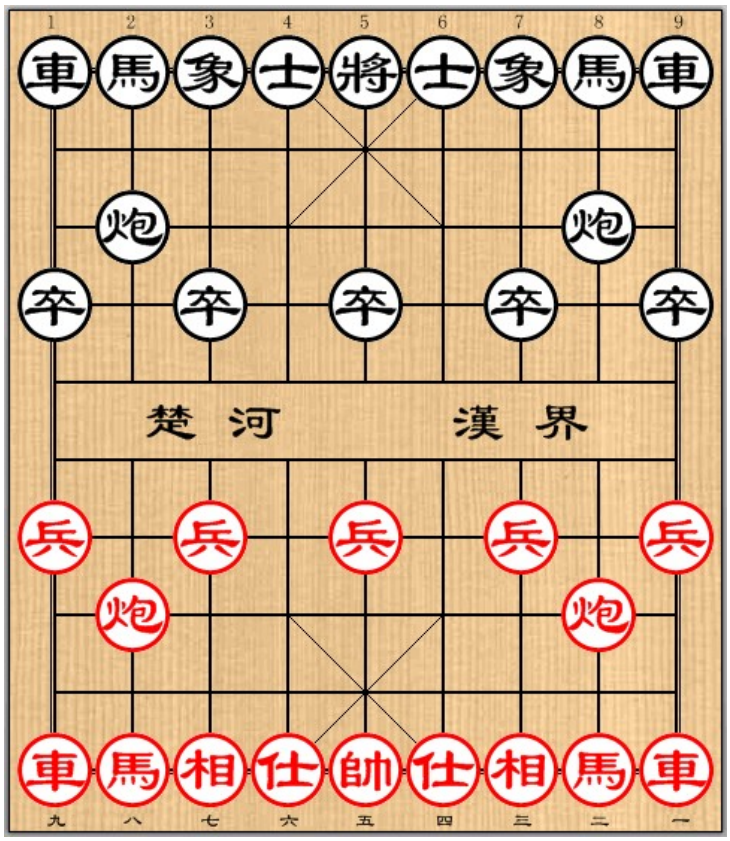
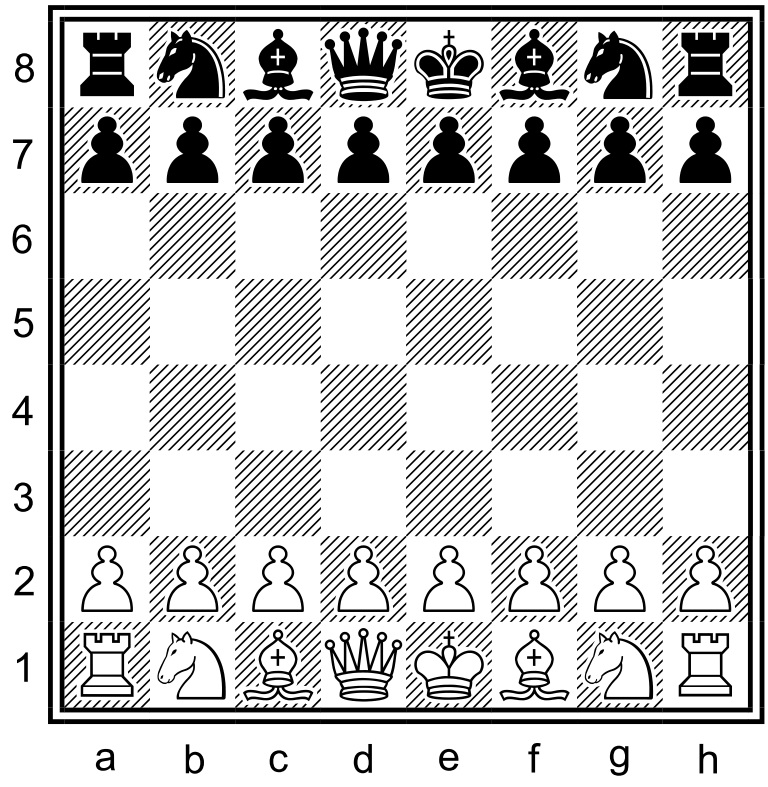
Introduction to Chinese Chess (XiangQi) for International Chess Players

A Comparison of Chess and XiangQi





Online Information

Title
Introduction to Chinese Chess (XiangQi) for International Chess Players

Keywords
Chess, Xiangqi, Comparison, Tactic, Strategy, Opening, Midgame, Endgame, Self-test, Checkmate, *Rules, Piece, Board, Term, History, Software, Database*

Abstract
While Chess is widely known and practiced all over the world Xiangqi (Chinese Chess) is popular only behind the Chinese Wall. Increasing cultural exchange between China and the western hemisphere advocates for an introduction of Xianqi to the western public, especially to people interested in mind sports like Chess.
This publication takes the view of a Chess player to teach Xiangqi. Starting from the qualities of Chess, or the knowledge about Chess, the similarities of and the differences between both Chess variants are studied. All aspects of the games were compared and conclusions drawn which allow the Chess player to understand Xiangqi by applying and extending his basic, preexisting knowledge about tactics, strategy, opening, midgame and endgame.
Facts about the history of Chinese characters and the history of Xiangqi dig a hole into the Chinese language wall big enough to adopt the Chinese or Asian way to record games and read Chinese game notations.
The reader is invited to test his initial understanding of Xiangqi by filling in a self-test for beginners. A rating system gives feedback about areas where to improve skills.
For readers who like to go further steps into Xiangqi, resources are listed like internet playsites, databases and software.

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0 Preface

International Chess and Chinese Chess (Xiangqi) are similar strategy board games for two players. Chess is commonly known and played in the western hemisphere. Xiangqi (say Hsiang chi) is a popular pastime in China, Vietnam and other East Asian countries with a Chinese minority or historical connections to China. Amateur and professional players compete in Chess and Xiangqi tournaments and organize themselves in clubs and federations. World Championships are organized by FIDE (Fédération Internationale des Échecs) for Chess and by WXF (World Xiangqi Federation) for Xiangqi.

International Chess has already gained popularity in the East. Chinese and Vietnamese International Grandmasters (IGM) are found in the FIDE top100 ELO rating list. Players with peak ratings above 2700 are: Wang Yue (2756), Hao Wang (2752), Ni Hua, Ding Liren (2724), Xiangzhi Bu (2714), Chao Li (2711) of China and Lê Quang Liêm (2717) of Vietnam.[C5] The current (y 2014) Women's World Chess Champion Hou Yifan (2639) is Chinese.[C3] There are about three million people in China who play Chess of which 300,000 are in the Chinese Chess Federation.[C3] Chess is taught at mind sports schools together with Xiangqi, Weiqi (Go) and Bridge.

On the other side, Xiangqi is almost unknown in the West. The number of non-Chinese/non-Vietnamese players in Europe, the Americas and Australia can be counted by a millipede not using half his feet, a quarter might be sufficient. The time for the first western International Grandmaster in Xiangqi is still ahead. The level of western Xiangqi is low. Top Xiangqi IGMs are rated above 2650 in a rating system similar to ELO.[X1,X6] The highest rating of western players is about 2000. Until today, the honorable IGM Dr. Robert Hübner, a former German World Chess Champion candidate, was the only high level Chess player who dared to fight in the Xiangqi arena. Dr. Hübner participated in the Xiangqi World Championship 1993 in Beijing (Peking) and other tournaments. 2010 in Hanoi, a match against Vu Huy Cuong in a friendly between national teams of Germany and Vietnam[X6] was his last official encounter.

In case you are interested in Chess or if you are a Chess player participating in Chess tournaments: Why not try Chinese Chess – Xiangqi? There are similarities and differences. The similarities will make it easy for you to play a decent Xiangqi in a short time. The differences will provide you a new, thrilling experience. Even your Chess style will profit from practicing Xiangqi. Due to the more dynamic aggressive character of Xiangqi compared to Chess your ability of detecting attacking possibilities will improve as well as your calculation of moves. Mistakes are punished harder and faster in Xiangqi. But there are better chances for a comeback and steal a victory – fun all the way. Special rules prevent from a draw in situations where a draw would be the outcome in Chess.

The negligible spreading of Xiangqi in the West and the low level gives you a good chance to be part of your national team and participate in World Championships. What a gain for a cheap price – What a pity if you would miss the opportunity!

China is one of the worlds growing economic super powers. The interest of the West in China and its culture increases parallel to the economic development there. There will be more contacts and interchange between the eastern and western hemisphere in political, cultural, educational and personal areas in the future. Xiangqi (like Weiqi = Go) is one of the four classical fine arts of ancient China: Music, Painting, Calligraphy and Board Game. The four arts an allround scholar had to master in addition to his knowledge of the four classics (i.e. the Great Learning (Daxue 大學), the Doctrine of the Mean (Zhongyong 中庸), the Analects of Confucius (Lunyu 論語), and the Book of Mencius (Mengzi 孟子)). Even today, these arts have a very high prestige. When you surprise your Chinese counterpart with an offer to play a round of Xiangqi you won a friend but ... probably lost a game. ☺

Yes, Xiangqi can be one of the tickets to a fruitful personal relationship which is such important in China.

In this manual the game of Xiangqi is introduced. Xiangqi is compared to Chess in relevant aspects of the games: Board, pieces notation, rules, tactics, strategy, opening and endgame. This makes it easy for the Chess player to understand Xiangqi.

This article is addressed also to non-Chess players who are interested in Chinese culture, language and history. Chapters are dedicated to the history of Chinese characters used in Xiangqi and to the history of Xiangqi itself.

A list of resources you need, when you want to practice Xiangqi seriously, is included: Software, databases, websites, free books. Self-test and self-study sections offer you the opportunity to learn Xiangqi without a teacher and control your progress.

For those, who are afraid of Chinese characters, we recommend to read chapter 13 “Historical Development of Chinese Characters” first.

Please note also the references for further studies.

1 Introduction

[C1, X1]

Chess and Xiangqi are two-player strategy board games with the object of capturing the opponent's King.

The Chess board is a checkered game board with 64 black and white squares arranged in an eight-by-eight grid. Pieces are placed on the squares.

The Xiangqi board is a nine-by-ten unicolored grid. There are special areas called the *palace* and *river*, which restrict the movement of some pieces (but enhance that of others). The pieces are placed on the intersections of the board lines, rather than within the squares.

Chess pieces represent the society of the European middle ages. Six Chess pieces are: King, Queen, Bishop, Knight, Rook and Pawn. They are three-dimensional figurines of turned or carved wood in white and black color. Each of the six piece types moves differently.

Xiangqi represents a battle between two armies with generals, guards, cavalry, artillery and infantry. The official (WXF) English terms for the seven pieces are: King (General; Marshal), Advisor (Guard), Elephant, Horse, Chariot, Cannon and Pawn (Soldier). Xiangqi pieces are flat circular discs made of wood engraved or labeled with Chinese characters identifying the piece type. The characters are colored Red and Black. Each of the seven piece types moves differently.

The meaning of “Xiang” is elephant, “Qi” is game. Therefore, Xiangqi is also called Elephant Chess.

In both games, each player begins with 16 pieces. Some types move identical, some similar, some different. Distinctive features of Xiangqi include the Cannon, which must jump to capture.

Common to both games:

Pieces are used to attack and capture the opponent's pieces, with the objective to 'checkmate' the opponent's King by placing it under an inescapable threat of capture. In addition to checkmate, the game can be won by the voluntary resignation of the opponent, which typically occurs when too much material is lost, or if checkmate appears unavoidable. A game may also result in a Draw in several ways, where neither player wins. The course of the game is divided into three phases: opening, middlegame, and endgame.

Different in both games:

Besides different piece movement, while in Chess the Kings have no effect on each other, except they cannot approach their opponent due to the regular movement rule, in Xiangqi a rule prohibits the Kings from facing each other directly.

In Xiangqi, several sequences that lead to a Draw in International Chess are not allowed and are penalized with an adjudicated Loss: e.g. perpetual check and perpetual chase.
*Draw offers from each side or a sequence of repetitive moves by Red before move **20** are against the rules of CXA (or AXF or WXF?) [I read this in an article that I was unable to find again ☹].*

For both games, computer software and databases exist. The complexity of Xiangqi is higher due to the bigger board.

The complexity of Xiangqi is between that of International Chess and Japanese Chess (Shogi).

Game	State-space complexity	Game-tree complexity
Chess	50	123
Xiangqi	48	150
Shogi	71	226
Weiqi, Go	160	400

Table: State-space complexity and game-tree complexity given by the power of 10. [S1]

A short summarized introduction to Xiangqi was written by Felix Tan:

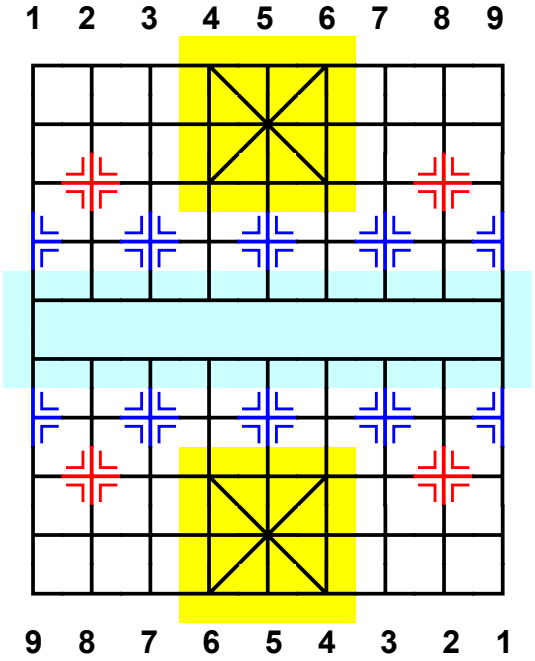
http://xiangqibowl.org/ : Rudiments of Xiangqi 2012

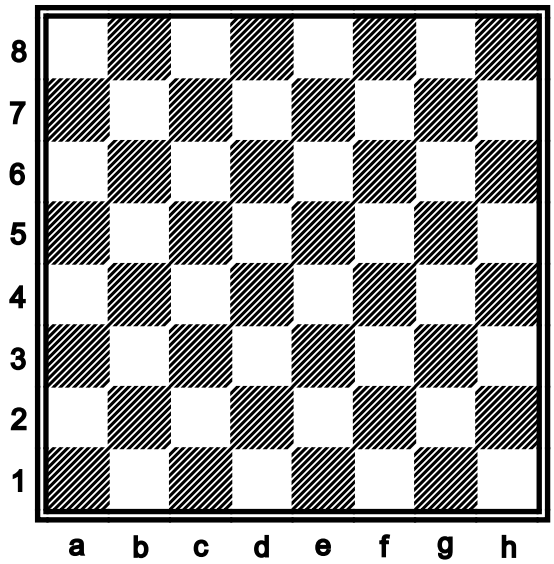
Contact the author of this manual for any questions, suggestions or others:
xq_info@gmx.de .

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2 Xiangqi Board

[C1, X1]





The Chessboard (right) is homogeneous, eight *squares* wide and eight squares high. The white (light) and black (dark) color of the squares have no other function than to serve the eye. The game could also be played on a unicolored board without any change of the game character. The chessboard is placed with a light square at the right-hand end of the rank nearest to each player. The squares have coordinates: letters *a* to *h* denote the vertical columns (*files*), numbers *1* to *8* denote the horizontal rows (*ranks*).

The Xiangqiboard shows lines instead of squares. Xiangqi is played on a board that is nine lines wide and ten lines long. In a manner similar to the game Go (*Wéiqí* 圍棋), the pieces are played on the intersections, which are known as *points*. The vertical lines are known as *files*, while the horizontal lines are known as *ranks*.

The Xiangqiboard is unicolored (colors above for illustration only!) but inhomogeneous. There are three-by-three square zones centered at the first through third and eighth through tenth ranks. Two diagonal lines connecting opposite corners and intersecting at the center point demarcate the three-point by three-point zone. Each of these areas is known as "*palace*" or "fortress". The palace is restricting the movement of the King and the Advisors, which cannot leave the palace.

Dividing the two opposing sides, between the fifth and sixth ranks, is the "*river*". The river is often marked with the phrases 楚河 *chǔ hé*, meaning "Chu River", and 漢界, *hàn jiè*, meaning "Han border", a reference to the Chu-Han War. Although the river provides a visual division between the two sides, only two pieces are affected by its presence: Soldier pieces (Pawns) have an enhanced move after crossing the river, while Elephant pieces cannot cross. The starting points of the Soldiers (⊥) and Cannons (⊥) are usually, but not always, marked with small crosses, the boardstars.

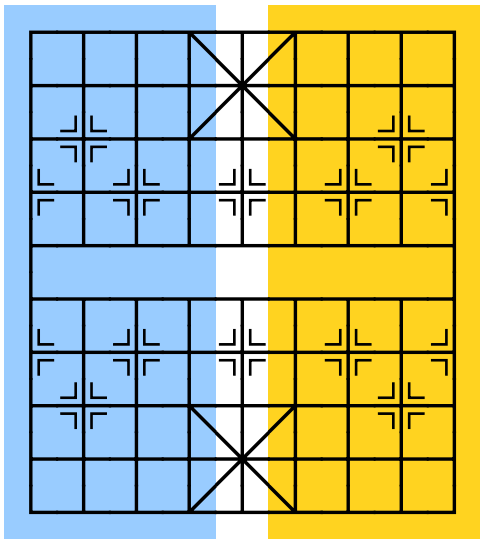
The files are counted from *1* to *9* from right to left for each player separately. Ranks are not denoted by letters or numbers. The Xiangqi board has no coordinates. Moves are recorded by denoting the start file and the move direction (see corresponding chapter). To differentiate between Red's and Black's view usually from Red's view files are written with Chinese numbers, from Black's view with Arabic numbers.
[Red's left 9th file　九八七六五四三二一　Red's right 1st file]

Note: Red's right flank is Black's left flank; Red's left flank is Black's right flank!

For the sake of communication, the ranks have descriptive names. From bottom to top: (1) Bottom rank, (2) Throat rank, (3) Cannon rank, (4) Pawn rank, (5) Riverbank, (6) Opponent's Riverbank, (7) Opponent's Pawn rank, (8) Opponent's Cannon rank, (9) Opponent's Throat rank, (10) Opponent's Bottom rank.

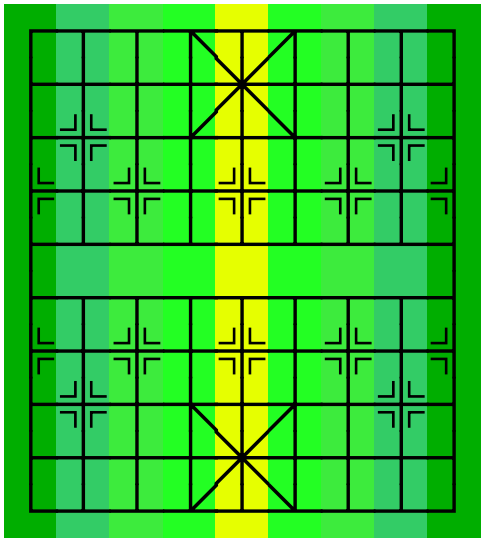
The following diagrams show what is meant in detail. Some more terms are added. You may refer to this part when reading chapters ahead in case you don't get a meaning.

Flanks / Sides



File 1-4:	right flank	= opponent's left flank
File 6-9:	left flank	= opponent's right flank

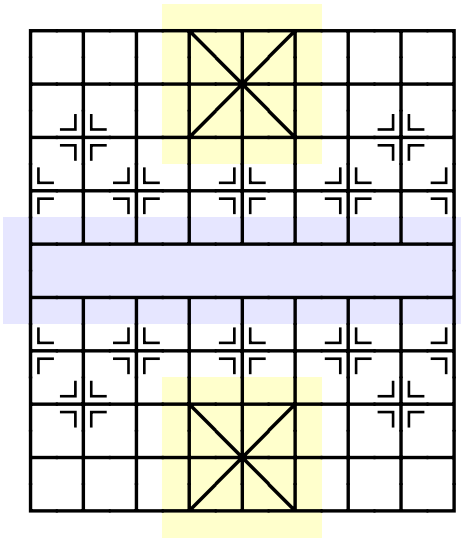
Files



File 5:	central file
Files 1, 9:	edge files
Files 2, 8:	2nd, 8th file
Files 3, 7:	elbow files
Files 4, 6:	rib files

Ranks

File number ======> 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 <===== for the opponent

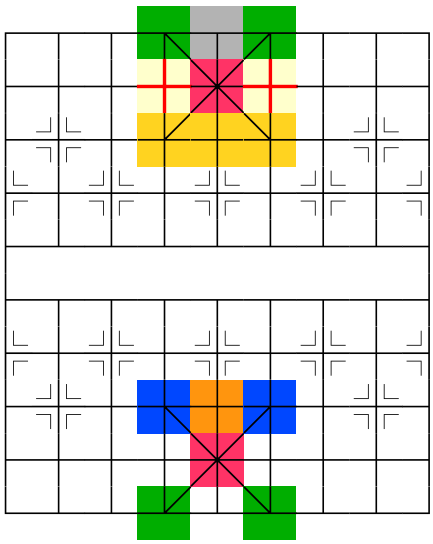


opponent's bottom rank
opponent's throat rank
opponent's cannon rank
opponent's pawn rank
opponent's riverbank
riverbank
pawn rank
cannon rank
throat rank
bottom rank

File number ======> 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 <======== for the player

Palace

throne (King)
centroid
palace roof top



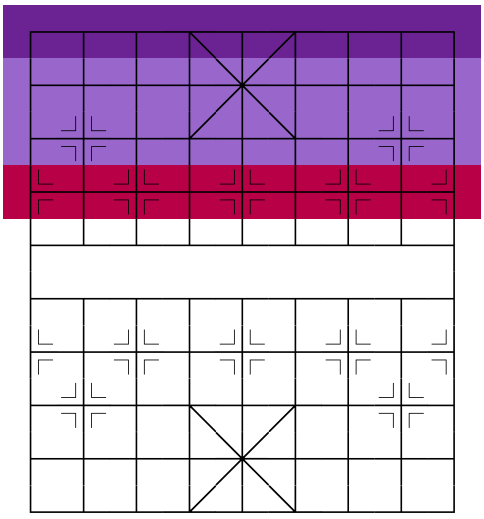
side door
elephant's eye

center of roof top

palace corner

(palace corner)

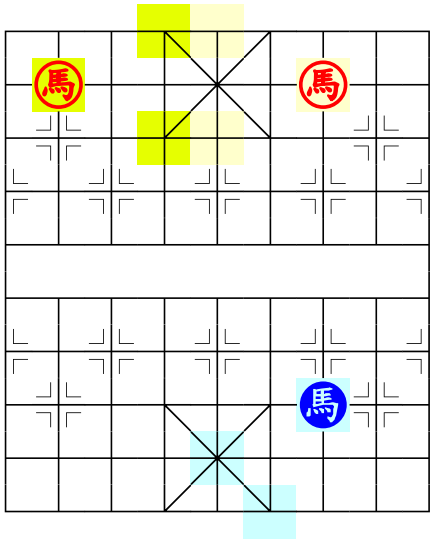
Pawns (players view)



old pawn, veteran
low pawn
low pawn
high pawn
crossriver pawn
riverbank pawn
pawn

Horse

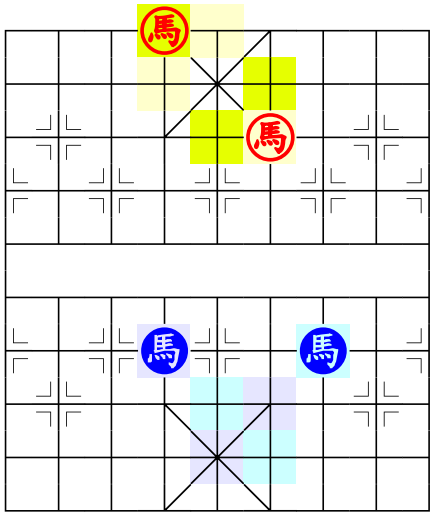
(2/2)



Elbow Horse

Angler Horse (3/3)

Octagonal Horse



Palace Corner Horse

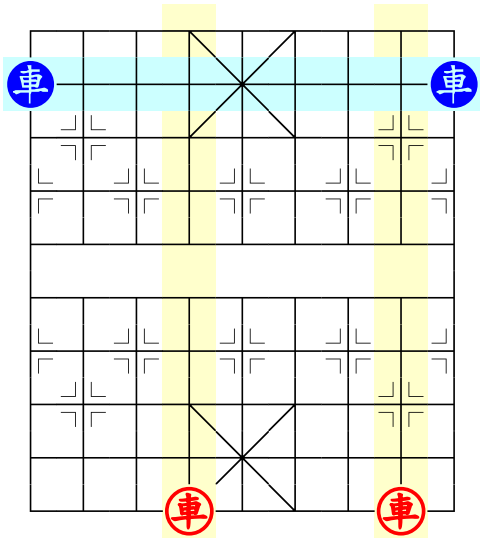
(4/4) ?

High Angler Horse

Chariot

r1+1

r9+1



ranked Chariots

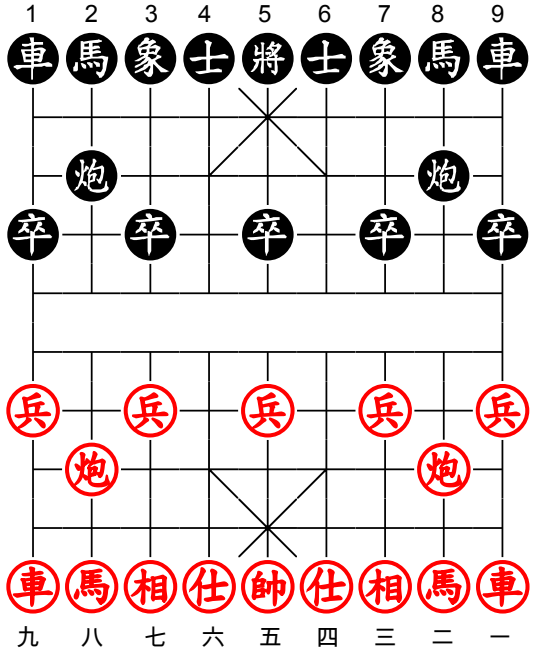
filed Chariots

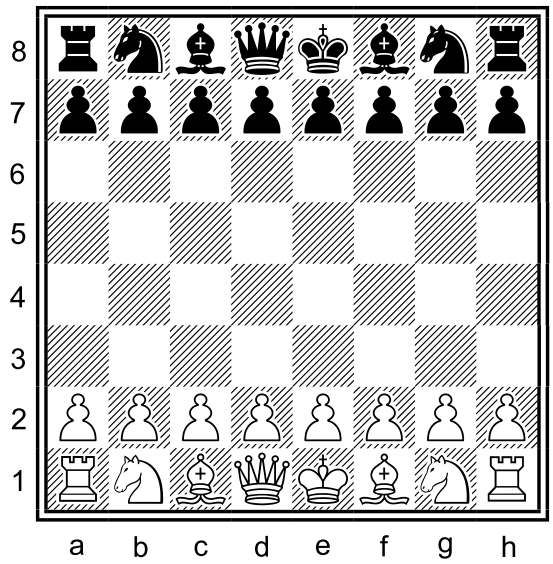
R9=6

R1=2

3 Setup

[C1, X1]





In Chess, five piece types are located at the bottom rank (white) and the top rank (black). From both edge (1st/8th) files to the 3rd/6th file (a,b,c,f,g,h) a Rook ♖♜, Knight ♘♞ and Bishop ♗♝ is placed for each player. Those are two of each kind. A single white Queen ♕ is placed on the light remaining square in the middle, the single white King ♔ sits on the right next to his Queen. The black Queen ♛ is placed on the dark remaining square in the middle, the black King ♚ sits on the left next to his Queen. Eight white and eight black pawns ♙♟ start from the 2nd and 7th rank respectively building a compact formation. The side where the Kings are placed is called King's wing, the side with the Queens we call Queen's wing. With respect to the Kings and Queens the board is not symmetrical, also the white King's wing Bishop moves only on light squares, the white Queen's wing Bishop runs along dark diagonals (Black's Bishops are contrary).

In Xiangqi too, 5 piece types occupy the bottom and top ranks. As the number of files is odd, the King 帥將 is placed on the central file. Right and left side of the board are mirror images. From the King in the center to the edges we have Advisors 仕士, Elephants 相象, Horses 馬馬 and Chariots 車車. The throat ranks (2nd/9th) are empty! The Chariots use them as horizontal routes during the game. On the Cannon ranks two Cannons 炮炮 are placed on the board stars there, the 2nd and 8th file. Each party has five Pawns 兵卒 on the board stars at the Pawn rank. The Pawns are not building a formation. One point stays empty between two neighboring Pawns. Four vertical routes for Cannon and Chariot are open.

Pawn formation, movement and promotion are the main differences between Chess and Xiangqi. They cause the different characters of the games. With no need to deploy a bunch of Pawns before development of pieces Xiangqi is “faster” than Chess though there are no Queens and Bishops in Xiangqi!

