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Shōgi in the Limelight

Over the years, the Japan Foundation Newsletter *has introduced many aspects of Japanese culture and international cultural exchange. In this issue, we focus on a part of everyday life whose history and character tell us a great deal about Japan:* shōgi, *or Japanese chess.*

Shōgi *is widely followed and enjoyed by the Japanese, from children to adults. Major title matches are covered prominently by the news media, just as the grand sumo tournaments are. And many* shōgi *terms have become a natural part of everyday speech.*

Articles in this issue examine the meaning of shōgi *from three different angles. First, Yoshinori Kimura, a former professional* shōgi *player who holds the eighth-*dan *rank and is currently Director of the Shōgi Museum in Osaka, introduces the history of* shōgi, *which, like Western chess, has its origins in India. His published works include* Yowai no ga Tsuyoi no ni Katsu Hōhō *[How the Weak Can Defeat the Strong] (Tokyo: Japan Shogi Association, 1980) and the seventeen-part "2000-nen no Shōgi Shi" [Two Thousand Years of Shōgi History] (Tokyo:* Shōgi Sekai, *1997–98).*

Then, Yoshio Ohsaki, who joined the Japan Shogi Association in 1982 and became chief editor of its monthly magazine, Shōgi Sekai *[Shōgi World], in 1991, discusses the game's distinctively Japanese aesthetic.*

Last, Haruto Matsumoto, who has acquired a deep knowledge of the game as shōgi *reporter for the* Nihon Keizai Shimbun, *looks at the source of* shōgi*'s appeal, its fascination as a game.*

The History of *Shōgi*

Yoshinori Kimura

Among the world's chess games, Japanese chess, or *shōgi,* is very unusual. Its most distinctive feature, I think all would agree, is the captor's reuse of captured pieces, but it also differs from other chess games in the shape, names, and number of the pieces; the rule allowing promotion of most pieces; and, most fundamental, the rules of movement. Since it differs so markedly from all other versions of chess, it has even been argued that *shōgi* had its genesis in Japan.

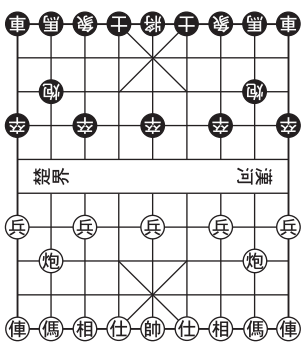

Figure 1. Chinese chessboard with pieces in starting position

Indeed, *shōgi* shares only one thing with the versions played in neighboring China and Korea—the fact that the pieces have their names written on them in Chinese ideograms. Chinese chess, or *xiangqi,* is not at all like Western chess in appearance (being played with round wooden pieces, inscribed with their names, which are placed on the intersections of the grid on the playing board; Figure 1), but its rules of movement are similar; in addition, both

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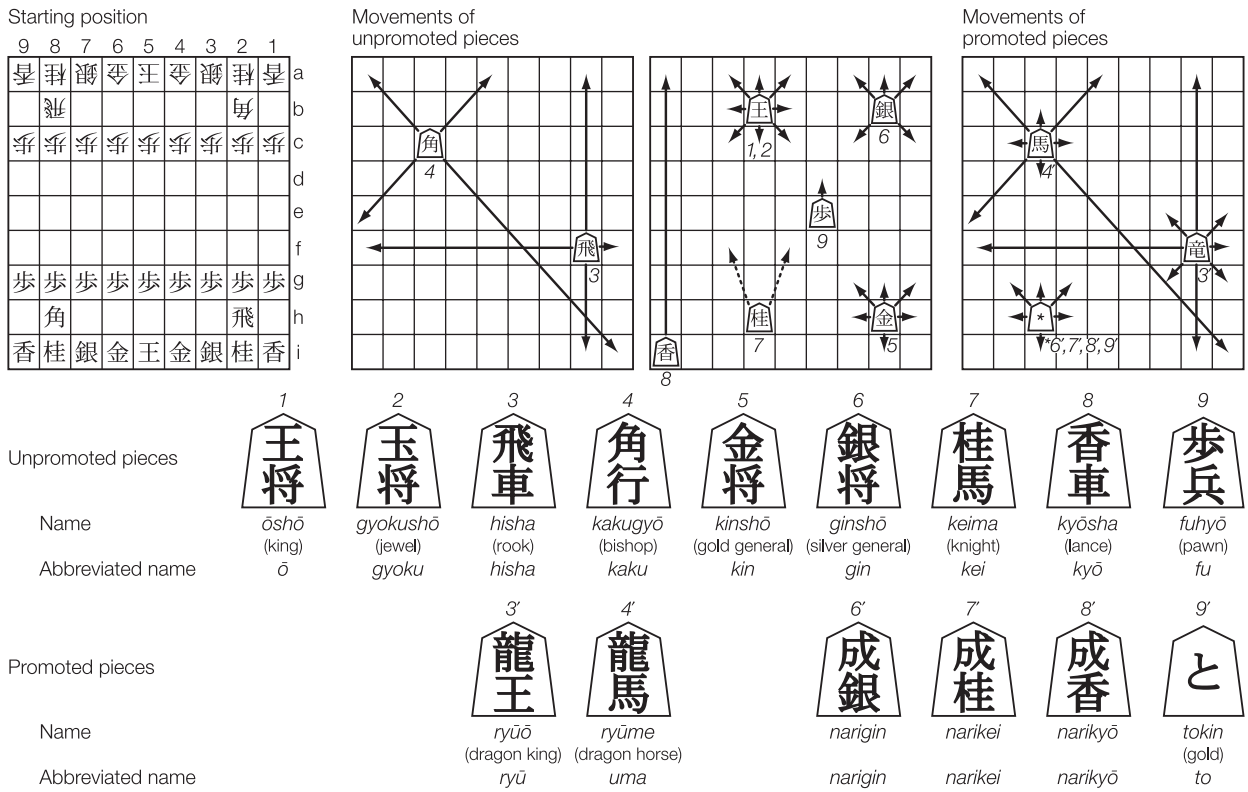

Figure 2. Modern shōgi *board and pieces, together with their starting position and moves*

use different colors for the two sides, and neither allows the reuse of captured pieces. *Shōgi* alone differs in ways that seem to set it apart. Nevertheless, it is my belief that the same chesslike game with thirty-two upright figures in two colors and an eight-square by eight-square board that traveled to other parts of the world also reached Japan and then evolved over time into the *shōgi* that we know today.

There were also organizational developments. In the Edo period (1603–1868), the *shōgi* world adopted the unique *iemoto* (hereditary headship) system that is typical of schools in traditional Japanese arts. The twentieth century has seen the rise of a modern professional organization, financed by the fees it receives from the newspapers that publish records of sanctioned games. All the phenomena mentioned thus far could be said to be unique to Japan. Yet, distinctive as they may be, there is nothing mysterious about their origins, since each owes its existence to a specific cause.

The Origins of *Shōgi*

The archetype of chesslike games originated in ancient India, probably between the first and fourth centuries of the common era. (Of course, it too had a precursor, a four-handed game played with dice, and this in turn also had a precursor.) As it traveled west from India the game became chess, while the eastward migration led to *xiangqi* and *shōgi*.

The archetype seems to have reached Japan, via China, as early as the sixth or seventh century. Although there are no historical records that establish clearly what it was like or when it arrived, since all the world's ancient chesslike games were a form of chess, the game that reached Japan was surely of this type. It probably made the crossing from China not long after the names of the pieces were translated into Chinese. A wealth of circumstantial evidence and historical materials indirectly support this early arrival. The most persuasive points are as follows.

1. A chesslike game is found in almost every region of the Old World. Most likely it was a universal favorite among board games (or gambling games), which would explain why it traveled so rapidly.

2. As already noted, the Chinese and Japanese versions are quite different today. This is explained by the same game having arrived in both countries and then undergone many changes that took it in different directions. *Xiangqi* was established in its present form around the eleventh century, after a process that probably continued for several centuries.

3. The oldest known *shōgi* pieces were excavated at the Nara temple Kōfuku-ji. Fifteen pieces were discovered; and on the basis of the date written on a thin strip of wood (of the sort often used for record keeping at the time) found at the same site, they can be roughly dated to 1058. Not only

are they the same irregular pentagonal shape as the pieces used today but there are also signs that the practice of reusing captured pieces had already been introduced. As we shall see, it had probably taken many small incremental changes to reach this stage—a process that would have required about four hundred years.

4. Finally, *shōgi* is distinguished by the limited movements of its pieces (Figure 2). The *kyōsha* (lance), the outermost piece on the rank closest to each player, in the location of the rook in chess, can move only directly forward; and the *keima*, which corresponds to the knight, can move only straight forward one square and then diagonally forward one square to the left or right, in an L-shaped movement. Thus, each of these pieces has only one-fourth the powers of its counterpart in chess. The rook originally represented a horse-drawn chariot and the knight a mounted warrior—both of which exercised their full powers only while moving forward and neither of which could readily move sideways or backward. That the Western chess pieces can move sideways and backward suggests that their moves were modified in a later era that knew chess purely as a game, free from its real-world associations.

