forces in the 1930’s, the army of the latter had a number of “Independent Divisions” in its military structure. trying to identify these unit’s exact nature kept western military analysts scratching their heads for some time before they realized that these “Independent Divisions” were nothing more than the old “Provincial Forces,” that is, militia of a quality sufficient to back up the regulars in a pinch. It is easily seen that these militia units were designed “to aid” and “to assist” the regular forces, and therefore had a function similar to that of the *hsiang* in Hsiang Ch’i. This comparison has a force and precision of similarity which makes obvious the translation given here. Thus, it is most probable that the use

of the character 象 has been retained merely as a device for differentiating the Militia of one side from that of the other, and contributes no other significance to the identification of the military unit designated by this piece.

While this interpretation represents pure speculation on the part of this writer, it has found enthusiastic agreement when exposed to Chinese adepts in this art. Circumstantial support is given by the history of the evolution of Hsiang Ch’i, as demonstrated above, which is marked by a process of acculturation making the game more and more “Chinese” with each modification down through the

years. It can, and will be demonstrated that this piece was quite likely to have been a deliberate reinterpretation of the “Elephant” found in the South and West Asian variants, and not an original Chinese creation. However, it is this writer’s contention that, in the Chinese mind, Hsiang Ch’i is to be viewed as a symbolic representation of the Chinese mode of warfare. As Ssu-ma Kuang wrote, “Even though the title uses the term *hsiang* 象 (which can mean “elephant”), (among the various pieces) there are chariots, but no elephants. The (pieces labelled) Chiang, P’ien, and P’i are (viewed as being) mounted on chariots because elephants could not have been used in China.” (See 8.4.) . . .

Chapter 4

The Battlefield

...

Chapter 5

The Moves

... The MILITIA: 象 and 相 *hsiang* (Yale: *syang*)

Placed initially on the outer flanks of the two Guards on each side, these pieces move on the diagonal — like the Bishop. However, (1) the Militia unit may *not* cross the river and penetrate enemy territory, and (2) on each move, it must jump two spaces — no more, no less. If another piece is on the intervening space in its line of travel, it cannot move in that particular direction. (See Fig. 10) Like the two pieces discussed above, the Militia captures by landing directly on an opposing piece.

Both the Chinese “Militia” and the European “Bishop” were derived from the Indian and Persian “Elephant.” This is made clear by the fact that the Bishop, which now may “traverse the length of a whole diagonal,” in an earlier period “could move only two squares diagonally,” just as the Militia unit in the Chinese version of chess now does.¹⁶ Ssu-ma Kuang’s emphatic negation of the Elephant’s place in Hsiang Ch’i is an obvious recognition of, and reaction to the Indian and Persian influence. Furthermore, at least one medieval Chinese scholar, Liu K’o-chuang, seems to accept the term “elephant” in association with the game Hsiang Ch’i, although he does not expressly state that the Elephant as a chess piece is found on the board. (See 8.6.) It is interesting to note that both the Europeans and the Chinese felt compelled to eliminate the Elephant, each making a modification more harmonious with their own respective cultural traditions.

Since the pieces discussed up to this point (totalling five per side) may not leave their own territories, they are necessarily defensive in nature. This marks a

primary tactical difference between this game and the chess with which Westerners are more familiar. This comparison may suggest that the Chinese version is somewhat tame, but such a prejudgment would not take into consideration the particular complexities created by its offensive elements. These attack units are employed as follows. . . .

Chapter 6

The Action

...

Chapter 7

The Philosophy

...

Chapter 8

Translations

8.1 Preface to Emperor Wu's (r. 561-577) *Hsiang Ching*, by Wang Pao

¹⁷ Emperor Wu of the (Northern) Chou dynasty created the game of Symbols. Wang Pao prefaces it (Emperor Wu's) *Hsiang Ching* saying: First, it discusses astronomy so that we may observe the phenomena of Heaven. This (is represented in the game by) the Sun, Moon, and the other stars. Second, it speaks of geography by imitating the form of Earth. This (is represented by the five elements of) water, fire, wood, metal, and earth. Third, it tells of Yin and Yang (i.e., the principles of Receptivity and Creativity) by conforming to the sources (of all things). Yang phenomena take priority by originating in Heaven; Yin phenomena take priority by springing from the Earth. Fourth, it indicates the seasons in order to regulate their order. This is (done by) the color of the eastern region being blue-green; the arrangement of the other colors also are like this. (That is, each region is colored according to the traditional color associated with each cardinal direction and its corresponding season. For example, red symbolizes both the South and Summer.)

Fifth, it discusses divination in order to penetrate (phenomenological) changes. By adapting to the vicissitudes of fortune, we then are (in harmony with) Heaven and Earth. If the evolutions of the Sun, Moon, and stars are comprehended, we then are (in Harmony with) the order of progression of the five elements.¹⁸

Sixth, it tells of music used to display one's vital force. Thus, from (the position) Tzu one takes (the position) Wei and when at Wu, takes Ch'ou.¹⁹

8.1. PREFACE TO EMPEROR WU'S (R. 561-577) HSIANG CHING, BY WANG PAO19

Seventh, it speaks of the Eight Trigrams (i.e., the fundamental symbols of the Book of Changes) in order to determine positional priorities. Thus, after arriving at (the trigram) Chen, one obtains (the trigram) Tui; after reaching Li, one gains K'an.²⁰

Eighth, it covers loyalty and filial piety so as to enlarge one's learning. When going forth, one must be completely loyal; having returned, one must fulfill (the duties of) filial piety.

