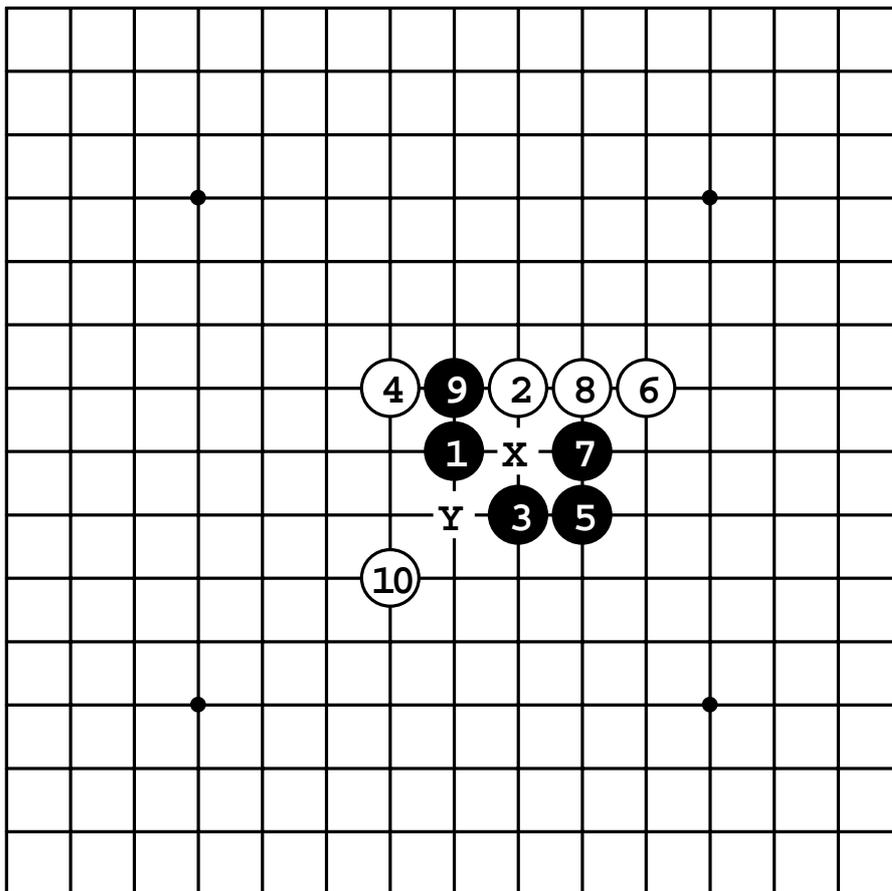


RENJU  
FOR BEGINNERS

written by Mr. Alexander NOSOVSKY

and Mr. Andrey SOKOLSKY

NEW REVISED EDITION



1999

## PREFACE

This excellent book on Renju for beginners written by Mr Alexander Nosovsky and Mr Andrey Sokolsky was the first reference book for the former USSR players for a long time. As President of the RIF (The Renju International Federation) I am very glad that I can introduce this book to all the players around the world.

Jonkoping, January 1990  
Tommy Maltell  
President of RIF

## PREFACE BY THE AUTHORS

The rules of this game are much simpler, than the rules of many other logical games, and even children of kindergarten age can study a simple variation of it. However, Renju does not yield anything in the number of combinations, richness in tactical and strategical ideas, and, finally, in the unexpectedness and beauty of victories to the more popular chess and checkers.

A lot of people know a simple variation of this game (called "five-in-a-row") as a fascinating method to spend their free time. Renju, in its modern variation, with simple winnings prohibited for Black (fouls 3x3, 4x4 and overline ) becomes beyond recognition a serious logical-mind game.

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Vice-president of RIF  
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Former vice-president of RIF .

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# CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION.

## 1.1 The Rules of Renju.

The present text is meant for the beginners. The authors hope though, that advanced players will also find something interesting here.

Why is this game so attractive?

First of all, the game has very simple rules: it seems very easy to build five-in-a-row. The unpretentious equipment (it is even possible to play with a pen on a sheet of paper) also does much to capture the hearts of people of different ages and professions. But as far as studying the game goes, it opens new and unexpected situations.

- "There is nothing simpler, than this game",- a beginner will exclaim after playing a few games.

- "Nothing more complicated",- a master would say. And he will be as much right. In fact, to study how to make moves is much simpler in Renju than in many other logical games. Little by little, studying the richness of the game, one will see for himself, that in subtlety Renju does not yield anything to any other logical game. Sudden changes of situations, multimoveness, carefully calculated attacks and quick counterattacks, beauty of the final thrust - that's what attracts a mature master in Renju.

In short, rules of Renju are:

1. Two players, one after another place stones of white and black color on the intersections of an empty game-board, which consists of 15 horizontal and 15 vertical lines. Black makes the first move beginning from the middle of the board (stones must be placed on the **INTERSECTIONS** !).
2. The winning player is the one, who builds the first "five-in-a-row" (an unbroken horizontal, vertical or diagonal line with 5 stones of the same color).
3. A game is considered a draw, if the players think, that there can be no winner or loser (e.g. the board is full of stones). Any player, unable to make a move, can refuse to place a stone on the board. If both players refuse to place their stones one after another, the game also ends in a draw.
4. Since Black begins the game it is not allowed to build with one move at least two "Threes", or "Fours", or an "Overline" (that is, a line of more than 5 stones) under the penalty of defeat. This prohibition is called a Foul in Renju.
5. White does not have prohibited moves. White can build an Overline and win. The exact definition and explanation of terms will be given in the next chapter.

## 1.2 From the History and Geography of Renju.

Renju first appeared in its simple variation, without fouls for Black. Practically in its first variation, Renju exists all over the world. There are a lot of names all over the world, You able to search it at Hotbot in Internet Go-moku, Gobang, Omok, WuZiQi, Connect5, piskvorky, noughts & crosses, 5 in Line, rendzu, luffarschack, Caro.

The game was first born in the delta of the Hwang Ho river in China. The time of birth is XX Century B.C., so this game is more than 4000 years old! It is surprising, but there are

an archeological evidences, that this game was independently created in the Antic Greece and pre-Columbian America. All of this makes Renju one of the oldest and easiest (as the rules go) logical games but not so simple as it appears.

The second birth, this time as a serious sports game, was given to Renju in Japan. Initially the game was brought to the Japanese Islands in the 270 B.C. by Chinese emigrants. It spread very quickly, under a name of "KAKUGO" (five steps - Jap.). The chronicles say that by the break between XVII and XVIII centuries everybody was playing this game - the old people as well as the children (Oriental traditions were reflected in the original etiquette of the modern Renju). The first books on theory of Renju were published in the beginning of the last century. However, right up to the beginning of our century, the game was still played leisurely by the people. This act is evidenced even in the variety of names given to the game: "GOREN" (five-in-a-row - Jap.), "GOSEKI" (five stones - Jap.), "GOMOKUNARABE" or simply "GOMO-KU" (five points in a row - Jap.).

Finally, the modern name - Renju - was born, and it is used now only for the game with the fous for Black, whereas the remaining name, GOMOKU, is used only for the game without fous.

The term "RENJU" (string of pearls) was introduced by Tenry Kobayashi, a Chinese poetry expert, in 1899. It is difficult to say now, what had inspired him to such a poetical image. Maybe it was a winning row of five black or white stones which reminded him of a string of beautiful pearls, or, maybe, a victory in Renju which is as hard as diving for pearls to a sea bottom. Indeed, there is a lot of poetry in the modern Renju. How lyrical are, for example, the names of some Renju openings: Flower, Asteroid and Meteor, Far, Cold, Lucky and Gold Stars, Silver Moon and New Moon, Valley and Canyon, Glory and so on.

Evidently, national temperament of the Japanese and their attitude to logical games as an art more than a sport, found their ideal here. The Japanese believe, that by playing the game, the partners are creating a masterpiece, and sport result of a single game is a minor detail.

From that point of view, our understanding of games is a little bit more pragmatic: in the combination of words "sports-logical game" we are inclined to make an accent on the first half - "sports game". It seems like both points of view have right to exist and every single player must decide for himself, where he wants to make an accent in this dialectic combination.

How the definition of foul appeared in Renju? It appeared like an inevitable result of process of transforming game to a sports game.

Official beginning of this process is creating in 1906 the first union of Renju-players - Tokyo Association (Federation) of Renju. The next important milestone in the history of Renju is 1936, when modern rules of Renju were finally, adopted, and Japanese Federation of Renju began active work. The thirty years, which had passed between these two dates can be called as "vague time" of Renju in Japan. What had appeared as its result?

First of all, a traditional Japanese system of sports qualification had been created - kyu and dan. Now, the uppermost category of kyu is the 1-st, the lowest is the 12-th. The lowest dan is the 1-st "sho-dan", the uppermost is the 9-th. The highest title is Meijin.

Secondly, and this is most important, thanks to appearance of hundreds of talented new players (Dans), it became apparent that when playing without prohibitions for Black, White always loses the game; no matter how skilfully he plays and defends. This situation is explained by the inevitable for all logical games "rule of the first move", which is Black. An idea to get over the threading crisis of the game (the apogee of it was in the

middle of the twenties this century), restricting the prohibitions for Black, had appeared. Very quickly an agreement was reached to restrict the board - first to 19x19 (like in Go), and then to 15x15. There were attempts to restrict the third move for Black, making it outside the 5x5 square. However, all these experiments, did not pass the test of time. Then players approached the problem from the other end, and forbade Black to make Forks 3x3. But it was also not enough. Finally, by the proposal of Meijin Rakusan Takaki the rules of fouls 3x3, 4x4, and overline were adopted which we now call Classic. The only Fork 4x3 remained for Black.