In case the Chinese characters confuse you, don't mind! They will be explained later in detail, or: Jump and read the Chapter “Historical Development of Chinese Characters found in XiangQi” first and continue after that. This will make it very easy to recognize the pieces.

4 Rules

[C1, X1]

Chess:

White always moves first. After the first move, players alternately move one piece per turn (except for *castling*, when two pieces are moved). Pieces are moved to either an unoccupied square or one occupied by an opponent's piece, which is captured and removed from play. With the sole exception of *en passant*, all pieces capture opponent's pieces by moving to the square that the opponent's piece occupies. A player may not make any move that would put or leave his or her King under attack. If the player to move has no legal moves, the game is over; it is either a *checkmate* (a loss for the player with no legal moves) if the king is under attack, or a *stalemate* (a draw) if the king is not.

We leave the Chess rules incomplete. Above is only a short remainder mentioning some key facts. We will enter into different and absent rules of Xiangqi following part:

Xiangqi:

The pieces start in the position shown in chapter 3 above. Generally, Red moves first in most modern tournaments. The two sides are identified as North and South, whereby Red represents the North and Black the South.

Each player in turn moves one piece from the point it occupies to another point. Pieces are generally not permitted to move through a point occupied by another piece. A piece can be moved onto a point occupied by an enemy piece, in which case the enemy piece is captured and removed from the board. For 'capturing' also the terms 'eating', 'destroying' or 'killing' a piece are used (no prisoners of war ☺). A player cannot capture one of his own pieces. Pieces are never promoted (converted into other pieces), although the Pawn is able to move sideways after it crosses the river. Almost all pieces capture using their normal moves, while the Cannon has a special capture move described below.

The game ends when one player captures the other's King. When the King is in danger of being captured by the enemy player on his next move, the enemy player has "delivered a check", and the King is “in check". A check should be announced. If the King's player can make no move to prevent the King's capture, the situation is called "checkmate". Unlike chess, in which a stalemate is a draw, in Xiangqi, a player with no legal moves left loses.

Although the objective of the game is to checkmate the opponent, chess games do not have to end in checkmate - either player may resign which is a win for the other player. It is considered bad etiquette to continue playing when in a truly hopeless position.

Games also may end in a draw. A draw can occur in several situations, including draw by agreement, allowed repetition of a position, or a draw by impossibility of checkmate (usually because of insufficient material to checkmate).

In Xiangqi, a player - often with material or positional disadvantage - may attempt to check or chase pieces in a way such that the moves fall in a cycle, forcing the opponent to draw the game. The following special rules are used to make it harder to draw the game by endless checking and chasing, regardless of whether the positions of the pieces are repeated or not:

- The side that perpetually checks with one piece or several pieces can be ruled to have lost unless he or she stops such checking.
- The side that perpetually chases any one unprotected piece with one or more pieces, excluding King and Pawns, will be ruled to have lost unless he or she stops such chasing.
- If one side perpetually checks and the other side perpetually chases, the checking

side has to stop or be ruled to have lost.
- When neither side violates the rules and both persist in not making an alternate move, the game can be ruled as a draw.
- When both sides violate the same rule at the same time and both persist in not making an alternate move, the game can be ruled as a draw.

The above rules to prevent perpetual checking and chasing, while popular, are not the only ones; there are numerous end game situations.

Chess and Xiangqi games may also be played with a time control, mostly by club and professional players. If a player's time runs out before the game is completed, the game is automatically lost (provided his opponent has enough pieces left to deliver checkmate).

Small intermediate summary:

- There is no such piece as Queen or Bishop in Xiangqi. Diagonals are less important.
- Xiangqi has no castling of the king, no “en passant” capture of Pawns.
- Promotion of Pawns into other pieces does not exist.
- Stalemate is a Loss for the party who cannot move and not a Draw.
- Perpetual checking is not a Draw but a Loss for the checking side.

Rules:

http://www.xqinenglish.com/files/Download01/AXF_XQ_rules_Eng.pdf

http://www.asianxiangqi.org/English/AXF_rules_Eng.pdf

http://wxf.ca/xq/rule/asia/asiarule.zip

Xiangqi Terms:

Xiangqi literature in Chinese is uncountable. The CXA (Chinese Xiangqi Association) defined official terms. Since Xiangqi's history in the West is a short one no systematic translation and definition of Xiangqi terms has taken place so far in western languages. The WXF (World Xiangqi Federation) has published a list of commonly used terms in English without definitions or illustrations. This gap has still to be closed.

Terms:

http://www.xqinenglish.com/glossary_of_xiangqi_terms.html

XIANGQI TERMS IN ENGLISH

http://wxf.ca/xq/computer/XIANGQI_TERMS_IN_ENGLISH.pdf

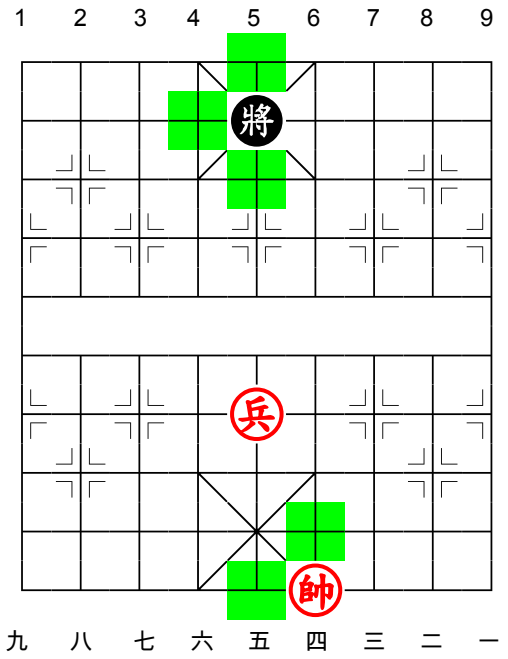
OFFICIAL XIANGQI PIECE NAMES AND NOTATION

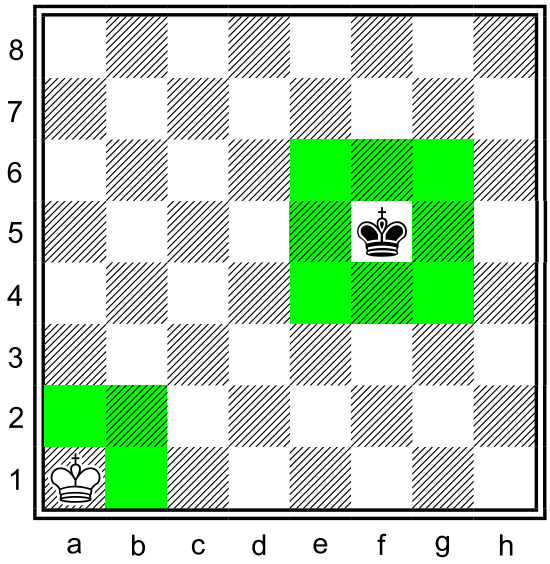
http://wxf.ca/xq/computer/wxf_notation.html

5 Xiangqi Pieces and Movement

5.1 King







The allowed moves of the Chess King are shown as green squares in the right diagram. A written description is omitted. Also for other Chess pieces it is regarded as common knowledge.

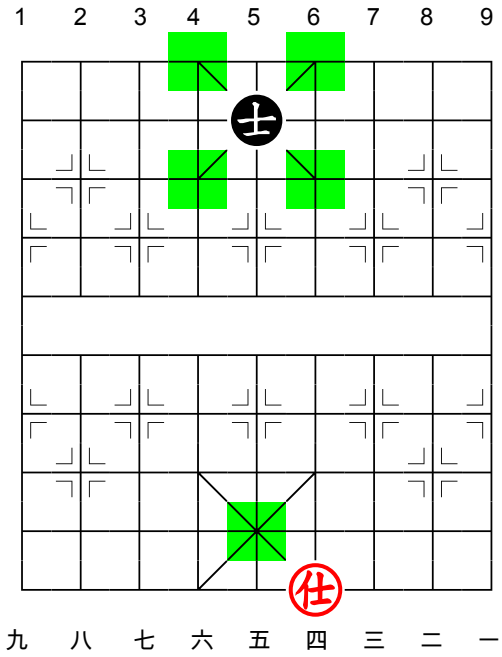
In Xiangqi, the King may move and capture one point orthogonally, never diagonally. The two Kings 帥 將 may not face each other in the same file with no intervening pieces (Face-to-Face-Laughing Rule). Without the Pawn Red's King would be prevented from stepping left like Black's King cannot step left in this situation (viewed from Black's side). In practice, this rule is used to enforce checkmate. The King may never leave the palace. Therefore, it has nine points available for movement in total.

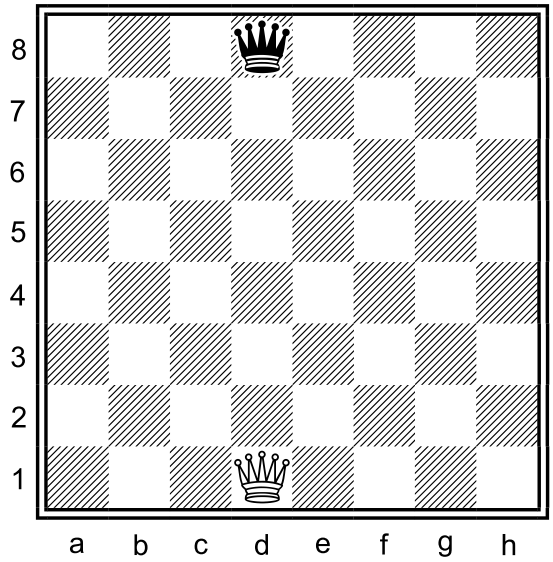
For a checkmate, three up to five points have to be controlled by the enemy or blocked by friendly pieces.

Kings are labeled with the Chinese character 將 (trad.) / 将 (simp.) *jiàng* ("general") on the black side and 帥 (trad.) / 帅 (simp.) *shuài* ("marshal") on the red side.[X1]

5.2 Advisor







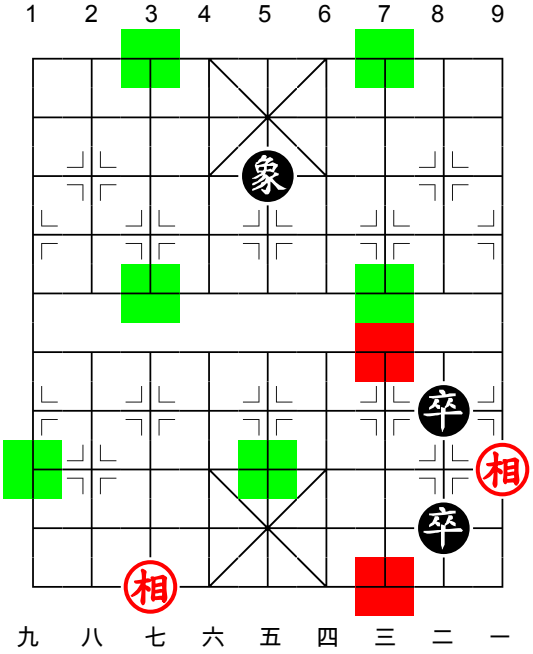
In Chess, there is no such piece as the Advisor next to the King. A Queen is absent in Xiangqi.

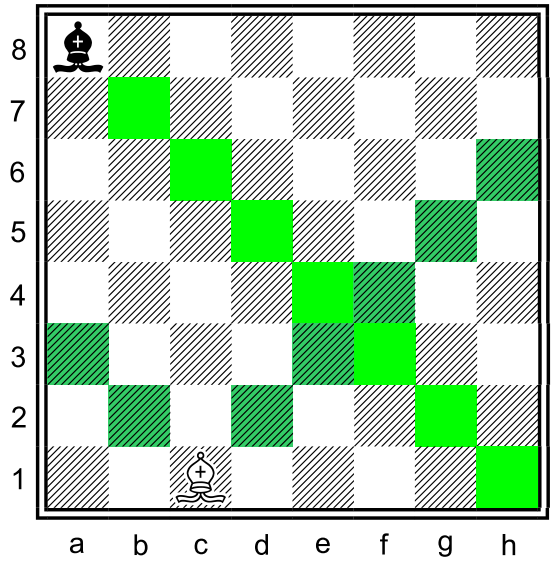
The Advisors (also known as Guards) start on either side of the King. They move and capture one point diagonally and may not leave the palace, which confines them to five points in the board. At the four palace corners, the Advisor has only one move to the center of the palace (centroid).

Advisors are labeled 士 *shì* ("scholar", "officer") for Black and 仕 *shì* ("scholar", "official") for Red. Rarely, sets use the character 士 for both colors.[X1]

5.3 Elephant







The corresponding piece for the Bishop in Chess is the Elephant in Xiangqi. Both are placed on the 3rd file from the edge and move diagonally, but in different ways.

Elephants are labeled 象 *xiàng* ("elephant") for Black and 相 *xiàng* ("minister") for Red. They are located next to the advisors. These pieces move and capture exactly two points diagonally and may not jump over intervening pieces. If an Elephant cannot move due to a diagonally adjacent piece, it is known as "blocking the Elephant's eye". In the diagram, Red's right elephant at the edge cannot move. Black Pawns block it.

Elephants may not cross the river, and serve as defensive pieces. If Red's left Elephant were at the riverbank, it only could move down to the same positions marked green. Because an Elephant's movement is restricted to just seven board positions, it can be easily trapped or threatened. The two Elephants are often used to defend each other.

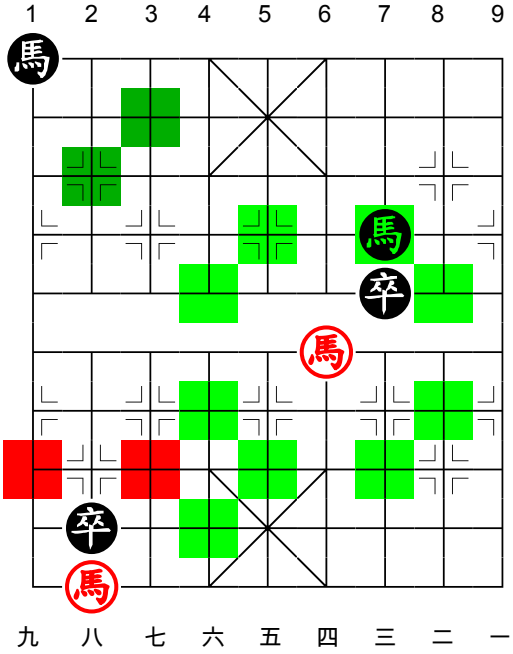
The Chinese characters for "minister" and "elephant" are homophones in Mandarin. However, both are referred to as Elephants in the game.[X1]

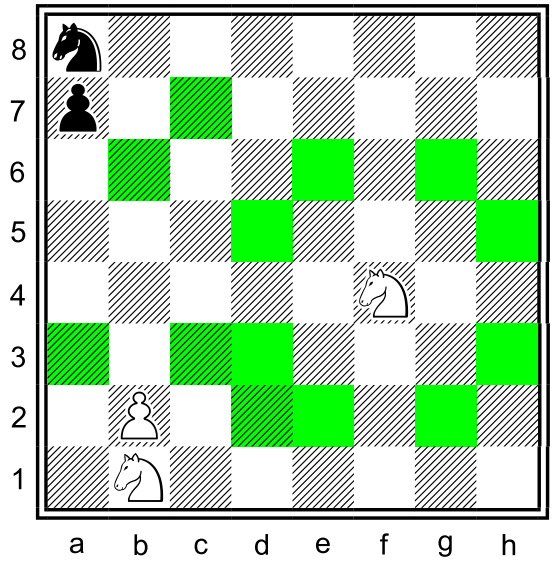
Please note that in Arabic (لافيل) or Spanish (alfil) the Bishops are called Elephants.

Recent research of David H. Li claims that Chess/Xiangqi was created in China by General Han Xin, to train his troops and prepare them for war and gives the date of invention as BC 203. According to him, Xiangqi was disseminated into India and Persia via the Silk Road.[H10] *From Persia Chess took the route via Arabia and North Africa to Spain and arrived in Europe in the middle ages*.

5.4 Horse







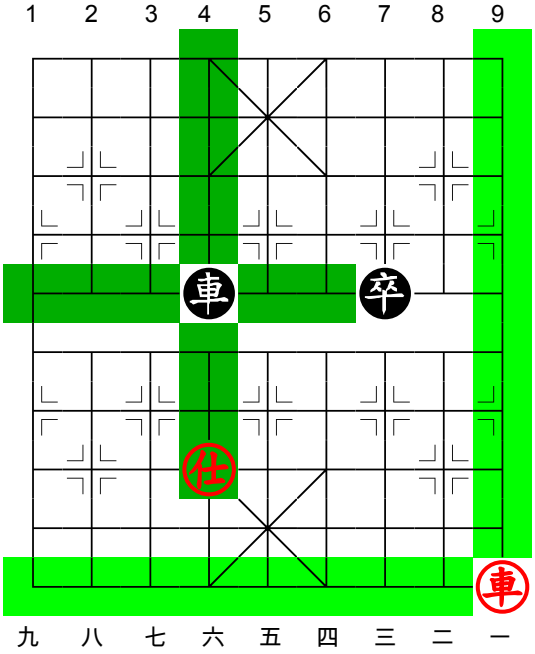
The Horse in Xiangqi corresponds to the Knight in Chess.

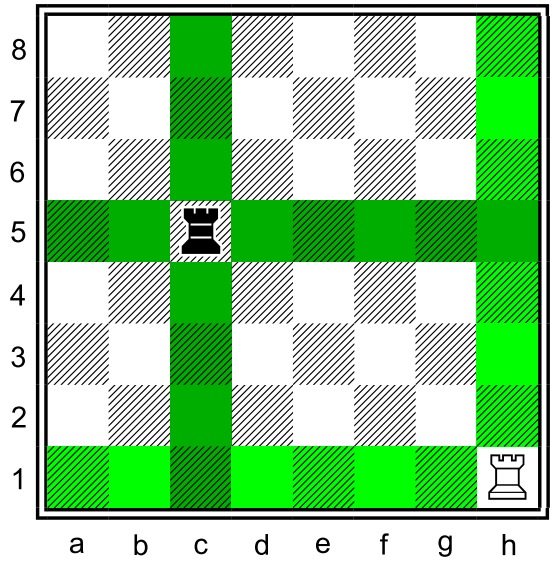
Horses are labeled 馬 *mǎ* for Black and 傌 *mà* for Red in sets marked with Traditional Chinese characters and 马 *mǎ* for both Black and Red in sets marked with Simplified Chinese characters. Some traditional sets use 馬 for both colors. Horses begin the game next to the Elephants, on their outside flanks. A Horse moves and captures one point orthogonally and then one point diagonally away from its former position like the Knight in International Chess. The Horse does not jump as the Knight does in Chess, and can be blocked by any piece located one point horizontally or vertically adjacent to it. Blocking a Horse is called "hobbling the Horse's leg".[X1] The diagram on the left illustrates the Horse's movement. A black Pawn blocks Red's Horse at the bottom rank. Therefore, it cannot move forward, only sideways.

Since Horses can be blocked, it is sometimes possible to trap the opponent's Horse. It is possible for one player's Horse to have an asymmetric attack advantage if an opponent's Horse is blocked.[X1] In the diagram, Red's Horse can capture Black's Horse while Black's Horse is blocked by its own Pawn and does not attack Red's Horse at the riverbank.

5.5 Chariot







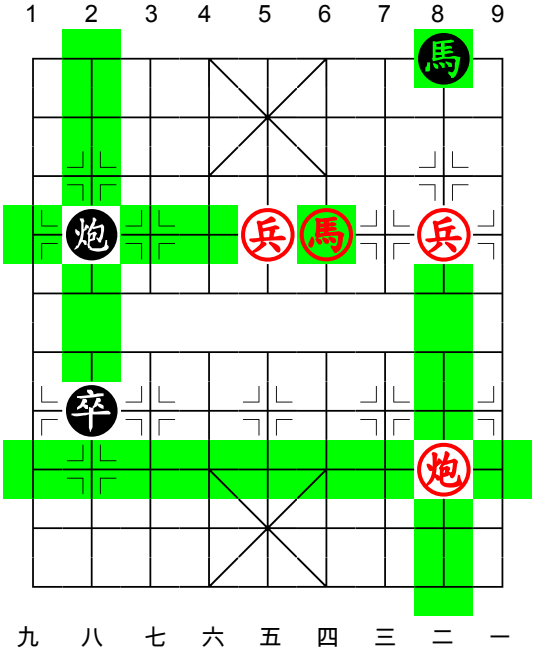
The Chariot in Xiangqi and the Rook in Chess move and capture identically.

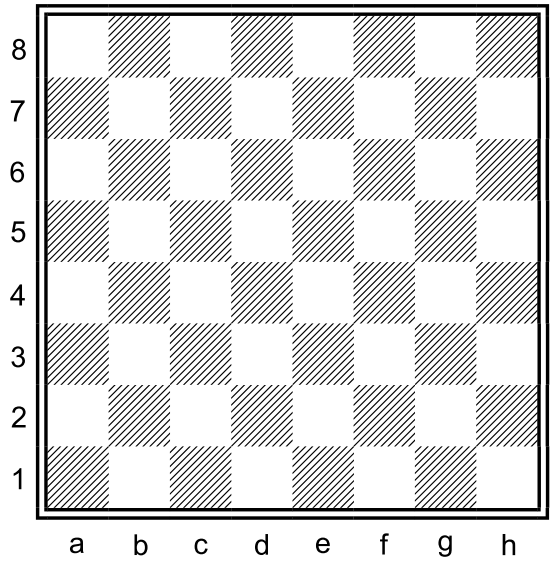
Chariots are labeled 車 for Black and 俥 for Red in sets marked with Traditional Chinese characters and 车 for both Black and Red in sets marked with Simplified Chinese characters. Some traditional sets use 車 for both colors. All of these characters are pronounced as *jū*. The Chariot moves and captures any distance orthogonally, but may not jump over intervening pieces. The Chariots begin the game on the points at the corners of the board. The Chariot is considered to be the strongest piece in the game.

The Chariot is sometimes known as the Rook by English-speaking players, since it is like the Rook in International Chess. Chinese players (and others) often call this piece a car, since that is one modern meaning of the character 車.[X1]

5.6 Cannon







There is no piece in Chess, which corresponds to the Cannon in Xiangqi. The Cannon is a unique feature of Xiangqi.

Cannons are labeled 砲 *pào* ("catapult") for Black and 炮 *pào* ("cannon") for Red. The names are homophones, though sometimes 炮 is used for both Red and Black. The 石 *shí* radical of 砲 means "stone", and the 火 *huǒ* radical of 炮 means "fire". Both colors' pieces are normally referred to as Cannons in English. The black piece is sometimes labeled 包.

Each player has two Cannons, which start on the row behind the Pawns, two points in front of the Horses. Cannons move like Chariots, any distance orthogonally without jumping, but can only capture by jumping a single piece, friend or foe, along the path of attack. The piece over which the Cannon jumps is called the 炮臺 (trad.) / 炮台 (simp.) *pào tái* "cannon platform" or “cannon mount”. Any number of unoccupied spaces, including none, may exist between the Cannon, cannon mount, and the piece to be captured. Cannons can be exchanged for Horses immediately from their starting positions.[X1]

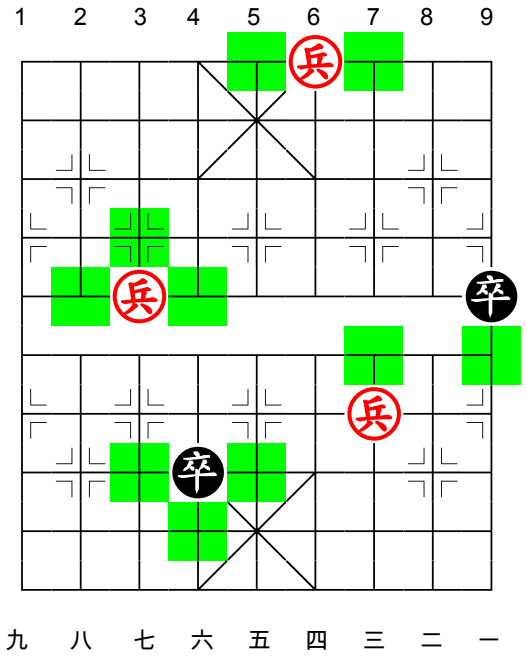
In the diagram, Red's Cannon can capture Black's Horse, Black's Cannon can capture Red's Horse. Both use a red Pawn as a platform. Note that Black's Cannon cannot capture any of Red's Pawns!

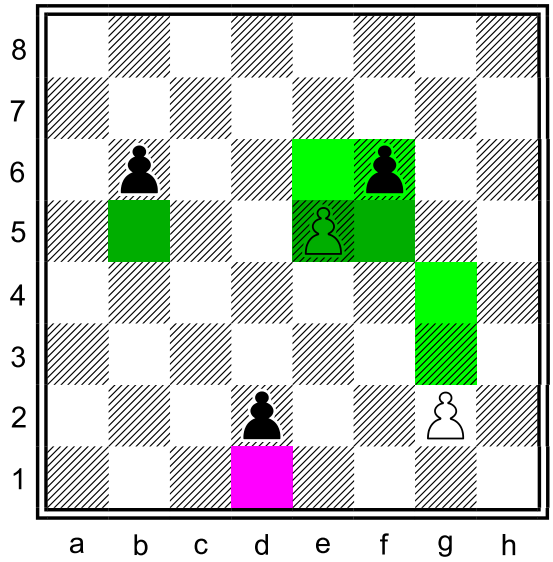
The peculiarity of the Cannon makes Xiangqi interesting for the International Chess player. Beautiful surprising effects and combinations are possible with the Cannon like pinning two pieces in a row or the frightening Double Cannon checkmate. Since the Cannon needs a platform for capture, it becomes less effective in the endgame when many pieces are destroyed.

The Chinese invention of gunpowder made this piece possible. Song Dynasty military forces as early as 904 AD used gunpowder devices against their primary enemy, the Mongols.

5.7 Pawn







Each side has five soldiers, labeled 卒 *zú* ("pawn" or "private") for Black and 兵 *bīng* ("soldier") for Red. Soldiers begin the game located on every other point one row back from the edge of the river. They move and capture by advancing one point. Once they have crossed the river, they may also move and capture one point horizontally. Soldiers cannot move backward, and therefore cannot retreat; after advancing to the last rank of the board, however, a soldier may still move sideways at the enemy's edge. English-speaking players, due to the pieces' similarities, call the soldier „Pawn".[X1]

The official WXF term is Pawn and we stick to that.

5.8 Value of Pieces

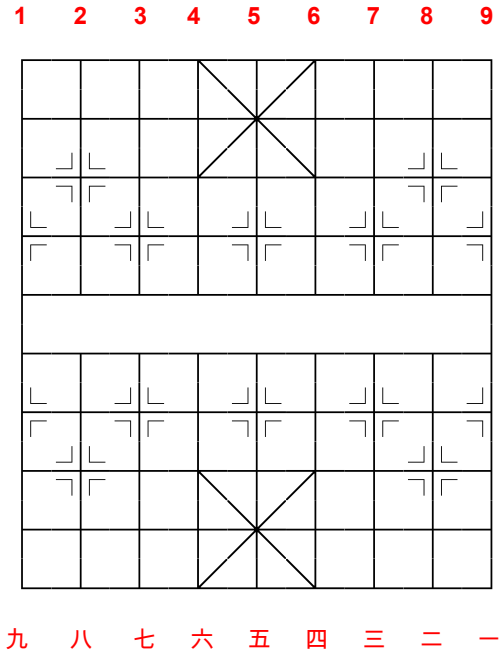
When exchanging or capturing pieces the value has to be taken into account:

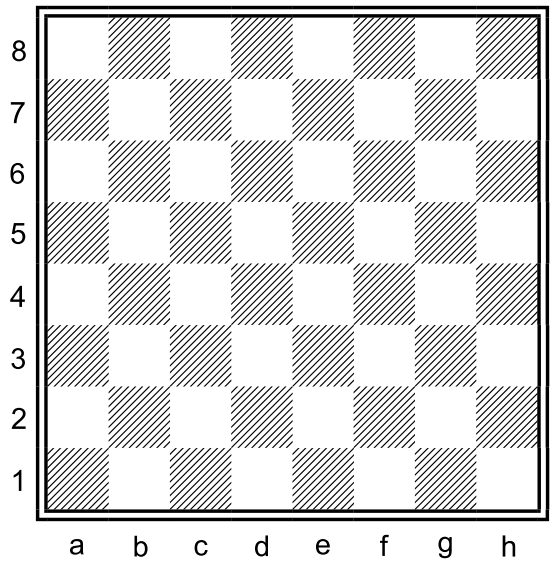
Pawn before crossing the river	1	|	*Chess Pawn*	*1*
Pawn after crossing the river	2	|		
Advisor	2	|	*Queen*	*9*
Elephant	2	|		
Horse	4	|	*Knight*	*3*
Cannon	4½	|	*Bishop*	*3*
Chariot	9	|	*Rook*	*5*

Table: Approximate relative values of the pieces

These approximate values do not take into account the position of the piece in question (except the Pawn in a general sense), the positions of other pieces on the board, or the number of pieces remaining.[X1]

6 Notation





Chess games and positions are recorded using a special notation, most often 'algebraic chess notation' based on the coordinates seen in the diagram. Abbreviated (or short) algebraic notation generally records moves in the format "abbreviation of the piece moved – file where it moved – rank where it moved".[C1]

There are several types of notation used to record Xiangqi games. In each case, the moves are numbered and written with the same general pattern.