Ninth, it speaks of the proper relationship between ruler and minister by establishing Ritual (i.e., formalized behavior patterns). This means one should not utilize high position to oppress the lowly. (Such would make) the straight become crooked. One should not because of low position make those in high position fearful. when out of office, one should be without a rebellious (attitude). Tenth, it tells of civil and military (aspects of government) in order to (teach) leading in important affairs. Through military arts one cultivates the seven virtues. Through civil affairs one manifests the four things which Confucius taught.²¹

Eleventh, it discusses ritualized conduct used as a regulating device. (Thus) those in high position will not be arrogant, and those in low position will be thoroughly respectful. If advancing and retreating have predetermined limits, (all affairs) can be regulated.

Twelfth, it speaks of examining one's own actions. This means determining one's goal and then seeking it. Goals are obtained only after seeking them. One should only speak at the appropriate time, and laugh only when happy.

Some (of the chess pieces) are moved outward as if in response to good advice. This signifies changing to a better position. Some (pieces) are demoted and withdrawn as if in punishment for faults. This is a matter of penalizing wrongs. Some (players) consider thoughtful action of value, (and so they) rectify their appearances. Some regard aggressive action as of merit, (and they thus) manifest their accurate observations (of tactical possibilities). Since winning or losing is manifested by waxing or waning, when one is in a weak position, he must stretch forth (i.e., be more aggressive). Since idleness or respectfulness (i.e., the manifestation of morale) is displayed by one's appearance, when in an honored (i.e., powerful) position, one should be careful to be humble. While even a little bit of skill may be honored on the chess board, one word of good advice is more valuable than a magnificent robe (i.e., outward honors).

COMMENT: This passage is the only extant evidence giving any indication of the nature of Emperor Wu's game of Symbolical Chess. Not having a copy of his *Hsiang Ching*, for which this preface was written, not only is it impossible to determine the exact way this game was played, but also the degree of accuracy

of this translation may not be fairly estimated. wang Pao's preface seems to refer to the philosophical and cultural ideas expressed in both the game and the reference text. One surmises that Emperor Wu's dissertation elaborated on these ideas and how the game expressed them. Evidently, among the chess pieces there were such things as heavenly bodies, the Eight trigrams, the Five Elements, and civil officials, as well as military units. As such, this sixth century Chinese game seems to have been a symbolical collage of many elements and aspects of the Chinese world-view at that time.

Nothing therein relates the word *hsiang* to its meaning as "elephant." Thus, we have a clear date, or rather time zone, for the Chinese perception of a chess game as being "symbolic," which is another accepted meaning of the character *hsiang*.

8.2 The Man from P'a-ch'iung, by Niu Seng-ju (779-847)

²² Once there was a man from Pa-ch'iung whose name I do not know.²³ On his family property there was a grove of tangerine trees. It happened that after a frost, most of his tangerines were ruined, but there remained two giant ones, each as big as a basin with a capacity of three or four pecks. Finding this quite strange, he ordered them picked. Each weighed only as much as an ordinary tangerine. However, when split in two, each tangerine was found to contain two old men. All were playing Hsiang Hsi.

Their bodies were barely than one foot in length. They were talking and laughing in a carefree manner. Even after the tangerines were split open, they were not frightened, but went right on with their competition.

When their games ended, one old man said, "You lose to me ten ounces of the hair of the Sea Dragon Spirit's seventh daughter, twelve pieces of yellow forehead (cake make-up) from Chih-Ch'iung,²⁴ one sleeveless shirt of purple silk, thirty-two pecks of Evening Cloud Essence powder from Ch'iang-t'ai mountain,²⁵ nine *hu* (i.e., about forty-five pecks) of ground jade from Ying Chou,²⁶ four *chung* (i.e., about sixteen pecks) of O-mu's bone-marrow-curing, high-proof liquor,²⁷ and eight pairs of colorless socks, used for ascending the firmament like a dragon, which belong to O-mu's daughter, T'ai-ying. You can pay me the day after tomorrow in Master Wang's Straw Hall on Ch'ing-ch'eng Mountain."²⁸

Another of the old men said, "Master Wang had promised to come (today), but in the end we couldn't wait for him. Our pleasures here inside these tangerines

are no less than (that of the four recluses of) Shang Mountain,²⁹ but unfortunately (here) we cannot be ‘deeply rooted and firmly implanted,’³⁰ and were plucked down.

Then another said, “I’m starved. I need to eat some Dragon-root meat.” With this, he pulled a root out from inside his sleeve. Its diameter was one inch, and its form was sinuous like that of a dragon. (In fact) it was complete (in the form of a dragon) down to the smallest detail. He thereupon shaved off slivers and ate them. (But) even while he shaved it, it remained complete.

After eating, he sprayed it with water and it was transformed into a real dragon. The four old men mounted it, and clouds formed leisurely beneath their feet (as they arose). Within a moment, wind and rain darkened the sky and (the man of P’a-ch’iung) could see them no longer.

The people of the P’a-ch’iung district have transmitted this story for about a hundred and fifty years. It seems to have originated (some time) between the Sui (589–617) and T’ang (618–906) dynasties, but I don’t know in which reign-period.

8.3 The Story of Tsen Shun, by Niu Seng-ju

³¹ Tsen Shun of Ju-nan had the cognomen of Hsiao-po.³² As a youth, he was fond of learning and had a reputation for writing. When old, he mastered military strategy. Once, when sojourning in Shan Chou, he was so poor that he had no place to live.³³ One of his maternal relatives, a Mr. Lü, had a mountain residence which he intended to have knocked down. When Shun requested permission to live there, someone exhorted him (not to do so). Shun responded by saying, “the Will of Heaven is unchangeable. What is there to fear?” And he went to live there.