Also, the *ginshō* (silver general), which corresponds to the bishop, can move only one square in any of five directions: directly forward, diagonally forward to the left or right, and diagonally backward to the left or right. This piece originally represented a war elephant with its trunk and four legs. Although this meaning is no longer reflected in its name, the silver general has retained its ancient moves. The modern *shōgi* pieces also include the *hisha* (rook) and *kakugyō* (bishop), but these were added much later.

As the birthplace of the game, India remained the creative capital of chess. Thus, after the first wave of a game with limited-range pieces had spread abroad, there must have been successive waves transmitting later refinements. (The second wave probably conveyed a version with pieces with a wider range of movement, and the third a version in which the pawns capture diagonally to the left and right.) But Japan received only the first wave, the most primitive form with the most limited ranges of movement. For reasons discussed below, the later modifications never reached Japan.

The Evolution of *Shōgi*

Now let us consider the process of modification in Japan.

1. First, the pieces had to be given names that were more familiar to the Japanese. Most likely, the Chinese names were simply prefixed with the names of five Buddhist treasures: jewel (*gyoku*), gold (*kin*), silver (*gin*), laurel (*kei*), and incense (*kyō*). Wherever the game traveled, the pieces took on the names of things well known to the local people, becoming culturally assimilated and thus gaining true popular appeal. Even today, the characters *shō*, *ma*, *sha*, and *hyō* are common to both the Chinese and the Japanese game.

2. Next, several major changes were made to just one piece, the *fuhyō* (equivalent to the pawn in chess). First, the row of *fuhyō* was shifted forward to the third rank. Then promotion was introduced, so that when a *fuhyō* reaches the promotion zone—the three ranks initially occupied by the opposing pieces—it acquires the powers of a *kinshō* (gold general). The next step was to turn the promoted pawn over; eventually, the pawn became a flat piece of wood to facilitate this. The same powers are possessed by the *bia* (pawn) in Thai chess (Figure 3), and indeed these modifications may have been made in Southeast Asia; the first wave that reached Japan from India may have been followed by a "Thai wave," an improved version in which only the pawns were altered. The *fuhyō* probably assumed the flat pentagonal shape of present-day *shōgi* pieces at that time.

rua	mā	khōn	met	khūn	khōn	mā	rua
bia	bia	bia	bia	bia	bia	bia	bia
bia	bia	bia	bia	bia	bia	bia	bia
rua	mā	khōn	khūn	met	khōn	mā	rua

Figure 3. Thai chessboard with pieces in starting position

3. Next, all the pieces took on this shape. Almost all the world's chesslike games use upright playing pieces identified by their shapes; it is only in China, Korea, and Japan—the Chinese-ideogram cultural sphere—that they are identified by inscribed characters. Certainly, nonsculptural pieces are easier to make. But it should be noted that *xiangqi* pieces were adapted from those of *weiqi* (*go*), which originally used wooden pieces; thus they became flat wooden discs bearing a single character and were placed, as in *go*, on the intersections of the grid. In Japan, on the other hand, the pieces were adapted from wooden writing tablets, which could accommodate two characters. (These tablets, or *mokkan,* were thin strips of wood used instead of paper; they were cut not to a standard size but to the size suited to the task at hand. As a less advanced country far from the center of civilization, Japan had continued to make wide use of the cheaper *mokkan* even after paper entered common use in China.)

In short, it seems likely that the *fuhyō* acquired its present shape through an imported modification and that, given the availability of wooden tablets, the other pieces (each with its identifying inscription) took on the same shape not long afterward. This change in shape was highly significant. It must have given rise to a consciousness of *shōgi* as being different from other chesslike games, a consciousness that would later lead to rejection of the second and third waves, with their wider ranges of piece movement, when they arrived from India. Also, as we will see, the two players' pieces were now identical in appearance, paving the way for the reuse of captured pieces.

4. Next, each player's single *kinshō* (gold general) became a pair, and their powers of movement were slightly altered. The *kinshō* corresponds to the queen in chess, and since it outranks the *ginshō* (silver general), of which there were already two, a pair was more appropriate. The addition of two more pawns following the introduction of the nine by nine board brought the total number of pieces to thirty-six.

Although the gold general ranks above the silver general, it originally had more limited moves. Like the *shi* (guard) in Chinese chess, the *met* in Thai chess, and the queen in Western chess before the fifteenth century (when its powers were greatly enhanced), the gold general could move only one square in any diagonal direction. This was now changed to the rule we have today: one square in six directions. This is the only instance of a piece's move being altered in Japan.

5. Next, the *ginshō*, *keima*, and *kyōsha* were also allowed to be promoted to the powers of the *kinshō* (and turned over to show their reverse faces) when they entered the opposing side's promotion zone.

The processes we have traced thus far brought the prototype of *shōgi* as a Japanese cultural product almost to completion. This would have been around the beginning of the ninth century, give or take seventy years. We now call this version Heian *shōgi* (Figure 4). *Shōgi* of the Heian period (794–1185) represents a definite midpoint between the game's arrival in Japan and its current form. With the later addition of the reuse of captured pieces, plus the *hisha* (rook) and *kakugyō* (bishop), we arrive at modern-day *shōgi*.

Figure 4. Heian shōgi *board with pieces in starting position*

6. The next step was the crucial one: the introduction of reuse of captured pieces. Chess games the world over differentiate the two armies by their colors; only in *shōgi* are they distinguished by having their pointed tips oriented in opposite directions. Since the inscriptions that identify the pieces are all the same color (black), the two players' pieces are identical, and this allows a captured enemy piece to be put back into play as the captor's own. This would simply not be possible in chess games, where the two sides are different colors.

The shape of the pieces in *shōgi* today is naturally suited to reuse, but not because it was adopted with that in mind. On the contrary, it was the fact that the pieces had become identical in shape that made reuse possible. The idea of reusing pieces most likely came about because, with *shōgi*'s limited ranges of movement, as the skill level rose draws must have been frequent and bets could not be collected.

But even after the conditions were ripe, it seems to have taken some time for such an unprecedented idea to occur. Thus, for the sake of advanced players whose games all too often ended in a draw, *daishōgi*, an expanded version with sixty-eight pieces, was created at the beginning of the tenth century. This is thought to be the world's oldest "big chess" game. The reuse of captured pieces seems finally to have been introduced around 1000 (give or take fifty years).

7. The last major change was the addition of the *hisha* and *kakugyō*, probably around 1250 (again, give or take fifty years). Though they move in the same way as the rook and the bishop, respectively, these two pieces originated in Japan. The West's great reform was to strengthen the powers of the queen and the bishop; China's was to create a new piece, the *pao* (cannon); and Japan too created new pieces.

It is interesting to note that the *hisha* and *kakugyō* first appeared in an even larger expanded version of the game for advanced players, with one hundred thirty pieces, and they must have entered the standard *shōgi* set from there. This one hundred thirty–piece *daishōgi* is undoubtedly the world's largest chess game. Moreover, its pieces have long ranges: for example, the *hon'ō* (galloping king) moves like the queen in modern chess but predates it in some three centuries.

Thus all the distinctive features of *shōgi* as we know it today had been established in about the thirteenth century, two hundred years after *xiangqi* and two hundred years before Western chess reached their present forms. There were now

forty pieces that remain in action until the last, vying for checkmate in an absorbing game that demands keen concentration on speed of attack—as the *shōgi* proverb says: "In the endgame speed is more important than material." Even advanced players who had previously devoted more attention to the expanded versions would have gradually come to embrace *shōgi* as we know it.

The Popularization of *Shōgi*

Since most players were of intermediate or lower rank, they preferred the smaller version of the game even in the days of the thirty-six–piece set, and once the present set was developed it became all the more firmly established as the focus of *shōgi*'s popularity. This is confirmed by the diaries of aristocrats from around the fifteenth century. But although the nobility played *shōgi*, it also became (and still is) a pastime of the common people, thanks to the small board and inexpensive equipment. It was surely the involvement of large numbers of commoners that catalyzed the changes discussed above.

In the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries, Japan experienced an era of civil strife unparalleled in its history. Though the times were hardly propitious, little by little, it seems, *shōgi*'s popularity continued to grow, mainly in Kyoto, which was still (though precariously) the capital, but also in the burgeoning provincial cities. Toward the end of this era, we see the debut of Ōhashi Sōkei (1555–1634), *shōgi*'s first lifetime *meijin,* or grand master.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the nation was unified under Tokugawa Ieyasu, and two hundred sixty years of peace ensued. With peace came economic prosperity, growth of the cities, and a flowering of culture; and among the beneficiaries were *go* and *shōgi*. The Tokugawa shogunate's award of a stipend (albeit a tiny one) to four masters of *go* and three of *shōgi* is especially noteworthy. Moving from Kyoto to the new capital of Edo (present-day Tokyo), they acquired a status equivalent to *gokenin,* or low-ranking retainers of the shogun. From these beginnings developed *shōgi*'s system of hereditary grand masters (*iemoto*), who derived their income chiefly from giving lessons in the playing style of their particular school.

