

Current Game Situation

Here we meet the first example of Sakata's unique style. Most players would see Black as needing to do something about his two stones in the lower left. It is not an easy position for Black to continue in, but would you play elsewhere now?

4 kyu: I don't think so.

Right. However, Sakata sees no good way to continue and since White played low at the bottom, he feels he is not under too much pressure. So he will play elsewhere.

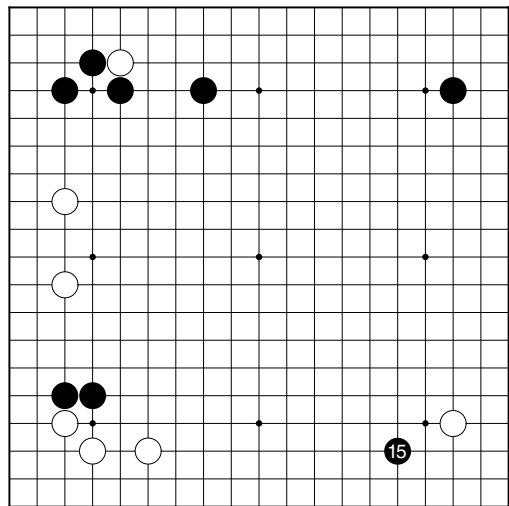
If White is at A in the above diagram, he would have a severe attack at B, but since White is low, the center is more open. Sakata sees no need to defend at this point. Where would you play elsewhere?

4 kyu: Both players are low on the right side so that's not interesting. I would close the upper right corner at C.

Right, that's normal thinking and there is nothing wrong with it.

However, for Sakata that would be too defensive. He wants to be more active and aggressive. So he approaches with 15, denying White an ideal corner enclosure.

15 is not a good place to play in terms of normal theory. It looks strange and you would ask, "Can that be good?" Sakata is not concerned about traditional theory. His practical aim is to deny White ideal shape and this is how to do it. He sees



15

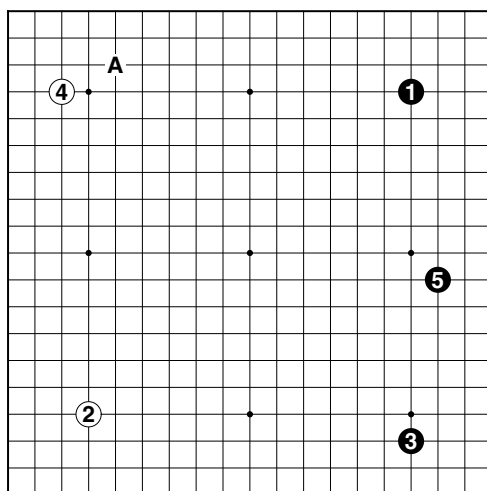
this as a more effective way to play. Sakata's aim is to get sente somehow in the bottom right and then play in the upper right corner.

THE FIRST KISEI TITLE DEFENSE

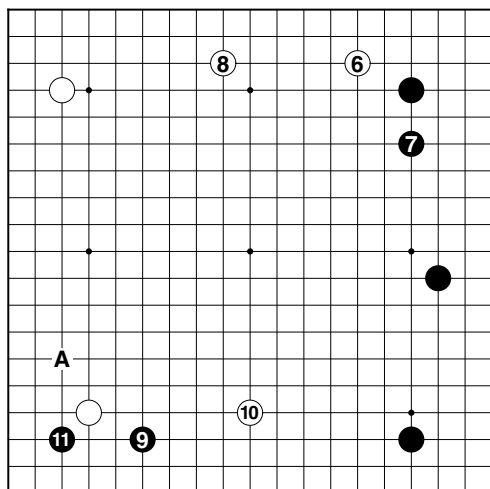
This game is from Shuko's first defense of his Kisei title. His opponent was Kato Masao, who held the Meijin title at the time and was a formidable opponent. This match went to the seventh game, which is the one we will examine. The general expectation was that Kato would win. In this game, Kato is Black and Shuko is White. Komi was five and a half points.

In this match, all seven games started with the Chinese opening. Kato, whose fighting style we discussed in an earlier book, was very fond of the Chinese opening.

④ is unusual because it would be advantageous for Black to approach at A with ⑤. However, Kato at this time is going to play the Chinese opening regardless of what White does.