After more than one year, Shun became accustomed to sitting alone in the library. None, even those in his family, were permitted to enter. Once, at midnight, he heard the sound of war drums. Not knowing from whence it came, he stepped out through the door, but then he heard nothing. He was greatly pleased with himself about this experience, and considered it to have been a good omen like (that experienced by) Shih Lo.³⁴ He invoked a blessing on it and said, “these must be supernatural troops aiding me. If so, they should inform me of the exact date of my becoming rich and honored.”

Several evenings later, he dreamed a man wearing armor came before him and reported (in a military manner) saying, “General Golden Elephant sent me to talk with you.³⁵ During the night alarm in the garrison, those who raised the

alarm were praised by you. How dare we not respect your request? You will certainly achieve great position (in the future). It is hoped you will take care of yourself. Although you carry great ambition, could you stoop to assist a small kingdom? Presently, an enemy state is assaulting our ramparts. We are willing to entrust the command to a worthy (such as you). Even our royal cooks and entertainers are willing to take up banners and halberds (and follow you)."

Shun thanked him and said, "The heavenly nature of your General is heroic and enlightened. Your army should be command directly by him. I have caused you trouble in bringing his kind message to such a lowly one as I. However, as for the ambitions of this servile animal (i.e., myself), he may use them as he wishes." The messenger then went back to report.

When Shun awoke suddenly, he was confused as if he was lost. He sat and thought over the substance of his dream. Suddenly, drums and horns sounded on all sides. As the sound became louder, Shun arranged his turban and got down out of bed, and again bowed to pray.

At that moment, a wind arose from the doors and windows, and the curtains flew up. Beneath the lamp, there appeared several hundred armored cavalymen galloping left and right. All were only a few inches high, and wore hard armor and held sharp weapons. First they scattered like stars all over the ground, and then in a moment as quick as a lightning bolt, they united from the four directions like a cloud formation. Shun was terrified, but he got a grip on his emotions so that he could observe them.

A foot-soldier offered him a letter, saying, the General has transmitted this despatch." Shun took it and read, "Since our territory borders on that of the northern barbarians, our warriors can never rest. During the past several decades, our have aged and our troops have become exhausted. Their (military) bearing has become frost-like, and they sleep in their armor. (Now) Heaven has sent a strong enemy whose power cannot be obstructed. You have nourished your virtue for a long time. The advanced level you have achieved is most timely. Frequently we have received your kind words. I hope we may trust each other with spiritual rapport. However, you are a human official; surely you would enjoy high position in the age of a Sage King. Today, how dare a small kingdom look to you (for help)? Along the northern border of (our) Kingdom of T'ien-na, the mountain bandits have concentrated. In the near future there will be war. We will make plans for this matter at midnight. Without even considering (the possibility of) bad fortune or destruction, I am badly frightened." Shun thanked the soldier, and after adding more candles in the room, he sat down and observed their (military) evolutions.

After midnight, the sound of drums and horns arose from all directions. There-

upon, a rat hole at bottom of the east wall transformed into a fortress gate. The ramparts against enemies were high like mountain crags. Thrice sounded the horns and drums, and troops poured out from the four gates. The arrayed banners were beyond counting. They galloped like the wind and moved like the clouds. Those beneath the east wall were the troops of T'ien-na. Below the west wall massed the army of the (bandit) Ch'üan family.

Once the formations were completed, both armies stood still. the Chief Military Advisor advanced and said, "The Celestial Cavalry should advance diagonally, cross three squares, and stop. The General should travel everywhere and control the four directions. The baggage train and chariots should move straight forward and not retreat. The six infantry units should advance in an orderly manner." The King said, "Excellent"!

Thereupon, the drums were sounded. From each army, one cavalry unit moved out diagonally three squares, and then stopped. Again the drums rolled, and on each side one infantry unit moved one square eastward and westward respectively. Again the drums boomed, and the chariots advanced. At this point, the drums gradually intensified, and each side brought forth bundles (of ammunition), (and then) arrows and stones flew back and forth. In the space of a moment, the army of T'ien-na was routed, and fled the ground. The dead and wounded covered the ground. The King galloped southward alone. Several hundred men fled to the southwest corner, barely able to escape.

Prior to this, in the southwest, the King of Medicine (i.e., the Buddha P'u-sa) who lived in the Sun transformed himself into a fort. The army of (General) Golden Elephant, greatly heartened (by this), gathered their armored troops, and loaded wagons with the corpses strewn over the earth.

When Shun bent down to observe this, a horseman rode up, stopped him, and announced, "The supernatural and the natural have their proper places. Those who take their proper place will flourish. The high majesty of Heaven stimulates (us) continuously like the driving winds. With one blast we can win. What do you think?" Shun replied, "Your General's talents can penetrate the Sun, and ride upon Heaven to utilize timely opportunities. When I observe these spiritual transformations and messages, I am overjoyed."

In this fashion, they warred for several days, and the outcome was uncertain. (But) the King's appearance was magnificent. His heroic bearing was almost beyond compare. He bestowed a luxurious banquet upon Shun, and presented him with an unlimited quantity of precious gems and lustrous pearls. Shun was thus glorified in their midst and all of his desires were fulfilled.

After this occurrence, he cut himself off somewhat from his relatives and friends, closing his door and not going out. His family was astonished at this, and none

could figure out the reason for it. Shun's countenance looked drawn and faded, as if he were possessed by demons. Some of his relatives who thought it strange asked him about it, but he would not say anything. Accordingly, they plied him with strong liquor, and asked him (again) after he had become inebriated. He then told them all. These relatives (then) prepared hoes and spades without his knowledge. And, when Shun left them to go relieve himself, they snatched up their spades in a rush to dig up the floor of his library. About eight or nine feet down, the earth suddenly collapsed.