A skilled player can ask a question: who will guarantee that all these complicated restrictions will suffice? Will anything new appear?

It is possible to say for sure, that in the coming decades changes will not happen. Almost fifty years of experience along with the various regulations of modern rules, practically equalized the players' chances.

And one more argument for the Fouls: their introduction, quite unexpectedly for their creators, had sharply enriched the game tactically and added new quality to it. How beautiful and graceful White victories look with the help of forced Foul for Black, whose victory seemed to be inevitable one move before it! Playing without Fouls...

That's why it is possible to say, that Renju, at least in Japan, had gone out of childhood of creation and revision of the rules, and became the beautiful time of adulthood. It is not necessary to repeat all existing mistakes of the Japanese, where this game originated and was cultivated.

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That's why it is possible to say, that Renju, at least in Japan had went out of childhood of creation and revision of the rules, and come to the beautiful time of mature age. It is not necessary to repeat all mistakes of Japanese in the countries, where this wonderful game just become to cultivate.

The modern Renju in the World is a young sports. The Renju International Federation was created in 1988 in Stokholm, Sweden. It organized two World Championships of Renju and Five-in-a-Row: First in Kyoto, Japan 1989, Second in Moscow, Russia 1991. Third World Championship in Arjeplog, Sweden 1993. 4-th in Tallin, Estonia 1995, 5-th in Sankt-Peterburg 1997, 6-th was in Beijing, China 1999, and 7-th will be in Kyoto, Japan 2001.

This book was written in 1984, but now, in 1999, we shall add some good news for this new edition. There exists now a regular English issue of the RIF - "RENJU WORLD" magazine - where Renju and Five-in-a-Row information is published.

You can download last issues at <http://www.neti.ee/renju/>

Other Five-in-a-Row and Renju books in English:

1. "Five-in-a-row / Renju" by Mr Goro Sakata & Mr Wataru Ikawa.1981
2. "From the Opening to the Middle of the game" by Mr Sigeru Sagara. 1984
- 3."Zvon Kamney" by Mr. Mikhail Kozhin & Mr. Alexander Nosovsky 1997

There is a lot of literature in Japanese, Russian and Sweden. There is also software for Renju .

There are playing program "Blackstone" for Windows-98 (winner of last Computers WC in 1998) as well as a database program called RenBase-98 with Base-17000 with 17000 real games from all competitions of last years, they are not free (but if you are serious in Renju you need it) It is also possibility with the help of RenBase to make diagrams like we do it in this book and make your own magazine or Internet Web-page.

We have also World Championships in Renju among computer programs next will be in summer of 2000. If you are interesting contact Alexander Nosovsky.

Shareware programs you can download Renju, Five-in-a-Row, Pente

<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/mmammel/marksfiv.htm>

We hope that after reading this book you will be interested enough to contact RIF: we are able to help you either find a Renju-club in your country or create one. Please, write to RIF main office : Box 249 S 551 14 Jonkoping, Sweden.

You can also contact with Tommy Maltell [tommy.maltell@lemes.se](mailto:tommy.maltell@lemes.se)

Please visit RIF WWW-page <http://www.lemes.se/renju>

You can contact author of this book Alexander Nosovsky by e-mail [stigma.ltd@g23.relcom.ru](mailto:stigma.ltd@g23.relcom.ru)

## CHAPTER 2. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS.

### 2.1 Accessories of the game

A complete set of Renju, used in the tournaments, includes: a playing board, a set of white and black stones, tournament clocks and blank sheets to record the game.

**The playing board.** is a wooden, paper or veneer board with 15 horizontal and 15 vertical lines. The intersections created by these lines, are called я\_pointsя.. To mark these points, the letters of Latin alphabet (e.g. A, B, C...X, Y, Z...a, b, c...) or move numbers are used. In Japanese literature they also use hieroglyphs and some digits.

**Numeric notation** is less popular. This is so because on the diagrams (which are called records of the game) the move numbers are marked, and the corresponding stones do not move until the end of the game. Besides diagram notation is clearer than numeric one.

The playing board is shown on the cover of this book. On this diagram a short game is shown (because of the Black's mistake in the opening on the 7th move), which finished after Black's losing by Foul in the points X or Y.

Out of 225 points of the board, five are emphasized by darker dots: one of them is Central (for the first move) and four of them are Corners (for better visual attachment of diagrams to the board).

**A set of stones.**, usually consists of 50 black and 50 white stones.

Experience proves this amount to be enough for most games (during the tournaments the referee supervising the tournament will be notified of any lack of stones). Stones in the set are not numbered. The size of stones and playing board are selected so that between adjacent stones there will be about a millimeter gap.

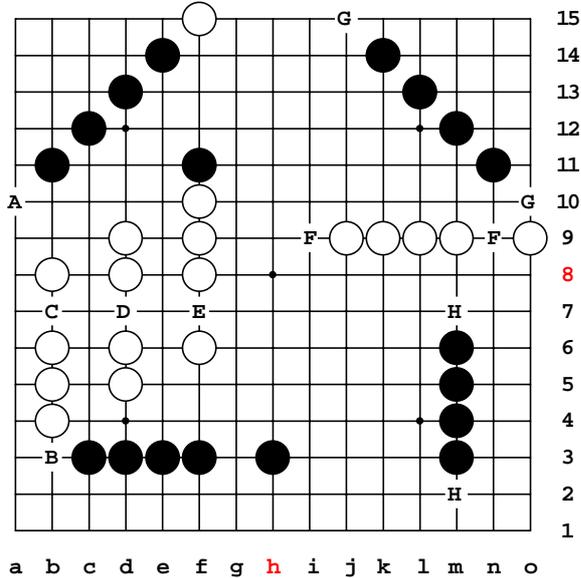
**Tournament clocks** - double-faces (chess-clock). It should be mentioned in addition to Renju rules mentioned in chapter 1, that if tournament clocks are used, any player loses the game when the time given for the game expires.

Sheets used to record the game contain the image of the board, information about the players (last name, first name, ranking, team), time, spent on the moves, code of the tournament, code of the opening and result of the game. After the game ends they are



Dia 1

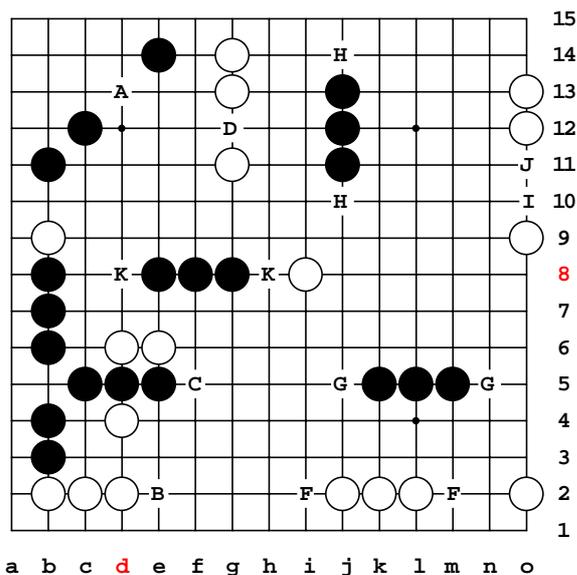
**Five.** - five stones of the same color, which make an unbroken vertical horizontal or diagonal row. Using Chess terminology we shall say that Five is a Mate in this game. Dia.1 shows Black's moves (marked by white dots). which result in a winning Five, i.e., moves, which make group of five stones in the same row.



Dia 2

The introduced term of **Five** describes external conditions of the group of five stones. Describing external relations of Five, it is necessary to mention, that points adjacent to **Five** from both sides should be free of stones of the same color. Otherwise we shall have not a Five, but a six., a seven., an eight., or a nine. (a ten. is already impossible, because Mate inevitably precedes it). **Overline.** is an unbroken row of six or more stones of the same color.

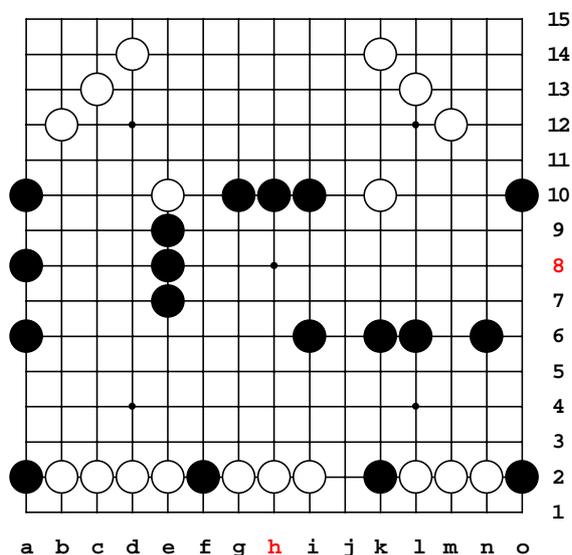
**Attention!** In accordance with the rules of Renju, moves, making an overline are prohibited for Black. Therefore, in the bottom horizontal group of Black stones on dia.1 one cannot move to X (f3), but the winning move will be to a.3.