For an *iemoto* system to develop in a particular art, there must be a large number of enthusiasts who want to take lessons and an authority to give them. Not all the pupils can study directly with the master—some, for example, live too far away. The master will thus authorize direct disciples (or their disciples) to teach in his or her place, certifying their skills and character by issuing licenses. In a full-fledged *iemoto* system, licensing fees become the master's main source of income, and the headship of the school is passed down from master to chosen heir. Of course, there can be more than one *iemoto* in an art; often an outstanding disciple will set up independently as a new *iemoto*.

The demand for lessons in *go* and *shōgi* was not large enough to require more *iemoto* than those established by the original stipends from the Tokugawa shogunate. But, as befits the world of games, the best player among the *iemoto* of the established *shōgi* "families" became the game's representative and was honored with the title *meijin* (grand master), a status that grew in authority over the years. The term still exists today, as the highest of the titles for which professional players compete.

The *iemoto* system can be seen as a uniquely Japanese social arrangement that evolved during two and a half centuries of continuous peace, as the tea ceremony, ikebana, dance, music, and other traditional arts became popular pastimes and accomplishments, especially in the cities. Further, in the feudal class system of the Edo period, as a rule a son's position in life was determined by his father's, be he a daimyo's chief retainer or a peasant. The hereditary "families" formed under the *iemoto* system seem to have succeeded in handing down not only their status but also their actual skills.

By the late eighteenth century, the Edo period was at its cultural zenith. The continuing policy of national seclusion meant that uniquely Japanese cultural arts arose and reached full maturity free of outside influences. Schools with distinctive styles proliferated, and *go* and *shōgi*, like other traditional arts, attained greater popularity and higher levels of technique than ever before.

After 1868, however, with the fall of the shogunate and the establishment of the Meiji government centered on the emperor, the *iemoto* of *go* and *shōgi* lost their stipends and official status and were reduced to poverty. Their decline was probably also hastened by the games' waning popularity in the last turbulent years of the Edo period. Moreover, in the political, economic, and social spheres the admiration once reserved for all things Chinese shifted to the worship of the West, or modernization, that continues today. The feudal class system was legally abolished, and the *iemoto* system became an anachronism in the world of games and gradually died out. While many of the *iemoto* schools faded from existence, the leading schools were able to reestablish themselves and are still flourishing today.

Shōgi's *iemoto* system was replaced by the current system of professional play, which dates from around the turn of the century. As the newspaper industry blossomed during the economic boom that followed the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5, one by one newspapers started their own *go* and *shōgi* columns. At first it was difficult to make a living by contributing to such columns, but as they gradually began to pay better, the first professional players appeared. Most likely the newspaper columns increased *shōgi*'s following among the public and enhanced the status of the masters, who could then command higher fees for their articles.

In *go* and *shōgi*, since players need opponents who are ranked by skill, it is necessary to form organizations. Initially there were several *shōgi* groups, but in 1924 the Tokyo Shogi Association was established; this later developed into today's nationwide organization, the Japan Shogi Association.

World War II and its aftermath left the professional *shōgi* world in straitened circumstances. But Japan has now enjoyed more than fifty years of unbroken peace. It is interesting to note that Japan, a less advanced country far from the center of civilization, was able to perfect a game that rivals chess and *xiangqi* thanks to the fact that, as an island nation, it has had a relatively peaceful history and enjoyed circumstances conducive to economic and cultural flowering. Undoubtedly, this also contributed to the rapidity with which Japan joined the ranks of the developed nations.

The Beauty of *Shōgi*

Yoshio Ohsaki

Some fifteen years ago, on an assignment for the *shōgi* magazine to which I had just been appointed, I found myself sitting in the room where the *Meijin* (grand master) title match was about to take place. The location was an inn at Nishiura Hot Springs, near Gamagōri, in Aichi Prefecture, halfway between Tokyo and Osaka. From the window, there was a view of a serene indigo sea with several black tankers lumbering back and forth like well-fed bears.

A *Meijin* Match Begins

The photographer and I had taken our places at 8:30 a.m. in readiness for the game, which was due to start at 9:00. We were each savoring the importance of the coming duel and the prospect of a close contest that might well last until midnight of the next day.

The only sound was the faint lapping of waves outside the window, which accentuated the hush inside the empty room. It struck me then that stillness does not mean the complete absence of sound, but the faint presence of a sound that calms the mind.

In fact, stillness has always been something of a preoccupation of Japanese culture, which has found many ways to orchestrate it. The trickling of the waterfall in a Japanese garden, the hollow clack of a pivoting bamboo water pipe against the quiet of the night, the glorious song of a bush warbler in the distant hills. In every case, the sound makes the stillness palpable. The next things that registered on my senses in that spacious tatami room, after the hush, were the light scent of new straw matting drenched in sunlight and a familiar faint aroma of wood.

The board, a block of *kaya* (Japanese nutmeg) about twenty-one centimeters thick, stood ready in the middle of the room. Though the tree had been felled many decades earlier, as if to prove it was alive the wood gave off a slight fragrance, gentle and subdued. One could easily foresee that as soon as another person entered this space, the stillness and the fragrance would be lost. And so, without a word, the photographer and I sat hardly daring to breathe, alert to the presence in that seaside inn of an aesthetic of quiet restraint that the Japanese have nurtured over the ages.

In the tokonoma there had been placed a single lovely flower and a hanging scroll written with bold strokes. Everything about the room revealed the care that had been taken not to tire or distract the players.

Presently the young scorekeeper, the arbiter, his deputy, and the other members of the press corps came in, and then the players entered, wearing traditional dress. With a rustle of kimono, the two men took their seats on cushions at the board.

The playing pieces are spilled gently onto the board before a match.

Small stands beside the shōgi *board hold captured playing pieces.*

The *Meijin* sat in the place of honor, with his back to the tokonoma, while the challenger took the seat nearer the entrance.

From a mulberry-wood box in the center of the board, the *Meijin* took the brocade bag holding the pieces and scattered them lightly onto the board. (It is always the higher-ranking player who takes the pieces from the box.) He placed the *ōshō* (king) on its appointed square, then the challenger did likewise with the *gyokushō* (jewel). In quality *shōgi* sets the kings of the two sides are distinguished by the addition of a single stroke to the character "king" (*ō*) to make the character "jewel" (*gyoku*) on one of the two, and it is traditional for the higher-ranking or senior player to use the *ōshō*. There is no difference in the moves or powers of the two kings. One senses the Japanese concern for etiquette in the fact that the mere presence or absence of a tiny dot decides which piece is used by which player.

When all the pieces were neatly arranged in their starting positions, the scorekeeper took five *fuhyō,* or pawns, from the higher-ranked player's side of the board, saying: "The toss will be performed on behalf of *Meijin* Tanigawa."

The *furigoma*, or toss, is the ceremony that determines who plays first. In a title match, it is performed on behalf of the titleholder with five of his or her pawns. If three or more land with the characters *fuhyō* uppermost, the titleholder plays first; if three or more land showing the reverse face, with the character *to* (short for *tokin*, or gold, the name of the *fuhyō* after promotion), the challenger plays first.

The scorekeeper rattled the five pawns between his hands, then threw them up in the air. They tumbled down to land on a white cloth spread on the tatami.

The scorekeeper declared: "There are three *fuhyō. Meijin* Tanigawa has the first move."

The arbiter said: "It is time, please begin play." At this signal the players made a deep bow and, with solemn formality, the game commenced.

Meijin Tanigawa's first move was P–7f. The moment was captured by the assembled photographers. In a special concession made only for the first move, it was then repeated several times to ensure that no one missed the shot.

Once the ritual of the game's commencement was over, as if by previous agreement most of those present left the room, one or two at a time. Usually only four people remain: the two players, the scorekeeper, and the eyewitness reporter. Everyone attending a match wants to create an environment that allows the players to concentrate, and this is an important role of all present. The press withdraws to a media room set up nearby. Here, the position is shown on a television monitor, from which it is reproduced on another board (the *tsugiban*), and discussion gets under way.

But in a two-day title match, where each player is allotted nine hours of playing time, nothing much tends to happen during the morning of the first day, and conversation in the media room flows freely, from chitchat to the reminiscences of the arbiters, who are veteran players themselves.

And so I sat on a sofa and listened in, there by the sea, while idly watching the bears with full bellies make their way smoothly across the bay. These are the hours that test the press corps' ability to while away time.

Skilled Artisans

Let me say something here about the board and the pieces used in *shōgi*.

The boards used in title matches are made of *kaya* from Miyazaki Prefecture, on Kyushu. It is a pale yellow wood with a beautiful grain and a slight, gentle fragrance.

The trees are found in a vast broadleaf evergreen forest that extends across the border between Miyazaki and Kagoshima prefectures. I visited this old-growth forest in the winter of 1993. With its leaves that gleam in the sun, the whole forest is like a sparkling green jewel, and when the rays strike the leaves at certain angles, their shimmering is like the play of light on a limpid sea.

Guided by staff from the Aya District Forest Office, I went deep into the forest. The dense interior was colder and darker than I had imagined. We clambered up an almost nonexistent track over a steep slope until, after half an hour, a giant tree came into sight, towering through the canopy overhead with a striking air of nobility.

It was a four-hundred-year-old *kaya*.