It was an ancient tomb. In the tomb there was a brick hall which contained many sacrificial vessels and several hundred figurines. In the front (of the hall), there was a chess board made of gold. Massed cavalry (pieces) covered the board, all being made of gold and bronze. They seemed ready for warfare. It was then understood that the words of the Chief Military Advisor (as reported by Shun) represented the way of moving Cavalry units in Hsiang Hsi.³⁶

After burning them, they filled in the earth. Much treasure which had been stored in the tomb was obtained. When Shun looked at the treasure, he was shocked into full consciousness, and regurgitated violently. Thereafter, he was filled with happiness, and the residence was no longer haunted.

This occurred in the first year of the Pao-ying reign-period (i.e., A.D. 762).

8.4 A Sketch of an Old Form of Hsiang Ch'i by Ssu-ma Kuang (1019–1086)

37

Preface This method and graph of an old form of Hsiang Ch'i was created by Ssu-ma Kuang in imitation of (the older) Hsiang Hsi, but with some deletions and additions. But I wonder why he chose the Warring States (403–221 B.C.) period (as model for his game)? That period was one of decline. The Chou dynasty rulers were worried about holding onto their (remaining) small territory and dared not set one foot out of it. Since the seven (major) powers (of that time) arranged various alliances secretly, deceit and opportunism arose. It was only after the ceremonial tripods of the Chou had been removed (i.e., the Chou dynasty was wiped out in 256 B.C.), and the trophy of (empire captured by) the Ch'in (221–206 B.C.) had been lost (i.e., the Ch'in dynasty overthrown) that expedient practices also, in time, ended.³⁸

Today, (with this game) we can observe the advancing and retreating of gener-

8.4. A SKETCH OF AN OLD FORM OF HSIANG CH'I BY SSU-MA KUANG (1019–1086)25

als and their field commanders, the comings and goings of diplomats, and the arrangements of cavalry, ballista, longbowmen, crossbowmen, sabermen, and broadswordsmen. However, the several decades of warfare among those seven kingdoms seems not worthy even of chess player's laughter. I would think that if the intellectuals of that (distant) time did not flap their tongues and instigate wicked plans, they would have been driven away or put to the axe. This was a great misfortune (for them)!

At present, the country is unified.³⁹ Bandits who surrendered dare not go out of their allotted territories. Since the (militarily) knowledgeable and skilled men of the world are piled up in (a state of) unemployment, when they seek a means to amuse their minds and accompany their drinking, only games and gamble will serve.

What happiness!! Mao K'ang-pao's exposure of this text is so timely!!⁴⁰ There is an old saying which goes, "To forget (the arts of) warfare when the world is at peace is surely dangerous." As for this game, it can be used to practice (the arts of) warfare. (On the subject of games), (Confucius) only stated, "Chess playing is still better than doing nothing."⁴¹ However, this does not (reflect) the full intentions of Ssu-ma Kuang and Mao K'ang-po.

Written by Wang Yi-min of Tung-hai.⁴²

(Ssu-ma Kuang's essay:) There are one hundred and twenty pieces used in the chess game symbolizing the seven (warring) states, Ch'i-kuo Hsiang Hsi.⁴³ The Chou (kingdom) has one piece, and each of the seven (warring) states has seventeen. The Chou (is colored) yellow; Ch'in is white; Ch'u is red; Ch'i is indigo (dark blue); Yen is black; Han is cinnabar-colored (orange-red); Wei is green; and Chao is purple.⁴⁴ The Chou piece (symbolizing the powerless King of the Warring States period) stands in the center and does not move. The various feudal lords may not invade (this small territory).⁴⁵ The Ch'in occupies the west; Han and Ch'u start in the south; Wei and Ch'i stand in the east; Yen and Chao hold the north.

Each of the seven states has a General. These move vertically, horizontally, or diagonally with no limit on distance (i.e., like the Queen in modern Western Chess). Each army has one Deputy General (*p'ien*) which moves vertically or horizontally with no limit on distance (i.e., like the western Rook). Each has one Adjutant General (*pi*) which moves diagonally without limit (i.e., like the western Bishop).

Even though the game's title uses the term *hsiang* 象 (which can mean elephant), (among the various pieces) there are chariots, but no elephants.

8.4. A SKETCH OF AN OLD FORM OF HSIANG CH'I BY SSU-MA KUANG (1019–1086)27

units (in each army) move four spaces (on each move), following a crooked path by first going one space in a straight line and then moving three diagonally.⁴⁹ Those who wish to play chess direct the army of the state (or states) they are given. If seven people play, then each directs one state. If six people play, then one player takes Ch'in and one other state in alliance with it. If only five play, then (in addition to the Ch'in alliance) Ch'u is allied with one other state. If only four play, (in addition to the Ch'in and Ch'u alliances) Ch'i is allied to another state.⁵⁰

However, when each player takes possession of one state, leaving the other states open (for other players to take), those states with which they are allied are chosen by the players themselves. Both (of the allied states) are directed by the choosing players, who first take an oath saying, "If either of the states under my command is lost, it will be through my own carelessness."⁵¹ If one orders an ally to attack a very strongly defended state, then he must first penalize himself by downing a glass of liquor.⁵²

The order of play is Ch'in, Ch'u, Han, Ch'i, Wei, Chao, and Yen (i.e., counterclockwise beginning with the state in the west).⁵³ If a piece is placed in a difficult position, it may not be taken back. If anyone moves a piece incorrectly, he is penalized.⁵⁴ If one attacks his own ally, then the entire army of that ally is lost and removed (from the board).