### Dia 3

It is also better to understand the terms "Four" and "Five" not statically, but dynamically - in the process of building a winning combination.

**Four** - a row of four stones of the same color, which can be extended by one move to Five for Black or to Five and Overline for White. Like in Chess Four is sometimes called Check and is marked shortly "4". Dia. 2 gives some examples of Fours as well as all the moves, which can change them to Fives.



### Dia 4

Attention! It is necessary to distinguish between Four and any four stones in a row, which no move can ever change to a Five. For example, four white stones b2, c2, d2, e2 on dia.4 do not make a Four. Nor will four black stones c3, d3, e3, f3 on dia.2 make a Four if point B is occupied by a white stone.

By its internal composition, Four can be unbroken (4 stones in a row) or with a gap: 2-gap-2 or 3-gap-1 (here gap means a free point).

But we have already pointed the necessity to study external composition, to determine, if a given group can become a winning group. By its external composition all fours can be subdivided into two types:

**Four.** - is a Four, which can be built to Five by the only possible move. Dia.2 represents different Fours in the left side of the board.

They can become Fives only after making moves to points A, B, C, D, E respectively. One can say that all broken fours are Fours. But unbroken fours can also be Fours. It is clear, that if the opponent does not close a Four with his next move (and in the only possible point at that), Five is inevitable.

**Straight Four.** - is a Four, which can be completed to Five from two opposite ends. Straight Fours are shown in the right side of dia. 2.

One can see, that in each case two different winning moves (f, g, h) are possible. Only an unbroken Four, for which one can place a stone in a free point adjacent to it, can be a straight Four. It is obvious, that against a straight Four one's opponent has no defense, because after any of his answers (except when he makes his own Five), the next move of the player with a straight Four will be Five.

**Attention!** The type of Four (straight or not) also depends on the color of the stones. For example, on dia.2 both horizontal Fours have the same internal composition, but left Four (black) is Four, and right Four (white) is straight Four.

The next definition is the most difficult one among simple structures.

**Three.** - is a row of three stones, which can be completed to a straight Four (!) and after that to a Five. Three is also called half-checkmate and is marked shortly "3". Examples of Threes are shown in dia.3 (marked by curved brackets), together with ways to transform them to straight Fours.

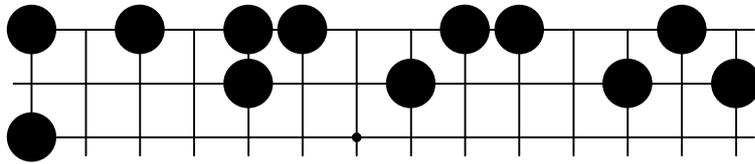
**Attention!** For successful game it is very important to be able to distinguish Three from the so-called "pseudothree" (in other words, false or closed three), which can be transformed only to a closed Four, not a straight Four. Pseudothree can be built to Five only if its owner has two moves in a row. There are examples of pseudothrees on the dia.4. One can easily understand, why each one of them is not a Three. The second horizontal line from the bottom gives examples of linear structures of the three and four stones, which can never be built to a Five.

By its internal composition three can be unbroken (three stones in a row) or broken: 2-gap-1. It is clear, that such linear structures of three stones like 1-gap-1-gap-1 or 2-gap-gap-1 are pseudothrees. Like with fours threes can also be further subdivided into two types by their external composition:

**Three.** - is a three, which can be completed to straight Four by the only possible move.

**Straight Three.** - is a three, which can be completed to the straight Four from two different ends. Obviously, only an unbroken Three can be a straight Three. Straight Threes are shown in the left part of dia.3, closed Threes - in the right side. Points, which correspond to winning moves are marked by letters. One can (and must!) take measures against a Three, by stopping it (thus changing it into a pseudothree) or building a Four of his own. Otherwise, this half checkmate can become a full one (straight Four), against which there is no defense. Pseudothree is not a method to carry a forced attack. Three-

stone groups not situated on the same line also are a means of non-forced methods of attack. The most popular are the following triangular formations:

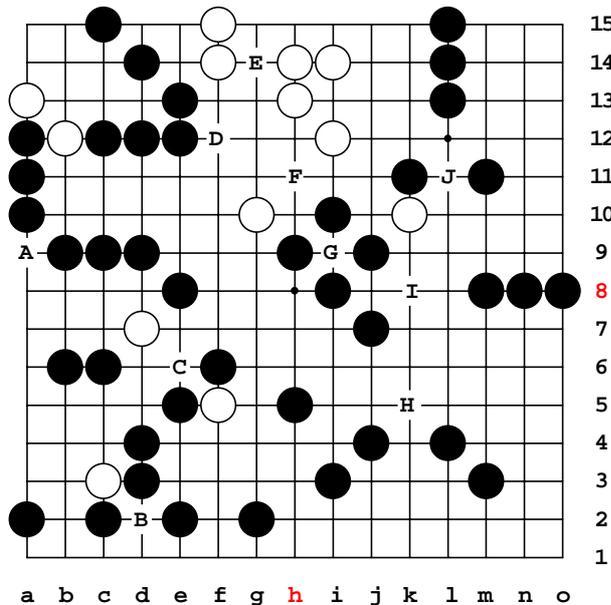


Triangular      Saddle      Angle      Tower

### 2.3 Forks and fouls.

It was explained in the previous paragraph, that Threes and Fours are attacking moves, against which an opponent has to counter-attack. But if one makes only Threes and Fours all the board will be occupied by stones, with no winner. Obviously, one can win only if two threats are created by one move, i.e., borrowing a Chess definition, by a fork.

Fork.- is made simultaneously by one move. At least two threats to built a Five (i.e. Threes or Fours) must cross in the fork point. The amount of threats made by a fork is called Multiple of this fork.



Dia 5

Note! In accordance with the rules of Renju, Forks 3x3, 4x4 and all Forks with multiples more than 2 are prohibited (Fouls) for Black.

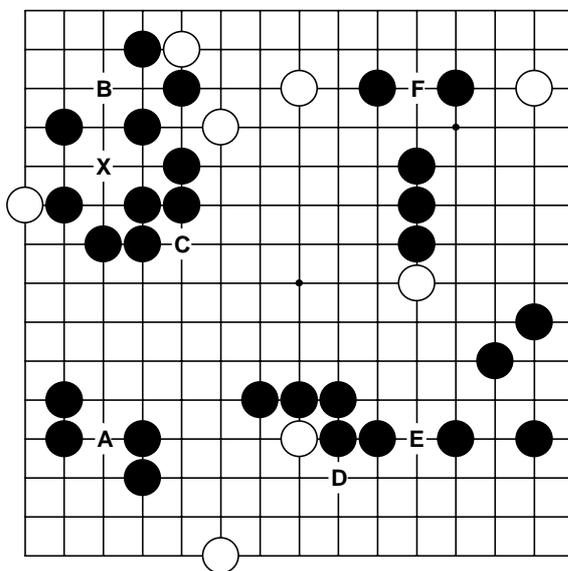
It is essential for understanding of Renju (and also Five-in-a -row), that Fork is a term of external, not only internal composition.

Dia.5 shows some examples of different Fork types: F, G, H are 3x3 Forks; A, D, E are 4x4 Forks; C, J are 4x3 Forks, I is a 3x3x4 fork, B is a 4x4x3 Fork. The last two Forks have multiple 3, all others have 2. One can notice, that the maximum possible multiples of a fork is 8 (try to build it yourself!). By the rules of Renju all the shown Forks with the exception of Forks C and J are prohibited to Black (fouls 3 x3x... and 4x4x...) By prohibited Forks Black makes at least two Threes (forks G, H, I) or two Fours (forks A, D, B), and these Forks are Fouls (i.e prohibited to Black).

**Note!** It is necessary to be able to determine if a move is Fork or not, and to determine the type of Fork.

Examples of moves shown in dia.6 only seem to be Forks. Move A is not a 3x3 Fork, because one of the threats which compose it is false - a diagonal pseudothree. The same is true for moves B and F. The move to E is not a 3x4 Fork because the horizontal group is not a Four (it can only become an Overline not a Five). Finally, move C is not a prohibited 3x3x4 Fork, but a legitimate 3x4 Fork, because the resulting three-stone diagonal group is just a pseudothree - it can become a Four only after a move to X, which itself is a prohibited 4x4 Fork.

**Note!** In the definition of Three the words "...can be completed to straight Four by the only possible move" mean, that this move is not Foul.

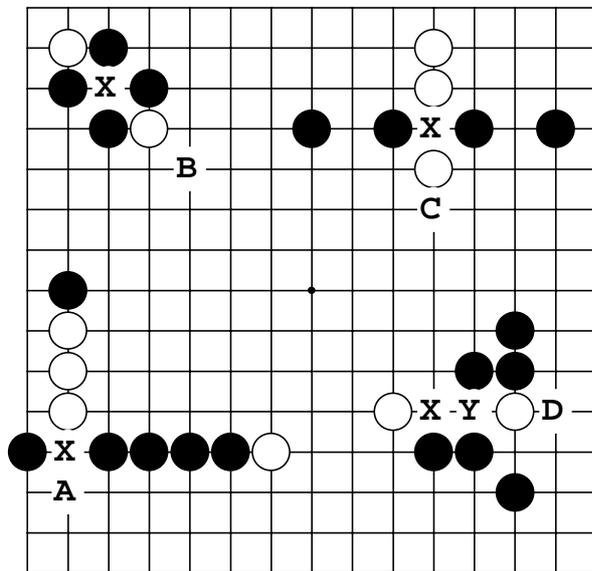


Dia 6

The moves, which only seem to be Fouls, are called Pseudofouls. On dia.6 besides the move to C, Pseudofouls are also making a Three by move D in the bottom right portion, although there is a Three already there (on the fifth horizontal). The point is that these two Threes do not cross in the point D, which was the last move in this position, i. e. they do not make a Fork by a move to D.