The trunk was so thick that if two adults linked hands they could barely reach around its circumference. It thrust into the sky and seemed to glare down at us with the stern will that had enabled it to survive for centuries in a harsh environment.

One of the foresters said quietly: "It's not for us to go judging a tree that's been here four hundred years, is it, when we've barely lived for fifty?"

The *kaya*, which commands about ¥10 million for a single tree, is known as the diamond of the forest. The trees are felled and sold at an auction of rare woods held three times a year by the Aya District Forest Office. Rather than waste these precious forest resources by letting them rot where they stand, it is the Forest Office's policy to fell them according to a carefully laid plan and use the income to conserve the forest through replanting.

When a *kaya* tree is purchased by a maker of *shōgi* boards, it is cut into blocks that are stored for about five years to allow the wood to dry naturally. Awaiting a new incarnation as a *shōgi* board, the *kaya* wood patiently releases its moisture.

Once dried, the board blank is finally ready for the last stage of production. It is sent to an artisan who first decides the finished thickness—from the six centimeters of tabletop boards to the twenty-four centimeters of the thickest boards, which stand on feet—so as to bring out the full beauty of the grain and not waste any of the wood.

The highly skilled artisan carves the feet, draws a grid of lacquered lines, and chisels a hollow known as the "navel" into the underside of the board.

Opinion is divided over the purpose of the navel. There is an oft-cited but apocryphal story that the hollow was originally used to collect the blood when a bystander who had offered advice to a player was beheaded. Another theory is that it makes the sound of the pieces more resonant as they are played, but the artisan that I asked about this just laughed. "It makes no difference either way," he said, without pausing at his work on the navel. "They also say it's to help the board dry," he continued, "or to get rid of a slight warp in the wood, but no one really knows for sure."

In the old days, one of the four feet would be removable. We don't know what this was for either, but it is said that the maker's signature was always engraved out of sight inside the space where that foot fitted—an elegantly modest touch.

Even when it has acquired its new shape, the *kaya* is alive. It may let out little creaks like cries in the night, or a large crack may suddenly appear, only to disappear again unnoticed. Over a stunningly long time, as these things recur, it settles into its true form as a *shōgi* board.

Then there are the pieces.

The *tsuge* (Japanese box tree) of which they are made is grown on Mikurajima, a small, remote island in the Pacific about 200 kilometers south-southwest of Tokyo. A wooded island shaped like an upturned bowl, Mikurajima has been known for its boxwood and mulberry since the Edo period (1603–1868).

Unlike *kaya*, *tsuge* is a low tree that grows in clusters. It is very slow growing, being said to take a hundred years to reach a height of two meters.

The logs are shipped from Mikurajima to Tendō, in Yamagata Prefecture, where they are delivered to woodworkers to be cut up into the irregular pentagon shape of *shōgi* pieces. They are then left to dry for a number of years. After the grain of the dried wood has been smoothed, the pieces are individually engraved by hand. The sight of a woodcarver expertly wielding a single chisel to produce those difficult characters is the high point of the whole process. Next, the pieces are taken to a lacquerer, who applies many coats of lacquer to the characters, tracing their lines with a fine brush.

There are basically three kinds of wooden *shōgi* piece: carved, inlaid, and embossed. On carved pieces, the engraved characters are simply lacquered; on inlaid pieces, the incisions are filled with lacquer until the top layer is level with the wood's surface; and on the highest class of pieces, the embossed type, still more layers are applied so that the characters are raised in relief.

Embossed pieces are nearly always used in professional title matches, for such an important occasion demands the most select of materials and the touch of the finest artisans.

The Tension Mounts

The first day of a title match ends with a sealed move.

As the scheduled end of the day's play approaches, one of the players will announce that he is ready to seal his next move. He then goes into another room and indicates his next move in red on a diagram of the current position prepared by the scorekeeper. He places this in an envelope, closes it, puts his signature across the lip of the closed flap, and then returns to the main room and

hands the envelope to the arbiter. The arbiter and second player then put their signatures across the lip of the closed flap, bringing the day's play to an end. The sealed move is locked away securely, either in the hotel safe or in a safe in the arbiter's room, until morning. No one but the player who made the move has any way of knowing what it is.

I have asked a number of players whether they are tempted to study the board when they go back to their rooms at night, but most reply: "I don't do a thing."

This is partly because *shōgi*, unlike chess, is strictly one-on-one; it is not considered good form to call on anyone's assistance. More important, the top priority overnight is resting. On the second day the contest becomes very intense, and it sometimes lasts beyond midnight. Thus, the players' sole concern is to prepare themselves by resting physically and mentally.

By early afternoon on the second day, the media room comes alive. Pieces collide on the *tsugiban* as the discussion heats up. But there is one inviolable rule: if a player taking a break should wander in, which can happen, the position on the board must be scrambled instantly. The players must never be given any possible hint.

Nine hours apiece is an enormous amount of time, but eventually it runs out. From that point on, the players enter *byōyomi,* countdown: sixty seconds per move.

The scorekeeper's voice is heard from the monitor: "Thirty seconds, 40 seconds, 50 seconds, 1, 2, 3—" Then the crisp click of a piece moved into place.

At this stage of the game one hesitates to enter the playing room, because the moment one opens the sliding door one is aware of the players' sharply focused energy filling the air. This is the stage when the tension reaches its height. But eventually the situation shifts in one player's favor. In a game like *shōgi* that is destiny, and it is also what makes the game sublime.

At length, one player bows his head and resigns, softly dropping the captured pieces from his stand onto the board.

This is the signal for the press to burst into the room, the photographers scrambling for the best angle, the reporters for the best position to hear what is said.

There follows the postmortem, in which the players analyze the game. No matter how crucial the match, or how frustratingly close, the loser never lets his disappointment show. To keep such feelings private is good manners toward the winner and the onlookers—and also a kindness to oneself.

Since the same etiquette also applies to the victor, of course, the postmortem proceeds with cool composure.

But traces of the defeated player's emotions can be made out in the wrinkles of a cast-off *haori* jacket, a row of empty mineral water bottles, and the slump of his shoulders. How often have I seen such figures in the small hours of the morning.

And they have taught me the beauty of *shōgi* as a Japanese tradition. The winner considers the loser's feelings, and the loser considers the winner's.

On that first assignment, too, after a hard-fought match the postmortem proceeded quietly. I took in the tatami, the kimono, the players' folding fans, the imposing board of *kaya* wood, and the embossed pieces with the players' hopes and fears soaked into their lustrous surfaces. I saw the single lovely flower and the hanging scroll that had witnessed everything. There was a fine harmony in the room, the harmony of that world of restrained beauty and decorum that the Japanese so love to pursue.

Outside the window it was dark, and the waves were lapping quietly as if to soothe our exhausted nerves. In the distance, dimly lit, the well-fed bears were swaying.

The Appeal of *Shōgi*

Haruto Matsumoto

Since *shōgi* reached its present form a dozen or so generations of professional players have progressively raised the technical level of the game. Yet today's professionals say they have grasped only 5 percent or 6 percent of the game, and according to Yoshiharu Habu, currently the strongest player in Japan: "The technical revolution in *shōgi* has only just begun." Despite the modern game's several-hundred-year history, it is still a young game.

Shōgi Compared with Other Board Games

Shōgi has a number of features not seen in other board games that are played internationally, including the reuse of captured pieces, the near-equal chance of winning regardless of whether one moves first or second, and the continuing superiority of human players over computers and artificial intelligence systems. Like Buddhism, *shōgi* reached Japan from India, but as it took on distinctively Japanese traits it became very different from the versions of the game that evolved in other parts of Asia.

The rules and special characteristics of the Japanese game can best be understood by comparison with chess.

1. Chess is played with thirty-two pieces on an eight by eight board, *shōgi* with forty pieces on a nine by nine board. In any given chess position, about 30 to 40 moves are possible under the rules, and a chess game typically ends after a total of about 80 moves (counting each player's move as one); in *shōgi* there are about 80 possible moves in any given position, and a game usually takes 115 to 120 moves. This means that *shōgi* players have a correspondingly greater number of choices. Mathematically, the number of possible moves is 10^{60} in Othello, 10^{120} in chess, and 10^{220} in *shōgi*.

2. The biggest difference is that in *shōgi* captured pieces can be reused as the captor's own. This means that whereas a chess player's options narrow as the game progresses, in *shōgi* they multiply and diverge, until they number approximately 300 in the final stage of the game—and there is usually only one right choice.

3. In all two-handed board games, the player who moves first has an advantage. In the internationally popular game of *go,* under Japanese rules, when the two players are of equal skill five and a half points are added to White's score to compensate for Black's advantage in playing first. In *shōgi*, however, the second player's handicap is negligible. Among professionals in Japan, the player who moves first wins about 51 percent to 53 percent of all games. There are even some top professionals who win far more often when playing second than when playing first.

There is, as yet, no mathematical explanation of this trait. But if a board is set up with only the pawns on each side, so that the players must advance a pawn at every turn, calculations show that the first player's pawns will all be gone after thirty-six moves.

Thus the second player can adopt an aggressive strategy designed to win and not merely draw. This leads to another characteristic: the fact that draws are very rare. Out of more than two thousand games played annually at the professional level in Japan, only about 3 percent end in a draw.