One wins (over another state) by capturing that enemy's general. But even if the general is not taken, one can win by capturing more than ten other pieces of the opposing state. If an enemy has not yet lost ten pieces and one's own army loses more than ten, then one's own side is lost. At the end of the game, the one who has captured the most pieces is the ultimate winner.⁵⁵ (First) the victor takes a drink, then the loser take a drink, collect all the pieces, and put up the board.

Should one player capture two generals, or take a total of thirty lesser pieces, he is declared Dictator (*pa*). Once one player has become Dictator, all the other states submit to him, and everyone drinks another round.⁵⁶

As for the (relative powers (of the pieces) in their initial positions, one Cavalry unit is the equivalent of any two units of Archers, Crossbowmen, Shortswordsmen, or Broadswordsmen. A Catapult is equal to three; an Adjutant General is valued at four; and the Deputy General ranks at five.

Colophon: Ssu-ma Kuang's stating that the Chou (king) is colored yellow and resides in the center (of the board) is to show respect for the Son of Heaven. He has no army; he does not engage in (aggressive) war. Each of the feudal states

has a particular color to reflect its directional position (i.e., north, south, east, or west). the Diplomats represent persuasive politicians who (try to create) vertical or horizontal alliances among the states.⁵⁷ All the other pieces are regulated (in their movements).

Alas! (This game) takes (only) intellect as its basis (i.e., it is devoid of moral considerations). With the seven states arranged around the chess board, seven people then attack each other. By some winning and some losing, their relative intelligences can be known. It is probable that this wise man of a previous generation (i.e., Ssu-ma Kuang) drew up his idea (of this game) fearing that others “would not have a means of employing their minds.”⁵⁸ Devoting all his attention to historical records and writing (history), when he drank (i.e., relaxed among friends), he would play chess and thus examine (further) the ancient political system. The *Lun Yü* says, “Is there not chess playing? To do even this still has some worth in it.”⁵⁹

The Yi Cheng Retired Scholar, P’ei Tzu-hsi, delighted in making friends with worthy scholars, and thus (by such contacts) obtained (a copy of) this text. He then had it engraved on wooden blocks so that it might be widely transmitted. It was then printed in my study on the day of the Lantern Festival in the second year of the K’ai-hsi reign-period (i.e., 24. February 1206)

8.5 An Ode to Hsiang Hsi by Ch’eng Hao (1032–1085)

60

Most competitive games are for fun and enjoyment,
 But Hsiang Hsi can teach arts in army deployment,
 Preserving Chou epoch’s use of Chariot and Horse,
 And official Han titles, P’ien and Pi (of great force).
 The General’s power, to all points, radiates from his post;
 Light Infantry, crossing river, obliquely moves first.
 We laugh at ourselves over chess board, this moment
 Being heroic like Liu and Hsiang, in our leisurely combat.

COMMENT: This seven-characters-per-line, “ruled” verse offers valuable data on the historical evolution of Hsiang Ch’i. While the salient aspects are covered in 2 of this text, one point requires further clarification.

the two proper names in the last line refer to Liu Pang (247–195 B.C.) and Hsiang Chi (233–202 B.C.). The former was the founder of the Han (202 B.C.–

A.D. 220) dynasty. The latter was known as the King of Chu, and was the greatest obstacle Liu Pang had to overcome before achieving the "purple." The battles between these two were a dramatic and exciting phase in China's military history.

The imagery thus evoked by Ch'eng Hao is retained in the present form of Hsiang Ch'iby the four characters printed in the space which divides the chess board in half. Referring to a border between Han and Ch'u, these characters thus refer to the leaders of those two kingdoms, i.e., Liu Pang and Hsiang Chi. Whether the pieces in Ch'eng Hao's reference game were placed in the squares, as in extant T'ang versions and in modern Western Chess, or were placed on the junctures of the lines, as in Ssu-ma Kuang's version and in modern Hsiang Ch'i, is not suggested by the given data.

8.6 An Ode to Hsiang Ch'i by Liu K'o-chuang (1187-1269)

61

Lesser arts are not difficult to master,
 But even the best minds have more to learn.
 Look at the chess game in the tangerine!
 Their wisdom did not extend beyond the board.⁶²
 Two states stand firm like mountains,
 Divided by a great river border.
 Encampments laid out around a central power
 Of four walls make a firm stronghold.
 Thirty-two units in all,
 One by one they transform the array.
 First (one) advances to challenge the enemy;
 (The other) marshals a fortress-like defense.
 Thrusting deeply, one sacrifices his braves;
 (The other) holds firm awaiting opportunity.
 Some are held off like at the siege of Chü;⁶³
 Some assault swiftly like the strike through Ts'ai.⁶⁴
 Distant cannon is no vain threat;
 Massed infantry needs skilled handling.
 Defeat may arise from lesser numbers,
 (But) may not strong blows overcome the greater?

At K'un-yang, even with his elephants, (Wang Mang's army) fled;⁶⁵
 At Ch'en-t'ao, 'though strong in chariots, (Fang Kuan) suffered
 defeat.⁶⁶

With only a few cavalry, Kuo (Tzu-yi) went forth to victory;⁶⁷
 'Though only an advisor, Chi An remained by (the throne).⁶⁸
 After presenting his captives, the General is recorded as meritious;
 For his excellent achievements, the people praise him happily.

8.7 An Ode to a Chess Game by Ts'ao Tzu-ch'i (1378–1425)

69

Two kingdoms embattled, each deploying troops,
 Arranging formations to determine the outcome.
 Following a crooked path, Cavalry takes the van;
 Safe inside fortress, Generals venture naught.
 Rushing forth on open file, Chariots capture Infantry;
 Firing Artillery over river, enemy stronghold is downed.
 In this leisurely experience of military arts,
 With one move's success, they see the Great Peace.