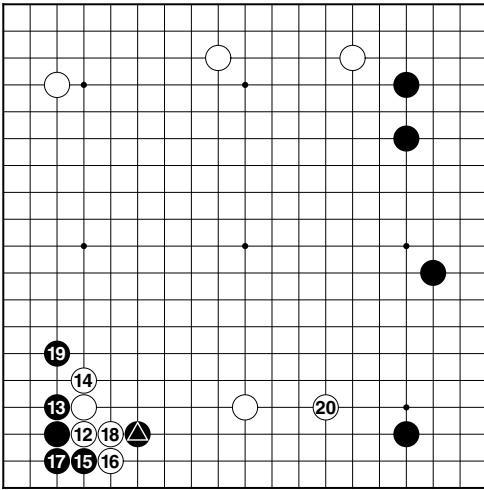


1 - 5



6 - 11

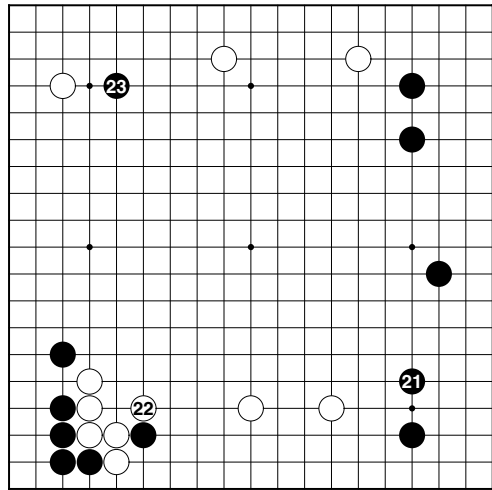
Shuko's aim in playing ④ is to set up the pattern we know as the mini-Chinese opening with ⑥ and ⑧. A common continuation is for Black to play ⑨ at ⑩. If White responds to ⑨ at A, Black will happily play at ⑩, getting a great moyo. Kato goes into the corner with ⑪, which is certainly playable although nowadays making a double approach at A is more common in this situation.



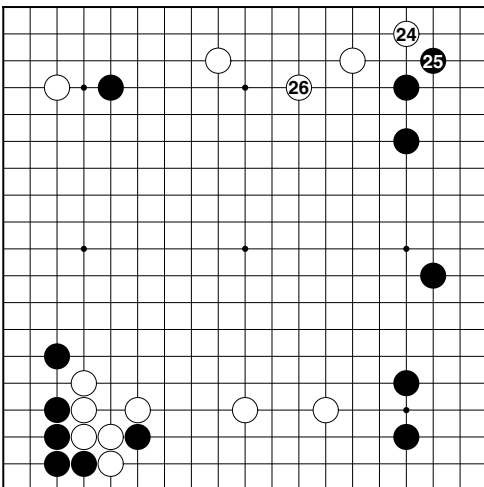
12 – 20

Black makes a nice shape with 21 and White eliminates the aji on the bottom with 22. Approaching the corner with 23 is now the biggest play.

Weaker players as White would now defend this corner, but since both Black and White are low on the left side, it has little value. Black is more interested in attacking White's shape in the top right than in doing anything on the left side.



21 – 23



A very common joseki follows; obviously White must block with 12 on this side. Locally this is good for Black—he gets a big corner and there is still aji on the outside because of \triangle . However, in the big picture when White extends to 20 he has succeeded in restricting Black's Chinese opening to the right side, which is a very good result from White's point of view. After this happens, it is much more difficult for Black to play.

Shuko shows his talent at opening play by immediately supporting his position in the top right with 24 and 26. This is correct play. Once White's top and bottom positions become strong, the right side becomes very open to invasion. This is a clear example of proper whole board thinking.

24 – 26

If Black takes the outside with ①, which would be normal, White will play ② and ④ to close the door on this side and then close the door on the other side with ⑥, making a large area of potential territory on the left side. This would obviously be great for White.