The small number of draws no doubt makes *shōgi* attractive to chess lovers and may account for its growing popularity overseas, mainly in Europe and the United States, in the last two decades. At the same time, the relationship between *shōgi* and computers has also begun to attract interest.

The Progression of Play

A *shōgi* game can be divided into three stages: the opening, the middle game, and the endgame. On occasion, a game may start with a quick attack and enter the endgame directly. Normally, however, the opening occupies the first 30 or 40 moves and consists of standard variations (*jōseki*); the middle game progresses in about 40 moves from the exchange of pieces to penetration of the opposing camp; and in the endgame, which occupies the last 40 or so moves, each player attempts to checkmate the other's king.

The key to winning at *shōgi* is good "whole board perception" (*taikyokukan*), or the ability to "see the board" as the position continually changes. Technique is also needed to employ *jōseki* and fight local skirmishes. At the level of professional and ranked amateur players, however, these skills tend not to vary greatly. A game of *shōgi* pits one's sight of the whole board against that of one's opponent. If the situation is in one's favor, one can simplify it and press on to victory, but if it is unfavorable, one must extend the battlefront and invite mistakes by one's opponent.

There are four criteria in assessing the situation: (1) material, that is, the relative value of pieces gained and lost; (2) the effective potential of the pieces on the board; (3) the inherent potential in the grouping of one's pieces ("good shape") and the security of the king's castled position; and (4) who has the move. A player who is ahead on all four counts has an overwhelming advantage, but this rarely occurs, since the two sides start with equal forces and make one move at a time.

There are subtle shifts in the relative importance of the four criteria between the opening, middle game, and endgame. During the opening, the emphasis is on material. Losing one pawn means, in effect, losing two, because it can be put back into action by one's adversary. Thus, until one is ready to go on the offensive one is careful not to let pieces be taken. Good shape is also important, and there are many *jōseki* for achieving this. The aim is to establish an ideal formation while preventing one's opponent from doing likewise. The opponent tries

to interfere, of course, and as small skirmishes develop the game enters its middle phase.

In the middle game, pieces are frequently exchanged. Professional players say that this is when *shōgi* is at its most interesting. Here, the different powers of the pieces become more important than the material situation.

The key is to penetrate the opponent's camp with as strong a force as possible. In addition, each player's focus moves closer to the position of the opposing king. At this point, capturing pieces at a distance will do nothing to improve one's attacking potential. What matters is how effectively the pieces on the board are used.

In the endgame, material counts for little. No matter how many pieces a player may have lost, the player who is first to checkmate the other's king wins, and therefore the most important element is which player has the move. The key is to take the initiative every time one has the move until the opponent is checkmated. Victories in *shōgi* are often won by a margin of one move. Waiting one more turn to make the same move could cost the game.

It also becomes essential to have one's own king in a secure position, as this will help slow the opponent's attack. Usually, the *hisha* (rook), *kakugyō* (bishop), *keima* (knight), and *kyōsha* (lance) are used for attacking and the *kinshō* (gold general) and *ginshō* (silver general) to defend the king.

The fascination of *shōgi* lies in the constantly shifting weight of the four criteria. Even in games between top professionals, often both players will judge their own position to be superior (or sometimes inferior) as they study the same board. One of them is wrong, and that becomes the deciding factor. It is said that, in *shōgi*, after 60 moves every position is unique. Thus "sight of the board" takes both a wealth of experience and keen intuition.

Computer *Shōgi*

In the world of board games, 1997 was a landmark year. In the spring, the legendary chess champion Garry Kasparov lost to Deep Blue, the IBM supercomputer. (In the same year, a computer also beat a human player at Othello.)

The 1997 model of Deep Blue had approximately twice the computational speed of the previous year's version. But the decisive factors behind Deep Blue's victory were reportedly the improved software's evaluation function, used to evaluate the computer's options (its sight of the board, as it were), and the massive parallel processing power enabling vast numbers of options to be swiftly analyzed in choosing a move.

Research on a chess program capable of beating humans began in the United States in the late 1940s, as part of efforts to adapt military software to civilian uses after World War II. In Japan, the quest for *shōgi* software that can beat the professionals began in earnest in the 1980s, led by information processing researchers. The Computer-Shogi Championship, held each March in the Tokyo region, draws about fifty corporate and other research teams every year, as well as chess software makers and other parties from foreign countries, such as England. Last year's champion was a student at the University of Tokyo who has since left his studies to become an entrepreneur. But *shōgi* software has not yet progressed beyond the level of a third-*dan* amateur.

Will a computer ever vanquish a *Meijin* titleholder? "Computers will surpass humans between 2010 and 2020," predicts Hitoshi Matsubara, chief researcher at the Electrotechnical Laboratory of the Agency of Industrial Science and Technology, Ministry of International Trade and Industry, in Tsukuba, Ibaraki Prefecture. But to get there, he says, it will be necessary to take a different approach from that of Deep Blue's developers.

Deep Blue is an exhaustive-search computer, that is, it examines every single potential move. In chess, every move has a mathematical value, and in the endgame the options narrow. Chess thus proceeds by means of selective choices, meaning that one can win by consistently making the move with the highest value available.

In certain *shōgi* positions, however, often the next move has no inherent value as a move. Once the two sides have engaged, there are even cases where it is better not to have the move, since whoever moves first will only worsen his or her position. Judging the best timing of one's moves in relation to the other player's then becomes the most important point. Hence, a *shōgi* computer should not simply select the best of its options but should recognize that its opponent is playing with such considerations in mind.

Matsubara says: "A *shōgi* computer will have to be thoroughly at home in Oriental culture." He is presently at work on emulating the thought processes of professional *shōgi* players. In any given situation, a professional player intuitively chooses two or three possibilities to pursue in depth, and Matsubara hopes to learn to replicate their perceptions through interviews.

"In chess," says Matsubara, "the first computer to beat professional players, Carnegie Mellon University's Deep Thought, did so in 1987, and ten years later a computer defeated Garry Kasparov. Judging by the rate of technological development,

we can predict that a *shōgi* computer capable of winning against professional players will appear in 2006 or 2007, and victory over the *Meijin* will come three or four years later."

There are many challenges involved in meeting this schedule, however. First, as Matsubara admits, it is doubtful how many of the professionals' insights can be converted into data through interviews. Yoshiharu Habu, current holder of four of the seven major titles, says: "I know that this move is the best, but I can't explain the process that led me to it in words."

In developing a *shōgi* computer, Matsubara is not only incorporating game theory but is also holding joint symposiums with psychologists in order to draw on their methods. "Without an understanding of the culture and a playful spirit," he says, "the computer won't make any progress."

The Making of a First-Class Player

In Japan, *shōgi* is said to be the field in which professionals and amateurs are the farthest apart in ability, and it is thus regarded as extremely difficult to attain full membership in the Japan Shogi Association, which is open to professionals of the fourth *dan* and above.

At most, professional *shōgi* players play about sixty games a year. But because each player is allotted a total of three to six hours, a game that begins in the morning will last into the evening or even late into the night. Games in title matches may be two-day events held at a country inn where the contestants stay overnight. By the end of a game, they say, a player will have lost two to three kilograms.

To become a professional, normally one should learn the rules by age ten and reach amateur sixth-*dan* rank by about age twelve. (Amateur players begin playing at the fifteenth-*kyū* level and work their way up to the first-*kyū* level; from there, they advance to the first-*dan* rank and work their way up to higher numbered *dan* ranks.) The next stage is the Shōreikai (promotion society), which trains new professionals. There are two Shōreikai, in Tokyo and Osaka, and about one in three aspiring players succeeds in gaining admission.

The Shōreikai have a total of 130 to 140 members, ranging in ability from the seventh *kyū* to the third *dan*. A player who does not qualify as fourth *dan* by his or her twenty-sixth birthday must automatically resign; after that, a professional career lies forever out of reach. Barely 20 percent of the trainees graduate. They must then advance through the professional ranks (fourth through ninth *dan*) at the rate of one *dan* every year. The road to the top is long and steep.

All professionals must be able to "read" or analyze a large number of moves in depth. They routinely examine hundreds of possible outcomes from any given position. But according to Kunio Yonenaga, a renowned lifetime holder of the *Kisei* (*shōgi* sage) title, to become a top player requires skill at *not* analyzing. One must constantly hone one's ability to see the board in order to discard 299 of 300 alternatives and choose the one best move while racing the clock during the endgame. It is this that makes the difference between a first-class and a second-class player.

Kisei titleholder Masataka Gōda puts it this way: "Because I've been playing *shōgi* since childhood, my right hand knows a good move by its feel." Professional players generally reach the peak of their analytic abilities around the age of twenty, then go on to learn whole board perception and strategy, entering their prime in their mid-thirties. A top professional's annual income can exceed ¥100 million.

Potential Applications

Research on *shōgi* is beginning to be applied in other fields. Such applications are hardly new, since *shōgi* is said to have influenced the development of *wasan*, the traditional mathematics of Japan, during the Edo period (1603–1868). Kurushima Yoshihiro (d. 1757), a famous *wasan* scholar of the mid–eighteenth century, was the first Japanese to generate determinants. An expert at *shōgi*, he is believed to have developed them without any influence from outside Japan, working from the nine by nine *shōgi* board.