At the end of this chapter we will discuss some of the tactical questions, connected with the Foul, although, speaking strictly, these questions should be discussed in the next chapter given to tactics.

The introduced rule of Foul for Black drastically cuts down his opportunities for building winning combinations (Threats and Forks), and White gets another method of fighting - which is to force a Black Foul. Some of White Fours thus become straight Fours, from which, as we have mentioned above, there is no defense. We will clarify this by the examples of the moves on the dia.7.



Dia 7

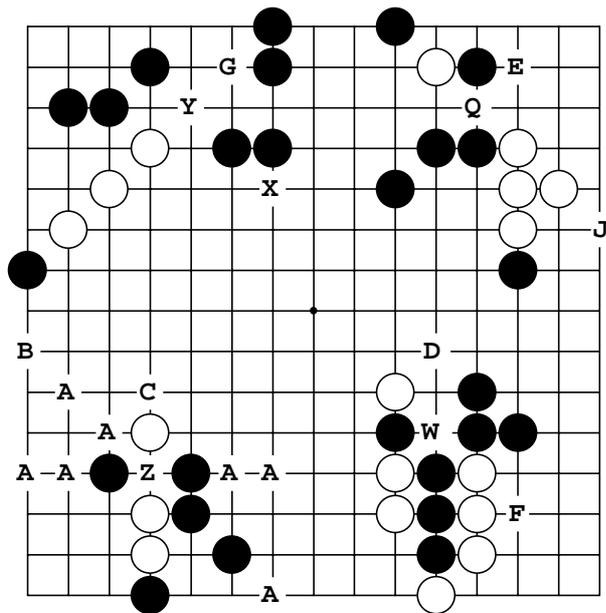
After White moves to A (Four) Black is not allowed to make a move to X, because this move for them is a Foul overline. The White move to B (making only a Three) also inevitably will lead them to victory, because X is a 3x3 Foul for Black. The White move to C (Four) is another winning move, because of 4x4 Foul in the X. Finally, after a brilliant White move to D (not even a Three but a Pseudothree), it is also time for Black to resign, because both points X and Y are 3x3 Fouls. All victories like those ones Renju-players shortly call "victories by Foul", although, of course, in any game, played to the Five, White wins only by making Five or overline.

So, how Black should defend against White's intention to win by Foul? One must always keep in mind that changes in position (i.e. in external composition) make some prohibited moves legitimate. And Black has several different ways for such purposeful changing of the position.

First, Black can simply occupy the point, with which White intend to win. For example, if it is Black's turn to make a move he will occupy points A, C or B on dia.7, and thus destroy White's threat. However, this method is not always helpful. For example, moves to points C or D on the same diagram do not save them (White can adjust its structure from the other side).

Second, one can try to change the Fork type. For example, in the bottom left position on dia.8 White threatens to win by the 3x3 Foul in the point Z by making a move to A. With their right of move, it is enough for Black to make a move to one of the points marked A, and potential fork Z will become not a 3x3 Fork, but a 4x3 Fork. However, what was said about the first method is also true with changing the Fork type - it is not a universal method either (e.g. what is possible in position B on dia.7 becomes impossible in positions A,C and D - try to find the reason for that yourself!)

Third, it is possible to try to get rid of the loosing 3x3 or 4x4 Fork at all by changing it to a Pseudofoul. For example, in the same bottom left position on dia.8, the Black's move to point B changes one of the potential Threes to a Pseudothree (because it can only become an Overline), and, by the same token the loosing 3x3 Fork to a Pseudofoul. The move to G (made under White's threat to make a move to C) in the position shown in the upper left corner of dia.8 has the same meaning: it changes the loosing 3x3 Fork Z to a Pseudofoul, because the diagonal group of three stones created by the move to Z could be completed to straight Four only by a move to X, which itself becomes a 4x4 Foul.



Dia 8

One special case derived from this defensive method of Black, the so-called Reviving Three., is noteworthy. It is illustrated by the position in the bottom right corner on dia.8. Here White threatens to move to point D and to make a Black 4x4 Foul in point Z. Black could make a move to D or get rid of Foul, by building a horizontal or a vertical Four. However, in this particular position, Black contrive not just to defend, but to win the whole game. To do that, Black should make a Three by a move to D, which White will have to close. Meanwhile point Z stops being the Foul 4x4 Fork, because the vertical group can only become the Foul Overline now. So with his next move to Z Black builds an unstoppable straight Four - the initial horizontal Three has been revived. There are also some other possible means of escaping a Foul threat.

And finally the last remark on the definition of Foul. A situation is possible, when one of the threats, contained in the Fork, is counteattacked by a White Four. Such a position, is shown in the upper right part of dia.8. Here You are tempted not to consider the forced move to X as a 3x3 Foul, because it looks like the resulting diagonal Three is countered by the Four in E, and after the forced answer of Black, their vertical Three is also countered. In reality the move X is nevertheless a 3x3 Foul, because it creates two valid Threes and each of them can become a straight Four. The fact that White can defend this position (but does not have to!), matters not at all: White's move is voluntary.

The example of Pseudofouls given in this paragraph can be summed up in one main rule:

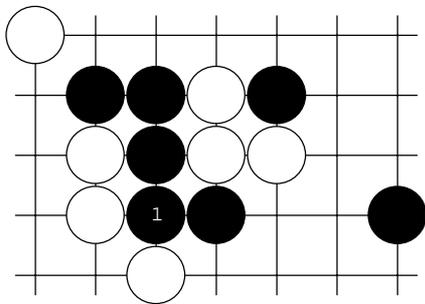
The best way to distinguish Fouls from Pseudofouls is simple: in case of Pseudofouls White can (but does not have to!) defend against all the threats contained in the fork one after another.

This rule can be also applied when you determine the type and multiple of a Fork.

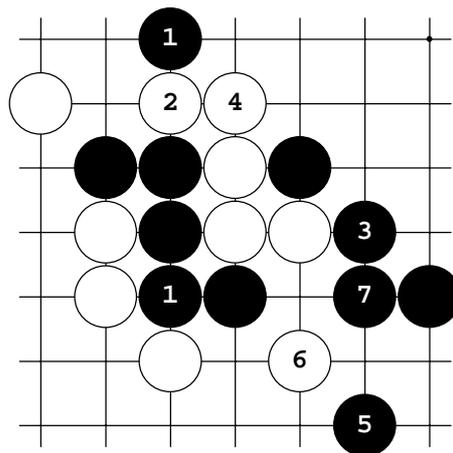
After you get some experience, the rule of the Foul, which now looks complicated, will become natural. The ability to win by Black Foul gives Renju an incomparable beauty, enriches the game tactically and equals chances of both sides: to counter the right of the first move, White gets a truly formidable weapon - Fouls.

### CHAPTER 3. PRINCIPLES OF TACTICS IN RENJU.

#### 3.1 A forced attack at the end of the game.



Dia 9-1



Dia 9-2

If final recipes of defense and offense in Renju could be found and formulated, it would mean, that algorithm of victory or draw of one side has been discovered and completely understood. But even if it does exist, thank God, it has not been found yet, nor is likely to be found in the near future. So, though precision of analytical calculation of game variations, depending on the opponent's move is very important, intuition has no less significance in Renju. Intuition manifests itself for each player and is realized in detailed understanding of a position. Its strength lies mostly in the player's experience and his irrefragable knowledge of the basic tactical methods of defense and offense.

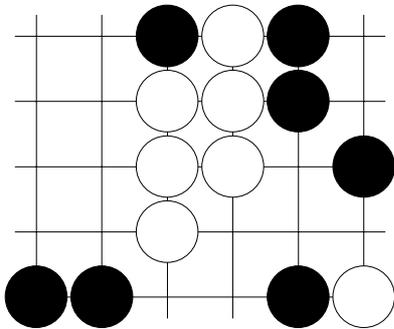
We shall begin with the simplest methods of attack at endspiel of the game. You should always remember that rules of Renju are asymmetrical: Black and White have different methods of attack. Black has less possibilities (because of the Fouls), i.e. the main road to victory for Black lies through the 4x3 Fork. At the same time 3x3 Fork allowed for White does not guarantee his victory, because Black can win by a series of

Fours. Therefore, we shall first discuss just the ways to reach victory with the help of 4x3 Fork (Fork Checkmate-half-checkmate).

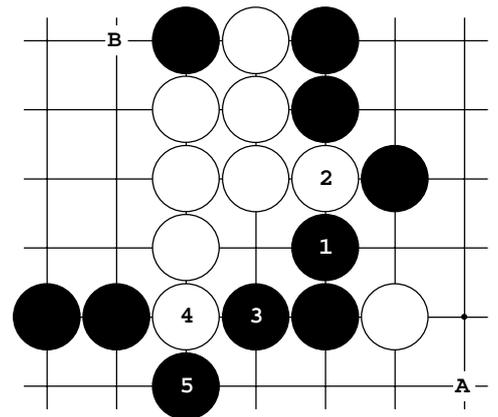
The simplest attacking technique is Victory by Continuous Fours (VCF), because by making Four you don't leave your opponent any alternative except stopping Four in a specified point. Dia 9 (left) shows the initial position and Black's victory there. Don't forget that each new stone changes the position and may create new ways and means to continue the attack (here Four by the move to 1 has created opportunity to make 4-3).