1. (first move by Red) (first response by Black)
2. (second move) (second response)
3. (…) ...

It is clearer but not required to write each move pair on a separate line.

Name	Abbr. Red	Piece	Abbr. Black	Piece
King	K	帥	k	將
Advisor	A	仕	a	士
Elephant	E	相	e	象
Horse	H	馬	h	馬
Chariot	R	車	r	車
Cannon	C	炮	c	炮
Pawn	P	兵	p	卒

Table: Abbreviation of Xiangqi pieces

WXF notation: http://www.wxf.org/xq/computer/wxf_notation.html

The official notation system recommended by the WXF (World Xiangqi Federation) is used by several computer software implementations describes moves in relative terms by four consecutive parts as follows: [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

[single-letter piece abbreviation] [former file] [operator indicating direction of movement] [new file, or in the case of purely vertical movement, number of ranks traversed]

The file numbers are counted from each player's right to each player's left.

In case there are two identical pieces in one file, symbols **+** (front) and **–** (rear) are used instead of former file number. Direction of movement is indicated via an operator symbol. A plus sign "**+**" is used to indicate forward movement. A minus sign "**-**" is used to indicate backwards movement. A dot "." or period "**.**" is used to indicate horizontal or lateral movement. For a piece that moves diagonally (such as the horse or elephant), the plus or minus sign is used rather than the period. Captures (x), checks (+) and checkmates (#) are **not** recorded like in Chess.

Thus, the most common opening in the game would be written as:

1. C2.5 H8+7

This notation is also the official Notation of the AXF (Asian Xiangqi Federation) whereby an equal sign "**=**" is used to indicate lateral movement.

1. C2=5 H8+7 [X1]

Nevertheless, Chinese and Vietnamese players and organizations use their traditional notation. The WXF- and AXF-notation are based on it.

Western players sometimes use the Chess notation for Xiangqi based on horizontal coordinates form *a* to *i* and vertical coordinates from *1* to *10* (written as *0*):

[single-letter piece abbreviation] [former position] [capture indication] [new position] [check indication][analysis]

The AXF notation is preferred to the WXF notation in print publications outside Asia.

In the table below a game is recorded in notations of various kinds for comparison . The CXA (Chinese Xiangqi Association) notation is used in Chinese literature and software. How to read Chinese Chess moves you find in chapter 8 of this article: http://www.xqinenglish.com/files/Download01/Short_manual_Simple_translation_of_CCBridge_20130826.pdf

For beginners the AXF notation is highly recommended because the AXF notation is a half way introduction to the Chinese notation that you must learn when reading Chinese Xiangqi literature. Detailed English literature on Xiangqi is very very rare while high level Xiangqi literature in Chinese is available in 1000s if not more.

CXA	**WXF**	**AXF**	**Chess**
1. 炮二平五 炮 8 平 5	1. C2.5 c8.5	**1. C2=5 C8=5**	1. Ch3-e3 Ch8-e8
2. 车一进一 马 8 进 7	2. R1+1 h8+7	**2. R1+1 H8+7**	2. Ri1-i2 Hh0-g8
3. 车一平六 车 9 平 8	3. R1.6 r9.8	**3. R1=6 R9=8**	3. Ri2-d2 Ri0-g0
4. 马二进三 车 9 进 6	4. H2+3 r9+6	**4. H2+3 R9+6**	4. Hh1-g3 Rg0-g4
5. 车六进七 马 2 进 1	5. R6+7 h2+1	**5. R6+7 H2+1**	5. Rd2-d9 Hb0-a8
6. 车九进一 炮 2 进 7	6. R9+1 c2+7	**6. R9+1 C2+7**	6. Ra1-a2 Cb8xb0
7. 炮八进五 马 7 退 8	7. C8+5 h7-8	**7. C8+5 H7-8**	7. Cb2-b8 Hg8-h0
8. 炮五进四 士 6 进 5	8. C5+4 a6+5	**8. C5+4 A6+5**	8. Ce3xe7+ Af0-e9
9. 车九平六 将 5 平 6	9. R9.6 k5.6	**9. R9=6 K5=6**	9. Ra2-d2 Ke0-f0
10. 前车进一 士 5 退 4	10. R++1 a5-4	**10. R++1 A5-4**	10. Rd9xd0+ Ae9xd0
11. 车六平四 炮 5 平 6	11. R6.4 c5.6	**11. R6=4 C5=6**	11. Rd2-f2+ Ce8-f8
12. 车四进六 将 6 平 5	12. R4+6 k6.5	**12. R4+6 K6=5**	12. Rf2xf8+ Kf0-e0
13. 炮八平五	13. C8.5	**13. C8=5**	13. Cb8-e8#
红胜	2-0	**Red wins.**	

Source: http://www.xqinenglish.com/ → Horse Sacrifice for Kill in 13 Moves with annotations and variations !

7 Tactics

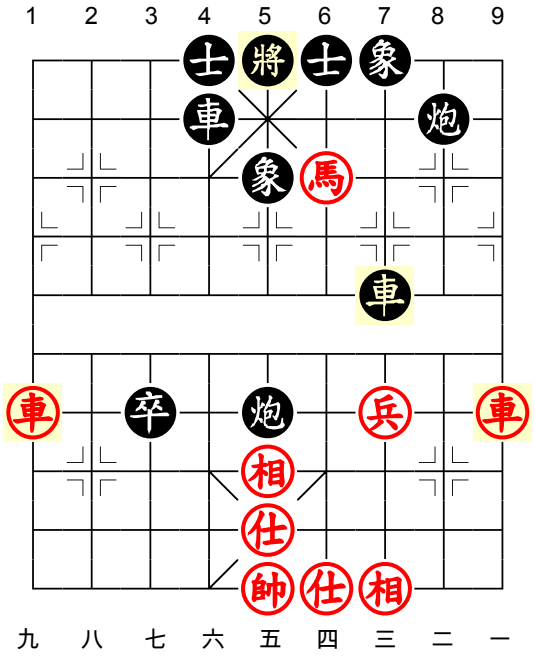
In Chess and Xiangqi, tactics in general concentrate on short-term actions – so short-term that they can be calculated in advance by a human player or by a computer. The possible depth of calculation depends on the player's ability. In quiet positions with many possibilities on both sides, a deep calculation is more difficult and may not be practical, while in "tactical" positions with a limited number of forced variations, strong players can calculate long sequences of moves.

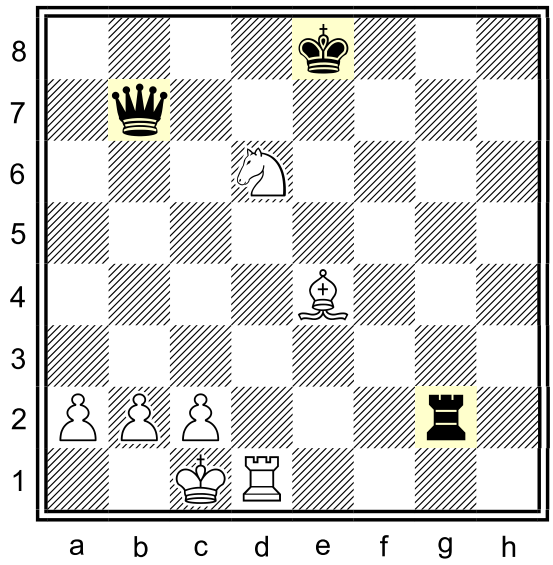
Simple one-move or two-move tactical actions – threats, exchanges of material, and double attacks – can be combined into more complicated combinations, sequences of tactical maneuvers that are often forced from the point of view of one or both players. Theoreticians describe many elementary tactical methods and typical maneuvers; for example, **fork, pin, skewer,** [battery,] discovered attack (especially **discovered check**), **zwischenzug**, **deflection**, decoy, sacrifice, **undermining**, **overloading**, and **interference**.

A forced variation that involves a sacrifice and usually results in a tangible gain is called a combination. Brilliant combinations are considered beautiful and are admired by Chess and Xiangqi lovers. [C1]

7.1 Fork

When one piece attacks more than one enemy piece, they are *forked*.[X1] Every piece is able to fork.



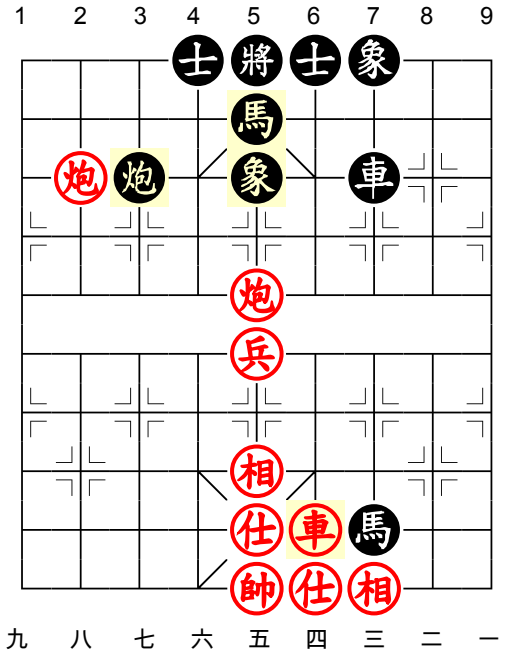


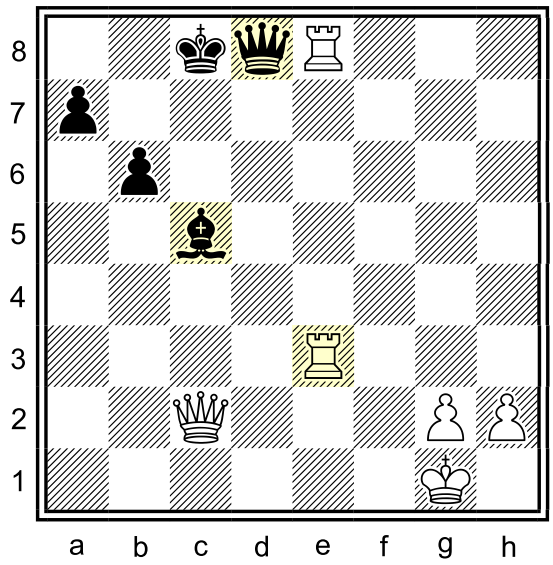
Chess diagram: White's Knight forks Black's King and Queen. The Bishop forks Queen and Rook. Black cannot counter either fork.

Xiangqi diagram: Red's Horse at the palace corner forks Black's King and the Chariot at the riverbank. The Horse does **not** fork Black's Chariot or Cannon at the throat rank. Black's Elephant blocks the Horse from attacking the Chariot while the Cannon can block the Horse in its next move itself and escape capture nicely. The Horse may capture in Red's next move H4-3. Black's Cannon forks Red's Chariots at Red's pawn rank and may capture either C5=1 or C5=9.

7.2 Pin

A piece is *pinned* when it cannot move without exposing a more important piece to capture.





Cannons can pin two pieces at once on one file or rank, Horses can pin because they can be blocked, and Kings can pin because of the "*Face-to-Face-Laughing*" rule (or "*flying general*" rule).[X1] The Chariot pins like the Rook in Chess. Generally, long or medium range pieces, which can be intercepted, are able to pin opponents' pieces. Advisors and Pawns cannot pin. Elephants normally do not pin actively. Rather one piece has pinned itself by blocking the Elephant's eye and another piece is moved to the blocked point afterward, e.g. for a capture.

Chess diagram: Black's Bishop is absolutely pinned by White's Queen (it cannot move), while the Bishop is pinning White's Rook at e3 absolutely. The pin of Black's Queen by White's Rook is not absolute as the Queen may capture the pinning piece. The side that moves first wins.

Xiangqi diagram: Red's Cannon on the central file pins Black's Horse and Elephant in the palace simultaniously. The Cannon on Red's 8th file pins Black's Cannon on the cannon rank (together with the Elephant), but not absolutely. Red's Chariot is pinned by Black's Horse.

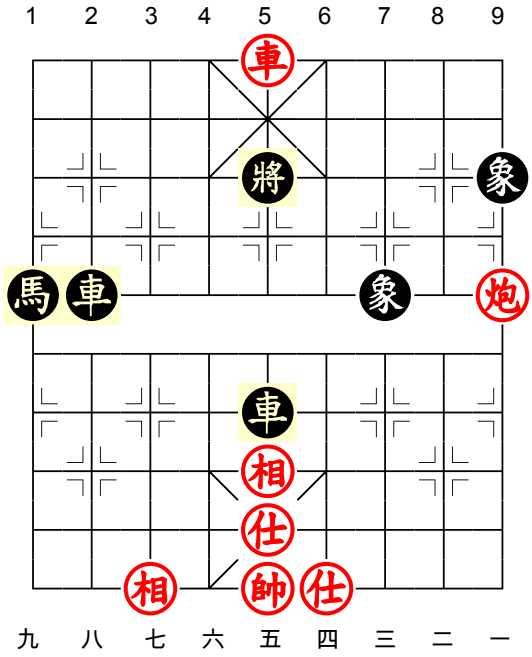
Note: Black's Horse is not checking, it is blocked.

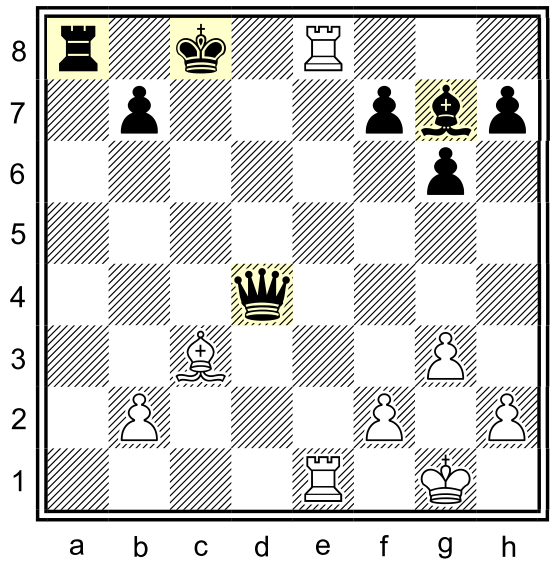
In Xiangqi, a nice form of double pins by Horse and Elephant can contain two enemy pieces simultaneously. Please download the free CXA-PDF "Xiangqi Basic Tactics" from the WXF website (http://www.wxf.org/xq/book/Xq_Tactics.pdf) . In chapter 5.3 "Containment of Horse and Elephant" on p38ff you find instructive examples. Surprising for Chess players!

This book is worth studying as some tactics that are not possible in Chess are explained. Attention: Several tactics are the same or similar to Chess but were given different names!

7.3 Skewer

A piece is *skewered* when it is attacked and, by moving, exposes a less important piece to be captured.[X1] Only Chariot and Cannon can skewer.

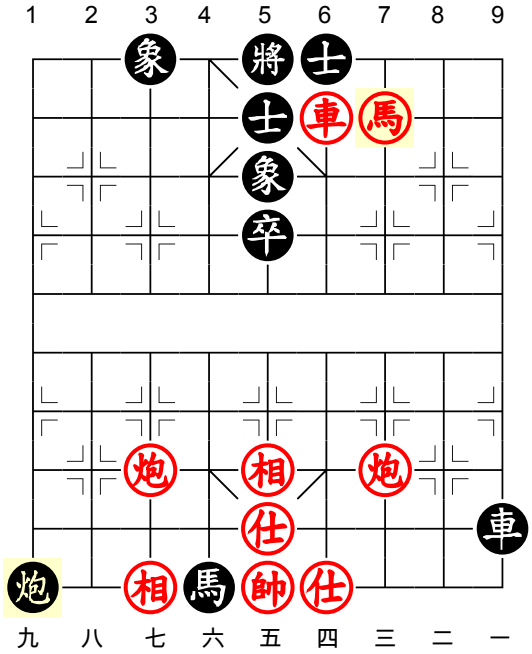


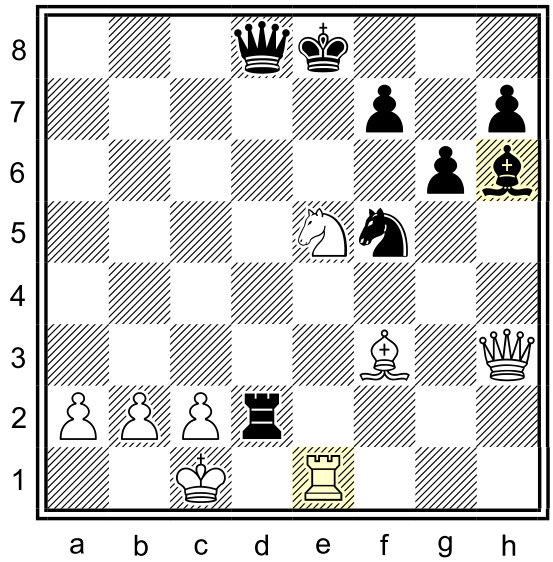


Chess diagram: Black's Queen is skewered by White's Bishop exposing the Bishop on g7 when escaping the attack. White's Rook on e8 skewers Black's King, which is forced to expose the Rook.

Xiangqi diagram: The red Chariot is skewering Black's King and Chariot on the central file. When the King moves, the Chariot can be taken (R5-6). Red's Cannon is skewering Chariot and Horse at the riverbank. When Chariot moves the Horse is captured (C1=9).

7.4 Discovered check





White to move

A *discovered check* occurs when an attacking piece moves so that it unblocks a line for a

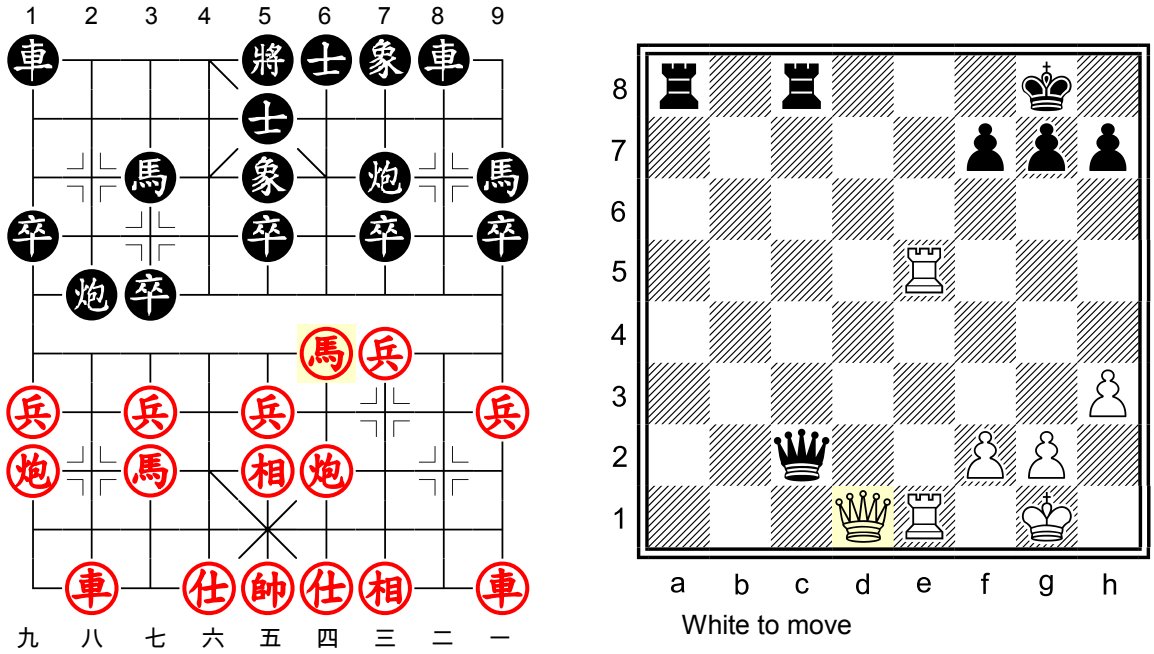
Chariot, Cannon, and less often, the Horse, to check the enemy King. The piece uncovering the check can safely move anywhere within its powers regardless of whether the opponent has those points under control.[X1]

Chess diagram: White is tempted to capture the Queen after Ne5-c6+; the Rook on e1 delivers the check. Black would counter with Rd2-e2+, the Bishop on h6 delivering a discovered check and win after Qh3xh6 Re2-e1+ Bf3-d1 Re1xd1#. White better moves Qh3xh6 first, after Nf5xh6 then Ne5-c6+...

Xiangqi diagram: Red can capture a Chariot after R4-7, the Horse delivering the check. Black can capture a Cannon by H4-3 for free though the Cannon is rooted by the other, his Cannon is delivering the check.

7.5 Overloading

A piece is overloaded when it has to protect two or more other pieces, files, ranks, points/squares or threats at the same time. An overloaded piece can sometimes be deflected, or required to abandon one of its defensive duties.[X4]

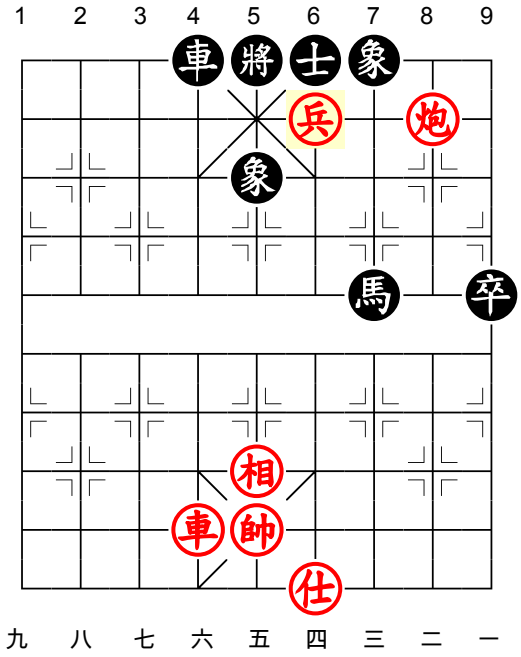


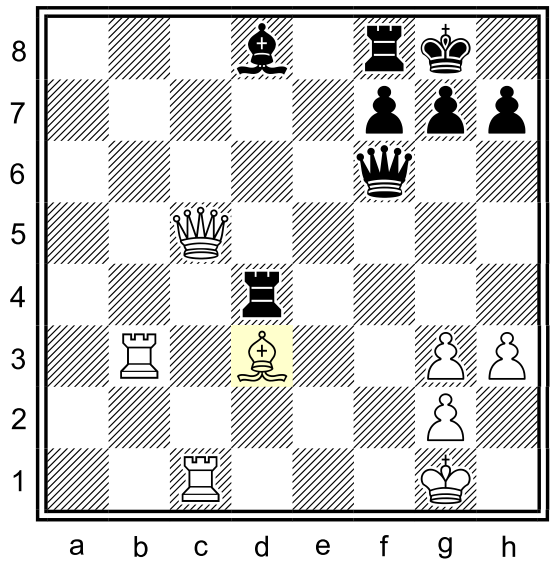
Chess diagram: White wins Black's Queen with Qd1xc2. Black's Rook on c8 cannot protect his Queen and his King at the same time. After Rc8xc2 White would checkmate with Re5-e8+ Ra8xe8 Re1xe8#.

Xiangqi diagram: Red can capture Black's central Pawn for free: H4+5 h3+5 (forced since Horse and Cannon are forked) R8+5. Black's Horse cannot root the Cannon and the Pawn simultaneously.

7.6 Deflection

Force away a piece from defensive duty such as guarding a piece, file, rank, point or king. [X4]



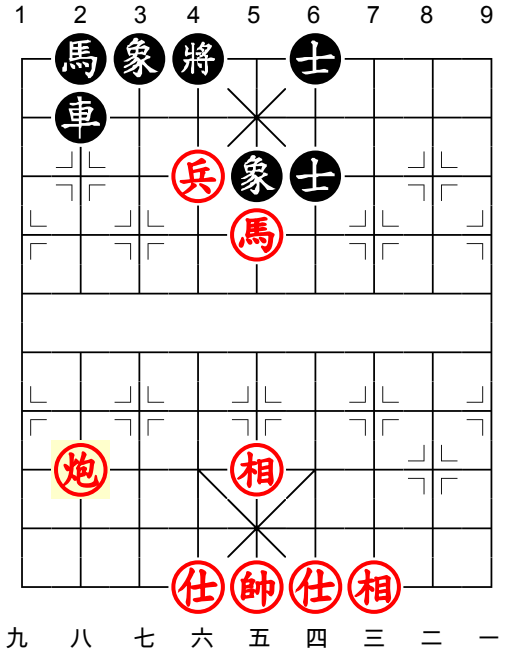


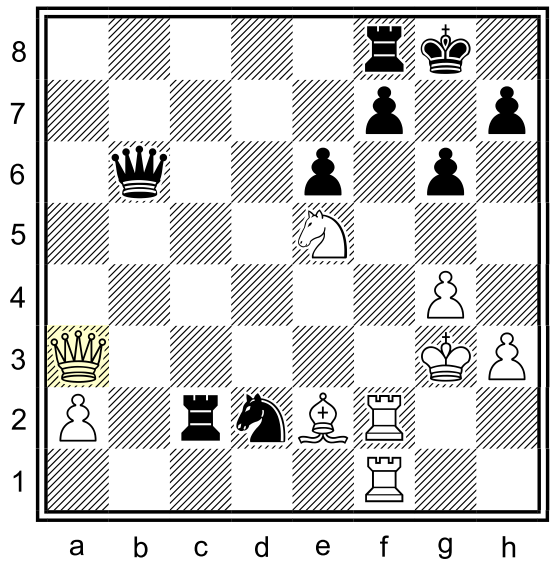
Chess diagram: When it is Whites turn Bd3xh7+ Kg8xh7 Qc5xf8 gains a Rook for a Bishop, the exchange. If it is Black's move, after Rd4xd3 White is forced to give up his Queen with Qc5xf8+ (Rb3xd3 Bd8-b6 and the Queen has to be sold cheap) Kg8xf8 Rb3xd3 and be at the material disadvantage.

Xiangqi diagram: Red deflects Black's King by P4+1 to capture the Chariot with R6+8. If it were Black's turn h7+6 would deflect Red's King and r4+8 gain a Chariot.

7.7 Attraction / Decoy

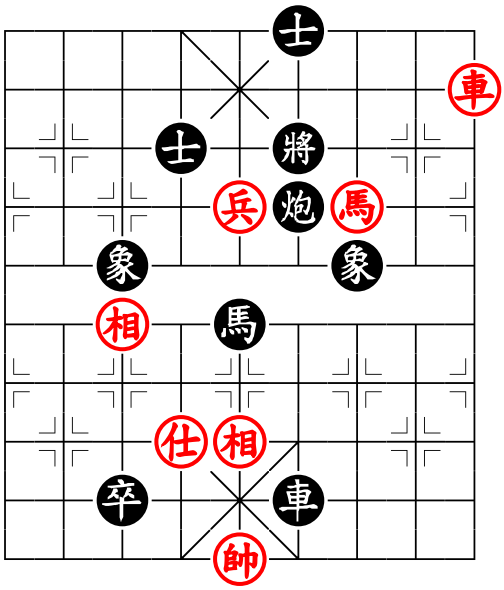
Sacrifice or exchange of material to force the opponent's king or an important piece to a dangerous position whereby it would be more vulnerable to attack or clog his own position. [X4]





Chess diagram: White Qa3xf8 Kg8xf8 Ne5-d7+ regains the Queen and a Rook in total. If Black is to move Rc2-c3+ Qa3xc3 Nd2-e4+ gains also a Queen for a Rook.

Xiangqi diagram: Red exchanges Cannon for Black's Horse C8+7 to attract Black's Chariot to that point r2-1. Now Red can fork with H5+7 and gain a Chariot after k4=5 H7+8.



To the left we have a nice example of clogging the opponent's palace by attracting his pieces to disadvantageous points.

Black has a checkmate sequence:
h5+4 K5=6 p3=4 K6=5 p4=5 K5=6 p5+1

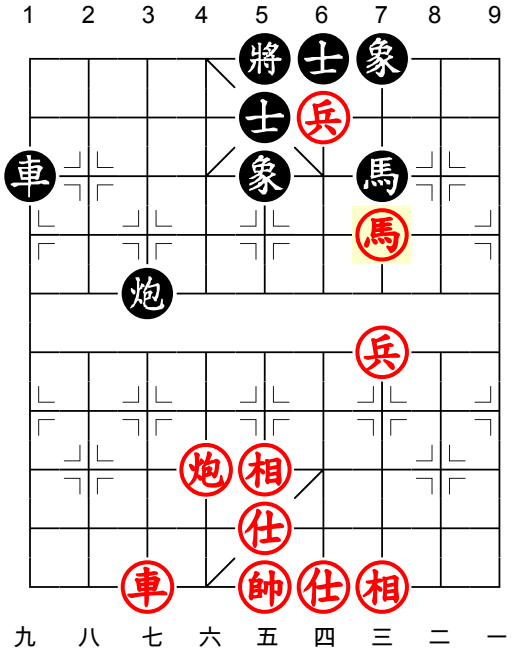
But it is Red's move:
R1=4 c6-2 P5+1 e3-5 H3-5
Red takes a smothered Horse checkmate by sacrificing his Chariot and Pawn.