Professor Yasushi Yonenaga of Akita National College of Technology has put the methods of total quality control to work in analyzing the *shōgi* styles of today's players. By focusing on the frequency with which different players use the various pieces, he hopes to identify their individual styles. Yonenaga expects that similar analyses will prove useful in many areas of market research, such as the variability of consumer preferences for automobiles.

Probably the greatest interest lies in applications to artificial intelligence. Matsubara of the Electrotechnical Laboratory says his work on developing a *shōgi* computer will help build artificial intelligence systems of various kinds. Take medical diagnostic systems, for example. When a patient complains of a vague pain, a skilled doctor tracks down its cause by a procedure that resembles the thought process of a professional *shōgi* player choosing the best move in an unfamiliar situation.

(Continued on page 14)

From the Japanese Press
(November 1–December 31, 1998)

HISTORY

Oldest Stone Tools in Japan Found in Miyagi
The early paleolithic site at Kamitakamori, Tsukidate, Miyagi Prefecture, previously yielded what were believed to be the oldest stone tools found in Japan, at about 600,000 years old. Now, thirteen artifacts, including a stone core from which small flake tools were made, have been found at the site in a still older stratum, dating back 600,000 to 780,000 years —about the same age as "Peking man." The discovery has been hailed as invaluable in tracing the origins of the Japanese people. Six of the flake tools found scattered near the core match it exactly in cross section, strongly suggesting that this was a tool-making site. (N, M, S: Nov. 4)

Middle Jōmon Raised-Floor Buildings May Have 7,000-Year-Old Roots Near Yangtze
A joinery method from the end of the Middle Jōmon period (about 4,000 years ago) recently discovered at the Sakuramachi site in Oyabe, Toyama Prefecture, has been found to be the same as one used about 7,000 years ago at the Hemudu site near the Yangtze River in Zhejiang Province, China. The shared method—a dadoed cross lap joint—offers a valuable clue to the origins of traditional Japanese construction techniques. Moreover, wet-rice cultivation has generally been held to have reached Japan from tropical regions, but an alternative theory of origins in the Yangtze region has been developed largely on the basis of discoveries at Hemudu, one of the world's oldest sites of rice cultivation. The correlation of construction techniques is thus likely to influence the debate over the route by which rice cultivation reached Japan. (M: Dec. 30)

MISCELLANEOUS

Kurosawa Film Archive Planned in Hollywood
Fund-raising is to begin for a U.S.-based project to preserve all of the late director Akira Kurosawa's films and make them more widely known to the American public. Those developing the plans include the Japan-America Society of Southern California in Los Angeles, the Nippon Foundation, and the Film Archive of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Among those serving on the project committee are such famous directors as Steven Spielberg (*Schindler's List*), Martin Scorsese (*Taxi Driver*), Sydney Pollack (*Out of Africa*), and Francis F. Coppola (*The Godfather*). It is planned to restore prints in poor condition and make the films available to audiences nationwide, mainly through educational institutions. (S: Nov. 28)

Nara Monuments Inscribed on World Heritage List
At its Kyoto meeting, the twenty-second session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee added thirty cultural and natural properties to the World Heritage List, among them "the historic monuments of ancient Nara." The historic monuments in Nara consist of five Buddhist temples (Tōdai-ji, Kōfuku-ji, Gangō-ji, Yakushi-ji, and Tōshōdai-ji), Kasuga Shrine, Mount Kasuga's primeval forest, and the remains of the imperial palace at the ancient capital Heijōkyō. They contain twenty-five buildings designated National Treasures, including the Great Buddha Hall and Shōsōin repository at Tōdai-ji and the five-storied pagoda at Kōfuku-ji, and another fifty-three that are Important Cultural Properties. The sites occupy a total area of 3,118.4 hectares, including the preservation districts and buffer zones provided under Japanese law (mainly by the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties), and they will be registered in the category "cultural landscapes," which represent "the combined works of nature and man." (A, S: Dec. 3)

Paris Jōmon Exhibition Revises Image of Japan
An exhibition introducing the culture of the Jōmon period (ca. 10,000–300 b.c.) opened at the Maison de la Culture du Japon à Paris at the end of September. Sponsors of the two-month exhibition, the first ever held in Europe, included the Agency for Cultural Affairs and the Japan Foundation. Over 110 items of high artistic value were displayed, among them the clay figurine called

Abbreviations used here:
A…Asahi Shimbun M…Mainichi Shimbun
N…Nihon Keizai Shimbun S…Sankei Shimbun
Y…Yomiuri Shimbun

the "Jōmon Venus," which is a National Treasure, and deep *kaen* pots, known for their exuberant flamelike rim ornamentation. The exhibition drew nearly thirty thousand visitors, including French President Jacques Chirac, who is known to have a deep knowledge of Japan, and renowned cultural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. Many visitors seem to have come away with their image of Japanese culture radically revised. (N: Dec. 15)

OBITUARIES

Keisuke Kinoshita, 86, film director, December 30. He made his directorial debut in 1943 with *Hana Saku Minato* [The Blossoming Port], and in 1951 displayed his talent with *Karumen Kokyō ni Kaeru* [Carmen Comes Home], a contemporary comedy of human nature and the first Japanese feature film made in color. The success of *Nijūshi no Hitomi* [Twenty-Four Eyes] in 1954 established Kinoshita's fame as a master of lyrical style. His *Nogiku no Gotoki Kimi Nariki* [She Was Like a Wild Chrysanthemum, 1955], *Yorokobi mo Kanashimi mo Ikutoshitsuki* [Years of Joy and Sorrow, 1957], and other major works helped create the golden age of Japanese cinema; he also directed dramas for television. Kinoshita was named a Person of Cultural Merit in 1991. (A: Dec. 31)

Nagaharu Yodogawa, 89, film critic, November 11. He acquired his love of the cinema from his parents, who operated a geisha house. After working as a reporter for *Eiga Sekai* [Movie World], a studio publicist, and editor in chief of *Eiga no Tomo* [Movie Companion], Yodogawa pursued a freelance career writing and broadcasting film reviews and commentaries. As the host of TV Asahi's *Nichiyō Yōga Gekijō* [Sunday Foreign Movie Theater], he never missed an appearance following the program's debut in 1966. Yodogawa was popular for his artless commentary delivered in an inimitable style, as well as his insightful criticism backed by a vast fund of knowledge. (A: Nov. 12)

(Continued from page 12)

There are also promising applications in the financial world. The input from *shōgi* research should enable the experience of analysts to be used more effectively in systems for predicting financial indices.

Shōgi began to attract a significant international following in the 1980s. As an Asian version of chess, it spread first to Europe, then to the United States, then throughout Asia. As title games came to be held overseas, perhaps its popularity was encouraged by the sight of the players in traditional dress —and by the prizes worth tens of millions of yen. At present, *shōgi* is enjoyed by about ten million people in Japan and tens of thousands overseas.

In June, the first International Shogi Forum will be held in Tokyo. The world amateur championship will be decided among thirty-two players representing twenty-five countries, and a symposium to explore the game's historical roots is also planned. This year will mark the beginning of a new era for *shōgi* as an international game.

Editor's Note on Shōgi

The Japan Foundation is indebted to the Japan Shogi Association for its generous assistance in the preparation of the articles on *shōgi* that appear in this issue of *The Japan Foundation Newsletter.*

Readers interested in further information on *shōgi* are cordially invited to visit the Japan Shogi Association's Web site at <http://www.shogi.or.jp/english/english.htm>. Those who have kanji-capable browsers may wish to begin their visit at the Association's Japanese-language front page, <http://www.shogi.or.jp/>. Postal messages can be sent to the Japan Shogi Association at 2-39-9 Sendagaya, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 151-8516, Japan.

Readers who would like to learn how to play *shōgi* may wish to study Tony Hosking's *The Art of Shogi,* which is available from the publisher: The Shogi Foundation, P.O. Box 172, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 8ZA, England.

Architectural Conservation in Japan: Authenticity and Unity

Qinghua Guo

In Japan, great care is taken of historical monuments, which are regarded as both cultural property and historical evidence essential to an understanding of Japanese history and culture—in short, as artifacts upon which culture can grow and flourish. Therefore, it is crucial to pass these cultural properties on to future generations in the full richness of their authenticity and to make them accessible to the public. However, the Japanese approach to the safeguarding of ancient buildings seems to differ from the principles that guide preservation and restoration in the West, as outlined in the Venice Charter, 1964. This paper briefly examines the issue of architectural authenticity in Japan's cultural and traditional context in order to reveal the unity of architectural value in Japan.

Legislation

The Japanese concept of protection of cultural properties was developed following the Meiji Restoration (1868). The government promulgated the Notice for Protection of Cultural Relics in 1871, Regulations on Protection of Ancient Temples and Shrines in 1897, and Law for Preservation of National Treasures in 1929.

The present Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, enacted in 1950, superseded all previous preservation laws, which classified cultural properties as tangible or intangible cultural properties. This law has been revised over the years, most recently in 1996. Under the current version of the law, cultural properties are classified in seven categories: tangible cultural properties, intangible cultural properties, folk-cultural properties, monuments, groups of historical buildings, traditional conservation techniques, and buried cultural properties.