**ADVICE TO A BEGINNER.** First of all, look for VCF in each position. Only when you are sure that there is no VCF use other methods of attack.

If you want to take this advice seriously - start solving Renju exercises and analyze games of the leading players.



Dia 10-1

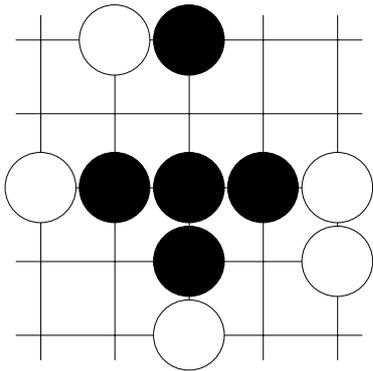


Dia 10-2

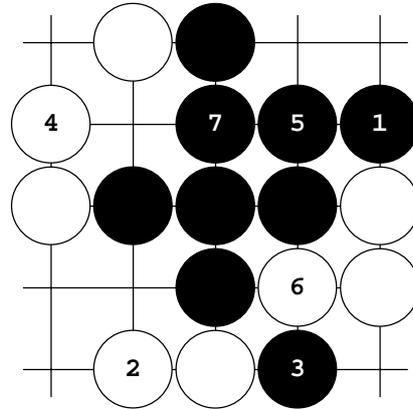
**Attention !** Pay attention to the right order of the moves. Dia.10 shows initial position which ends in Black's victory. If Black selects another move sequence, i.e. if he makes the first move to 3 (from here on we shall write shortly: if 1-3, then...), then White 2-4, and then Black is forced to make his next move to 5, which, after White's move 4-1 (or 4-A, or 4-B), gives victory to White.

The right order of moves is still more significant when you try to reach victory by the series of continuing threes (VCT). Your opponent can counter-attack your Three not only by his Four (which must be stopped), but to create, as a result, his own Three, which you also must stop (if you do not have VCF). See how it is done in positions on dias. 11 and 12.

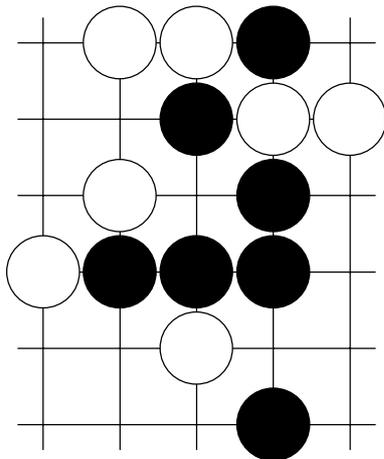
Pay attention, that in position on dia. 12 with another move sequence, Black, instead of the winning Fork 4X3 can come only to a Foul.



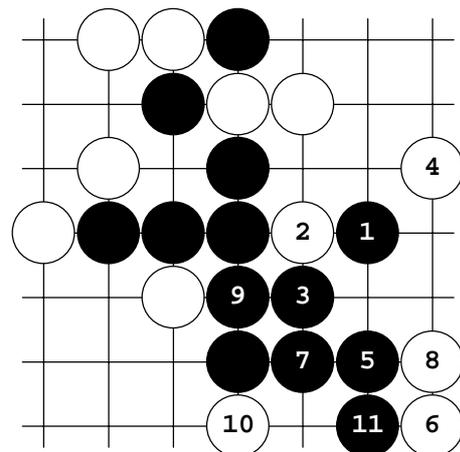
Dia 11-1



Dia 11-2



Dia 12-1



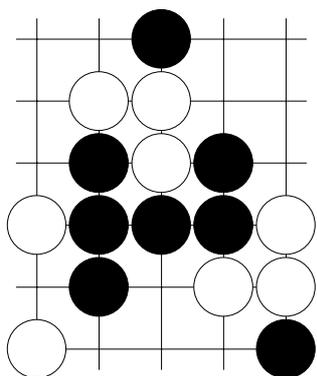
Dia12-2

**ADVICE TO A BEGINNER.** Carefully calculate your attack, make sure that your opponent has no counter-game.

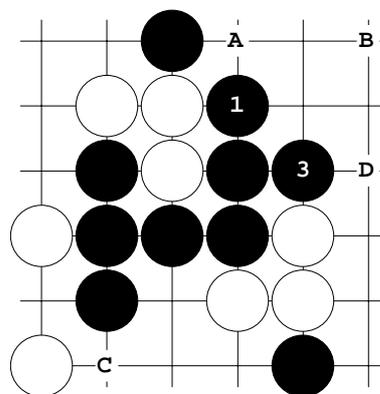
Another method of a forced attack is Fukumi (Japanese term).

Fukumi is the move, which threatens to win by VCF. The multiple of Fukumi is the number of moves you must make to build a winning fork 4X3 (or, for White, Fork 4X4). The Fukumi with the multiple 1 is called Single Fukumi.

To learn how to make effective Fukumi, is the big step towards building up your skill. Sometimes, Fukumi is the only way to win. The position shown on dia.13-2 (right) is just the case. Here after move to 1 Black has two opportunities to win by VCF: 3-A, 5-B. White is forced to end this threat. And Black gets the opportunity to make a Three at 3, and after that to win by the fork 4X3 at C. It should be noticed, that if Black makes the first Fukumi at 3 (i.e. if 1-3), White can defend (attacking at the same time), playing 2-a. The same situation would appear after move 1-c.

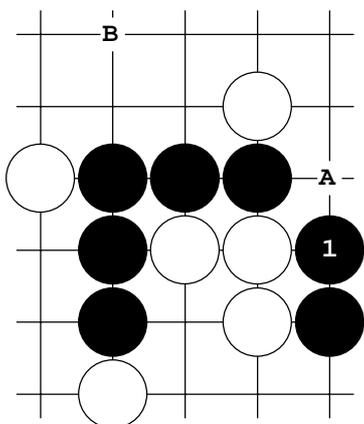


Dia 13-1

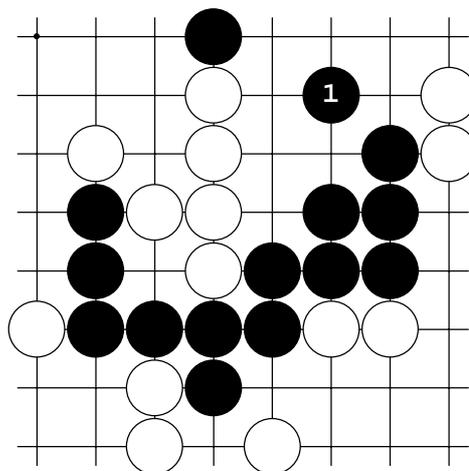


Dia 13-2

Sometimes, Fukumi drives directly to victory (without intermediate moves, but at once, by Fours). It happens when two uncrossing threats are created simultaneously. On dia.14 move 1 is Double Fukumi (do not confuse with Single Fukumi multiple 2). At the same time, Black by move to 1 prevented counterthreats.

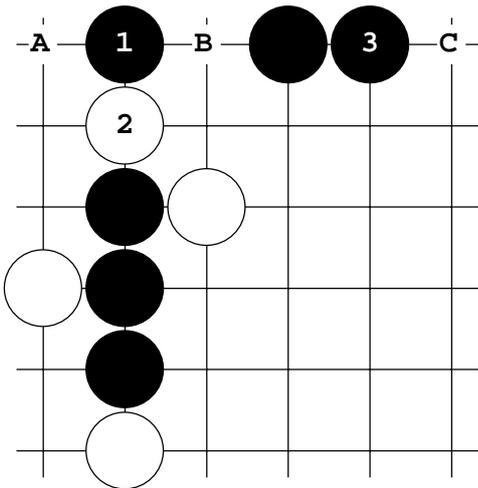


Dia 14

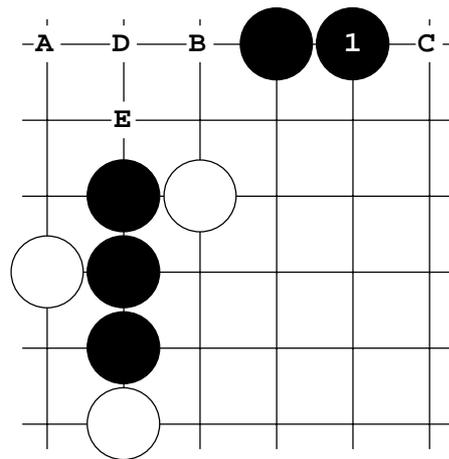


Dia 15

Fukumi can be used not only at the end of the game. Fukumi is an effective method of offense and defense in the middle of the game. The point is, that after Fukumi the opponent has a complicated dilemma of choosing the most effective counter move for this threat. There is, as a rule, several possible moves. To select one from them (very often there is only one answer which does not lose at once) during the game, without laborious analysis is difficult and there might be simply no time for analysis. Besides, to counter both threats, which are hidden in the potential fork, is often simply impossible.