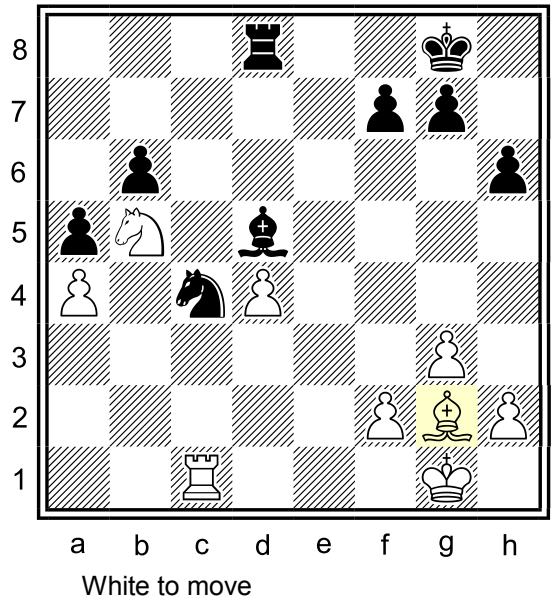
In the process two pieces blocking Red's Horse are removed, Cannon and Pawn, before it can checkmate. Beautiful !

WXF/CXA Zhu Baowei "Basic Xiangqi Checkmate Methods"

7.8 Undermining

Capture of a defensive piece leaving one of the opponent's pieces undefended or underdefended. The opponent has the unpalatable choice between recapturing or saving the undefended piece.[C1, X4]





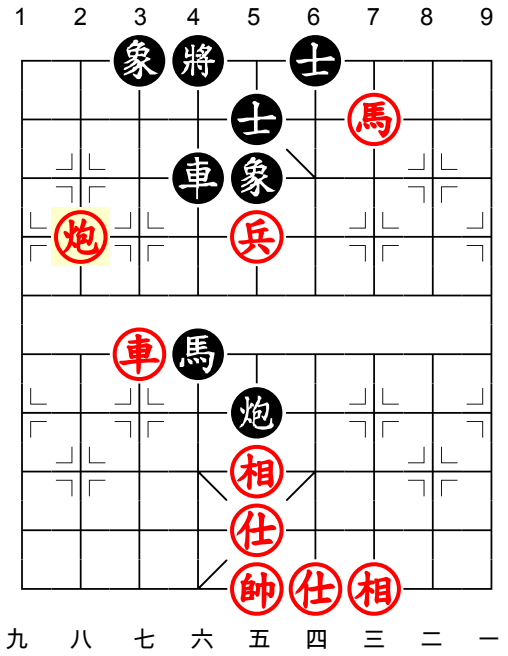
White to move

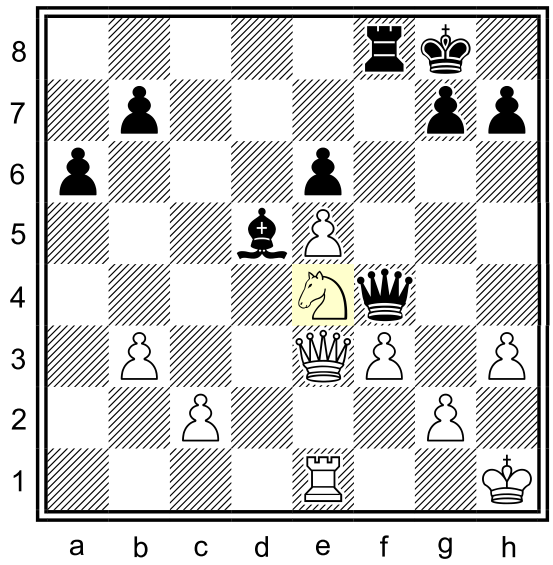
Chess diagram: Exchanging Bishops with Bg2xd5 undermines the Knight on c4 (Rd8xd5 Rc1xc4).

Xiangqi diagram: Red gets an Elephant for free since H3+5 undermines Black's riverbank Cannon (r1=5 R7+5).

7.9 Interference

Interruption of the line between an attacked piece and its defender by sacrificially interposing a piece. The defended object must be more valuable than the sacrificed piece, and the interposition must itself represent a threat.[C1, X4]





White to move

Chess diagram: Queens face each other being protected by their Rooks. White can intercept Black's Rook with Ne4-f6+. Black has no choice than to give the exchange Rf8xf6 exf6 Qf4xf6.

Xiangqi diagram: Black's cross river Horse is rooted by the Chariot at the palcorner (palace corner). Red can intercept by C8=6. Black has to abandon the Horse r4=1 R7=6 r1+7 R6-4 r1=4 K5=6 and have a big disadvantage.

7.10 Zwischenzug

A German term that means “in between move”. A surprising move that, when inserted in an apparently logical sequence (for example, a check that interrupts a series of exchanges), changes the result of that sequence. [X4]

Please download the annotated games from http://wxf.ca/wxf/doc/book/Annotated%20Games.pdf or go to the interactive page http://www.wxf.org/xq/annotate/g3.htm and replay the 3rd game Liu Dianzhong vs. Xu Tianhong commented by Ge Weipu.
Red inserts several zwischenzugs in the move series:

12. C7+7 destroys Black's right-hand Elephant first instead saving the Chariot immediately.
20. C7=9 threatens a checkmate sequence R7+5 a5-4 R6+4 k5+1 R7-1.
21. R6+3 threatens R7+5 a5-4 R7=6 checkmate before taking care of the 8th file Cannon.
24. C8+7 installs a Cannon on the opponent's bottom rank before recapturing the Chariot.
26. R7+5 does save the attacked Horse indirectly before recapturing the 6th file Cannon.

A brilliant game illustrating the beauty of zwischenzugs.

8 Checkmates

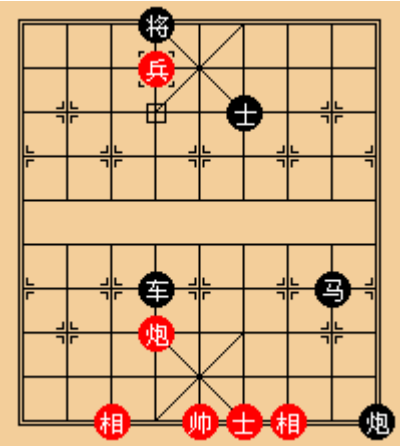
In this chapter we skip the Chess part. Xiangqi checkmates (abbr. 'C.') where the special powers of the unique Cannon or the King are effective are introduced as well as the stalemate checkmate. They would never appear in Chess.

The colored boards are exported from CCBridge, a Xiangqi database software. Until now, the Xiangqi font was used for diagrams as we can have differently colored points or pieces then. Fonts are also preferred to limit document size.

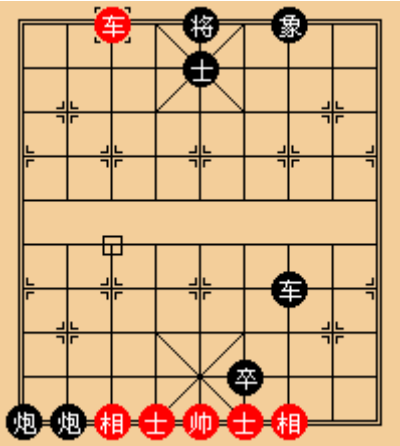
Checkmate situations are from the free PDF “Basic Xiangqi Checkmate Methods”[X5] which you can download from the WXF website: http://wxf.ca/wxf/index.php/books .

In the self-test section (17) you can try to find checkmate sequences and become more familiar with Xiangqi.

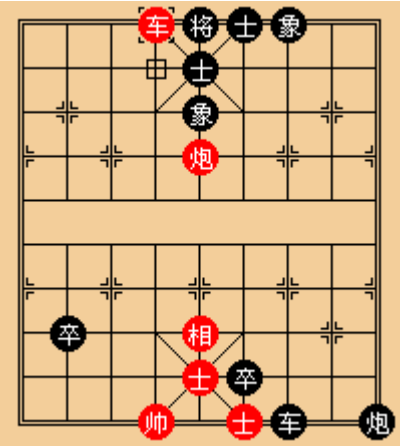
8.1 Checkmate situations



1
Face-to-Face Laughing C.



2
Face-to-Face Laughing C.

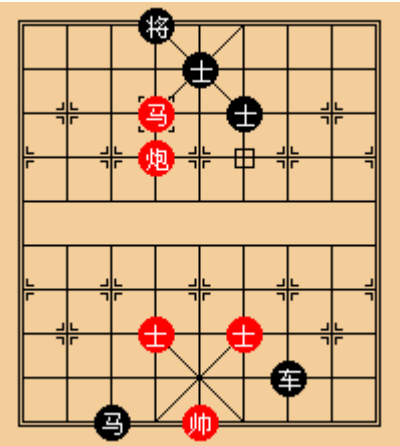


3
Iron Bolt Checkmate

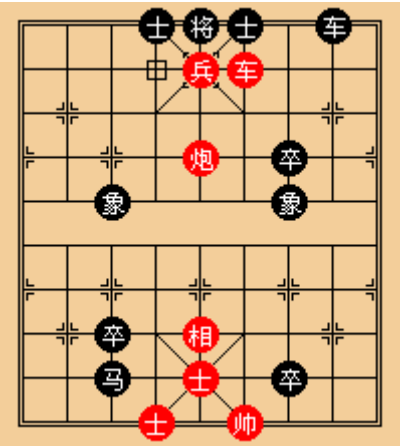
Diagram 1 shows a checkmate position impossible in Chess: Red's Pawn supported by the Cannon delivers a check, Blacks King cannot step sidewards since (1) it cannot leave the palace, (2) the central file is blocked by Red's King. Chariot cannot eat the Pawn. Why?

Diagram 2: Red's Chariot delivers a fatal checkmate on the opponent's bottom rank. Black's Advisor cannot block the Chariot since it is pinned by Red's King.

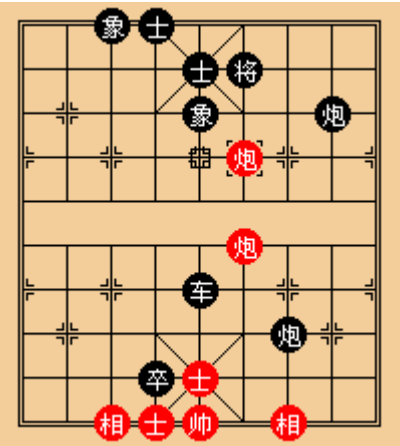
Diagram 3: Red's Cannon pins the central black Advisor and Elephant. With the support of the King Red's Chariot delivers a checkmate. Black's King cannot capture Chariot since its King roots (protects) it. The Advisor cannot move to defend.



4
Horse-Cannon C.



5
Exposed Cannon C.

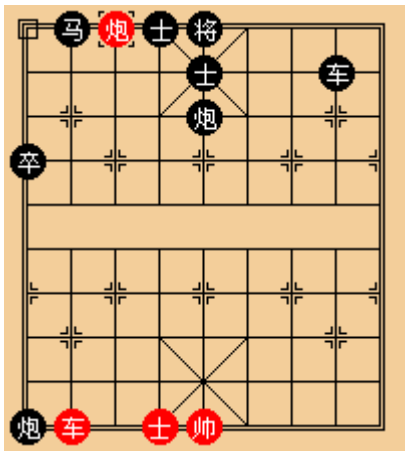


6
Double Cannons C.

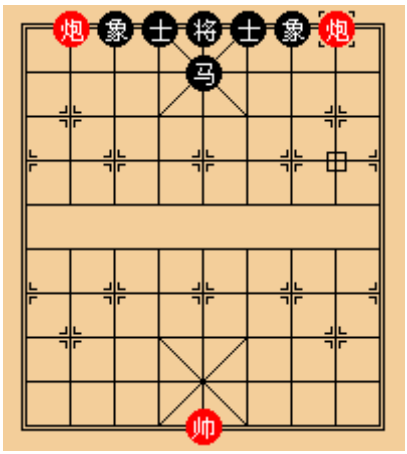
4: The Horse controls the center point; the Cannon delivers a check and controls the point in front of Black's King.

5: Red's Pawn delivers a check. Black's King cannot destroy the Pawn since it is rooted by the Chariot. Black's Advisors are not pinned. Normally they could capture the aggressive Pawn. But: A Cannon is also delivering a check: Double check! When an Advisor eliminates the Pawn, the Cannon check stays permanent. Therefore: Checkmate.

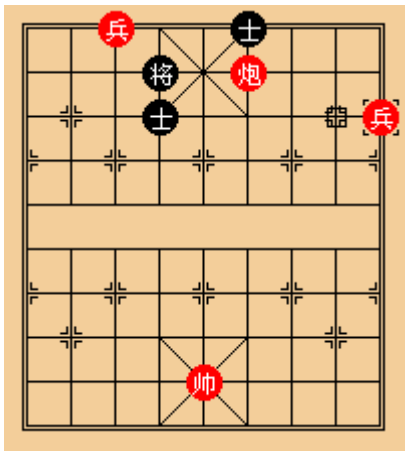
6: The Cannon at Red's riverbank delivers a check using the other Cannon as cannon mount. Blocking the check by the first Cannon would activate one of the second: Checkmate.



7
Smothered Cannon C.



8
Stalemate C.

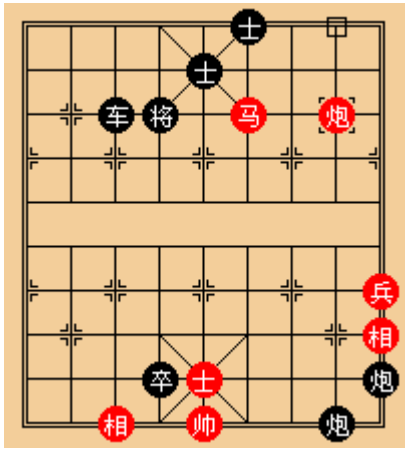


9
Stalemate C.

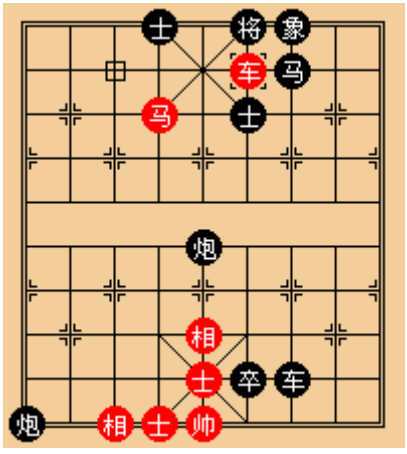
7: Red's Cannon delivers a check. Black's bottom Advisor is blocked by his own partner that blocks the way up for the King.

8: Black cannot move any piece. All his pieces are pinned. Though not in check, it is the stalemate-checkmate, a loss for Black.

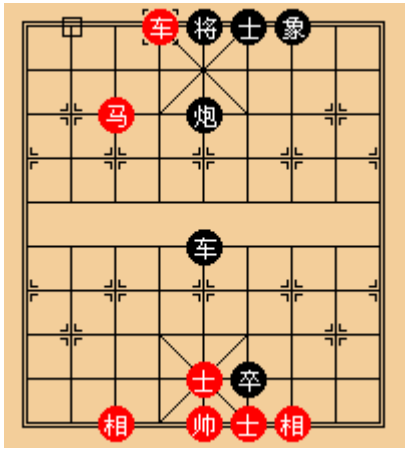
9: Black's King is confined by Red's Pawn at the bottom, his own Advisor at the top palace corner and Red's King. The Advisors cannot move to the centroid (Palace center) without becoming a Cannon mount and causing a self-check. Stalemate → checkmate!



10
Palcorner Horse-Cannon C.



11
Palcorner Horse C.



12
Angler Horse C.

10: Similar to number 4.

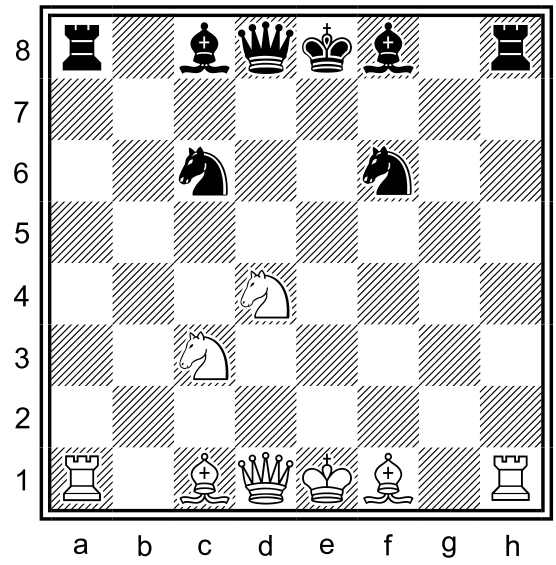
11, 12: The Chariot is delivering a check while the Horse protects the Chariot and controls the escape route, the point next to Black's King. These checkmates also occur in Chess.

9 Strategy

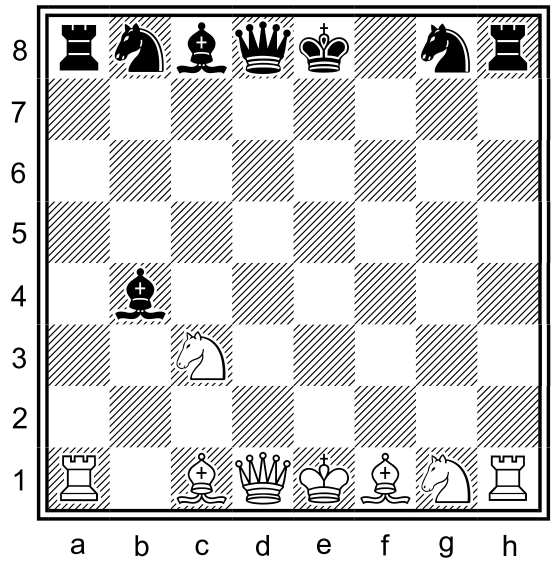
9.0 Comparison of Game Information in Piece Formations

An experiment for club and tournament Chess players:

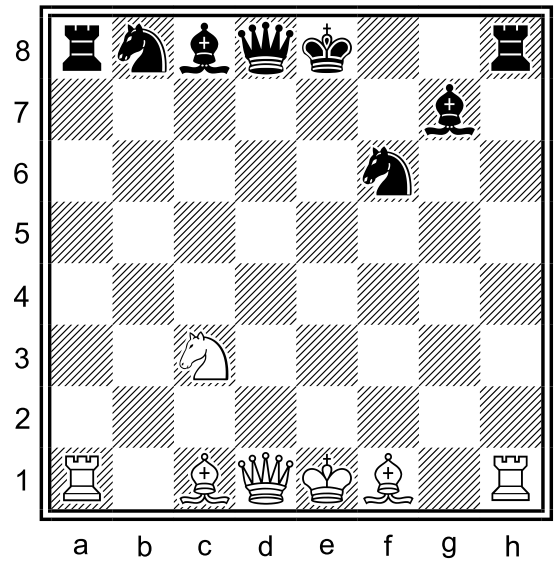
The next four diagrams show positions of popular Chess openings without any Pawns. Try to figure out which openings they are!



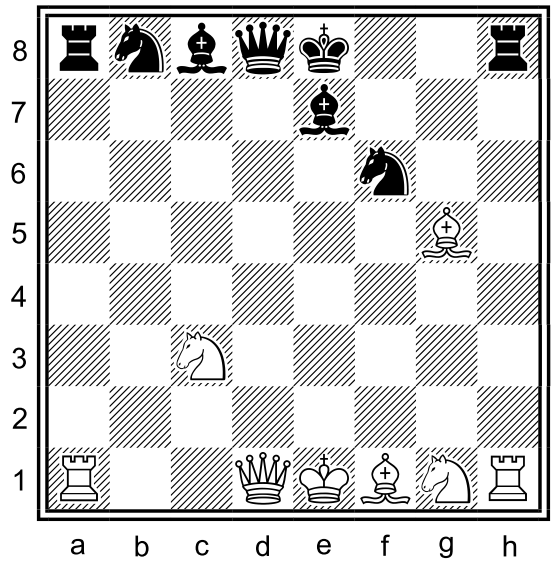
C1a



C2a



C3a

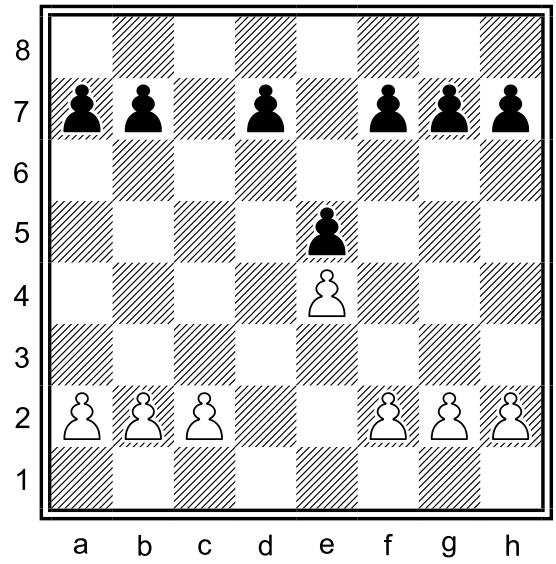


C4a

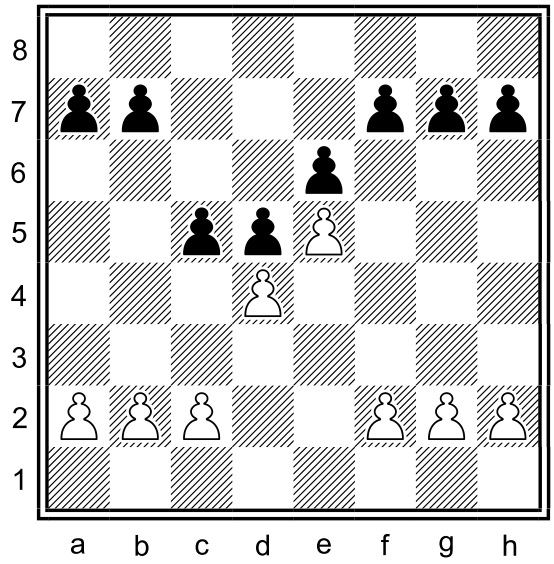
Even if you have an idea what opening might have been played, you can't be sure.

C1a: Scotch Game-Four Knights or Sicilian-Sveshnikov
C2a: French Defence, or unusual Vienna Game, Nimzo-Indian, Queens Gambit
C3a: King's Indian or Pirc Defence
C4a: Queen's Gambit or Dutch Defence

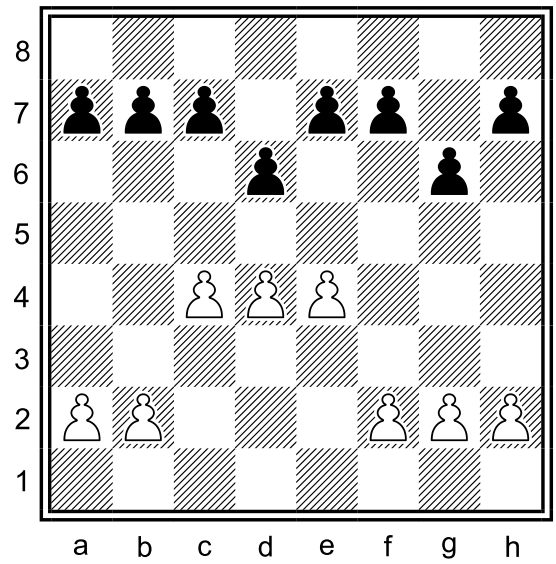
Now find out the opening played from the Pawn structure!



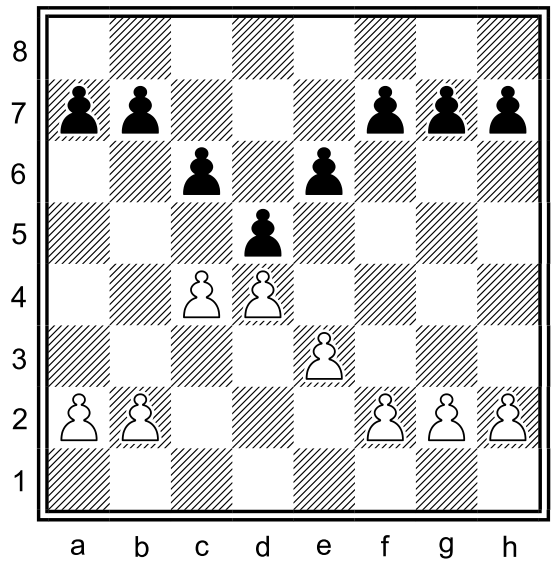
C1b



C2b



C3b



C4b

It is easy to tell the opening from the Pawn formation:

C1a: Sicilian -Sveshnikov variation
C2a: French Defence
C3a: King's Indian
C4a: Queen's Gambit

Put together a and b of each pair of diagrams and you will recognize.

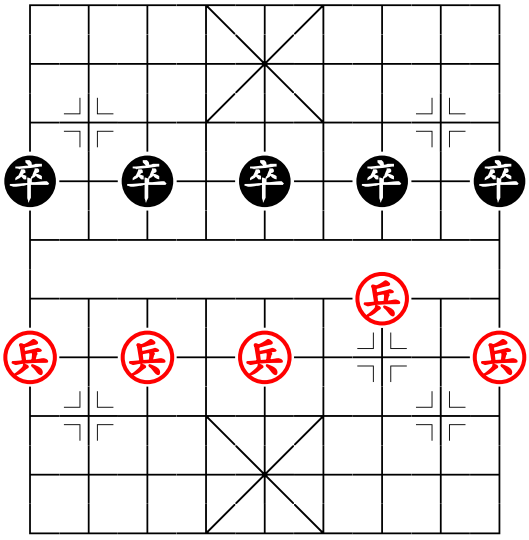
The Pawn formation tells you more about the Chess game than the positioning of the pieces. This may serve as an illustration why in Chess strategic plans are more often based on Pawn structure than on the actual piece positioning.

Like François-André Danican Philidor (1726 – 1795) wrote in his book *Le jeu des échecs*, 1792 edition: "The pawns are the soul of chess."

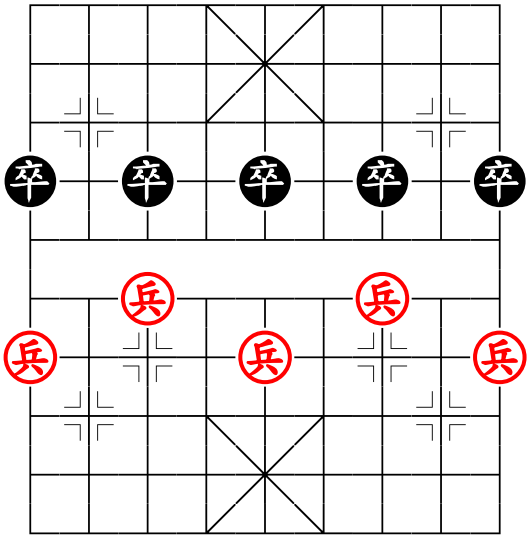
How is it in Xiangqi?

Taking into account that there are only five Pawns on a symmetrical XiangQi board which capture as they move forward and that they start from a high position (like Chess Pawns would have after making a double step from their pawn rank) there are basically only four Pawn formations seen in the opening. Moving the side Pawns at an early opening stage does not contribute much to the development of pieces and therefore is not recommended. The central Pawn will become prey to the opponent's Cannon after 1.P5+1 c8=5. The central Pawn might be moved later in the game for an attack down the central file.

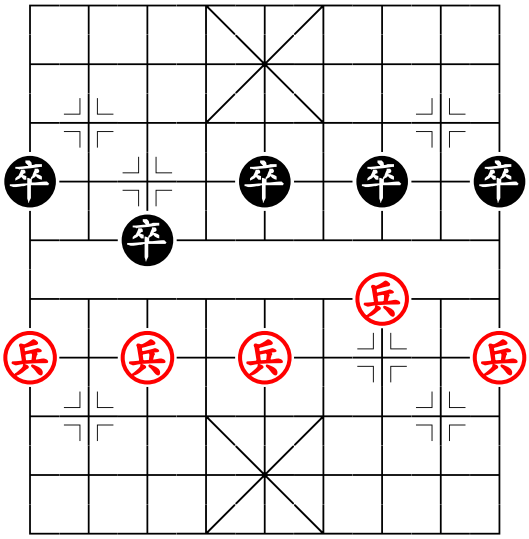
Ask a XiangQi player what openings are played with the Pawn formations shown.