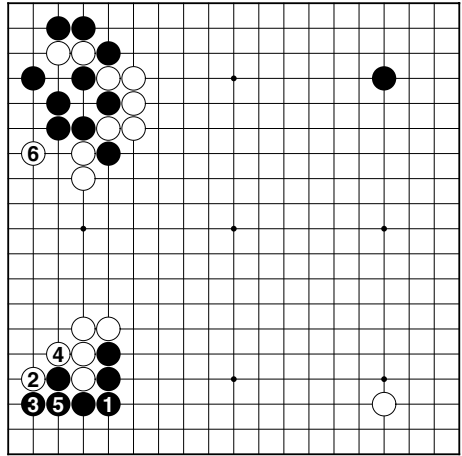
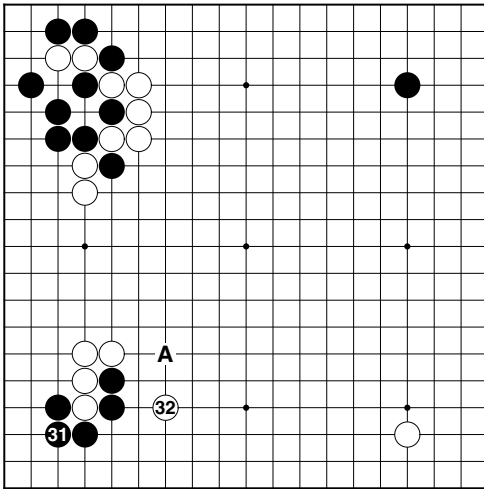


Diagram 5

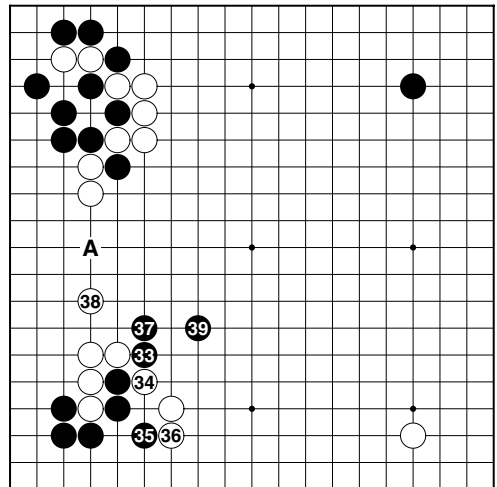


31 – 32

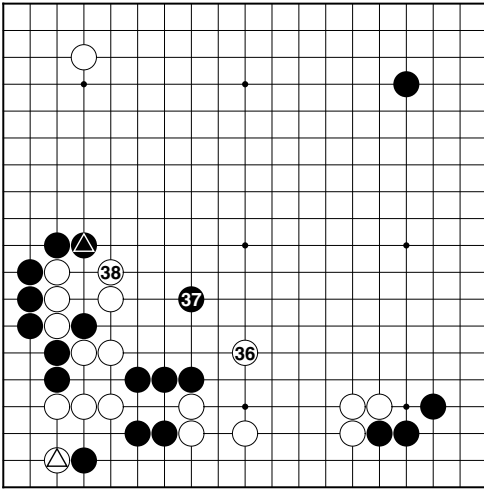
Hence, with the overall situation in mind, Nie connects on the inside at ③①, denying White a large left side position. This leaves some aji on the outside, of course, and White aims to exploit it with ③②. However, ③② is an overplay—White should jump to A instead. Yet, if White plays ③② at A, the exchange with ③① is not a good one for White.

Black hanes at ③③—his aim is to make White overconcentrated and to further limit the value of White’s thickness. ③⑤ makes Black’s corner solid. Nie is continuing to play from the perspective of the whole board.

After ③⑨, White must be concerned about a black invasion at A.



33 – 39

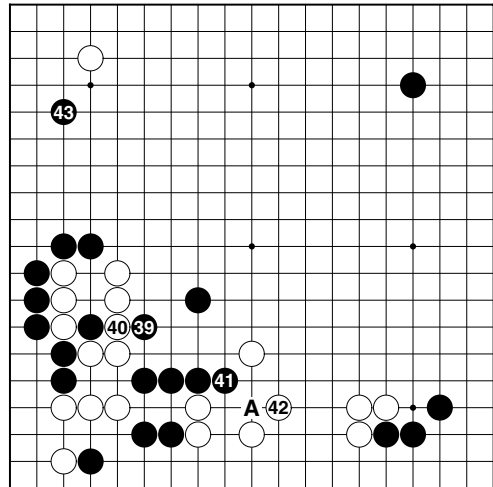


36 – 38

White attacks Black's weak group. The jump with ③⑥ is one line further than usual for more pressure on Black. Black must run with ③⑦, and White saves the three stones in danger with ③⑧. White's left side group is safe, but Black's group running out from the bottom is floating.

The \triangle - \triangle exchange was a big gain for White.