Dia 16-1



Dia 16-2

This idea is illustrated by a fragment of position on dia.16. In the left part of the diagram Black has played to 1 and after that to 3. In this case White has three variations of the answer - a, b or c, and the extra white stone 2. By a move to A White can even intercept initiative, making Three. In the right part of this diagram move 1 - a Fukumi - has been made. White is forced to select an answer from five variations already - a, b, c, d, e, and he cannot intercept initiative here by making Three. One of the positive sides of Fukumi in this situation is that White cannot counter both threats by any of his answers (potential horizontal three and vertical four).

**ADVICE TO A BEGINNER.** Do not hurry to make Threes and Fours, remember about opportunities Fukumi gives. On the other hand, do not overdo it with Fukumi: sometimes only direct Fours and Threes will get you victory.

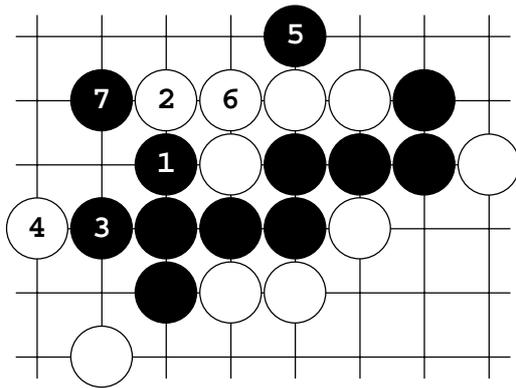
**Note!** It is allowed to apply Threes and Fukumi only when opponent does not have VCF.

### 3.2 The art of Pause.

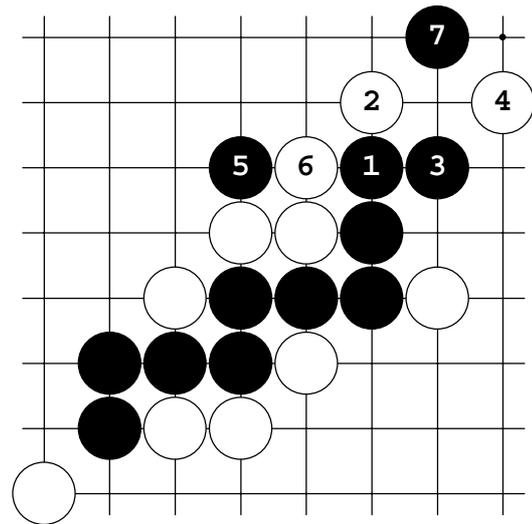
Unlike the Four, Three or Fukumi, **Pause (Yobi - jap.)** is a move, which intensifies the position, and is not a forced method of attack.

**Note!** It is allowed to use any Yobi, when opponent does not have his own victory by VCF, Threes, or Fukumi.

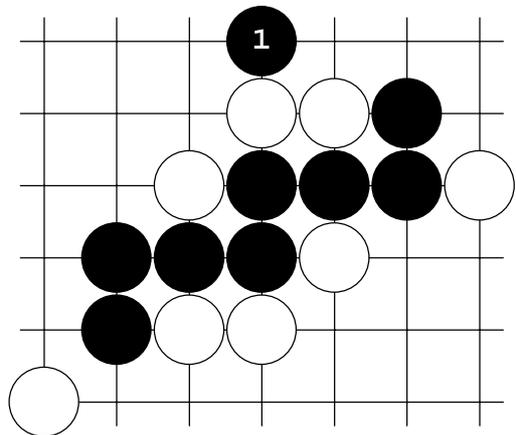
We will clarify the definition of Yobi by examples below. Diagrams 17-1 and 17-2 illustrate two variants of Black attacks from the same initial position. Moreover, those attempts cost Black his strategic initiative. Dia. 17-3 shows just a "calm" move - Yobi 1 - for that position. In the given position this brilliant move makes two uncrossing victories on different flanks.



Dia 17-1

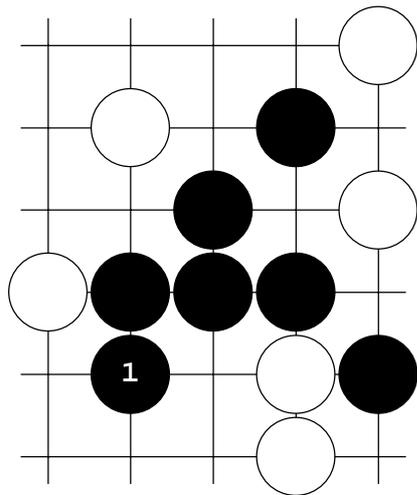


Dia 17-2



Dia 17-3

On dia. 18 Yobi 1 makes base for Black attack, although it leaves White a lot of illusory defenses. Yobis used in dias.17 and 18 are called Semifukumi, because they create opportunities to win by series of Threes.



### Dia 18

A special type of Yobi is going into isolation, when one's own stones are placed far away from the stones of the opponent, making numerical superiority in that flank.

**Note!** It is allowed to use other types of Yobi only, when the opponent does not have victory by Threes.

And one more recommendation for choosing place to make Yobi: it is most effective when it connects different flanks for potential attack (Yobi on dia.17).

**ADVICE TO A BEGINNER.** The art of Yobi is the ultimate in attacking skill of a Renju player. There are no ready recipes for learning this art and developing intuition for correct time and place to make Yobi, except one - play more and seriously, and analyze every position.

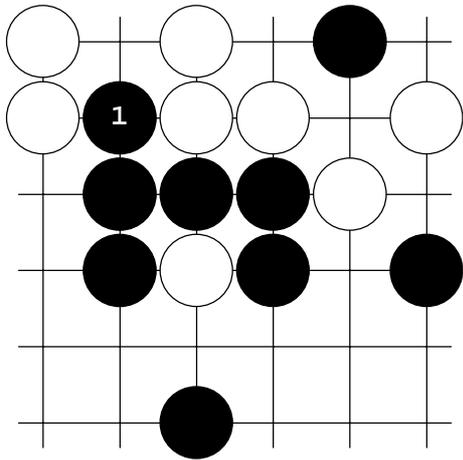
**Note!** Do not hurry to play all your Fours and Fukumies, give your self a chance to make Yobi.

### 3.3 Methods of Defense.

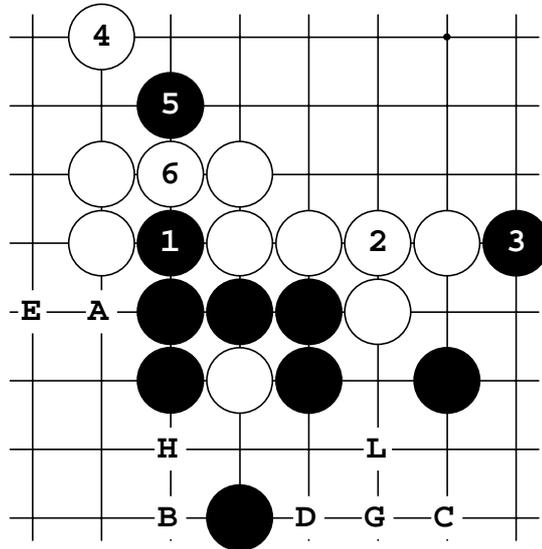
If your opponent attacks, you, naturally, must defend. But, passive defense won't do - you must try and get the initiative in order to build a counter-Four against opponent's attempts to attack. The simplest example of a Counter-Four has already been analysed in dia. 10. Black did well there and avoided White counter-Four by correct order of the moves.

Dia.19-1 shows position with the White's turn to move. White has victory by a series of Threes in the upper part of the board, and Black has VCF in the bottom part. It looks like White has to stop Black's Three below by reverting to defense. However, he finds the winning move to 1 (19-2 diagram), which with the help of a Counter-Four avoids Black VCF in the bottom and at the same time gives White the opportunity to take the initiative. In fact, Black's victory 6-A, 8-B, 10-C, 12-D and a 4x3 Fork won't do, because of White's vertical Four, which was first prepared by the move to 1 and then realised by

defensive moves c and d. If White has not made its move to 1, and prepared a Counter-Four in advance but began with move 1-3 instead, he could lose the game. Note that Black's move to 1 also makes a CounterFour which is not effective in this situation, because by stopping it with a move to 5 White makes another Counter-Four and wins thanks to it. Also note that Black moves 6-b, 8 -a result only in White's vertical Counter-Four on the left.

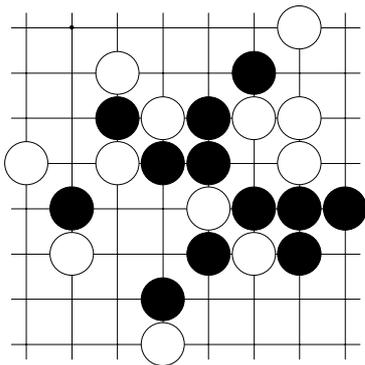


Dia 19-1

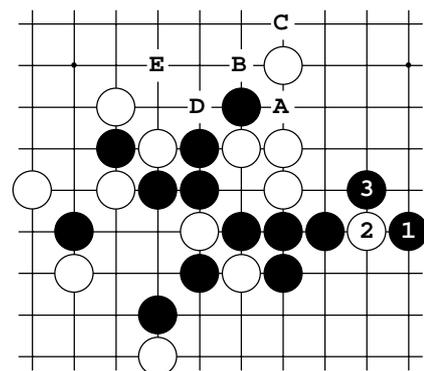


Dia 19-2

One more example of preparing a Counter-Four is shown in dia.20. By moves 1 and 3 Black kills White victory a, b, c, because with move B he creates a Black Counter-Four 1-3-gap-A-B. In that way Black manages to counter initial Fukumi of White and snatch initiative at the same time. From there on Black's victory is just a technical matter.