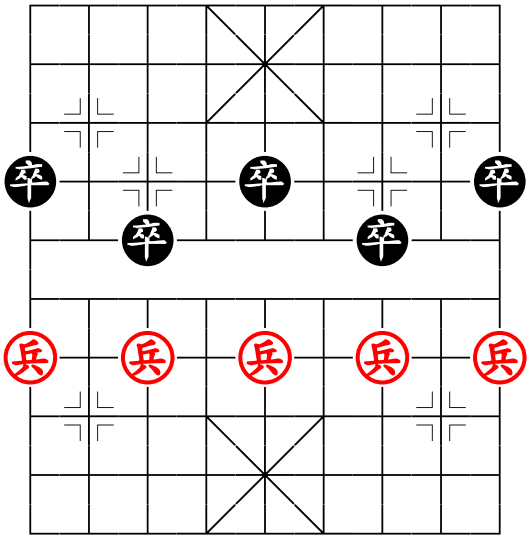
1



2



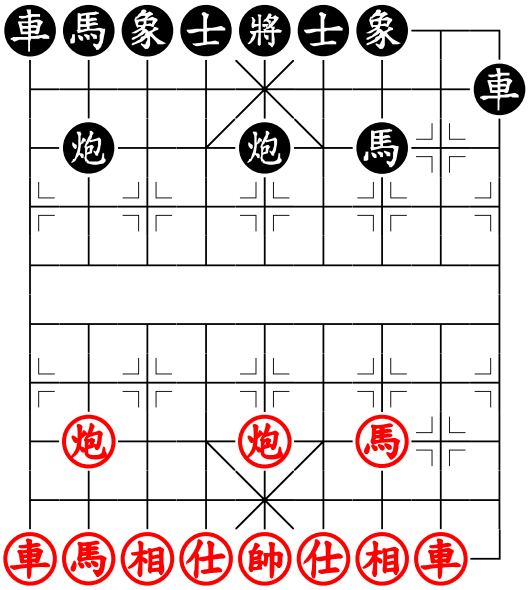
3



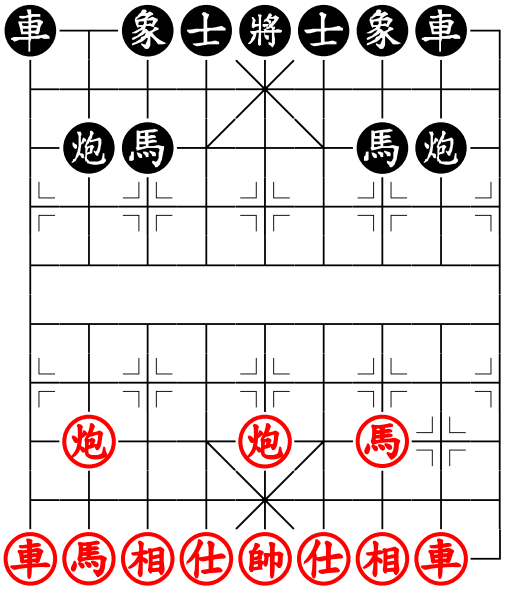
4

He will not be able to give even a direction, because these Pawn formations are possible in almost all openings. No Xiangqi Grandmaster can tell!

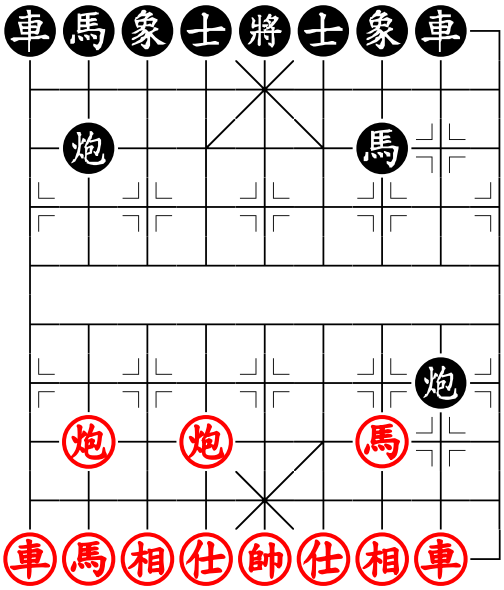
Let us have a look at formations of major pieces. If you have already done some opening study in XiangQi guess which openings are shown in the diagrams. Pawns are omitted.



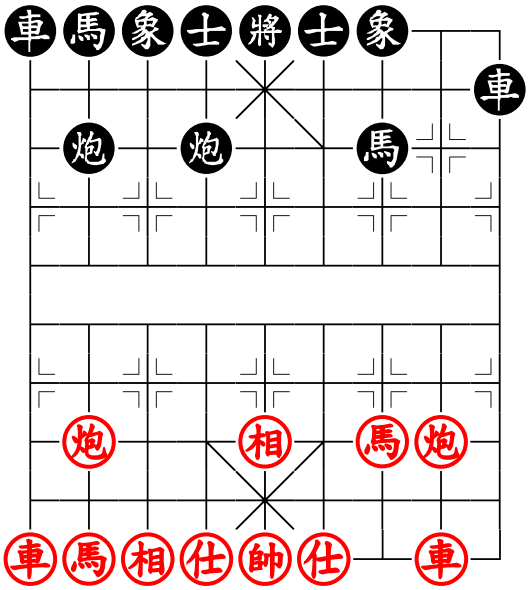
5



6



7



8

It is not hard to tell:

5: Same Direction Cannons : Ranked Chariot vs Filed Chariot
6: Central Cannon vs Screen Horse Defence
7: Cross Palace Cannon vs Left Proper Horse
8: Elephant Opening vs Left Palcorner Cannon

Unlike in Chess, one is able to categorize most openings from the piece formation alone. Therefore the openings are denoted by the piece maneuvers of the initial moves. See also: Chapter 10 Opening.

From this comparision of game information we can conclude that while strategy in Chess is centered around the static Pawn formations, strategy in XiangQi is about semi-static positions of major pieces: blocked Horse, pinned defenders (Advisor, Elephant), trapped Chariot, etc. Of course, the immobility of the King which does not castle is on top. To say it the other way: Every XiangQi strategy is more about mobility of pieces than in Chess.

9.1 Strategy and Tactics

Chess/Xiangqi strategy consists of setting and achieving long-term positioning advantages during the game while tactics concentrate on immediate maneuver. These two parts of the Xiangqi-playing process cannot be completely separated, because strategic goals are mostly achieved through tactics, while the tactical opportunities are based on the previous strategy of play. A game of Xiangqi is normally divided into three phases: opening, typically the first 8-10 moves, when players move their pieces to useful positions for the coming battle; then middlegame; and last, the endgame, when most of the pieces are gone, and Kings typically take an active part in the struggle.[C1]

9.2 Strategic factors

Xiangqi strategy is concerned with evaluation of Xiangqi positions. During the evaluation, players must take into account numerous factors such as the value of the pieces on the board, control of the riverbank and centralization, the piece development, King safety, and the control of key points or groups of points (for example, Elephant-eye, open files).

The most basic step in evaluating a position is to count the total value of pieces of both sides (Table). In the endgame, the King becomes more powerful when the enemies army is almost exhausted. Basic values are then modified by other factors like position of the piece (for example, cross river Pawns are usually more valuable than those on their initial points), coordination between pieces (for example, a Cannon-Horse pair usually coordinates better than a Cannon pair or a Horse pair), or the amount of remaining material (Cannons generally better in positions with many cannon mounts while Horses are more powerful in material reduced positions).[C1]

There are several factors important in Chess, which are not present in Xiangqi: Pawn structure such as isolated, doubled, or backward pawns and holes; passed Pawns, control of diagonals.

Control of the center is less important than in Chess, but the central file as a whole is a fighting area as the Kings are placed on it.

Common factors are mobility of pieces, room for maneuvering, control of files, unrooted/unprotected pieces.

Factors unique to Xiangqi are the blocked Horse, boxed Chariot or Cannon and insufficient control of home territory and damaged defense (one Advisor or Elephant destroyed).

9.3 Basic use of pieces in Xiangqi [X1]

Usually, **Pawns** do not support each other, because from the initial position it takes a minimum of five moves of a soldier to allow mutual protection between two of them. Pawns and **Horses** are short and medium range attacking pieces. Try to drive them near the enemies King.

The **Chariot**s, as the most valuable pieces, are normally not lined up together, as it risks losing one Chariot to an enemy's inferior piece, especially the Cannon. Depending on the situation, it may be advantageous to position a Chariot/Cannon at one of the corners on the enemy's side of the board, where it is difficult to dislodge and able to threaten the enemy King. Use Chariots to control open files or block Elephants-eyes of your opponents defense formation.

It is common to use **Cannon**s independently to control particular ranks and files. Using a Cannon to control the central file is often considered vital strategy, because it locks pieces such as the Advisors and Elephants in certain positions to prevent a check. The two files adjacent to the central file (rib files) are also considered important and Horses and Chariots can be used to push for checkmate there. Two Cannons on the same file is also a powerful formation, as the rear Cannon can threaten the King, but moving a piece in front of the Cannons to block will fail, because the front Cannon can then attack the King.

A common defensive configuration is to leave the King at its starting position, deploy one **Advisor** and one **Elephant** on the two points directly in front of the King, and to leave the other Advisor and Elephant in their starting positions, to the side of the King. In this setup, the Advisor-Elephant pairs support each other, and the King is immune from attacks by Cannons. Losing any of these pieces makes the King vulnerable to Cannon, and the setup may need to be abandoned. The defender may move Advisors or Elephants away from the King, or even sacrifice them intentionally, to ward off attack by a Cannon.

9.4 Strategic factors of Xiangqi and Chess in parallel

Xiangqi	Chess	Comparison
development of pieces	development of pieces	identical
control of central file	control of center	different
control of riverbank	-----	not applicable
control of points	control of squares	identical
room advantage	space advantage	identical
Chariot controlling a file -----	Rook controlling a file pair of Rooks controlling a file	identical rare in Xiangqi
Chariot controlling opponents throat rank (9^{th}/2^{nd}rank)	Rook controlling opponents pawn rank (7^{th}/2^{nd}rank)	more dangerous in Xiangqi
Horse-Cannon pair	pair of Bishops	different
riverbank Horse	centralized Knight (d4,d5,e4,e5)	similar
central file Cannon	open position	similar
defense (A, E) on central file	closed position	similar
-----	Pawn structure	not applicable
cross river Pawn	advanced / passed Pawn	different
material advantage	material advantage	identical
supply of troops	-----	different
piece rooting	piece protection	similar
effective number of moves	-----	no criteria in Chess
-----	double pawn	not applicable
-----	isolated pawn	not applicable
blocked Horse	Knight at the edge	different
absence of cannon mounts	bad Bishop	totally different
King does not castle	castle	totally different
blocked Elephant's-Eye	-----	not applicable
bottom rank Elephants	-----	not applicable
-----	exchanged fianchettoed Bishop	not applicable
(weak bottom rank)	weak base rank	different
damaged defense	damaged pawn formation	totally different
clogged palace	-----	not applicable
boxed Chariot or Cannon	Queen going astray	?
territory full of holes	-----	not applicable
unrooted pieces	(tactical factor in Chess)	different
lead **(!)**	initiative	similar

9.5 Maneuvers, Mobility and Local Material Superiority

Before a tactics can be applied to transform a strategic advantage into a decisive material advantage or even a checkmate both sides are maneuvering their pieces into effective attacking and/or defending positions. Exploiting a permanent weakness in a formation requires to have more mobile pieces than the opponent in the area of attack.

Each game phase has its special maneuvers:

9.5.1 Opening

The mirror symmetry of the original piece positions, the important role of the riverbanks and pawn ranks result in classifying the openings after maneuvers rather than giving them names after a region of origin or a player who played and researched it first. In XiangQi there is nothing like a Dutch Opening, Ruy Lopez, Marshall Attack or Aljekhine's Defence. Instead we have 五六炮左正马对反宫马 which means literally “56 Cannons Left Proper Horse vs Opposite Palace Horse”. The maneuvers of piece development denote the opening.

Concerning strategy, in Chess one is advised not to create (or let the opponent induce) static burdens like double Pawns or isolated Pawns during the opening stage when there is no compensation for it. In XiangQi immobile pieces are such a burden. The opening maneuvers in XiangQi are aimed to improve the mobility of the own pieces and to deny mobility to the oponent's pieces.

Let us look at a game (2008 Jiang Chuan W Sun YongZheng) and its opening maneuvers which affect mobility:

1. C8=5 h8+7 2. H8+7 c2=4 3. R9=8 h2+3 4. C2=4 r9=8

Opening classification is normalized with Red to make his first move on his right hand side. Therefore, nevertheless Red played C8=5 as his first and C2=4 as his fourth move the opening is classified as 56 Cannons due to the board symmetry.

Black inhibits with his Cannon maneuver 2...c2=4 the development of Red's right Horse (after H2+3 Black is prepared to skewer Red's Horse and 2nd file Cannon with C2+5). Red increases the mobility of his left Chariot with R9=8 occupying an open file. Black's formation is called Sandwiched Horse in English, the right Horse is between two Cannons.

5. H2+3 c8=9 6. P3+1 p3+1 7. H3+4 a6+5 8. R8+6 r1=2

After Red's fifth move all Horses are out but still immobile due to the Pawns on their own pawn rank. Black occupies the other open file with his left Chariot by moving the Cannon to the edge c8=9. Both players choose to free one Horse by advancing a Pawn P3+1 p3+1 and Red comes first to advance his right Horse to the riverbank H3+4. As Red already attacks Black's central Pawn Black fortifies the central file with a6+5. Red maneuvers his left Chariot across the river to Black's pawn rank to block Black's right Horse next. Black fights for the open file with r1=2.

So far no tactical clashes have taken place, both players develop their pieces smoothly.

9. R8=7 c4-1 10. H4+3 r8+3 11. P3+1 c4=3 12. C4+4 r8+4? (better: r8+3)

Red's R8=7 blocks and attacks Black's unrooted Horse! Black counters with retreating his cannon c4-1. A dual purpose move: the Horse becomes rooted by the 9th file Cannon and Black prepares to kick Red's Chariot out with c4=3!

13. R7=6 c9-1

Red now has a slight advantage in a complicated situation. Both sides have developed their pieces. Red has more room to maneuver and will attack along the central file while Black can pressure Red's 7th file Horse/Elephant.

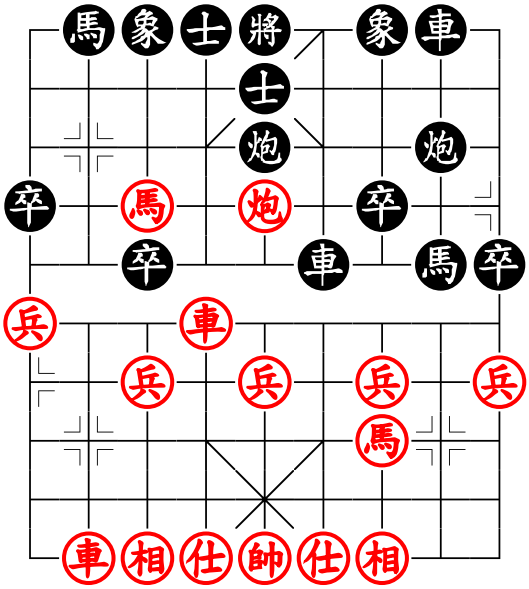
For the complete game see: http://www.xqinenglish.com/sg201309252008jiangchuanwsunyongzhengb44.html

Note: Black's c4-1 and c4=3 to get rid of a Horse blocking Chariot is a often used maneuver in the opening. Compare c9-1 and c9=7 in the commented Screen Horse Opening in Chapter 10.

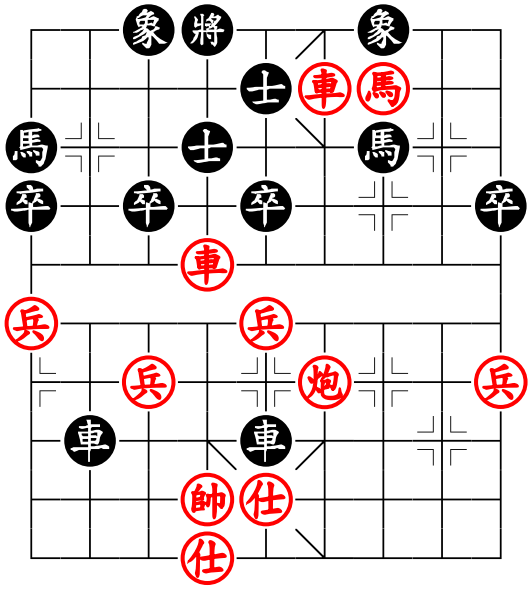
9.5.2 Midgame

In the midgame, besides mobility maneuvers, maneuvers for taking a checkmate occur frequently. They are standard procedures. In Chess, the sacrifice of the white Bishop at h7 against a castled black King is comparable. But in XiangQi there are much more due to the limited space of the palace where the Kings can only move. Starting point of such maneuvers is the piece combination of the attacker and their dynamic attacking potential and a hole in the defence line (weakness). In Chess static defects in the pawn structure in front of a castled King are such a weakness, in XiangQi a lack of piece coordination or mobility on the defending side is exploited.

Let us study two examples. Red to move. What is the situation? What would you move?



1



2

1: Position 1 is a nice example for an attack by a Chariot-Horse-Cannon combination. Red's central Cannon pins down Black's Cannon and Advisor. Two red Chariots and one red Horse are concentrated on Black's right flank. The Horse does not seem to do much other than threatening an exchange for Black's Cannon. Wrong! It controls the Elephant's eye of the palace too. Such a Horse is called *High Angler Horse*.

Black's major pieces are on his left side unable to defend. Red has the local material superiority on Black's right flank.

Red is going to “fish” starting with a Chariot sacrifice.

1. R6+5 k5=4 2. R8+9 c5=3 3. R8=7 k4+1 4. R7-2 e7+5
5. R7=8 k4-1 6. R8+2 e5-3 7. R8=7 Tiger Silhouette checkmate

After inducing the High Angler Horse pattern with moves 1 to 4 one of the standard sequences follows with move 5 to 8. The Cannon stops Black's King to retreat with 2...k4=5 as 3. R8=7 would take the iron bolt checkmate (See: Chapter 8) immediately.

2: In Position 2 Black threatens a checkmate with r2+1 which Red can not resolve. Black's Horses on the other hand do not defend well. Red again has a Chariot-Horse-Cannon combination. The Horse (indirectly) controlling Black's throne and the center top of the palace is called *Elbow Horse* making an attack on the rib files extremely dangerous. Red already has Chariots and a Cannon in place for such an attack.

1. R4+1 k4+1 2. C4+5 a5-6 3. R6+2 k4=5 4. R6+1 k5+1
5. C4-7 k5=6 7. A5+4 h7+6 8. H3-2 k5=6 8. H2-4 k5=6
9. H4+2 K6=5 10. H2+3 checkmate

Again a Chariot sacrifice 2.C4+5 serves as as prelude to reach a situation where the control of the palace by the Elbow Horse becomes effective after 5.C4-7. Combined action

of the red Horse and Cannon maneuver Black's King into a checkmate situation. The maneuver includes a discovered check and a pin as tactical means. The attack on the rib files is a standard midgame procedure one should be aware of.

To learn more about checkmate maneuvers which can applied in the midgame see:

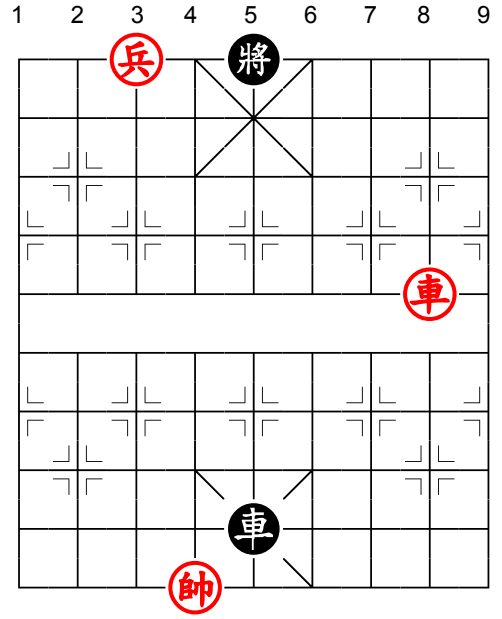
Endgame: http://www.xqinenglish.com/basickills.html
Endgame: http://www.xqinenglish.com/basickills02combination.html
Endgame: http://wxf.ca/wxf/doc/book/BasicXqCheckmate.pdf
Midgame: http://wxf.ca/wxf/doc/book/Xq_Tactics.pdf
Opening: http://wxf.ca/wxf/doc/book/Deceptive_Play.pdf

9.5.3 Endgame

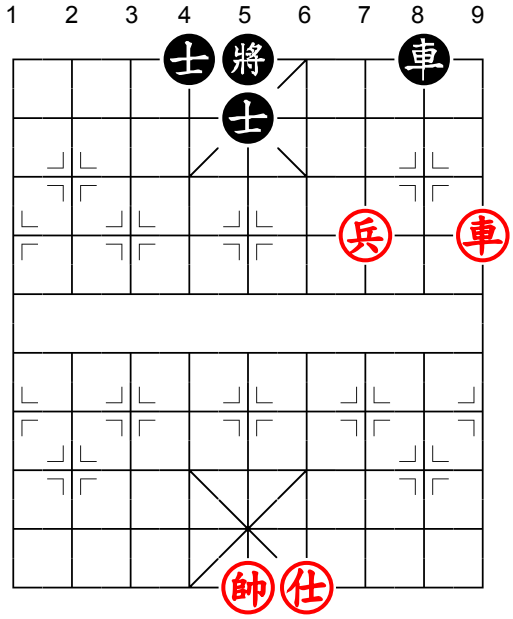
In XiangQi Pawns are not promoted into a major piece when reaching the opponent's bottom rank like in Chess. They become veterans which can only move sideways. Therefore, the win (or the checkmate to be precise) has to be performed with the materials on board at the start of the game. Endgame maneuvers to transform a minimal advantage into a victory are studied and standardized since ancient times. Sometimes the maneuvers are regarded worthy to have colorful names.

The worst position a Pawn can have is the opponent's bottom rank. There it controls only two intersections and can deny the opponent's King only one. On the cannon rank or throat rank it controls three intersections and can deny the King two.

Let us study two endgame maneuvers with Chariot-Pawn combinations (1r1p) useful for practical play:



3: 1r1bp vs 1r



4: 1r1hp vs 1r2a

3: A one-Chariot-one-bottom-Pawn combination is a draw against one Chariot when the defender controls the central file. In this situation Black's Chariot occupies a bad position and is unable to check by moving sideways. Therefore, Red is can apply the “Fishing-the-moon-under-deep-sea” maneuver and win!

1. P7=6 k5+1 2. R2+4 k5+1 3. R2+1 r5=7 4. R2=5 k5=6 5. K6=5 k6-1
6. R5-1 k6+1 7. P6=5 r7-3 8. P5=4 r7+1 9. R5-2 r7=6 10. P4=3 R6-1
11. R5+3 XanyX 12. R5=4

In the first two moves Red forces Black's King to the palace roof top with P7=6 and R2+4. When the red Chariot drives to the opponent's bottom rank R2+1 Black's Chariot is threatened by a skewer (R2=5) and has to leave the central file. Red ends his initial

maneuver by taking complete control of the central file of life and death R2=5 and K6=5.

With Black's King confined to the rib file Red maneuvers his veteran Pawn across the palace with the threat of a checkmate in move 5.R5-2 inducing Black's Chariot leaving Black's 7th file. After return of the red Chariot to the bottom rank again Black is unable to resolve the checkmate R5=4.

These are very important maneuvers to memorize!

4: This one-Chariot-one-high-Pawn against one-Chariot-two-Advisors endgame would be a draw without the red Advisor. With the King pinning down Black's Advisors and having an additional Advisor to shield against checks of Black's Chariot from the side Red can carry out a two stage maneuver for victory:

1. P3+1 r8=7 2. P3+1 r7=6 3. R1+2 r6=8 4. P3=4 r8=7 5. R1-2 r7=8
6. P4=5 a4+5 7. R1=7 k5=4 8. R7+3 k4+1 9. R7=2 Red wins

In the first stage Red maneuvers his Pawn to the Elephant's Eye on the opponent's throat rank. Black is unable to capture the Pawn because of the threat of a bottom rank Chariot checkmate R1+3. Black's Chariot is left immobile to its bottom rank. In a second stage Red retreats his Chariot before exchanging his Pawn for the centroid Advisor and transferring the Chariot from the right to the left side creating a material superiority there on Black's empty flank. Due to the pinned Advisor a checkmate threat is set up. Therefore, Black can not save his Chariot and loses.

Remark: There is a variation which leads to the same result with similar maneuvers:

1. P3+1 **k5=6** 2. P3+1 a5+6 3. R1+2 a4+5 4. P3=4 k6=5 5. R1-3 k5=4
6. R1=6 k4=5 7. R6=7 k5=4 8. R7+4 k4+1 9. R7=2 Red wins

Compared to Chess maneuvers play a bigger role in XiangQi:

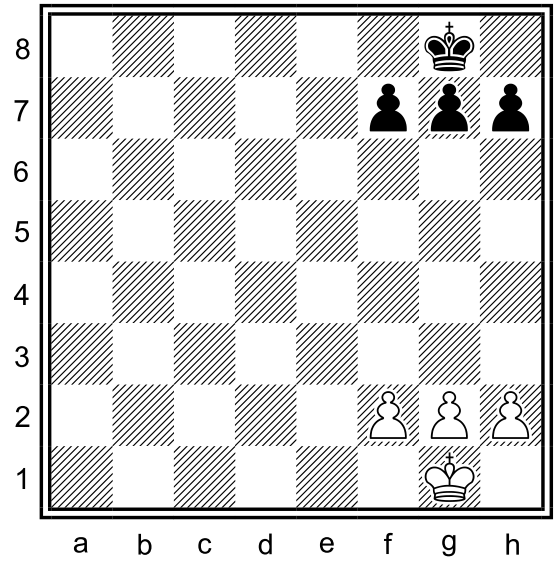
- The XiangQi board is 40% larger than the Chess board and therefore has more space to maneuver.
- In XiangQi there are important ranks like the throat ranks, pawn ranks or riverbanks. Especially in the opening the own throat rank is a road to develop a Chariot. In Chess there is the base rank and the pawn rank, but they get a meaning only later in the game. Chess has diagonal moving major pieces, but there is no important diagonal at the start.
- The altogether sixteen Pawns in Chess limit the mobility of pieces, especially in the opening. In XiangQi the five high Pawns leave four files open.

Due to slowly changing pawn structures long term planning is more required in Chess than in XiangQi. The quality of strategic maneuvers is different. In XiangQi, the setup of standard maneuvers is more important. The beginner and the advanced player is advised to learn and recognize situations where to initiate and apply them. As mutal attacks where both players go for a checkmate and the one who comes first wins are more frequent than in Chess, study of such maneuvers will pay back fast.

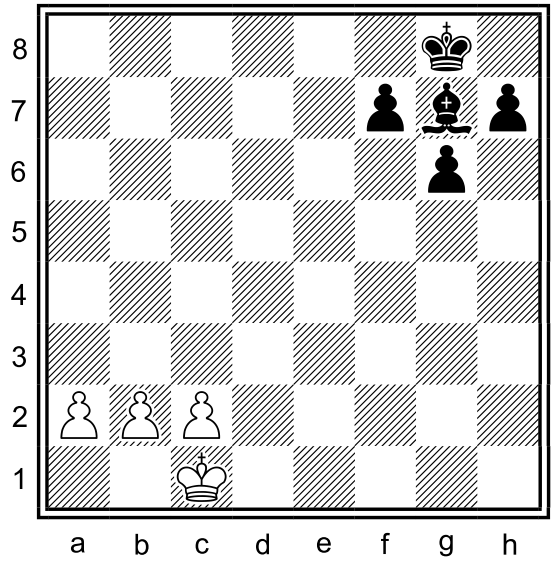
In parallel to Philidor's statement we can say: *Maneuvers are the heart of XiangQi*. The Learner is recommended to memorize the various maneuvers of the opening, midgame and endgame.

9.6 The King and its Defenders

In Chess there are two ideal defense formations in front of a castled King: a three pawn phalanx of Pawns at their start position, or a fianchettoed Bishop combining attacking and defending tasks. Both sides can choose their formation in the opening.