Tangible cultural properties, monuments, and groups of historical buildings pertain to the preservation of architectural objects, while intangible cultural properties, folk-cultural properties, and traditional conservation techniques relate to the protection of traditional techniques and skills. The principle of the law is that cultural properties, or material objects, are tangible cultural properties and that the knowledge and techniques are intangible cultural properties that are necessary to produce or preserve the tangible cultural properties. The Japanese law protects intangible cultural property by recognizing people and organizations as living national treasures who hold such knowledge, techniques, and skills. Japan stands alone in taking legal measures to protect traditional techniques and occupations and officially recognize the holders of these skills.

As well as enacting and revising the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, the government has issued several standards and regulations for designating and selecting cultural properties.

In the 1990s the Japanese government instituted additional measures for protecting and utilizing the nation's cultural properties: (a) extending the areas of protection to include the historical context of the cultural properties; (b) strengthening comprehensive research and emphasizing training by subsidizing the transmission of intangible cultural properties; (c) displaying the remains of ancient capitals and archaeological sites and restoring important historic buildings in tandem with city planning; (d) recommending national treasures to be inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List and establishing an international center for the maintenance and repair of cultural properties; and (e) allying national and local administrative bodies to make cultural assets more accessible to the public. Only about twelve percent of Japan's national treasures and important cultural properties are owned by the state.

Techniques

The traditional Japanese house is a wooden structure. The initial impression of such a building is that of a structure (or structures) crowned with a huge roof. The roof is in fact supported by a wooden frame filled with nonsupporting walls and sliding doors. All building elements are made of flexible natural materials—wood, paper, and straw—which

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are precut for assembly on site. The wooden frame consists of a number of upright posts that support horizontal beams upon which rest short struts that support another tier of beams. It is not uncommon for a ridge to be supported by three or more tiers of beams and struts.

The most typical roof is a double-shell thatch roof. The space between the two shells is spanned by hidden framing. The difference between the two roofs is obvious; the slope of the outer one is steeper, which allows rainwater to drain more easily and is suitable for thatch roofing.

Architectural conservation demands competent artisans with knowledge of traditional construction techniques. The government actively supports preservation of Japan's architectural heritage by protecting such traditional architectural techniques as (1) traditional construction techniques and carpentry; (2) traditional repair techniques; (3) ornamenting and coloring techniques; (4) techniques for board, cypress-bark shingle, and thatch roofing; (5) traditional roof-tile production techniques; and (6) geometric calculation (*kiku*) techniques for the design of overhanging eaves.

Japanese architectural monuments are intimately related to traditional construction techniques. These techniques are necessary to preserve historic structures and are in turn preserved through actual use in preservation work. The essence of this relationship is mutual dependence.

Conservation

Traditional Japanese architecture has been preserved through both continuous use and periodic repair. There are two types of repair: major and minor. Major repair involves structural carpentry —complete dismantling and reassembly or partial replacement of decayed structural elements *in situ.* Minor repair includes reroofing and repainting.

Partial replacement makes use of a temporary framework to support the building while decayed timbers are replaced or repaired. The repairs and techniques include (1) replacing decayed timbers or cutting away the decayed portions and using animal glue or traditional joinery techniques to fasten new replacement elements to the old timbers, (2) stabilizing decayed members by impregnating them with epoxy resin, and (3) reinforcing decayed structural members by any acceptable contemporary method.

Although the Japanese maintain architecture as long as possible, buildings are restored periodically as their timbers inevitably deteriorate. Nowadays major repair, which is undertaken roughly every one hundred years, begins with the measuring, drawing, photographing, dating, and recording of the building; proceeds to the dismantling of the building (accompanied by recording of the details of structural members) and the design of the reconstruction; and culminates in the actual reconstruction. The compilation of a detailed record of the repair work, storage or display of the replaced elements, and attachment to the repair site of a plaque describing the repairs are all required at present. Minor repairs are made in the intervals between major repairs: reroofing is done approximately every thirty-five years; repainting, every forty years.

The Japanese custom of periodic repair is the fruit of both the country's climate and the people's belief. For example, Shinto shrine buildings were traditionally rebuilt every twenty, thirty, or sixty years. This custom has been maintained most notably at Ise Shrine, in Mie Prefecture, from the seventh century to the present day. The principles of restoration are practiced continuously, with utmost care and sensitivity. This unique tradition surely arose from the Japanese people's desire for the renewal of their deities, a desire universal among agricultural societies. People believed that the spirits of buildings could be handed down, if the architectural forms and styles were scrupulously preserved. To achieve this certainly requires that the carpenters have thorough knowledge of design methods, construction techniques, and traditional skills.

That the Japanese people are strongly conscious of the authenticity of historic buildings when undertaking architectural conservation is shown by the reuse of as much of the original material as possible in complete or partial dismantling and partial repair. Architecturally, use of the Japanese modular proportions (*kiwari*) and geometric calculations (*kiku*) guarantee the authenticity of restored historic buildings. Architectural unity is the primary aim in Japan.

Research

Studies related to the preservation of cultural properties are undertaken at Japan's two national research institutions, one in Nara Prefecture and the other in Tokyo. The Nara National Research Institute of Cultural Properties, founded in 1952, engages in research on immovable cultural properties—such as archaeological sites, architectural structures, and gardens—and carries out archaeological excavations. This institute is also responsible for the protection of immovable cultural properties (including conducting an archaeologi-

cal-operations training program) and for the educational use of these cultural properties. The Tokyo National Research Institute of Cultural Properties, founded in 1930, pursues research on preservation techniques.

Of the six groups recognized as holders of techniques or skills related to tangible cultural properties, three are concerned with architectural conservation. These groups, which are responsible for transmitting knowledge of traditional techniques, are the Japanese Association for Conservation of Architectural Monuments, recognized by the government for its competence in carpentry and other traditional skills required for the repair of historic buildings; the National Association for the Preservation of Roofing Techniques for Temples and Shrines, for competence in cypress-bark shingle, board, and thatch roofing; and the Nikkō Shrine and Temple Association for the Conservation of Cultural Properties (that is, properties owned by two shines and one temple in Nikkō, Tochigi Prefecture), for competence in architectural painting and lacquering techniques.

Historic buildings represent human achievement. Their value is spiritual, scholarly, and functional. In Japan, historic buildings and the intangible architectural properties associated with them are united. That is to say, the Japanese see their cultural heritage as a whole, consisting of the monument itself, architectural knowledge, construction techniques, and traditional skills. The purpose of architectural conservation in Japan is to sustain cultural identity and thereby enrich the country's culture.

Mothers and Group Day Care for Children in Japan and South Korea

Lee Woo Joo

Whether women's employment is a response to the structural demands of industrial society or a move toward self-realization by women themselves, the social phenomenon of an increasing number of mothers working outside the home is accompanied by a strong need and social demand for group day care for children.

In the study of the relationship between group day care and child development, attention has come to focus not only on the content of the day care itself but also on the social and cultural factors that affect it, such as the day care environment. Since the content of day care and its environment in a particular society are strongly influenced by the sociocultural environment—that is, the political, economic, cultural, religious, and customary practices of that society—understanding how such sociocultural factors regulate the content of group day care should provide a foundation for exploring the relationship between group day care and child development.

Lee Woo Joo is a special researcher at the Child Educare Research Institute of Pusan National University. Her field is child developmental psychology. Her research on the theme "Child Care and Child Development in Japan and South Korea," conducted at Kobe University, was supported by a 1997 Japan Foundation Fellowship.

For my research, I selected certain aspects of the sociocultural environments of Japan and South Korea that can be characterized as "the lifestyle and child-rearing attitudes of mothers" and attempted to clarify their relationship with group day care. These aspects include the mother's lifestyle, her child-rearing attitudes, the structure of and priorities in her daily activities, and her view of group day care.

The findings indicate that the theory of the mother-child relationship that holds that while a child is young the mother, who is innately maternal, must take care of it at home strongly influences the lifestyles and child-rearing attitudes of mothers, and hence group day care. The influence of this theory can be summarized under three topics.

First, this mother-child relationship theory affects the employment choices and lifestyles of mothers.

Japanese and South Korean mothers who stay at home full time state as their main reason for doing so: "It is better for the mother to devote herself to looking after her child at home while the child is young." In contrast, mothers who work full time outside the home say that they take their children to day care because "It is good for the children

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BOOKS IN OTHER LANGUAGES

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The Bridegroom Was a Dog. Yōko Tawada. Trans. Margaret Mitsutani. Tokyo: Kodansha International Ltd., 1998. 165 pp. ISBN 4-7700-2307-3.

We English-language readers are a fairly spoiled lot, used to getting first crack at translations by Japanese writers, so it will be a considerable shock for some to realize how behind the times we are in the case of Yōko Tawada (b. 1960). Though still in her thirties, Tawada is already an established international literary figure, whose fiction has been available in European languages for some time; in fact, she has taken to composing much of her work in German, the language of her adopted country. Now at long last we have the chance to read the work of one of the young architects of "90s literature," skillfully rendered into English by Margaret Mitsutani.