Dia 20-1

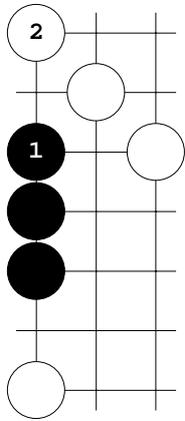


Dia 20-2

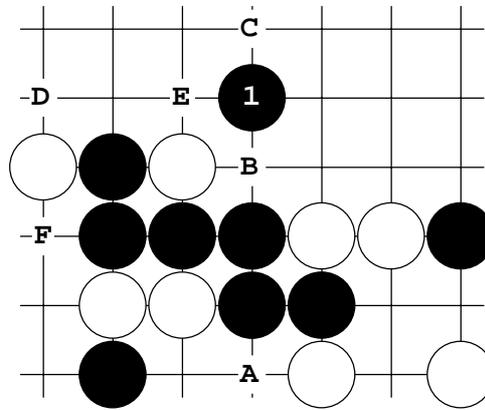
**NOTE!** When you prepare a Counter-Four, calculate your moves carefully: make sure you are not giving any chance of victory to your opponent.

There are other active forms of defense besides Counter-Four. For example, in dia.21 by a move to 1 Black makes a Counter-Four. White can neutralize it not by traditional

close stopping, but by making his own Three at 2, thus transforming Black's Three into a Pseudothree.

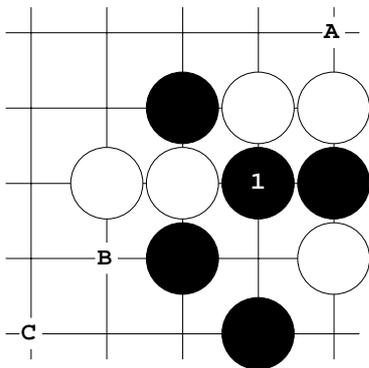


Dia 21

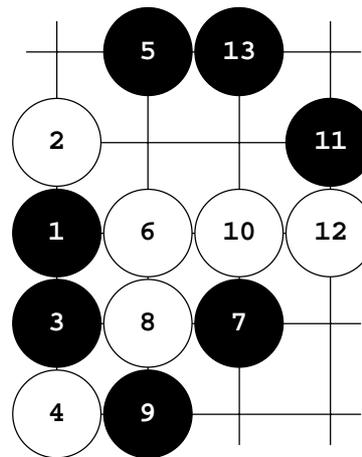


Dia 22

**ADVICE TO A BEGINNER.** One must fight for the initiative and try to take possession of it.



Dia 23



Dia 24

However, not every attacking move of the opponent gives way to active defense. Sometimes, one has to look for the only defensive moves possible, and make them to the so-called strong points of the opponent's attack.

In dia.22 Black has made Three by move 1. It can be stopped in points A, B, or C. Black threatens to make his next move to A and make Double Fukumi: there are two possible non-crossing forks 4X3 in points B and C. However, fork C crosses one of the possible points where the initial Three can be stopped. Therefore, the only White answer which isn't losing immediately, is move 2-C.

**ADVICE TO A BEGINNER.** When defending, remember, that the opponent's best move is also your best move, i.e. try to occupy strong points of his probable

attack - points where potential threats of the opponent are crossing. Determine the next strongest moves of your opponent.

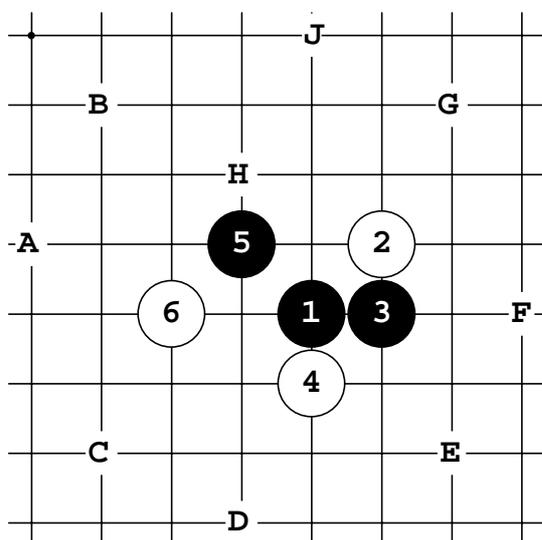
However, an attempt to defend in the opponent's strong points as an answer to his direct threat is often useless. One must make defensive moves beforehand, when the opponent only prepares for an attack.

In dia.23, Black are reverting to defense and can play either to A or B. Both these moves can stop possible development of White's attack. But they are too passive. The best perspective for Black in this position gives a move to C. Though this move does not stop White's diagonal Two by itself, it prevents its spreading to the left flank, where White can continue his attack. At the same time, this move strengthens Black's own position in that left flank, by giving him better attacking chances in future.

**ADVICE TO A BEGINNER.** In the equal position the best moves are the moves, which are both defensive and offensive.

Another method of trench fighting in the middle of the game is to surround the opponent's stones. In the real game shown in dia.24 Black has got positional advantage, because he has successfully surrounded White stones. Black has kept space for the manoeuvre as well as several ways to begin attack with Threes. Recommendations which follow proclaim the same idea of neutralization your opponent's stones.

**ADVICE TO A BEGINNER.** When in positional defense, try either to surround the enemy stones, divide them by your moves, or drive them to the board edge.

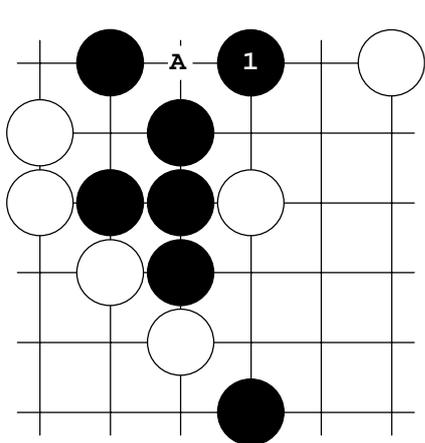


Dia 25

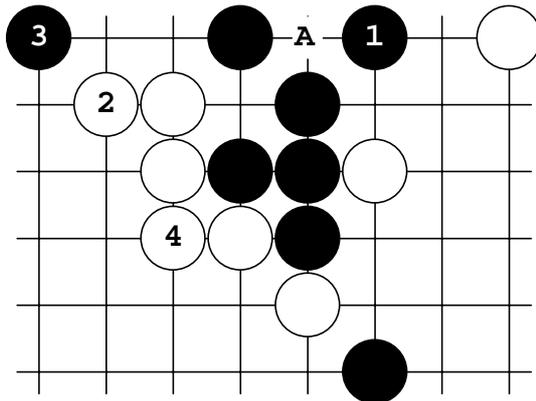
Almost all methods described above can be either defensive or offensive which depends upon the situation. There is also one purely defensive method - Making the Net.. In dia.25 White began Making a Net by moves 2, 4, 6 and it can be completed, by moves A-J. Net is a method of deep defense, but after it is built it will take.

White only two moves to become active again. For example, his move to point J (White stones are already in points 6, A, B, 4) creates four Twos, which can become Threes. Therefore, if Black does not want to be caught in White's Net, he must make his own manoeuvre - tear the net by placing his stone on one of its knots. In this position the optimum Black move is 7-E.

**ADVICE TO A BEGINNER.** Although Net (or its fragments) is a very simple and effective method of defense, do not get carried away while making it: the enemy will easily guess your idea and break the Net leaving you with no good moves for the attack.

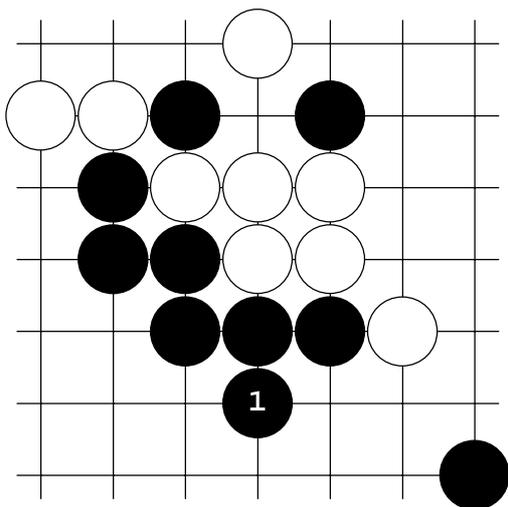


Dia 26-1

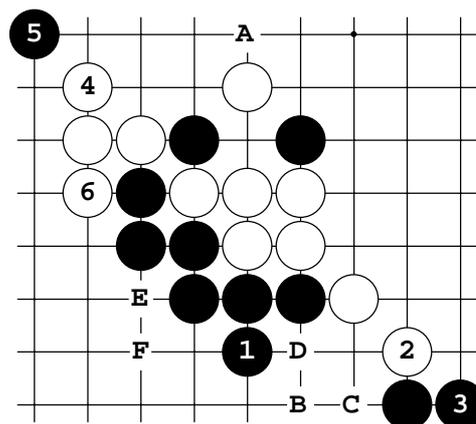


Dia 26-2

To conclude this paragraph, let's talk about defensive methods of White with the help of Fouls (also see end of paragraph 2.3).