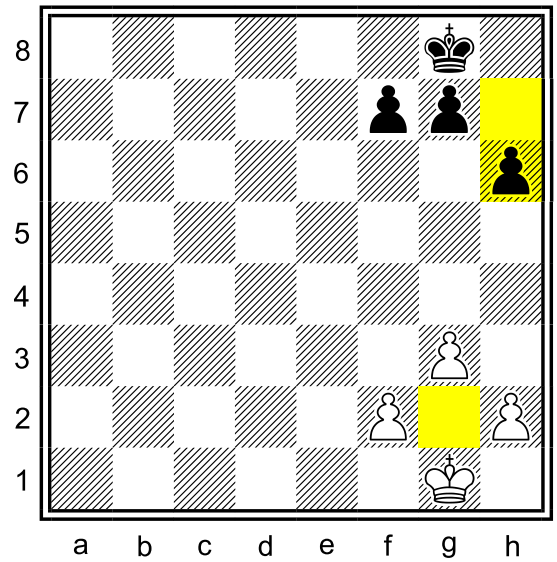


5a: Compact pawn phalanx

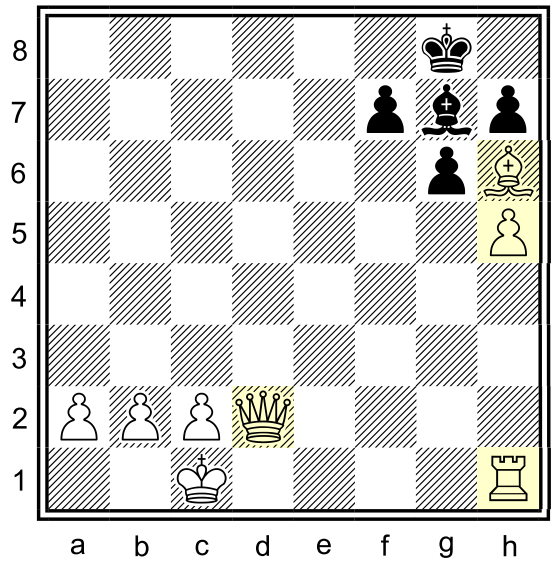


6a: Black fianchettoed Bishop

The opponent will choose a strategy to disrupt the order. In case of the Pawn phalanx he will try to induce a Pawn to move (in diagram 5 mainly on the g- or h-file). Either the moved Pawn itself or the hole its leaves behind can become a target of attack. Against the fianchettoed Bishop the opponent gets a strong attack when the fianchettoed Bishop is exchanged and the h-file is opened by exchanging Pawns.



5b: Weakened pawn phalanx

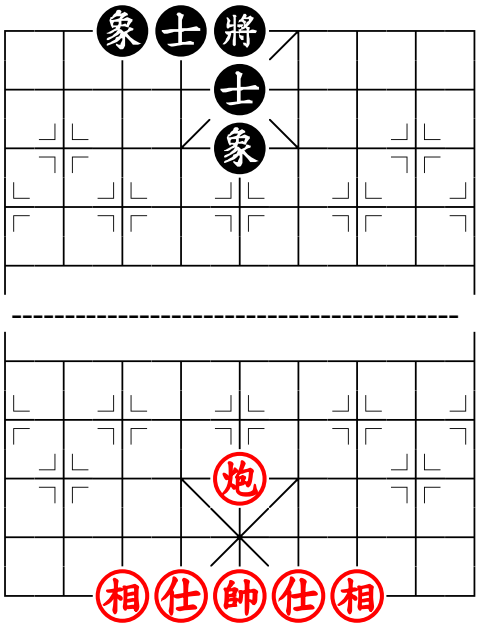


6b: Strategy against fianchettoed Bishop

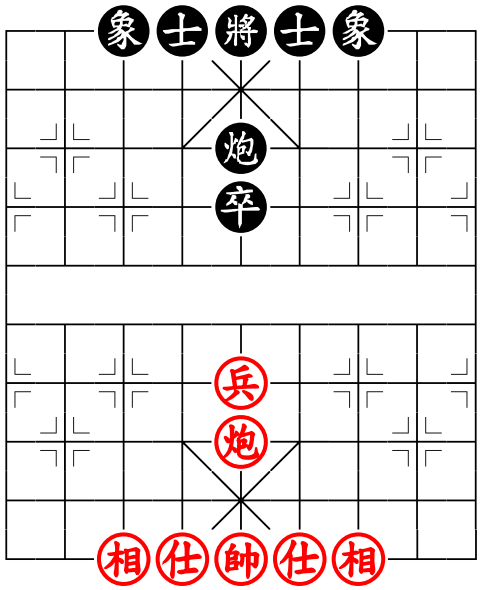
Let us switch to XiangQi:

As strategy is about concepts for middle and long term planning of the game it is natural that it depends on slowly changing formations on the board. Due to the limited possiblities to move, the formation of King, Advisors and Elephants is subject to strategic planning.

There are two basic formations which can be set up against each other independently.



7a: Basic formations A and B



8: Combination of A-A in a game

The first set up (A) results from moving a Cannon to the central file disabling the Elephants to connect (see Red in diagram 7 above, only relevant pieces are shown). The Advisors are not moved to maintain flexibility in reacting to the opponents maneuvers. This is an aggressive approach to the game. The centralized Cannon aims indirectly at the opponents King and is able to pin down pieces in front of it.

The second set up (B) is a defensive one. Elephant and Advisor from one side are raised to the central file (see Black in diagram 7 above, only relevant pieces are shown, the mirror formation is basically the same). This formation guards well against the aggressiveness of a central Cannon. The King is also shielded from Cannon checks from the side where the defenders remain in their original positions.

Red and Black can choose a formation independent from the opponent according to their temper or preference. In diagram 8 both chose the aggressive one (A) with centralized Cannons.

Following combinations occur in several openings. E.g.:

A-A: Same Direction Cannons (SDC), Opposite Direction Cannons (ODC)

A-B: Sandwiched Horse (SaH), Screen Horse Defense (ScH)

B-A: Elephant Opening, Cross Palace Cannon (CPC), Palace Corner Cannon (PCC)

B-B: Elephant Opening, Pawn Opening, Horse Opening

Remark: Yes, you don't have to move any piece onto the central file in the opening. It is also possible to wait until the game situation requires that.

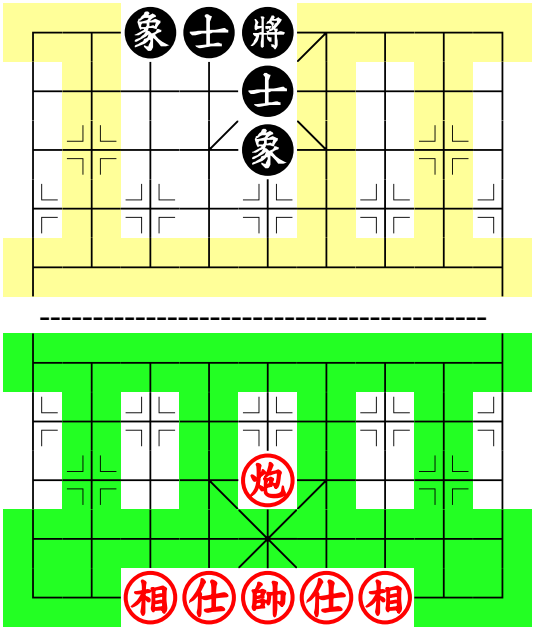
For more on openings go to Chapter 10 and the Opening section of the XiangQi in English website: http://www.xqinenglish.com/openings.html .

Choosing a formation has consequences for the development of pieces:

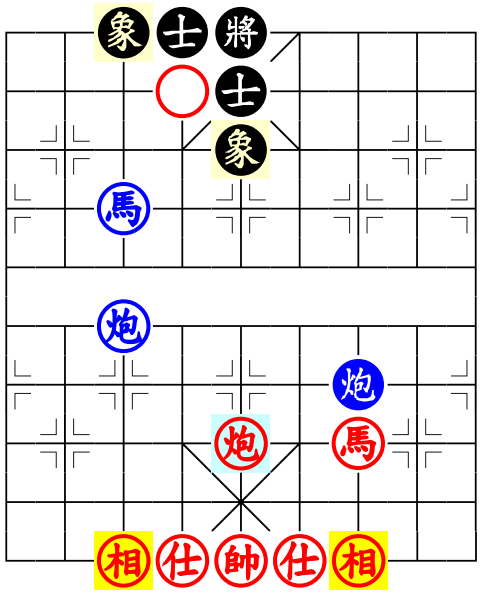
Concerning formation A, while losing the possibility to link the Elephants, the throat rank remains open for horizontal maneuvers of the Chariots to switch flanks or to occupy the rib files. When using formation B, the own territory becomes divided along the central file. The

Chariots can only use less than half of the throat rank for maneuvers there. In return, the Chariot on the side where the defenders cleared the way can move to the rib file directly.

Diagram 7b shows the main routes for development of the Chariots for both formations.



7b: Main routes for the Chariots



9: Weaknesses of the formations

We explained the advantages of the formations for attack and defense. But each formation has its drawback. The opponent's strategy will be designed to exploit them (see diagram 9).

When the central Cannon occupies the the intersection where the Elephants can link, the opponent will target the Elephants on the bottom rank. An attack by the Cannon is best, because a capture of the Elephant by a Cannon calls check if the Advisors are still in place. So it is practically a free move. After the Advisor is raised to answer the check the bottom rank as a whole becomes vulnerable for attacks by a Chariot or by the second Cannon.

In a formation with linked Advisors and linked Elephants the weakest spot is the Elephant's Eye. Once the opponent breaks the link between the Elephants by occupying the Eye with any piece (often the Chariot will do as it is very mobile) both Elephants become susceptible for capture. A capture of the central Elephant by a Horse destroys the defense and threatens with the Elbow Horse next. A capture of the bottom rank Elephant by a Cannon is even checkmate! Be aware!!!

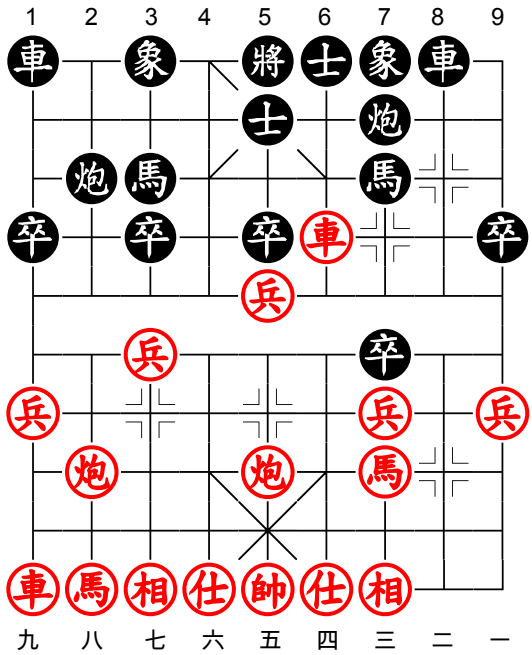
Two examples follow where the strategies are applied:

The opening of both games is a variation of Central Cannon vs Screen Horses Defense which is annotated in detail in Chapter 10 Opening. To show how the relevant situations developed, the whole games are given.

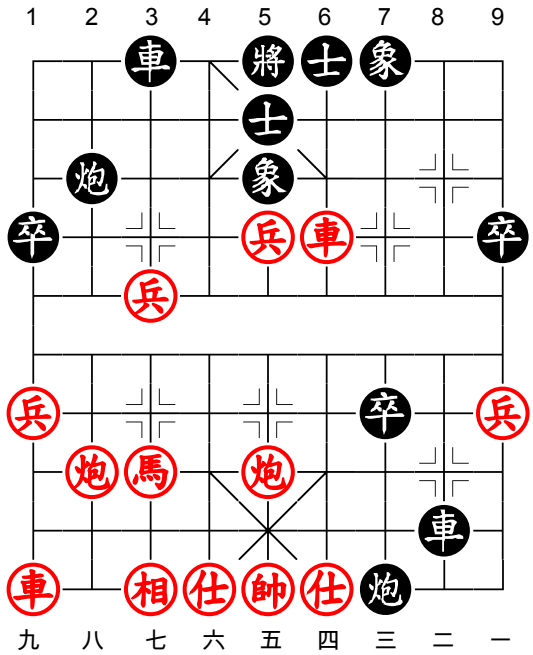
Game 1: sg 20130824 2005 GM Zhao GuoRong (Loss) Master Shang Wei ; ECCO C49

1. C2=5 h8+7	2. H2+3 r9=8	3. R1=2 p7+1	4. R2+6 h2+3	5. P7+1 c8=9
6. R2=3 c9-1	7. P5+1 a4+5	**8. P5+1** c9=7	9. R3=4 **p7+1**	10. H3+5 p7+1
11. H5+6 **r8+8**	12. H8+7 e3+5	13. H6+7 R1=3	14. H+-5 p3+1	**15. P7+1 h7+5**
16. P5+1 c7+8	**17. A4+5 r3+4**	**18. C8-1 r8+1**	**19. R9+2 e5-3**	**20. C8=7 r3=8**
21. C7+8 c2+7	**22. R4-5 r8=5**	**23. H7-8 c7=4**	**24. A5-4 c4=2**	**25. K5+1 r5=3**
26. R9-1 r3-4	27. P5=6 e7+5	28. R9=8 c2=6	29. P6=5 c6=5	30. C5+5 a5-4
31. E7+5 p7+1	32. C5=3 c5=7	33. C3-7 r8=7	34. R4+8 k5=6	35. E5-3 r3+3
36. R8+1 r3=5	37. R8=5 r5=7	38. R5+7 k6+1	39. R5-7 p1+1	40. P1+1 r7+2
41. K5-1 r7=9	42. R5=3 r9=5	43. K5=6 k6=5	44. R3=6 p9+1	45. R6+6 k5-1
46. R6+1 k5+1	47. R6-6 p9+1	48. K6+1 r5+3	49. K6-1 r5+1	50. K6+1 r5=7
51. R6=5 k5=6	52. K6=5 r7=6	And red resigned.		

Red chose the most aggressive variation against the Screen Horses by advancing the central Pawn 8.P5+1. This calls for a immediate attack along the central file. After stabilizing with a6+5 the center is save for the time being. Black fights fire with fire by attacking along his 7th file in move 9...p7+1 targeting Red's pieces there (diagram 10). While Red advances his Horse via the central file to the opponent's riverbank threatening Black's 3rd file Horse, Black extends the pressure on the 7th file capturing a Pawn there. 11...r8+8 threatens r8=2 gaining back material in case Red captures the Horse with H6+7.



10: Situation after 9...p7+1



11: Black captured the Elephant 16...c7+8

Rather than taking care of his Horse Black fortifies the center with 12...e3+5 clearing ways for the Chariot. After forcing Red's Horse back to the central file Black finally can initiate a sequence to retaliate by capturing Red's bottom Elephant with his Cannon (diagram 11). For the sacrificed Horse Black gained an Elephant, better development of the Chariots and an attack. Not a bad deal but still no victory. This position was reached in several games and both sides had their chances. The situation is tense and requires abilities of highest level. Don't dare to play such brutal variations until you made GM! ☺ Please continue the game on your board and see one way to attack. Last notes: Retreating the Elephant with 19...e5-3 denies Red to do damage in the center; Red could have played 21.R9=8 for a better game. Enjoy Black's endgame technique which will lead to a win with “Fishing-the moon-under-deep-sea” maneuver (section 9.5.3, Red resigned before).

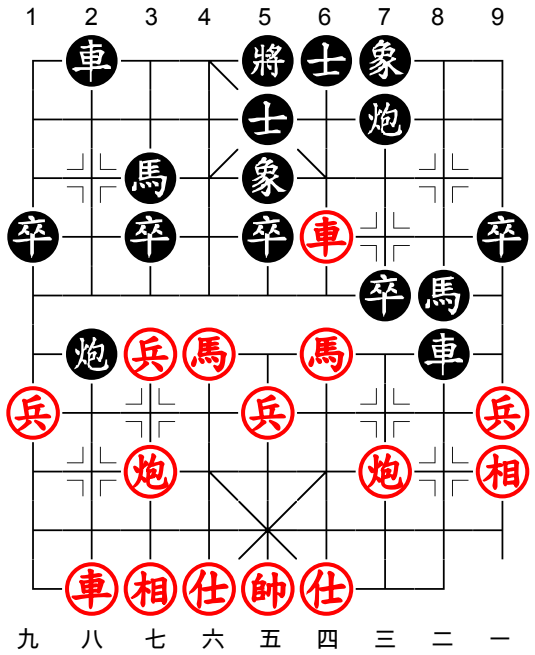
For more comments and variations please go to “XiangQi in English” website:

http://www.xqinenglish.com/sg201308242005zhaoguoronglshangweic49.html

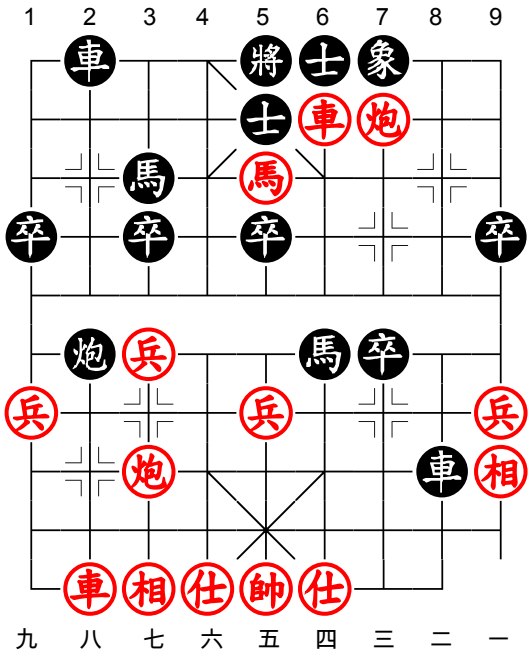
Game 2: sg 20140122 1978 Hu RongHua (Win) Zhu YongKang; ECCO C44

1. C2=5 h8+7	2. H2+3 p7+1	3. R1=2 r9=8	4. R2+6 h2+3	5. P7+1 c8=9
6. R2=3 c9-1	7. H8+7 a4+5	**8. H7+6** c9=7	9. R3=4 e3+5	10. C8=7 r8+5
11. P3+1 r8=7	12. R9=8 r1=2	13. H3+4 c2+3	14. E3+1 r7=8	**15.** C5=3 **h7+8**
16. C3+6 p7+1	17. R4+2 h8+6	**18. H6+4 r8+2**	**19. H4+5 r8=3**	**20. C3-1 r2+4**
21. H5+3 k5=4	**22. C3+2 k4+1**	**23. H3-2 h3-4**	**24. C3-1 k4+1**	**25. R4-3 r2=6**
26. R8+4 k4=5	**27. R8+3 a5+4**	**28. H2-4** k5-1	29. R8=6 k5-1	30. R6+1 a6+5
31. H4+3	Black resigned and red won.			

In this game Red chose an slower approach to attack with the riverbank Horse 8.H7+6 also targeting the center. Black fortified the center immediately e3+5 (for r8+5 see Chapter 10). Black's 15...h8+7 initiated a Cannon for a Horse exchange using a discovered fork 16...p7+1. In the process Red occupied Elephant's Eye 17.R4+2 and took the opportunity to fork with 18.H6+4 Black's Chariot and central Elephant.



12: Situation after 15...h8+7



13: Red captured the Elephant 19.H4+5

Again, rather than taking care for an endangered piece which does not contribute to attack or defense at the moment, the 7th file Cannon, Red captures Black's central Elephant 19.H4+5. Black eats the Cannon and Red unfolds a brilliant continuation to the sacrifice with 20.C3-1. Don't think this is to attack the Horse. The Cannon clears way for the Elbow Horse 21.H5+3 threatening a checkmate by the Cannon and a discovered check by the Chariot! Black's pieces stranded at his left wing can only watch helplessly red's pieces on the other flank to threaten a checkmate sequence with 23.H3-2 (do you find it?). Black missed a chance to defend better with 23...h6-7 and attacked Red's Chariot instead 23...h3-4. 24.C3-1 sets up the checkmate again and a discovered check. Red's Chariot is immune against capture, why? Black is forced to climb the palace roof top with his King. After 25.R4-3 Black missed r2-1 for better defense and captured Red's Chariot 25...r2=6 for an exchange. But Red had a zwischenzug 26.R8+4. There is a checkmate, do you see it? The game is decided when red recaptures the Chariot with 28.H2-4.

You find this game on the “XiangQi in English” website:

http://www.xqinenglish.com/sg201401221978huronghuawzhuyongkangc44.html

Conclusion:

The Screen Horses Defense is the opening with highest complexity in XiangQi and can be compared to Ruy Lopez or the Sicilian Defense in Chess.

In the discussed variations of the Screen Horse Defense we have formation A vs B. The strategies to fight each formation were applied. As both sides go for an attack, the one who comes first wins. Speed and initiative dominated over material gains, though the defenders missed their chances. The games also demonstrate the difference to Chess in the brutality which attacks in XiangQi can have and in the determination you must show when you start your offensive. There is no way back.

If you are a Chess player favoring tactical combinations and fast checkmates XiangQi is the heaven. In case you prefer positional slow play, besides this exists in XiangQi too, you can practice to spot tactical solutions as a means to convert a positional advantage into a decisive one.

Why not add some Kung Fu to your Chess Boxing? ☺

10 Opening

A Chess/Xiangqi opening is the group of initial moves of a game (the "opening moves"). Recognized sequences of opening moves are referred to as *openings.*[C1]

In Chess openings have been given names after persons, regions, countries, actual wing, animals or others.

Different in Xiangqi: To denote an opening the first characterizing moves or formation is given for each side: e.g.

Center Cannon Cross River Chariot 7th Pawn Advancement versus

Screen Horses Defense Cannon to the Edge for Exchange of Chariots.

Sounds strange and lengthy. Note: In Chinese each word shrinks to one character here:

中炮过河车互进七兵对屏风马平炮兑车.

Still lengthy. The reason behind naming openings this way is that Red and Black can choose their opening formations more independent from the opponent than in Chess (see 9.5.1 also). The opening name says “Formation X” versus “Formation Y”. Y=X possible...

Sometimes, interesting names are used. For example, Mandarin Duck Cannon Counter, or Three Step Tiger, or Phoenix Cannon Counter, or Thundering defense; all Black formations. Red: One horned monster, Nine tailed tortoise.

Openings are catalogued in reference works such as the *Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings* (ECO)[C1] for Chess or the *Encyclopaedia of Chinese Chess Openings* for Xiangqi (**ECCO**).

There are dozens of different openings, varying widely in character from aggressive play (Center Cannon with 5th Pawn advancement) to quiet positional play (Horse and Elephant opening).

The fundamental strategic aims of most openings are similar[C1]:

- *Development*: This is the technique of placing the pieces (particularly Chariots, Cannons and Horses) on useful points where they will have an optimal impact on the game.
- *Control or block files:* After moving a Chariot to an open (empty) file, it can advance deep into enemy territory.
  When both opponents have Chariots on the same file and one party has a Cannon between them, it can advance the Cannon supported by the Chariot. Moving the Cannon to the riverbank denies the opponent to cross the river with his Chariot. Moving the Cannon to the enemy pawn rank even denies the opponent moving his Chariot up to his riverbank.
- *Control of the riverbank*: Control of the riverbank allows pieces to be moved to any part of the board relatively easily. A chariot on the riverbank is an obstacle for enemy Horses and Pawns to cross the river. Pawns on the riverbank have a cramping effect on the development of the opponent's Horses.
- *King safety*: It is critical to keep the king safe from dangerous possibilities. A correctly timed raising of Advisor or Elephant to the central file often enhances safety.

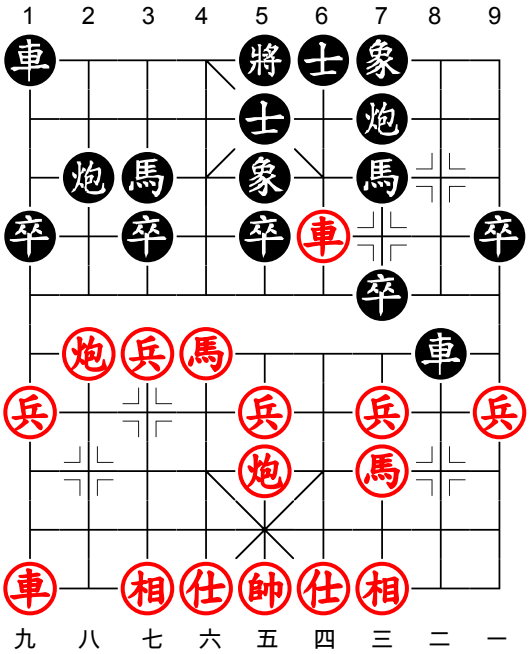
General advice for the opening includes rapid development of at least one Chariot, as it is the most powerful piece with a long attack range. There is a saying that only a poor player does not move a Chariot in the first three moves.

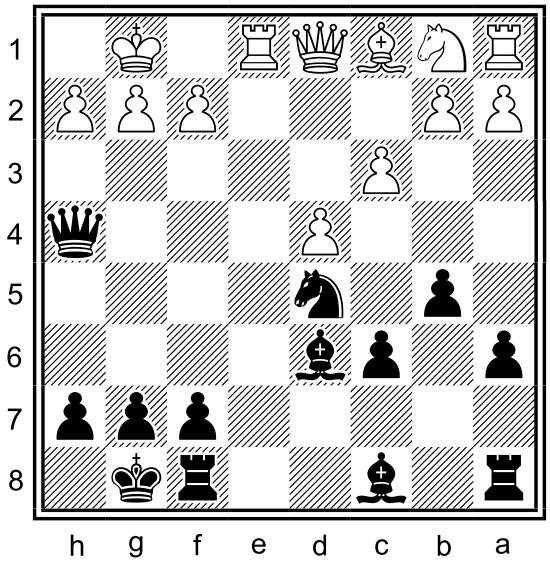
Since the left and right flanks of the starting setup are symmetrical, it is customary to make the first move on the right flank. Starting on the left flank is considered needlessly confusing.[X1]

The most common opening is Center Cannon vs. Screen Horses Defense. Let us see how the strategic aims and recommendations are applied (follow the game on your Xiangqi set to understand the notation system, see chapter "Things you need” for a set):

Move	Comment
1. C2=5 H8+7	Red starts the game aggressively with a Cannon on the central file attacking Black's center Pawn and viewing indirectly at Black's King. Black counters with the proper Horse protecting his Pawn and clearing his 8th file for the Chariot.
2. H2+3 R9=8	Red also protects his Pawn and gives way for the Chariot by moving his right Horse. Black develops his left Chariot to the important 8th file.
3. R1=2 P7+1	Red develops his right Chariot to his 2nd file. In this opening Black regards it more important to advance his 7th file pawn to the riverbank than advancing his Cannon across the river to block Red's Chariot. Black frees his own horse while slowing down the development of Red's horse. Note: After three moves, both sides have developed one Chariot.
4. R2+6 H2+3	Red advances his Chariot to Black's pawn rank before Black can also restrict this piece by advancing the Cannon. Black protects the center Pawn a second time with his right Horse. This move relieves the other Horse of rooting that Pawn and gives way for the right Chariot. Important “side effect”: Black's left Horse is now rooted by the right Cannon!
5. P7+1 C8=9	Red advances his 7th Pawn to restrict Black's Horse before developing his left Horse. Correct move order, because in case Red moves his Horse H8+7 Black could play P3+1 and both Red Horses are confined. Black moves Cannon to the edge and offers an exchange of Chariots.
6. R2=3 C9-1	Red does not exchange Chariots but blocks Black's Horse with it. The open file is Black's now, a positional exchange instead of material exchange! As care was already taken of the Horse Black retreats his edge Cannon to get rid of the annoying red Chariot. Black plans to attack Red's Chariot from behind the Horse.
7. H8+7 A4+5	Red plays the left proper Horse that can advance to the riverbank later. See the effect of 5.P7+1! Black begins to strengthen his center by raising the right Advisor. Raising an Elephant instead would be a mistake because this would unroot Black's left Horse and Red can capture it for free with the Chariot. The right Advisor is preferred to the left one, as Black's right Chariot will have the additional possibility to develop to the cleared point later.
8. H7+6 C9=7	Red charges his Horse to the riverbank threatening Black's territory. Black makes a zwischenzug, a forcing move before continuing with other plans and attacks Red's Chariot with the Cannon.
9. R3=4 R8+5	Red has to answer by escaping to the rib file (4th and 6th files) with his Chariot. Black becomes aggressive by advancing his Chariot over the river and attacking Red's horse at the opponent's riverbank.
10. C8+2 E3+5	Red advances his left cannon to the riverbank protecting the Horse there and threatening a discovered attack when moving the Horse. Black is not afraid of the discovered attack at this moment. As his left Horse is under attack no more, Black can raise the right Elephant clearing all the way for the corner Chariot to the rib file.

You might have already noticed that BOTH sides address ALL the aspects of the opening mentioned earlier. A dynamic position is reached where both sides have equal chances (dynamic equilibrium). The position reached is show in the diagram:





The middlegame was entered with equal material, no exchange took place, no piece was lost.