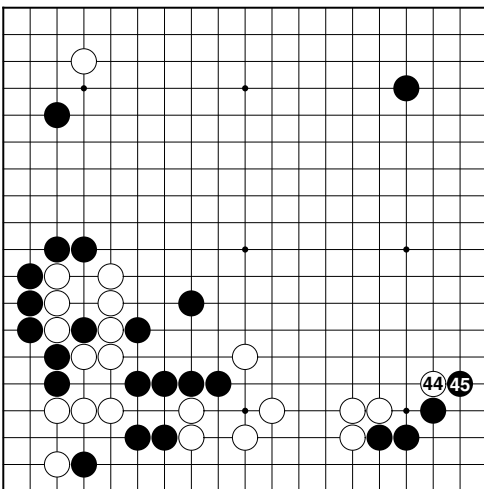
Black gets some help from the sente move of ③⑨ and then pushes at ④①. ④② is the correct response. If ④② is at A, Black can push and cut. White's two outside stones would be heavy. If Black later still pushes and cuts, White can treat the one outside stone as light. However, since Black is behind now, he does not have time to continue in the center but takes the big point at ④③. This makes sense.



39 – 43

White takes advantage of Black's not finishing the joseki in the lower right with ④④. Black can only hane underneath with ④⑤.

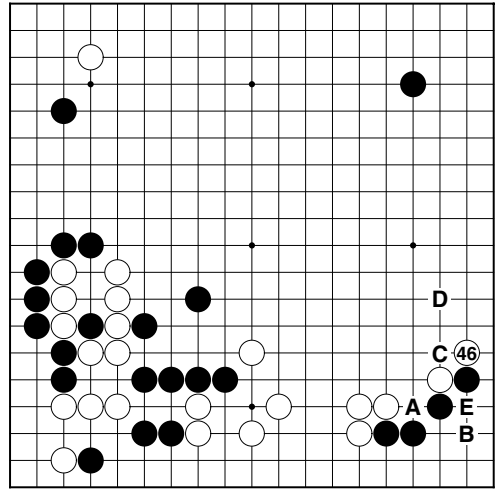
So far we have seen soft, solid, traditional play by Cho. Now we will see his Korean side break out.



44 – 45

④⑥ is bold and aggressive, but it is a good move in this case. The normal way would be ④⑥ at A, Black B, White C, Black at ④⑥, and White D. White gets the outside and Black has a solid corner. After ④⑥, If Black connects at E, White C blocks Black in and gives White a better outside position.

Diagram 1 shows why White can play the game way.



46

White can play ④⑥ even though Black can get out with ① in Diagram 1. However, Black doesn't really gain by doing this. White is so strong around here that Black can't attack effectively. Moreover, White can capture \triangle and Black's corner is not alive so he must make a move there. After that, White can seal Black in at A. All Black would be doing by coming out is playing on some dame points.

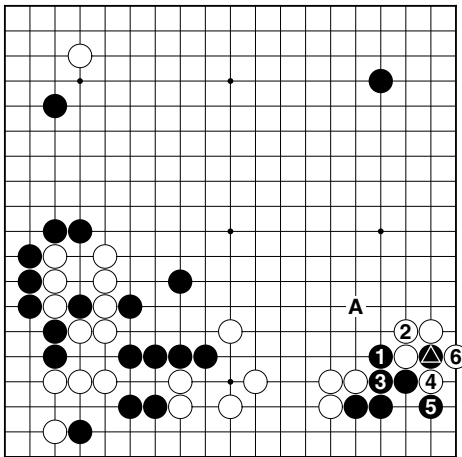
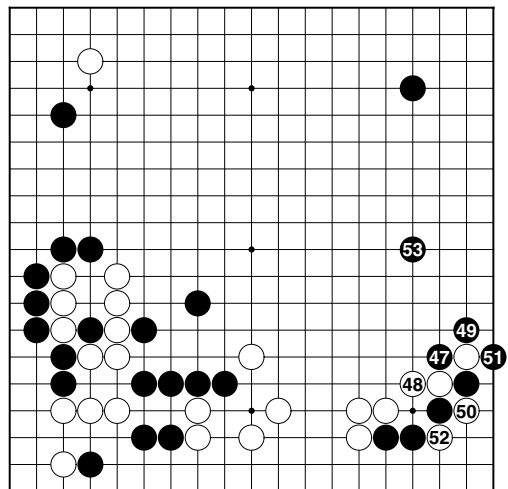


Diagram 1

For Black the only way is to fight back with the cross-cut at ④⑦. However, this allows White to invade the corner with ⑤⑩ and ⑤⑫.

There is still some aji in the corner, but this is a big gain for White. Black gets to develop the right side with ⑤⑬.



47 - 53