The title story, "The Bridegroom Was a Dog," will undoubtedly attract the most initial attention, and for good reason, since it is a hilarious, thought-provoking, unforgettable piece of fiction, which won the coveted Akutagawa Prize in 1993. Its central character is a beautiful, exceedingly unconventional small-town cram-school teacher who delights her small charges by telling them, among other things, a fairy-tale that begins:

> Once upon a time there was a little princess who was still too young to wipe herself after she went to the lavatory, and the woman assigned to look after her was too lazy to do it for her, so she used to call the princess's favorite black dog and say, "If you lick her bottom clean, one day she'll be your bride," and in time the princess herself began looking forward to that day.

The story takes an unexpected turn, however, when a "real life" (a phrase of admittedly limited application in Tawada's case) man with pronounced doglike tendencies shows up to literally sweep the heroine off her feet. This launches a relationship that swings from the erotic to the absurd and back again with scarcely a moment's pause, affording us a richly satirical look at male and female sexuality, and the head-in-the-sand mind-set of a typical Japanese community.

"Missing Heels," the second and longest story in the book, is an even more experimental and disorienting work, written in a careening, stream-of-consciousness style somewhat reminiscent of Kenzaburō Ōe's "The Day He Himself Shall Wipe My Tears Away" in *Teach Us to Outgrow Our Madness* (New York: Grove Press, 1977). Here the protagonist is a mail-order bride freshly arrived in some European, possibly German, metropolis. In fact, however, she never gets the chance to talk to her new husband face-to-face, though he joins her at night when she is asleep, and leaves money by her bedside. Nevertheless, she makes an effort to communicate with a variety of people in her new country—language-school teachers, doctors and nurses, shopkeepers, and the like—who generally come across as an arrogant, even racist bunch. Despite its hallucinatory, dreamlike atmosphere, by the end of the story we have been given a painfully acute and thoroughly real sense of what it must be like to step as a foreign wife into a self-professedly "superior" culture.

The third and final selection, "The Gotthard Railway," was originally written in German, a commissioned article (or so we are led to believe) about a tunneled railroad that cuts through a Swiss mountain whose name literally means "hard God." In fact, however, this imaginative, highly subjective "essay" fits well with Tawada's ostensibly more fictional works: the landscape of central Europe is transformed into the body of a great, sprawling male deity, the entry into the tunnel Tawada's initiation into the bloody mysteries of nation and man. Here, for example, is her meditation on the Swiss flag:

> As I stared at the Swiss flag, my vision gradually blurred, and the design began to change. The blood that was supposed to stay frozen outside the cross started to run, seeping slowly into the center. The cross drank it in, and turned into a fat red ball. As it lost its blood, the background grew pale, then finally pure white. Before I knew it, I was looking at the Japanese flag. Until that moment, I'd never noticed how closely the two flags resembled each other: the cross of Christ and the sun of Amaterasu; different shapes, but both islands of a sort. . . . Two sacred islands, standing alone. Isolated, yet brash enough to plant themselves in the center of the world before anyone notices.

After so many novels and stories depicting the United States from a Japanese perspective, this Europe-centered approach is a fresh and stimulating change, made all the more challenging for the fact of its having been written in German, for a German audience.

Can Yōko Tawada's works in German be re-

garded as "Japanese literature"? The question, I feel, is more than technical. Certainly, a Japanese writer who writes in a foreign language for a non-Japanese audience can be seen as working within the context of her or his adopted culture: from this point of view, German literature, not Japanese, has first dibs on a work like "The Gotthard Railway." At the same time, however, it is obviously ludicrous for us to separate the German and Japanese streams within Tawada's writing as if we were dealing with two separate authors. In a real sense, therefore, what her dual career underlines is the absurdity of any monolithic, prescriptive definition of "national literature."

Having said this, though, I think it is also clear that she fits well within the broadening framework of Japanese literature as it has developed in the 1990s. Some of the best "Japanese" writers who have come of age during this decade are Okinawan (like Shun Medoruma [b. 1960]) or Korean Japanese (like Miri Yū [b. 1968]) or, as in Tawada's case, Japanese who have established allegiances with other, non-Japanese communities. In their hands, "Japanese literature" will grow more diverse, and likely more interesting, as we set out on our own careening path through the beckoning millennium.

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themselves to be with their peer group, and for my own part, I want to be a job holder." Both groups of mothers express general satisfaction with their chosen way of life, but the satisfaction level of full-time job-holding mothers is higher than that of full-time homemakers. In descending order of satisfaction, the groups ranked as follows: South Korean full-time job-holding mothers; South Korean full-time homemakers; Japanese full-time job-holding mothers; and Japanese full-time homemakers.

However, with regard to child rearing, in both countries full-time homemakers looking after their children at home reported higher satisfaction than full-time job-holding mothers. The theory that emphasizes the mother-child relationship tells mothers: "For the sake of individual self-realization it is better to work, but for the sake of the child it is better to be at home." In the replies of both groups, we can clearly read the painful dilemma of contemporary mothers, torn between their way of life as an individual and their way of life as a mother.

Second, this theory has a strong influence on mothers' child-rearing attitudes.

The groups' attitudes to the mother-child relationship theory and gender-based division of labor ranked as follows, from the most liberal to the most conservative: Japanese full-time job-holding mothers, South Korean full-time job-holding mothers, Japanese full-time homemakers, and South Korean full-time homemakers.

Mothers at home full time supported the mother-child relationship theory more strongly than did mothers in full-time employment, and they tended to be more conservative about gender roles. But while mothers working outside the home full time had a liberal attitude toward gender roles, they too can be said to be living under the influence of the mother-child relationship theory. They can be said to hold two contradictory sets of beliefs: on the one hand, that men should participate in child rearing and women, too, should make use of their talents and abilities by working outside the home; on the other hand, that mothers are innately suited to caring for children and should be the ones to do so.

Third, this theory influences attitudes toward group day care as follows.

Mothers who have a negative attitude toward group day care for children under the age of three cite the mother-child relationship theory as the main reason for this belief.

There are, however, many studies that indicate that the mother-child relationship theory's excessive emphasis on the child's attachment to its mother produces results that are actually harmful to the personal development and growth of both mother and child. These studies have popularized such catchphrases as "the myth of the first three years" and "the motherhood myth."

Critics of the mother-child relationship theory also point out that the abilities involved in child rearing—loving, cherishing, and taking care of a child—are basically a question of individual character.

While child rearing is thus viewed by some as a question of character rather than gender, in both Japanese and South Korean society the generally accepted view still tends to force child care onto mothers as their responsibility on the grounds of "innate mother love" and the mother-child relationship theory. In both societies, the prevalence of this view can be said to have a strong influence on the child-rearing attitudes of mothers themselves.

AFTERWORD

The Growing Popularity of *Shōgi* Overseas

Teruichi Aono

In 1980, at a time when *shōgi,* or Japanese chess, was relatively unknown abroad in comparison with *go*, it came as startling news to Japanese players that a *shōgi* tournament was to be held in London. Ninth-*dan* Hitoshige Awaji and I immediately went over to lend our support, and I was surprised and delighted to meet an Englishman who was more serious about the game than Japanese players and very keen to encourage its spread.

After learning *shōgi* from an English guide written by a former employee of the BBC, he not only sought out and brought together fellow players but also published an English-language magazine and even made his own pieces.

When I asked the *shōgi* fans at the event what attracted them to the game, they mentioned the reuse of captured pieces and the excitement of a game that has very few draws. *Shōgi* is indeed the only game in the world in which captured pieces can be used again.

We were most concerned about the fact that the names of the pieces are inscribed in Chinese ideograms, but we were told reassuringly: "It just takes a little memorizing, and then it's no problem." For learners, pieces are also available with the names in English, or with the move indicated.

The following year, professional *shōgi* players began to make overseas visits under the auspices of the Japan Foundation, and I was the first to be sent. Where once *shōgi* was played in just a few European nations, as well as in countries with many people of Japanese descent, today it is played worldwide. This June the International Shogi Forum will bring together *shōgi* lovers from around the world.

In addition to a tournament for the world amateur title, the Forum will feature symposiums on such topics as the historical roots of *shōgi* and the likelihood of *shōgi* computers besting human players.

When the world's champion chess player lost to an IBM computer, I was struck by his comment that it will surely be difficult for a computer to be unbeatable at *shōgi*.

Shōgi is part of traditional Japanese culture; it is also a uniquely enjoyable intellectual game. At the deepest level, its principles also hold true in life. I hope that *shōgi* will attract increasing numbers of devotees.

Teruichi Aono, a professional shōgi *player who holds the ninth-*dan *rank, is a* shōgi *lecturer at the Open School of NHK Academy of Distance Learning, in Tokyo. He was a director of the Japan Shogi Association from 1995 through 1997 and is the author of* Guide to Shogi Openings: Shogi Problems in Japanese and English *(Tokyo: Sankaido Ltd., 1983) and* Better Moves for Better Shogi: The NHK Shogi Lectures Step-by-Step Instruction *(Tokyo: Sankaido Ltd., 1983). He was sent to London, Edinburgh, and Amsterdam by the Japan Foundation in June 1981.*

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