Red has crossed the river with his Chariot, now at the important rib file, but still no damage was done. Black's cross- river Chariot is in an unstable position. It can be attacked either by Red's left Cannon when the riverbank Horse is moved or by Red's right Horse when the 3rd file Pawn is charged forward. Black controls the only open file in the game with his developed Chariot. Both sides have one free horse and one restricted Horse. All of Black's major pieces (Chariot, Horse, Cannon) are unrooted. Any attack on a Black major piece will require an immediate answer. Red's center Cannon has some effect down the central file. Black's 7th file Cannon has an indirect view at Red's right Elephant at the bottom rank. Generally, unrooted Elephants are the drawback of a center Cannon. Black has a currently stable defense with connected Elephants and Advisors.

Black is threatening to destabilize Red's riverbank by P3+1. Red could not capture this Pawn with P7+1 since Black would capture a Horse with the Chariot R8=4. It's Red's move now. Red uses the instability of the attacking Chariot to counter:

11. C5=6 P3+1 12. P3+1!! R8-1 13. P7+1 E5+3 14. C8=7 H3+4

Within another four rounds, the situation became tense and highly tactical. In the last sequence is a trap involved: If Black destroys a Pawn with 12...R8=7 after 13.E7+5 R7+1 14. C8-1 his Chariot cannot escape capture.

Please use your game set to view the situation at this stage: There is a confrontation at the river, three Red pieces and four Black pieces facing each other. That's Xiangqi! All of a sudden a heavy fight can break out. Learn to master it!

BTW: The Chess diagram shows a position reached after 13 rounds in a variation of the Ruy Lopez opening, the Marshall attack, an active counter for Black avoiding endless positional lines in the Ruy Lopez. The view is from Black's angle.

If you enjoy active and aggressive play with lots of fireworks: Try Xiangqi!

11 Endgame

Chess: [C1]

The endgame (or end game or ending) is the stage of the game when there are few pieces left on the board. There are three main strategic differences between earlier stages of the game and endgame:

- During the endgame, pawns become more important; endgames often revolve around attempting to promote a pawn by advancing it to the eighth rank.
- The king, which has to be protected in the middlegame owing to the threat of checkmate, becomes a strong piece in the endgame. It is often brought to the center of the board where it can protect its own pawns, attack the pawns of opposite color, and hinder movement of the opponent's king.
- Zugzwang, a disadvantage because the player has to make a move, is often a factor in endgames but rarely in other stages of the game.

Endgames can be classified according to the type of pieces that remain on board. Basic checkmates are positions in which one side has only a king and the other side has one or two pieces and can checkmate the opposing king, with the pieces working together with their king. For example, king and pawn endgames involve only kings and pawns on one or both sides and the task of the stronger side is to promote one of the pawns. Other more complicated endings are classified according to the pieces on board other than kings, such as the "rook and pawn versus rook endgame".

Xiangqi: (***PNG* Dictionary of Xiangqi Terms, to be published**) [X4]

The endgame is the final stage in the game of Xiangqi. It is more of a concept and there is no specific number of moves that would define the endgame stage.
Usually in the middlegame, the armies of both players have clashed head on and there would have been material loss for both sides. Although the possible outcome is not known, it may be predicted. This stage of the game would be known as the “endgame”.
Endgames usually have the following characteristics:

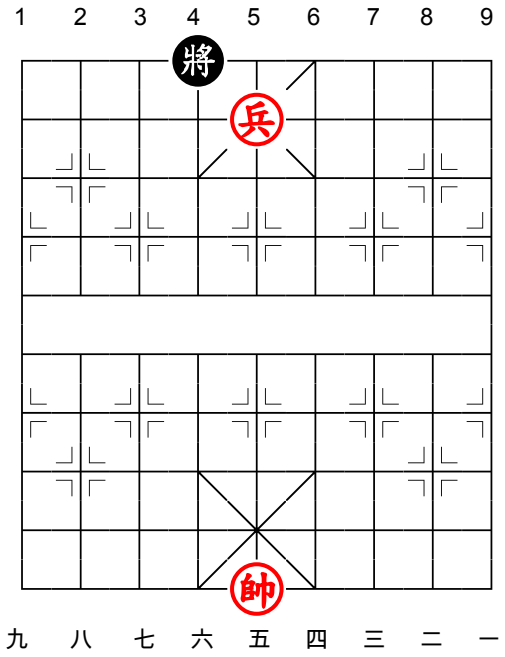
- a marked decrease in material,
- an increase in the space available for movement,
- an increase in the mobility of certain material like the Horse and Pawn.

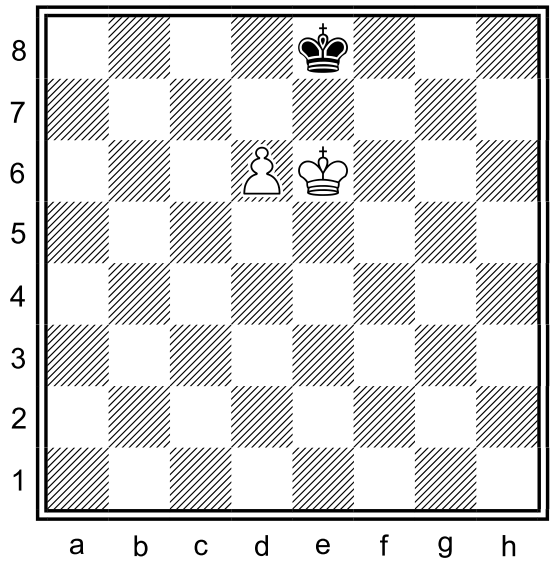
This has various implications for the tactics used in the endgame. Usually, if another one or two material were exchanged, it would be a draw.
Endgames have been studied extensively throughout the centuries. As there is no potential change in material (Pawn promotion) as in International Chess, conclusions have been drawn about the outcomes of various Xiangqi endgame positions. For example, a single Horse is capable of defeating a solitary King with an Advisor.
Some Endgame situations are more complex whereby the outcome is dependent on the position of the remaining material, in particular, as to who has controlled the Central File and where the Pawns are located.
Endgame study is advocated as a good place to start learning Xiangqi. As material is less, it would be easier to understand various strategies and tactics. Endgames are also a good place to learn how to use various individual material and their simple combinations better. A similar concept has been advocated in International Chess.
"In order to improve your game, you must study the endgame before everything else, for whereas the endings can be studied and mastered by themselves, the middle game and the opening must be studied in relation to the endgame."-- Jose Raul Capablanca, World Champion

In the endgame, it becomes obvious how much the different number of pawns and their different powers (no promotion in Xiangqi) affect the game.

Endgame maneuvers to gain a victory with reduced material in Xiangqi are of overwhelming number. Please refer to the endgame section of http://www.xqinenglish.com/

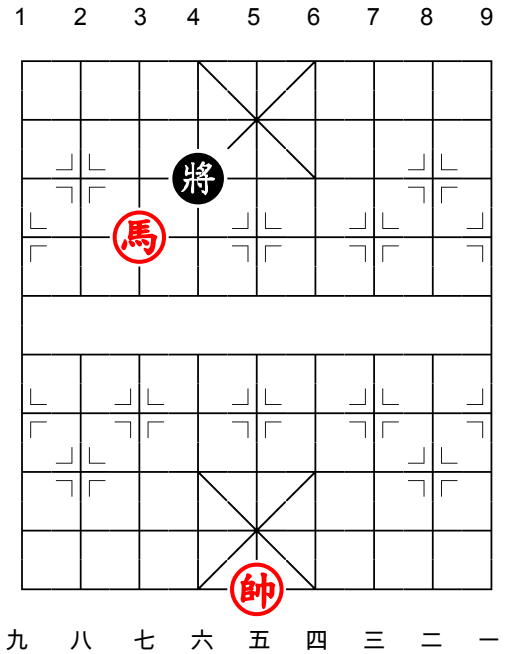
Let us see few examples how the different qualities of Chess and Xiangqi affect the outcome:

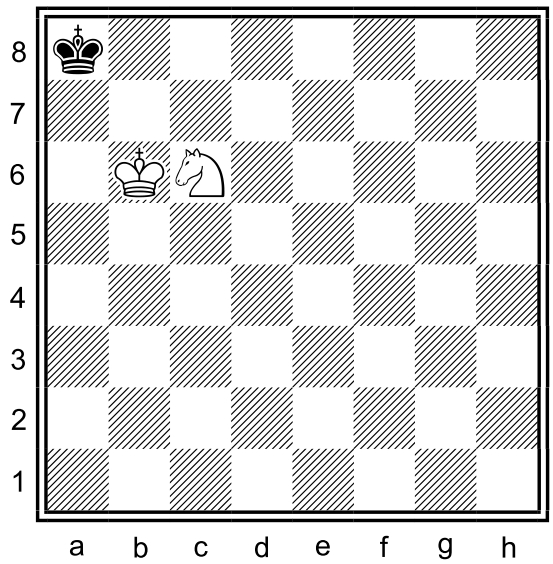




In Xiangqi a pawn wins versus the sole King when reaching the centroid (center of palace, see WXF terms of Xiangqi) supported by its King on the central file. The situation becomes checkmate by stalemate no matter which corner the opponent's King occupies. A veteran, a Pawn on the opponent's bottom rank, cannot win.

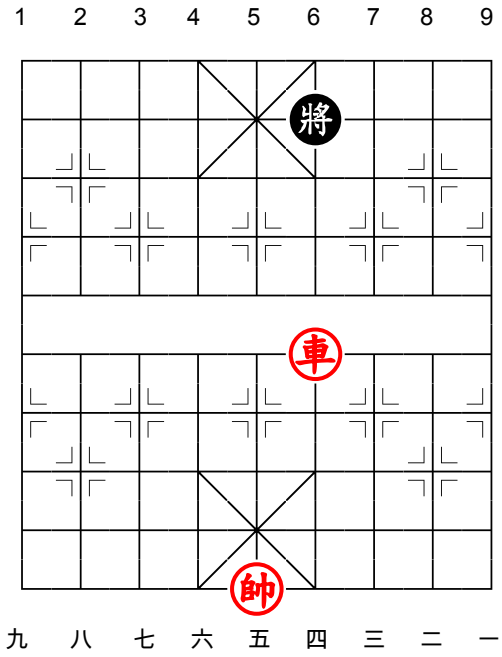
Different in Chess: For a victory, the side having the Pawn advantage has to promote it into a Queen or Rook to gain sufficient material. Promotion takes place when the opponent's bottom rank is reached. Even with the support of the King, this is not guaranteed. In the situation above, White wins only when it is Black's turn (zugzwang).

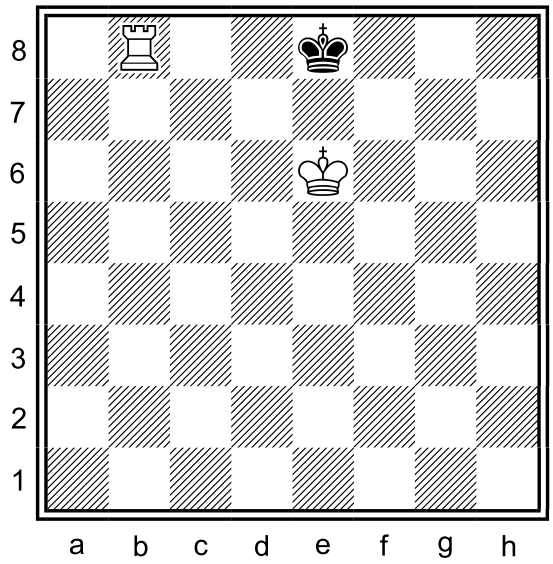




Due to the Face-to-Face-Laughing rule, the stalemate rule and the confinement of the Kings to their palace a Horse supported by its King gains a victory in Xiangqi.

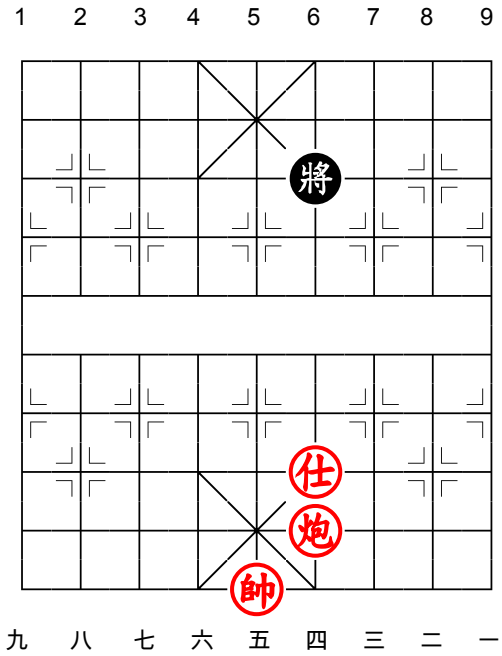
In Chess, a Knight cannot checkmate in combination with the King. Even two Knights cannot force a checkmate against Black's solitary King!

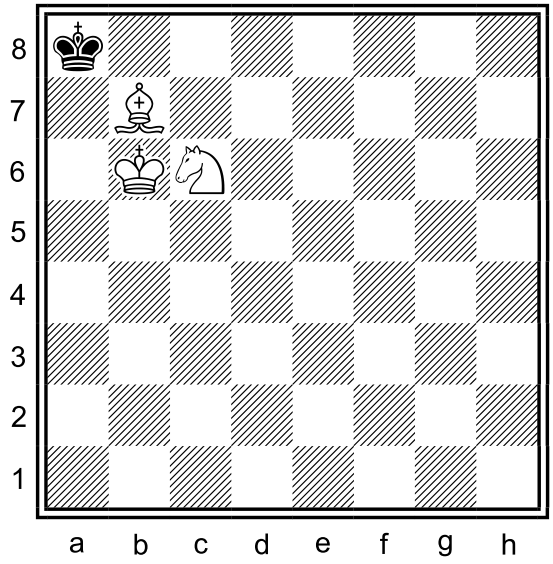




In Chess, combined efforts of King and Rook will checkmate at the base ranks or the edges.

The Face-to-Face-Laughing rule lets King and Chariot operate similar to two Rooks in Chess. The Chariot can gain a victory against the sole King even alone! A Chariot on the centroid wins by stalemate.





La6-b7#

The Cannon has no firepower without a cannon mount. Therefore, a combination of pieces is needed for victory: An additional Advisor or high Pawn can do the job.

In Chess, the combination of Knight and Bishop can force a checkmate in a lengthy maneuver. Alone, neither Knight nor Bishop can win.

12 Summary

Xiangqi pieces are flat discs and not figurine.

Xiangqi pieces are placed on intersections not on squares.

The 9-by-10 symmetrical Xiangqi board is inhomogeneous. There is a palace and a river.

Kings in Xiangqi cannot move across the board. They are restricted to their palace.

Kings cannot stand opposite each other without a piece in between (Face-to-Face-Laughing rule).

Purely defensive pieces exist: Advisor and Elephant. Advisors do not leave the palace, Elephants do not cross the river.

The Cannon is unique to Xiangqi. It can only capture when a cannon mount is present.

Only the Chariot moves like a Chess piece, the Rook.

Horses can be blocked. They do not jump over other pieces.

Pawns never promote into other pieces.

Xiangqi has only 5 Pawns on 9 files, which do not build a Pawn chain or phalanx.

Pawns do not occupy the “center” in Xiangqi like in Chess. Moving the central Pawn in the 1st move P5+1 would be a mistake! The Pawn is lost after black C2=5 or C8=5.

There are no Queens or Bishops. Diagonals are less important.

Material combinations: Although Horse is roughly equal to Cannon, Chariot + Horse + Cannon is better than Chariot + 2 Cannons. In Chess, a pair of Bishops is of higher value than a pair of Knights.

Stalemate is not a draw but a loss for the side, which cannot move.

Perpetual check is a loss for the side checking.

Perpetual chase of an unrooted piece or a piece of higher value is a loss for the chasing side.

Due to a pawn string full of holes and the bigger board, the development of major pieces is faster and they have more room for maneuvering than in Chess. Therefore, the opening phase is reduced and the game can become a tactical clash early.

Due to less Pawns and their limited power before crossing the river they rarely protect other pieces or each other. Major pieces have to protect mutually or take an Advisor or Elephant as root. Unrooted they are subject of attack.

Tactics are similar to those in Chess. Checkmate combinations occur frequently in Xiangqi. For a victory, you have to checkmate, not to promote a Pawn... ☺

Chess and Xiangqi have common strategic factors and factors that are unique to each game. The differences in strategy originate from (1) formation of purely defensive pieces, (2) different Pawn number and Pawn powers, (3) different King powers.

While in Chess the endgame often is about to promote an extra Pawn the endgame in Xiangqi is always about to checkmate with reduced material often applying the power of the King (Face-to-face-Laughing rule). The defending side tries to save his King by maneuvering his defense forces, Advisors and Elephants to build a fortress. E.g.: A complete defense can hold against the combined efforts of a Chariot and the enemy's King.

Unique qualities make Xiangqi an adventure of its own. Without testing Xiangqi nobody can judge which “Chess” is more thrilling, more interesting, deeper and more fun.

Probably you will evaluate Xiangqi and Chess as equal, though players addicted to Xiangqi would disagree. ☺☺☺

13 Historical Development of Characters

Chinese is the most spoken language in the world. For 1.1 Billion people in- and outside China Chinese is their mother tongue. Phonetically Chinese consists of 420 syllables spoken in 4 tones. Chinese characters are up to 8,000 years old, developed and changed over time. There are more than 90,000 of them, about 5,000 still in use. The characters are sorted by their 214 (186) radicals and number of strokes. There are four sorts of characters: pictograms, ideograms, compound pictograms/ideograms and semantic-phonetic compounds. A phonetic transcription in Latin letters was created, the Pinyin.

Sometimes learning the Chinese characters on Xiangqi discs is supposed to be difficult and found confusing by westerners unused to picturesque characters. But that's in fact not the case. A little information about what the characters show in detail and how the current appearance developed from the past makes it so easy to memorize them.

In this chapter the historical development, the original meaning, a decoding of the picture and the pronunciation in Pinyin are presented for the 11 Chinese characters of Xiangqi.

The creators of Xiangqi took care to have different characters for the Red and Black side representing two armies facing each other wearing different uniforms. Also excellent for uncolored pieces. This might be new to the International Chess player who never made the experience having all pieces the same color (let's say white) on a board with only white squares. ☺

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
将（將）	jiāng	General BLACK (South)
帅（帥）	shuài	Marshal RED (North)
士	shì	Advisor BLACK
仕	shì	Advisor RED
相	xiàng	Elephant, Minister RED
象	xiàng	Elephant BLACK
马（馬）	mǎ	Horse
车（車）	chē, jū	Chariot, Rook
砲	pào	Catapult BLACK
炮	pào	Cannon RED
卒	zú	Soldier, Pawn BLACK
兵	bīng	Soldier, Pawn RED

The character histories in light blue boxes are taken from http://dict.shufaji.com/ going from the past on the left to current time on the right. The boxes have external hyperlinks connecting to the resource.



Advisor 士，仕 shì





Original meaning: Axe; carrying an axe
The top part of the character shows the handle/hilt, the bottom part symbolizes the wedge. The meaning changed from guard (of high rank military personal) to scholar or advisor.

The red Advisor piece has added the character 人 for man/person in the combined version 亻 left to 士 as a distinctive mark to differentiate from the black piece. It is normally omitted when the characters on the discs are colored.



Minister / Elephant 相 xiàng





Original meaning: Tree 木 to the left, eye 目 to the right; eyes climbing up the trees.
Though the meaning is minister, we call this red piece elephant. Please note that the pronunciation is identical with the pronunciation of elephant 象: xiàng.



Elephant 象 xiàng





Original meaning: Big animal with long nose (trunk)
Four legs, a tail, two ears (or the head) can be found, while the trunk shrank in the latest form.



Horse 马（馬） mǎ





Original meaning: Animal with good running capacities.
Four legs, a long tail, the head and mane can be identified.

The red Horse piece has added the character 人 for man/person in the combined version 亻 left to 馬 as a distinctive mark to differentiate from the black piece. It is normally omitted when the characters on the discs are colored.



Chariot 车（車） chē, jū





Original meaning: Ox or horse driven vehicle with wheels, chariot
The middle part of the character shows a protective shield or box. The yoke was omitted and only the side wheels remained visible in a top view.

The red Chariot piece has added the character 人 for man/person in the combined version 亻 left to 車 as a distinctive mark to differentiate from the black piece. It is normally omitted when the characters on the discs are colored.



Cannon/Catapult 炮，砲 páo





Original meaning: Gun, firecracker
On the left the character for fire (to roast, to bake), on the right the character for bag (to wrap) as phonetic part.

The character for the black catapult shows a stone 石 on the left instead of fire 火.



Pawn, Soldier 兵 bīng





Original meaning: Soldier with small axe fighting at the front line
The bottom part shows two hands, the top represents the axe.



Pawn, Soldier 卒 zú



At the top a shield 亠 protects two persons 人 in the middle. The bottom part symbolizes a sword or a lance.



King, Marshal 帅（帥） shuài





Original meaning: Commander of military operations
The left part stands for two hands holding a sharp sword, the right for a banner 巾.



King, General 将（將） jiāng





On the left a bed 爿 (a piece of bamboo or wood 丬) is seen.
The right part consists of meat 𠙵 → 月 [on some pieces we see a claw 爪 (top) and a thumb or balance 寸 (bottom)].
𤕫 is a kind of fork to hold the meat.
How the meaning includes „general“ is a little mysterious.

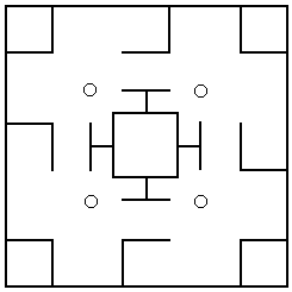
14 History of Xiangqi

Date Time range	Region	Person Inventor / Poet	Game	Evidence
4000 BC	China		Weiqi 圍棋	
4th cent. BC 250 BC	Pingshan / Hebei Xiaohu / Hubei		LiuBo 六博 (race game, capture fish pieces?)	2x6 pieces, 1 board, 6 dice sticks
3rd cent. BC	China			Poems from Chu *Chuci* 楚辭
17 BC Han dynasty	China	Liu Xiang 劉向	XiangQi 象棋	collection of poems 說苑
203 BC	China	**General Han Xin**	XiangQi	
1st cent. BC				*Shuo yüan*
25-220 AD Eastern Han	Three Gorges Dam area, Wanzhou District, Chongqing City		?	archaelogical discovery of an isolated Chariot
6th cent.	Gupta Empire, India	Indian philosopher	Chaturanga	
569 Northern Zhou dynasty	China	**Emperor Wu** 武 Wang Bao 王褒	XiangXi 象戲 astrological game	Book *Xiangjing* 象經
643-712	China	Fazang		*Fanwang fazang shu*
762	China		XiangXi board in an old grave	
779-847	China	Tang Minister of State Niu Sengru 牛僧孺	reference to a game that more closely resembles modern XiangQi, rules	Tales of the obscure and peculiar *Xuanguai lu* 玄怪錄
1019-1086	China	Sima Guang 司馬光	*Qiguo Xiangxi* long range weapons	
1032-1085	China		river mentioned	poem from Cheng Hao
1102-1106 era Chongning	China		XiangQi 象棋	complete set made of copper
1127–1279 Southern Song Dynasty	China		current form of Xiangqi	poem by Liu Kechuang

[H10, H11, H12, H13]

Not being a historian I give a summary of the current discussion on the history of Xiangqi, which may be part of the history of Chess in the table above.

The first game with the object of capturing pieces is LiuBo, dated 250 BC or earlier:





LiuBo has a history of its own. The exact rules of the game of LiuBo are not known, and some of the surviving descriptions of the game are conflicting. If and how it is connected to Xiangqi is speculative.

There are two candidates for the invention of chesslike games discussed by chess historians: General Han Xin (203 BC) and an unknown Indian philosopher (6th century AD).

First archeological evidence, an isolated Chariot piece, is dated to the era of the Eastern Han (25-220 AD). But this isolated finding is not regarded sufficient to be connected to the game of XiangQi.

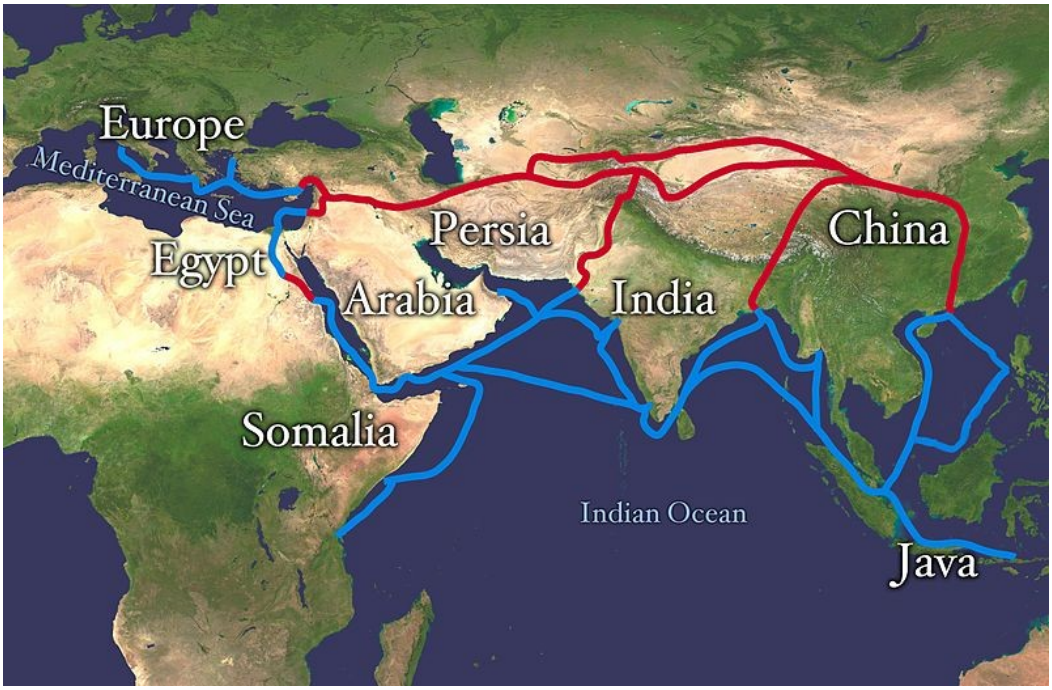
Emperor Wu invented a game called XiangXi. The preface of Emperor Wu's book *Xiangjing* written by Wang Bao states that there were pieces that were moved on the board, and we are told that military thinking and strategy played a role in the game. Thus, we are entitled to count Xiangxi amongst the forerunners of modern Xiangqi.[H11]

[H] *Copper* 

1xxx AD

Tang Minister of State Niu Sengru (779-847) in his “Tales of the obscure and peculiar” tells a story "Cen Shun 岑順" about a scholar who finds a XiangXi board in an old grave he slept upon after dreaming of being commissioned as military advisor. This is regarded as a first reference to a game that more closely resembles modern XiangQi.[H11] Rules were given.

The map below shows the Silk Road, which Xiangqi might have gone to be disseminated into Persia and India.



15 Things you need

15.1 Xiangqi Set

You can find Xiangqi sets in Asia markets with Chinese and Vietnamese products. Small piece sets start about 3.50 € (5.00US$) and you have to take care for the board separately, e.g. by drawing the boardlines on a big sheet of paper. Bigger piece sets cost about 15€ (25US$) and for a Xiangqi board of appropriate size about 10€ is charged.

When you have no Asia store nearby, you can make your own piece set by drawing the characters on wooden discs yourself in colors you like. Some nice handicraft...

If you want to have a set quick, install the Font “Xiangqi” on your computer that can be downloaded from the internet. Just search...
You create the board by typing the corresponding characters in your word processor.