Dia 27-1



Dia 27-2

White can often escape the seemingly inevitable Black's victory by creating a Foul in the point of the winning Fork 4X3. For example, in dia.26 Black has a winning Fork

4X3 in point A. Making Four in 1, White first wipes out this threat (only an Overline can be built horizontally), after which he starts an attack with move 3 simultaneously stopping Black's diagonal Three. In dia.27 White has demonstrated three methods of defense: preparing Counter-Four by moves 3 and 5, using the edge effect by move 1 and Foul 4X4. As a result, White ensures a winning fork in a. Analyze this position yourself, as an exercise.

**ADVICE TO A BEGINNER.** Do not forget about Fouls, no matter what color you play.

### 3.4 Advice to a beginner.

1. Carefully study the rules of Renju, even if it seems to you, that you know them. Be especially careful when studying the definitions of "Four", "Three", "Fork", "Foul". Try to explain the rules to somebody else.
2. Solve more problems. With a critical eye study games of the top players.
3. Study the openings. Try to find your own variant, maybe it will be more interesting, than theory.
4. Play as often, as you can. Record your games and analyze them, do not repeat your mistakes.
5. Play often with players of your strength, and sometimes with a stronger player. It will temper your will power and you will not become lax.
6. Calculate each of your moves. Remember, that each move must pursue an idea. Try to foresee the opponent's moves and neutralize his idea in time.
7. Try to play to the maximum of your knowledge in every game and enjoy the game.
8. Use the best software for improving your strength, Playing programs will help you to analyze positions, databases substitute many theory books.
9. If you feel ready and willing to play in a tournament, find a Renju-club and join it.

## CHAPTER 4. OPENINGS IN RENJU.

To play Renju successfully, the openings have an utmost importance, much greater than, for example, in Chess. A mistake in the first five eleven moves can often be fatal.

**ADVICE TO A BEGINNER.** Try to learn all basic variants at least up to the 10th move. Try to play different openings often.

The 24 openings in Renju are called Basic. They are classified by the 2nd and 3rd move. The second move (White's move) is made next to the central stone. Therefore, joining symmetrical openings, we get the so-called Direct and Indirect openings (shortly "D" and "I"). The third move (Black's move) is made inside the so-called Central Square 5x5 points, i.e. no farther, than two points from the central stone. All the 13th openings (marked on dias. as V) are not basic. The variant number of the possible 3rd move equals the number of Direct or Indirect opening. All basic openings have their own nickname (they are used very seldom: more often people would say "4d" instead of "Flower").

In the 22 openings shown below (2d, 2i and 6d, 6i are shown together, as pairs) no variants are analyzed. It was in previous issue of this book.

Now, it is more usefull to use Renju Opening Classificator (ROC).

The letters on diagrams are shown according ROC, it is possible to download ROC from RIF WWW-Page. <http://www.lemes.se/renju/roc/renbase.htm>

Openings differ by their degree of advantage for Black. The most advantageous openings (although this subdivision is conditional) are marked by three asterisks (\*\*\*), the least advantageous ones - by one asterisk (\*), the rest - by two asterisks (\*\*). More theory analyzes you can find at book "Zvon Kamney" (Russian name) or "Click of the Stones".

Therefore, to equalize chances of the players at the tournaments they use various playing regulations for the opening and for the game:

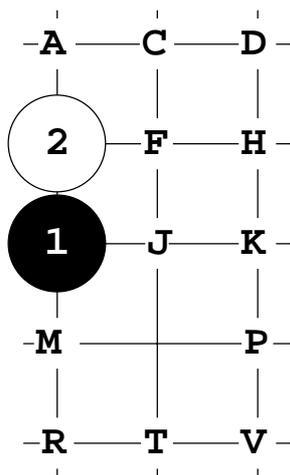
1. For the beginners with the qualification lower than 5-8 Kyu the regulations are:

- a) one hour is given to each player;
- b) free choice of opening.

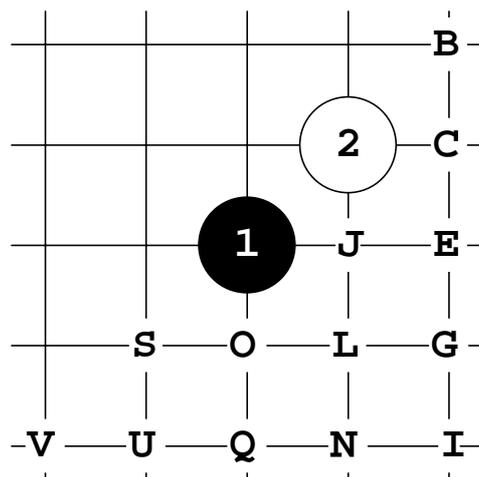
2. Regulations in the official tournaments (RIF rules) (Dan level) :

- a) Players start the game as a tentative Black and tentative White;
- b) tentative White makes the second move, choosing Direct or Indirect opening;
- c) tentative Black makes the third move, choosing one of the basic openings;
- d) tentative White has the right to change the color of the stones (White's choice);
- e) player, who now has the white stones, makes the fourth move;
- f) Black makes two fifth moves, which are asymmetrical (Black's option);
- g) White chooses one of the fifth moves and makes the sixth move.

After that, the game continues as usual.



Direct openings



Indirect openings

Here are the main variants of the openings.

A	1d "Cold Star" (***)
B	1i - "Asteroid".. (*)
C	2i - "Canyon". and 2d - "Valley".. (**)
D	3d - "Faraway Star".. (*)
E	3i - "Constant".. (***)
F	4d - "Flower". (***)
G	4i - "Water".. (***)
H	5d - "Remainder".. (**)
I	5i - "Meteor".. (*)
J	6d - "Rain". and 6i - "Cloud".. (**)
K	7d - "Gold Star".. (***)
L	7i - "Bay".. (***)
M	8d - "Pine".. (*)
N	8i - "Storm".. (**)
O	9i - Silver Moon..(**)
Q	10i - "Radiance"..(**)
P	10d - "New Moon"..(**).
R	11d - "Lucky Star".. (***)
S	11i - "Slanting Hill".. (**) 9d - "Low hill" .. (**)
T	12d - "Mountain".. (**)
U	12i - "Glory".. (***)

## CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS

We will emphasize once more, that Renju is a game and is a head of a whole family of popular games. Here are some of the most popular games, which you probably know.

**Five-in-a-row.** On a board with no margins opponents place a squared paper, Pencil crosses and circles are used instead of stones, and the game is called "cross-circles on a non-margin board". In Russia this game is very popular among students.

**Gomoku.** This game is like "five-in-a-row" on the board 19x19 or 15x15. The Overline is not a victory for anybody. The game is popular all over the world. World Championships among computer programs are held on a regular basis. In 1981-1982 within the frame of the 1-st World Championship on Renju by mail a Gomoku tournament was held with participants from Bulgaria, Denmark, Canada, Soviet Union, United States, Sweden and Japan. The winner was Yoninori Otsuka (Japan).

**Gomoku with the prohibited central square.** The game is played with the rules of Gomoku on the board 15x15, but the second move of Black (the 3th move in the game) is played outside the central square 5x5 points. The game was created in the 1920`s in Japan. Now the game is popular in Russia and Sweden. In 1982-1983 within the frame of the 2-nd World Championship by mail on Renju the tournament on Gomoku with the prohibited central square was held, with participants from Bulgaria,

Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Sweden and Japan. In Russia the game is also called "Free Rendzue".

**Gomoku with the common central stone.** The game is played under rules of Gomoku on the board 15x15, but the first stone (the central Stone) is black with the Black's move and White with the White's move. The rules of the game are symmetrical. The author is K.Kotsev (Bulgaria).

The game has not become popular in Russia yet.

**Six-in-a-row.** The rules of the game are the same as in the five-in-a-row, but the objective is to build six-in-a-row, i.e. an unbroken row of six stones. The game did not become popular.

**The Three-Dimensional Gomoku.** The game is under rules of Gomoku, but spatial. The object is to build five on the diagonal, horizontal or vertical row in the plane and in the space. The game has not become popular yet.

**Gomokynarabe.** The game is played on the board 15x15. The object of the game is to build a Five. No player is allowed to make fork 3x3; every player has 35 stones; if Black does not build a Five with all the stones, Black loses the game. The game is very popular in Japan.

**The old Renju.** The game is played on the board 19x19. For Black the fork 3x3 is Foul (all other forks are allowed). The game was an official sports game before the adoption in 1936 the modern rules of Renju. The fans of this game remained in Japan, some joined the Zenihhon Renju Renmai. Mr, Morita was Meijin in Japan in 1994-1995 seems he still Meijin because stopping organization.

**Pente.** The game is played on the board 19x19. The player, who gets the first Five, wins the game. There is one more way to victory, which reminds of the Go rules. The rule is that if a player can close two opponent's stones on both ends, this "pair" is removed from the board and is called a "catch". In fact, it is possible to win by getting five "catches". The game is very popular in the USA, where, besides, an Overline equals to a Five, and the third move is made outside the square 5x5. Actually, the American Pente is the simplified variation of the game "ninuki-renju", which was played in 1900-1940s in Japan.

So, You have read this book for beginners. If you have liked Renju then you are sure to have questions. To some of them you will find answers in this book at the second reading. Others will need consultations with experienced renju-players - you will always find one in the nearest Renju-club.

We wish you every success in Renju !