Notes

¹For transliterations of Chinese terms, this text will utilize the Wade-Giles romanization system. However, for those terms which may be of interest to the non-specialist, the Yale system's spelling will be added in parentheses, such being easier to read for those not initiated to Sinological academic esoterica.

²*Encyclopaedia Britannica; Macropaedia*, (Chicago; H. H. Benton, 1974), IV/195.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵See *Ku-chin t'u-shu chi-ch'eng*, Compiled 1725, (Taipei: Wen Hsing Book Co., 1964), 59/1040-1041 (*chüan* 799). hereafter abbreviated as KCTSCC. See also Yen K'o-chün (Comp.), *Ch'üan shang-ku san-tai ch'in-han san-kuo lu-ch'ao wen*, (Tokyo: Chuubun Pub. Co., 1972), *Ch'üan hou chou* 9/3a-b. Hereafter abbreviated as CSKST. Yü Hsin's letter which accompanied this prose-poem's presentation to Emperor Wu states clearly that the *Hsiang Ching* was written by said august personage to explain his invention of "Symbolic Chess." See KCTSCC, 59/1041 (*chüan* 799); see also CSKST, *Ch'üan hou chou* 10/3a-b.

⁶See Chou Chia-sen, *Hsiang Ch'i ch'üan-chü yen-chiu*, (Tainan: Tsung Ho Pub. Co., 1977), p. 4. hereafter abbreviated as HCYC.

⁷Ibid., pp. ii-iii.

⁸Ibid., p. 4.

⁹See Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁰See Ibid., pp. v, 8, 9. The Banner system combined both civil and military administrative functions and provided the means of controlling the subject Chinese and Mongol peoples as well as the Manchu tribesmen. See J. K. Fairbank and E. O. Reischauer, *East Asia: The Great Tradition*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1960), pp. 351-352.

¹¹See Wang Chih-teng, *Yi shih* (History of Chess), in Ts'ao Ch'iu-yüeh (Comp.), *Hsüeh-hai lei-pien*, Kuang-hsü edition, (Taipei: Wen Yüan Book Co., 1964), p. 5059.

¹²See HCYC, p. 1.

¹³See Ibid., p. 10, which quotes Li Shan's (d. 689) commentary to the *Wen Hsüan* compiled by Hsiao T'ung (501-531).

¹⁴It is also worth noting here that at least one modern manufacturer of Hsiang Ch'i sets uses the homonym *hsiang* in the Game's title.

¹⁵See W. F. Wong, *Chinese Chess*, (Hong Kong: Swindon Book Co., 1971), pp. 3, 7. Wong also refers the Guards as "Officer." This latter term is somewhat ambiguous as a military unit appellation. See *Ibid.*, p. 3, 9.

¹⁶*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, IV/196.

¹⁷The text used for this translation is recorded in Li Fang, et. al. (Comp.), *T'ai-p'ing yü-lan*, completed in A.D. 983, (Taipei: Ta Hua Book Co., 1977), p. 3353 (755//a-b); see also CSKST, *Ch'üan hou chou*, 7/3a-b. Wang Pao was a noted scholar-official who served under Emperor Yüan (r. 552-554) of the Liang (502-556) dynasty, and later served served Emperors Ming (r. 557-560) and Wu (r. 561-577) of the Northern Chou (557-581). See Fang I et. al. (Comp.), *Chung-kuo jen-ming ta-tz'u-tien*, (Taipei: Commercial Press, 1966), p. 154. Hereafter abbreviated as CKJMT. Chiang Liang-fu, *Li-tai ming-jen nien-li pei-chuan tsung-piao*, (Taipei: Commercial Press, 1975), gives only the dates of Wang Pao's father, Wang Kuei (492-536). See p. 62.

¹⁸During this period, it was believed commonly that the fate of dynasties depended upon the correspondence between the Element calculated as expressing the basic power and nature of a ruling house or aspirant to power, and the Element having ascendancy during the times. Thus, a destiny symbolized by the Element water was believed to be stronger than that symbolized by fire, and weaker than that of earth. These of actors were learned and studied by astrological observations and calculations.

¹⁹Apparently, the musical scales were represented in the game by the Twelve Earthly Branches. This symbolic device is usually associated with calendrical notations and the signs of the Zodiac.

²⁰The Eight trigrams can be arranged to represent a natural evolution of phenomenological changes. Just how this system of categorizing is used in Emperor Wu's game cannot be known.

²¹"Letters, ethical conduct, contentiousness, and truthfulness." *Lun Yü*, VII/24; Cf. Legge, I/102.

²²This text is found in Li Fang, et. al. (Comp.), *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi*, Completed in A.D. 977, (Taipei: Hsin Hsing Book Co., 1958), p. 268 (40/1). Hereafter abbreviated as TPKC.

²³P'a-ch'üung is a region in present Szechwan province.

²⁴This place name refers to two districts in Kwangtung province. During the Six Dynasties (317–589) period, it was common practice for women to use a yellow cosmetic on their foreheads as part of their makeup. See Fang I, et. al. (Comp.), *Tz'u-yüan*, (Taipei: Commercial Press, 1971), p. 1629.

²⁵Possibly a reference to Chiang mountain in Shantung province.

²⁶Ying Chou is a mythical island(s) of the spirits.

²⁷In this and the following reference, “O-mu” refers probably to the mythological Hsi Wang-mu (Queen Mother of the West).

²⁸Ch'ing-ch'eng Mountain, located in Szechwan, is noted for its many Taoist temples.

²⁹Shang mountain is a famous site in Shansi province where four old scholars lived to hide from the tyranny of the First Emperor of the Ch'in (221–206 B.C.) dynasty.

³⁰A Paraphrase of *Tao Te Ching*, 59; see D. C. Lau (Tr.), *Lao Tzu: Tao Te Ching*, (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 120.

³¹Recorded in TPKC, pp. 2721–2723 (369/7).

³²The Ju-nan of this tale was probably located in present Honan province.

³³Shan Chou was a T'ang dynasty prefecture located in present Honan province.

³⁴Shih Lo (273–332) founded in A.D. 319 the Kingdom of Chao which was centered in present Hopei. See H. A. Giles, *A Chinese Biographical Dictionary*, (Cambridge, 1898), pp. 656–657.

³⁵All three variations of chess known to have been prevalent during the T'ang period have pieces labelled “Chin Chiang,” meaning Golden General. this term could be a contraction of the term given here in this tale, which is also from the T'ang. None of these games, however, have pieces marked with the character for “elephant,” i.e., *hsiang* 象, according to HCYC, pp. 2–3.

³⁶Chinese dictionaries equate Hsiang Hsi and Hsiang Ch'i. A possible difference between the two is suggested by this paragraph. Hsiang Hsi may refer to chess which employs upright figures as pieces in the Indian fashion. The latter term then would indicate the Chinese practice of using discs with engraved or carved characters to denote specific units,

³⁷This text is found in T'ao Tsung-yi (Comp.), *Shuo Fu*, 1647 block print

edition, 102/2a; see also KCTSCC, 59/1027-1028 (*chüan* 798). The preface and colophon of this essay are by Wang Yi-min, and dated 1206.

³⁸In the context of Confucian thought, “expedient practices” are immoral policies in which “the ends justify the means.” This is contrasted with policies using moral means for goals beneficial to both state and populace, i.e., policies which accord with the dictates of *Li*, the ritualized code of moral conduct.

³⁹When this preface was written, the northern half of China was under the rule of an alien dynasty. Evidently, the need to avoid offending the sensibilities of the Sung Imperial House dictated this slight exaggeration.

⁴⁰The following chart and text is not to be found in Ssu-ma Kuang’s collected writings.

⁴¹See *Lun Yü* (The Analects of Confucius), XVII/22; Cf. Legge, I/359.

⁴²Tung-hai was a district in present Kiangsu province.

⁴³The references to chess dating from the Northern Sung (960–1126), i.e., Ssu-ma Kuang’s essay and Ch’eng Hao’s ode (see 8.5), continue to use the older name of Hsiang hsi. The modern term, Hsiang Ch’i, seems to have first appeared in the Southern Sung (1127–1179), as indicated by Wang Yi-min’s preface (here) and Liu K’o-chuang’s ode (see 8.6).

⁴⁴Individual army colors represented the colors symbolic of the cardinal directions as derived from the Five Elements cosmological theory of ancient China. This reflects one demonstrable connection with the older Hsiang Hsi of the Northern Chou Emperor Wu. Thus, Ch’i and Han had reddish colors symbolizing the South; Ch’i and Wei had blue-green colors symbolizing the East; Yen and Chao had the black or near black colors indicative of the North; and the white of Ch’in alludes to the West.

⁴⁵This rule highlights the analogy between this game and the historical period which it represents. The Chou kings had no power other than a ritual function which was considered the legitimizing authority by which the feudal rulers were invested with their positions and territories. Thus, the contending armies of that period tended to avoid the small piece of land under direct control of the Chou kings. It was not until the Ch’in rulers had developed power sufficient to conquer the other feudal states that they extinguished this legal, or rather, ceremonial fiction.

⁴⁶This comment by Ssu-ma Kuang is a key element in understanding the evolution of Hsiang Ch’i in China. It points out clearly that while the term

for “elephant” in the game’s title *may* have been derived from exposure to the Indian form of chess, its employment as a unit on the Chinese chess board was rejected by the Chinese as not reflecting the actual practice of warfare in the Middle Kingdom.

⁴⁷As suggested in Wang Yi-min’s colophon (below), this piece carries further the historical analogy by its representing the intellectuals of the Warring States period who gained position and power by serving the various feudal lords as diplomats, creating temporary alliances for the sake of controlling and manipulating the balance of powers. See J. I. Crump, Jr. (Tr.), *Chan-kuo Ts’u’e*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 13-15. The usage of this piece must be inferred if reconstruction of this game is desired. It seems likely that allies would be created by placing one’s Diplomat within the army, or near the home base of the desired ally. Thus, to prevent an alliance from being either made or broken, the movement of the Diplomat would have to be obstructed, since it cannot be captured. Nevertheless, Ssu-ma Kuang’s application of this complexity cannot be determined by the available data.

⁴⁸This movement regulation corresponds exactly with that of the Field Artillery unit in modern Hsiang Ch’i.

⁴⁹This would be the same as moving four spaces straight ahead and then three to the right or left on a line perpendicular to the original line of travel.

⁵⁰These rules for alliances reflect the relative power of each of these states in the age symbolized by this game.

⁵¹This swearing of an oath at the commencement of an alliance reflects the normal practice of rulers during the warring States period.

⁵²This passage seems to imply that when his turn comes, a player may move either one of his own pieces or one of those of his ally – his ally having the same option.

⁵³The initial attacking move being given to Ch’in correspond with that state’s historical position as the primary aggressor.

⁵⁴Belting a glassful of fermented spirits was probably a standard penalty.

⁵⁵The implication here seems to be that if one state wins the final body count, even his own ally is deemed a loser. Such would introduce another level of complexity, further reflecting actual warring States period political conditions. An ally would have to be manipulated so that (a) he is not lost, and (b) he is not given a chance to be the major victor.

⁵⁶Here is another historical parallel with a recognized institution of that general period. Eberhard states, "At the beginning of the seventh century (B. C.) it became customary for the (Chou) ruler to unite with the feudal lord who was the most powerful at the time. This feudal lord became of dictator, and had the military power in his hands, like the shoguns in (feudal) Japan. . . . The period of the dictators came to an end after about a century because it was found that none of the feudal states was any longer strong enough to exercise control over all the others. These others formed alliances against which the dictator was powerless. Thus the period passed into the next, which the Chinese call the period of the Contending (i.e., Warring) States." Wolfram Eberhardt, *A History of China*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 38-40.

⁵⁷"Vertical" refers to the historical Ch'u's attempts to create a north-south alliance of states to prevent Ch'in's eastward advance. "Horizontal" indicates the diplomatic efforts of the historical Ch'in which wanted to obstruct Ch'u's northward drive.

⁵⁸*Lun Yü*, XVII/22; Cf. Legge, I/359.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Recorded in P'an Tzu-mu (Comp.), *Chi-tsuan yüan-hai*, re-edited and enlarged by Wan Chia-pin, 1579 edition, (Taipei: Hsin Hsing Book Co., 1972), X/5711 (88/9a-b); see also KCTSCC, 59/1045 (*chüan* 800).

⁶¹See HCYC, p. 7, for this text. Chou Chia-sen comments that this poem is a "five-character-per-line ode in the ancient style which describes the pieces and explains strategic considerations, and which could be called the ancestor of poems on Hsiang Ch'i." Ibid.

⁶²This refers to the story of "The Man from P'a-ch'üung" by Niu Seng-ju. See 8.2.

⁶³The allusion here is to one of the many dramatic events of the Warring States period. The state of Yen invaded Ch'i and rapidly captured seventy cities. "Chü," one of the two cities remaining under the Ch'i flag, put up a stout and prolonged defense which halted Yen's advance. Eventually, Ch'i launched a counterattack from this walled city, and drove Yen out of its territory. See Crump, p. 205.

⁶⁴This historical reference is an event in the Spring and Autumn (722-481 B.C.) period of classical antiquity. In 655 B.C., the state of Ch'i, in alliance with some other states, overran the small, intervening territory of "Ts'ai" as a move preparatory to invading the large state of Ch'u. See *Tso Chuan*. V/4/1;

James Legge (Tr.), *The Chinese Classics*, Vol. V, (Taipei: Chin Hsüeh Book Co., 1969), p. 139.

⁶⁵K'un-yang, near present Yeh Hs., Hsü Chou, Honan, was the site of one of several battles in which Liu Hsiu (4 B.C.–A.D. 57), who later became the first ruler of the Latter Han (25-220 A.D.) dynasty, defeated the army of the “usurper” Wang Mang (33 B.C.– A.D. 23), despite having an apparently weaker army at his disposal. The passage in the *Hou Han Shu* (History of the Latter Han) by Fan Yeh (d. A.D. 455) which records this event states that Wang Mang’s forces “drove wild animals, such as tigers, panthers, rhinos, and elephants, before it to increase its awesome martiality.” Fan Yeh, *Hou Han Shu*, (Taipei: Hung Ts’ung Book Co., 1973), p. 22 (Imperial Annals, I/5-7). However, not only is it doubtful if elephants (not to mention rhinos) existed in China at this time, but also it is clear that such were not ridden as in classical Indian warfare. It is reasonable to suppose that Fan Yeh’s record merely points to the usage of large herds of beasts as a battle tactic, and his awareness of elephant as massive beasts probably came from contact with Buddhist missionaries from India who were active in China during his lifetime. Another possibility is that horses were costumed to appear as more formidable creatures. This tactic is known to have been used in classical warfare. Nevertheless, this and the next three lines in Liu’s ode contain references to individual chess pieces. Thus, unless Liu K’o-chuang was merely indulging in poetical license in order to increase his mastery of history, he may have interpreted the *hsiang* piece to mean “elephant.”

⁶⁶The valley of Ch’en-t’ao, located east of Hsien-yang Hs., Shensi, was the site of a battle between Fang Kuan (697–763), T’ang general, and a rebel army. A believer in the efficacy of the ancient style of warfare, he relied heavily on chariots, and was thoroughly routed. See CKJMT, p. 568.

⁶⁷Kuo Tzu-yi (697–781) was one of the famous generals of the T’ang. This line refers to a rebellion in 765 of the Turfan und Hui-ho tribes of the Uighur Turks. Breaking their peace with the T’ang, they invaded via two routes. General Kuo, even though sixty-eight years old, rode to the Hui-ho camp with only some cavalry as escort. Pursuading this tribe to restore amity with the T’ang, he then led them against the Turfans successfully. See Giles, p. 411; see also CKJMT, p. 1042.

⁶⁸Chi An (d. 112 B.C.?) was a high minister under Emperor Wu (r. 140–87 B.C.) of the Former Han (202 B.C.–A.D. 8) dynasty who enjoys unique longevity in office. “On several occasions he fell into disfavor, but always managed to recover his position, thus justifying the remark of Huai Nan Tzu that

all the Imperial advisors could be shaken off like dust, except Chi An.” Giles, p. 117. The term *shih* 士, meaning “advisor” here in Liu’s ode, has several meanings. For example, in Chou times, it meant a member of the lesser feudal nobility, such as the son of a baron. It also can mean a scholar or intellectual, a specific governmental position in certain specific periods, or an armored warrior.

⁶⁹This poem is recorded in HCYC, p. 7. Chou Chia-sen describes the origin of this ode stating, “When the Ming Emperor Jen-tsung (r. 1425) was residing in the Eastern Palace (as Heir Apparent to the Throne), he chanced to observe two eunuchs playing chess. He accordingly commanded Ts’ao Tzu-ch’i to commemorate the event in a poem.” Ibid.