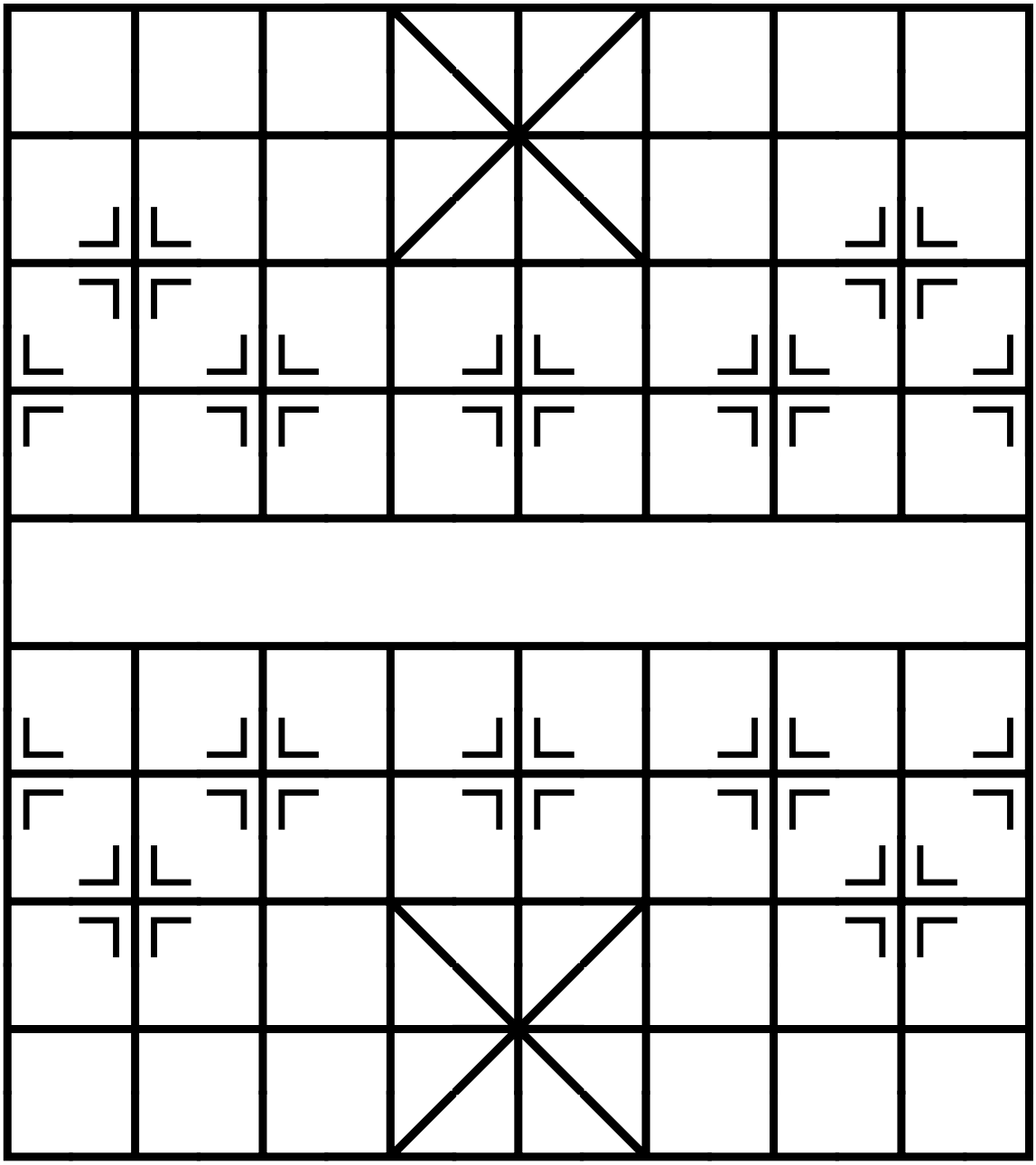
For your first steps to try Xiangqi, the set provided in this manual below and on the next page may be sufficient. Print and cut. For a bigger set make a 2:1 copy.
Have fun!

Xiangqi piece set for print (Font: Xiangqi, Size:52) and cut:

帥 仕 相 馬 車 炮 ○
○ 仕 相 馬 車 炮 ○
兵 兵 兵 兵 兵 兵
將 士 象 馬 車 炮 ●
● 士 象 馬 車 炮 ●
卒 卒 卒 卒 卒 卒

Xiangqi board for print (Font: Xiangqi, Size:53)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

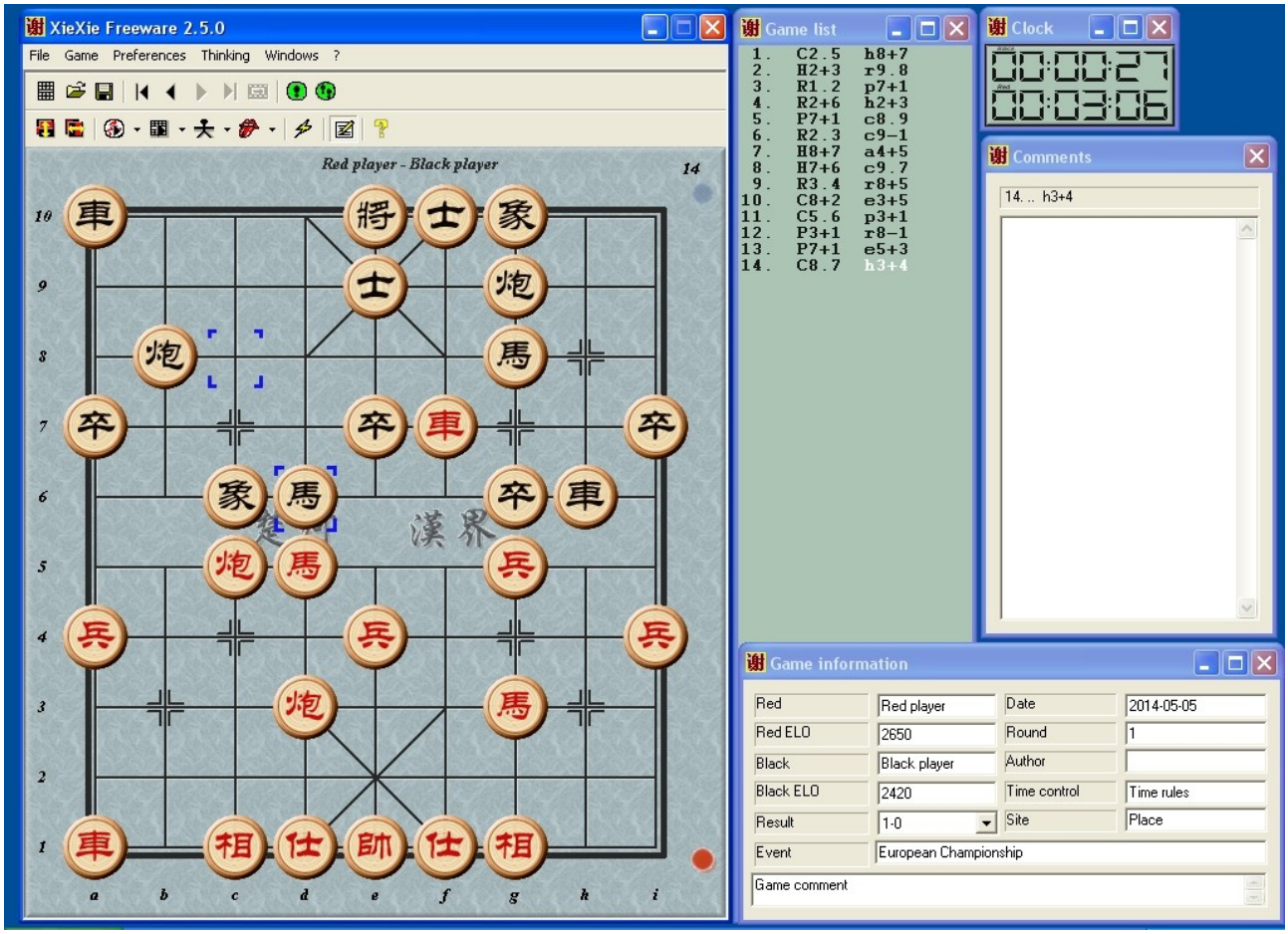


九 八 七 六 五 四 三 二 一

15.2 Game Software

To the Chess player gameplay software like “Fritz” or “Rybka” are known. Similar software is present for Xiangqi.

There are several Xiangqi computer applications available. A free and strong gameplay software is **XieXie**. You can download is at: http://www.cc-xiexie.com/home.php



XieXie provides many features including a setup where you can start a game from any position you compose.

Others are:

WinBoard / Xboard

http://www.gnu.org/software/xboard/

XQWizard

http://sourceforge.net/projects/xqwizard/

Qianhong

http://www.jcraner.com/qianhong/ or http://www.old-games.com/download/5493/qianhong

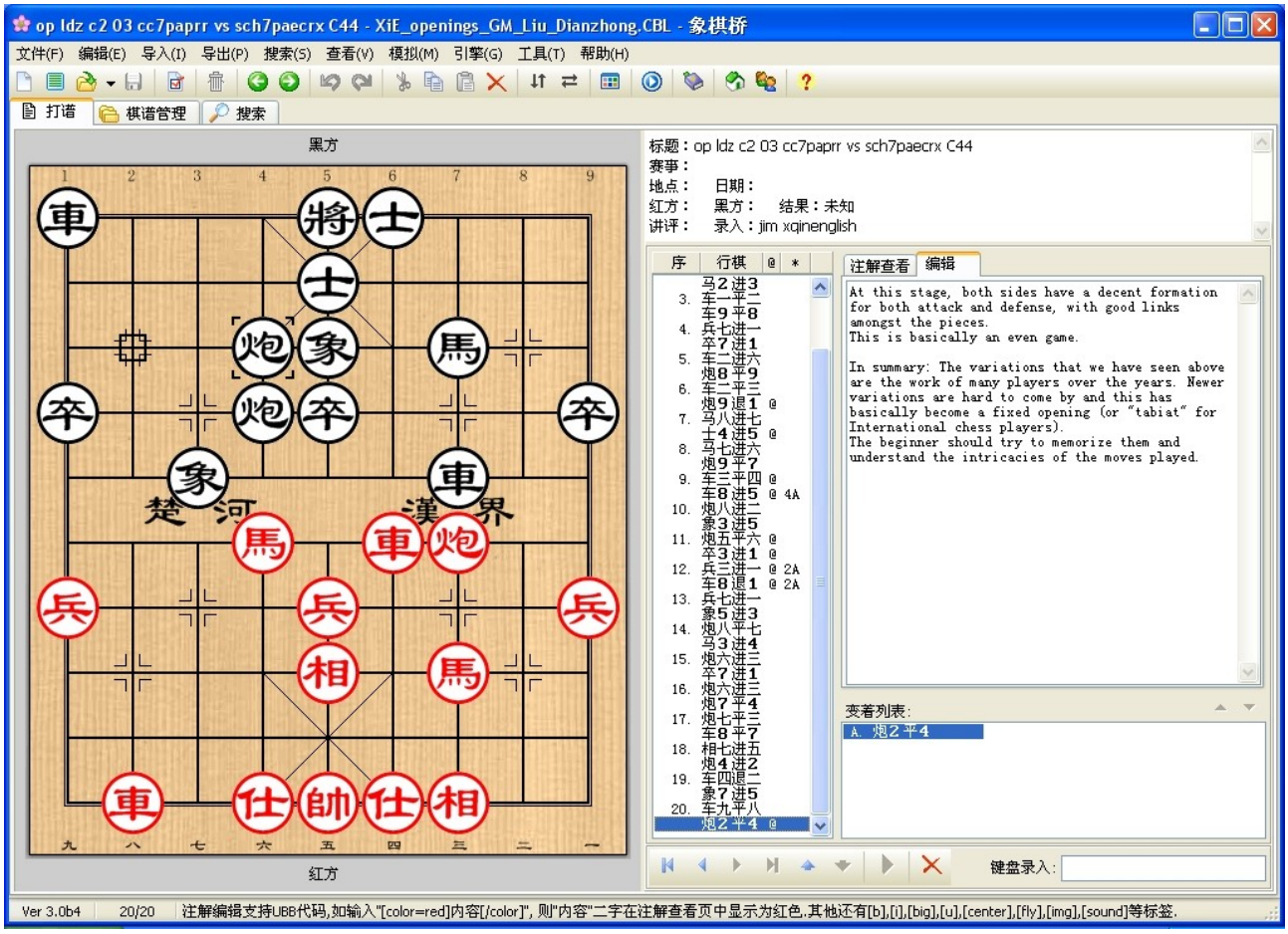
15.3 Database

“Chessbase” is a widely used database software which Chess players cannot forgo, though costly. “CBlight” is a free version with reduced functions.

The best and FREE Xiangqi database is “Chinese Chess Bridge” or in short CCBridge. The original website http://www.ccbridge.net/ is shut down. But there are still places where this remarkable software is shared:

http://www.mediafire.com/download/lnmgnj4zhdt/CCBridge3beta4.zip

It is recommended to download CCBridge immediately before the sources vanish and go extinct !! Other databases you have to pay for.

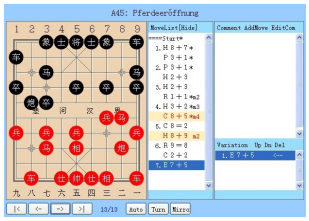


The features of CCBridge are numerous. The user interface is Chinese. That's not a problem because a translation is available. You find a free English manual at “Xiangqi in English”:

http://www.xqinenglish.com/downloads.html

http://www.xqinenglish.com/files/Download01/Short_manual_Simple_translation_of_CCBridge_20130826.pdf

15.4 Xiangqi Viewer



In case you want to design your own Xiangqi website including game views with comments and variations you will need a Xiangqi viewer. Search the internet for “**DhtmlXQ_www_dpxq_com_Eng.js**”.

The input for the viewer is a direct copy from CCBridge. Very easy.

To get information about the application contact xq_info@gmx.de .

15.5 Playsites

PlayOK http://www.playok.com/

The only playsite where you get a full screen game board is PlayOK. No client has to be installed. No personal data or email address is required for registration. Just choose yourself a nickname. You can select several languages for the user interface. Game times are adjustable from 3 to 60 minutes. Time per move can be added (Fisher Time).



A download in WXF format of games played during the last 6 months is provided for direct import into XieXie or via a converter (xq_info@gmx.de) into CCBridge.

In case you have a magnifier nearby to recognize pieces, there are other playsites:

ClubXiangqi http://www.clubxiangqi.com/

Vietson http://vietson.com/

For games with time rules on a move basis (correspondence game):

BrainKing http://www.brainking.com/ (language selectable & discussion boards)

ItsYourTurn http://www.itsyourturn.com/

Please try all of them and experience the difference in appearance and features.

15.6 Books

A handful of FREE eBooks (PDF) can be downloaded at the WXF website:
http://www.wxf.org/xq/books.php ? http://wxf.ca/wxf/index.php/books

16 Links

Top Xiangqi Website ►►► "Xiangqi in English"

http://www.xqinenglish.com/

Only website in English with detailed and comprehensive coverage of Xiangqi on over 2000 pages and subpages. Find your way through the Xiangqi jungle there...

Top Playsite ►►► "PlayOK"

http://www.playok.com/

Organisations

WXF	World Xiangqi Federation	http://www.wxf.org/
AXF	Asian Xiangqi Federation	http://www.asianxiangqi.org/
EXF	European Xiangqi Federation	http://www.chinaschach.de/

Databases and general information

XiangQi DataBase 01xq.com	http://www.01xq.com/
XiangQi Master Database	http://wxf.ca/xq/xqdb/xqdb_index.html
ECCO 2004	http://www.xqbase.com/ecco/ecco_intro.htm

Others

A New Approach to Xiangqi	http://xiangqibowl.org/

Links addressing special topics are included in the corresponding chapters and the reference list. Please go there...

Youtube Videos

On Youtube you can search for Xiangqi videos and filter playlists. Most videos are in Chinese, some have English subtitles, only few are in English.

http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLrCToa1qWlXu73pS3v7zWnzxaT-sMKXBN	18 videos opening series (en subt.)
http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLcBrn4P42ECuFTeuugYGOwneXGNeBVtLR	same
http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIpPuwrtcwMGEFL6sNbocP-q0f4Yok6sJ	18 videos introduction / games (cn)
http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLLV2yfqGysfhVVBif0tMAlCO9p85TsxE5	19 videos checkmate methods (en)
http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLMW5NJNDOjy28RoYQdTAER1Hq62Ujjb13	200 videos popular xq
http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIpPuwrtcwMHKdZazd39zFkjGFrGp4loZ	200 videos CCTV5 (cn)
http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLcBrn4P42ECugJ_ZtFqsO-KGXsh0alDJD	10 videos learn xq by cartoon
http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLcBrn4P42ECvoRmDenoVmrod6iw7ZzYiX	10 videos endgame (cn)
http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIpPuwrtcwMEcFSt8YdPiwL-gptKRqkjU	40 videos HuRonghua (cn)
http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIpPuwrtcwMHModrcYHjZvIL1Z1MbI2Dd	36 videos ShanghaiTV (cn)
http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJzPS7GoJs3I_9CejUBApUh7XzUZt1xRK	12 videos opening (cn)
http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIpPuwrtcwMEEqm0S_4rxRTD8mu3X_f9J	87videos GuangdongTV (cn)

In English:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Nv5oT-Jbbc#t=18	Felix Tan - Annotation of a Training Game
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I92hpVezGe0	Felix Tan - puzzle - 4 Birds With One Stone
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-1jXt-QbuEA	IGM Alvin Woo - A Concept in Xiangqi Opening
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oERKjeYlyXE	IGM Alvin Woo - Sacrifice Horse Opening
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vRC68s0GmKU	Taiwan - China Town - XiangQi

17 Self-test

The self-test is divided into four sections. Two parts are covering checkmates sequences and two cover combinations for material gains.

For each part preconditions (what you must have mastered to start), goal of the section and training materials in form of puzzles are given.

Your task is to find the checkmate sequence or material gain, respectively. Correct solutions are rewarded with points. Solutions are found at the end of each part. You add all your points and according to the sum you get a valuation of your result like a mark in school... and a hint what you might have missed.

The self-test can serve as a handout or summary with questions in form of puzzles in Xiangqi courses.

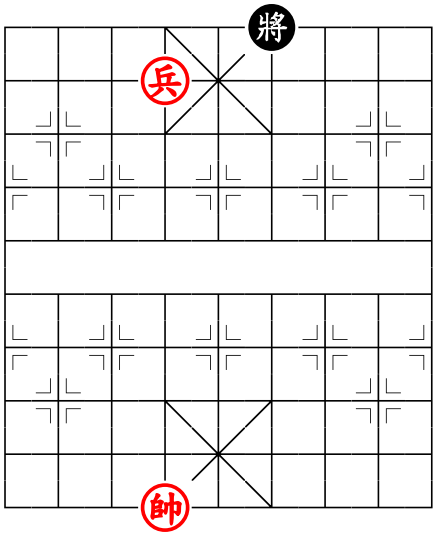
17.1 Simple Checkmates

Precondition: Operation of pieces, Face-to-Face-Laughing rule, stalemate rule, AXF notation.

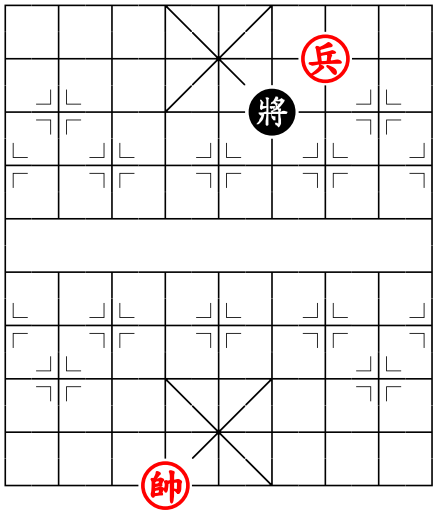
Learning target: Impact of pieces, cooperation of pieces, checkmate positions, AXF notation.

Exercise: Red to move. Red checkmates in one move.

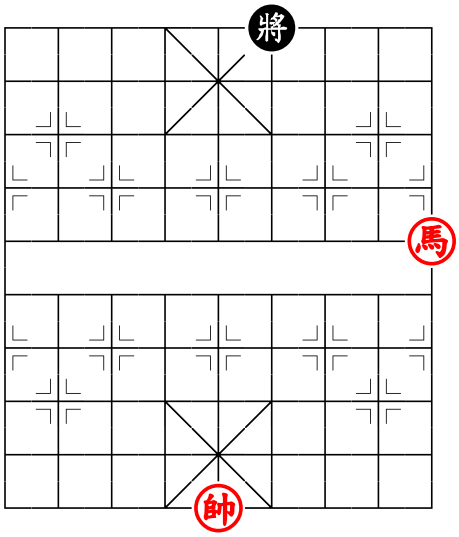
Task: Write down the solution in AXF notation! *Try to find the solution without a board first.*



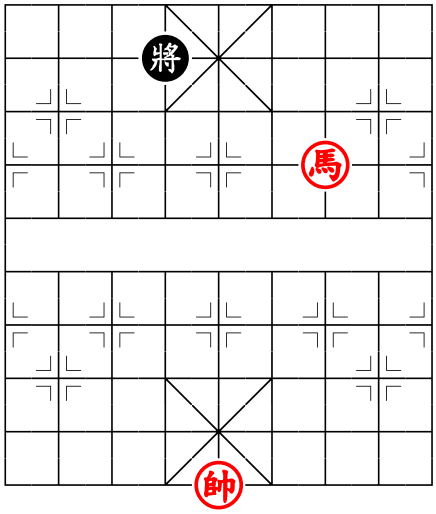
1: 1 solution 1 point



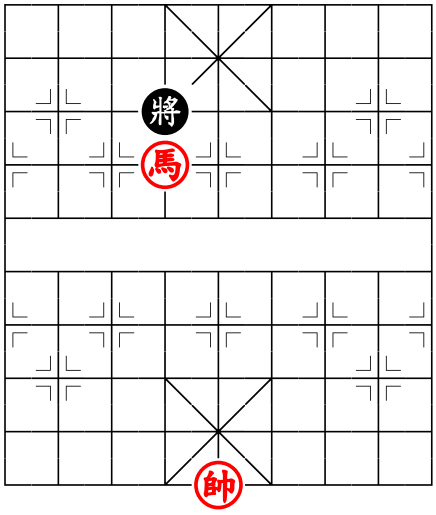
2: 1 solution 1 point



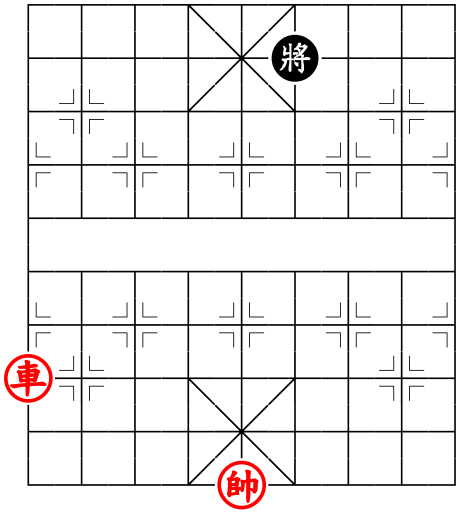
3: 2 solutions 2 points



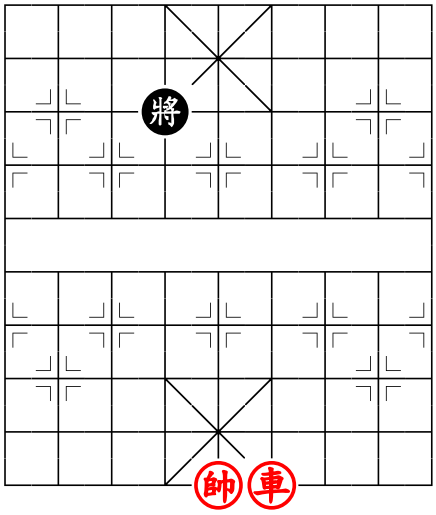
4: 1 solution 1 point



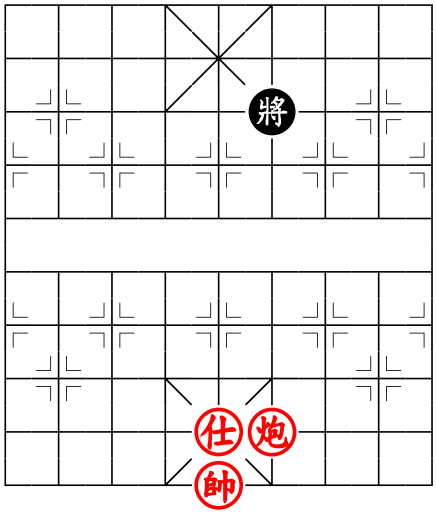
5: 2 solutions 2 points



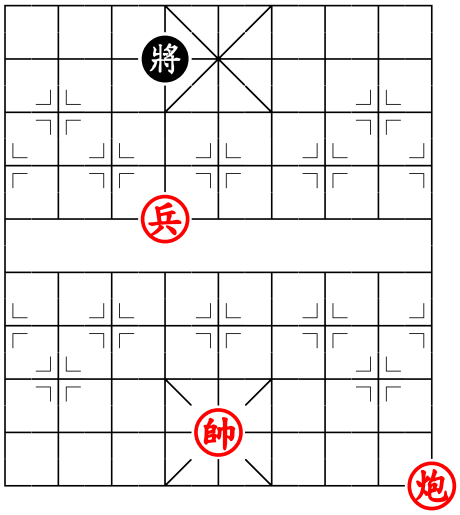
6: 1 solution 1 point



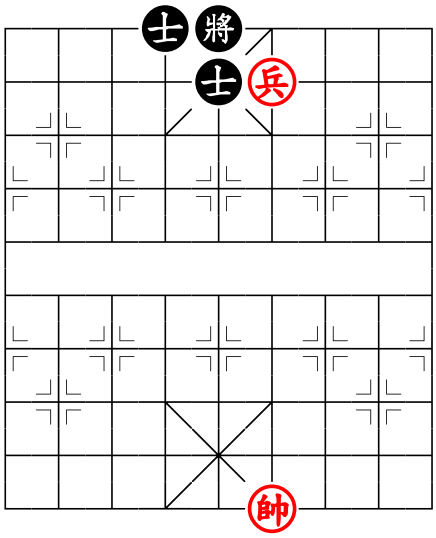
7: 1 solution 1 point



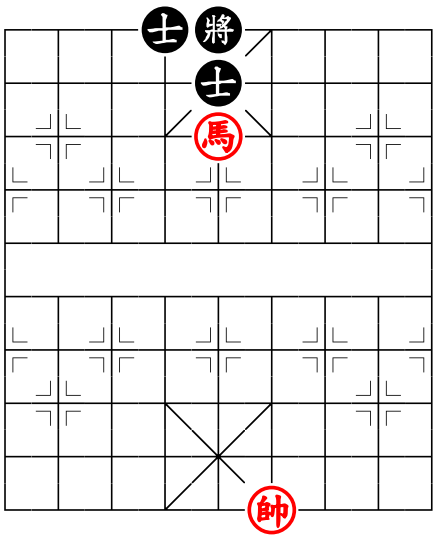
8: 1 solution 1 point



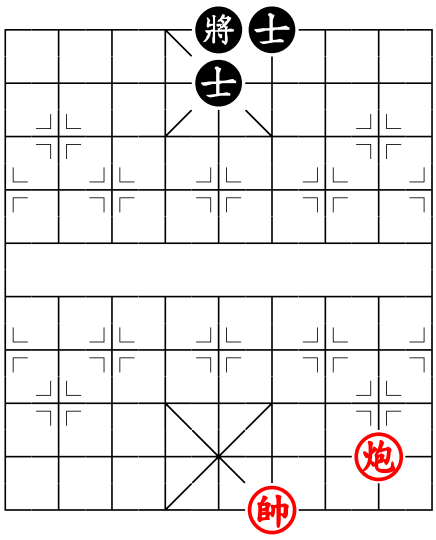
9: 1 solution 1 point



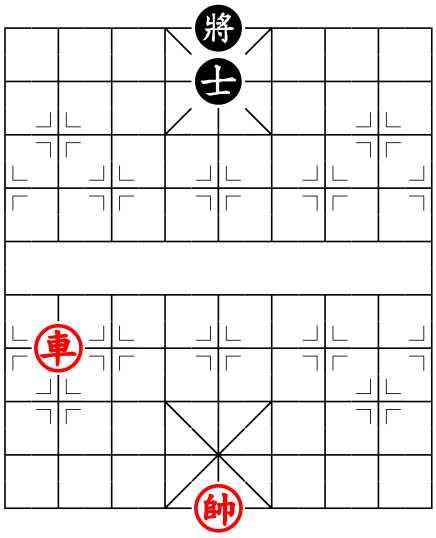
10: 1 solution 1 point



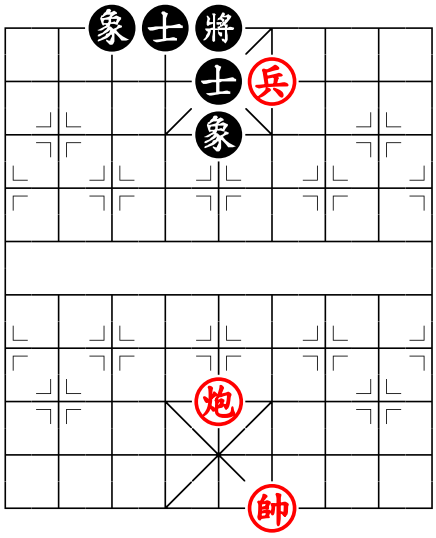
11: 2 solutions 2 points



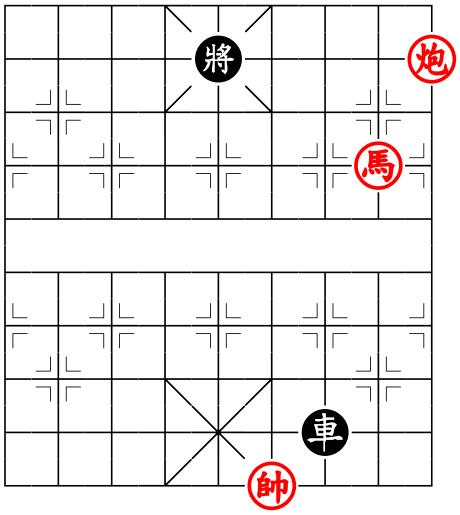
12: 1 solution 1 point



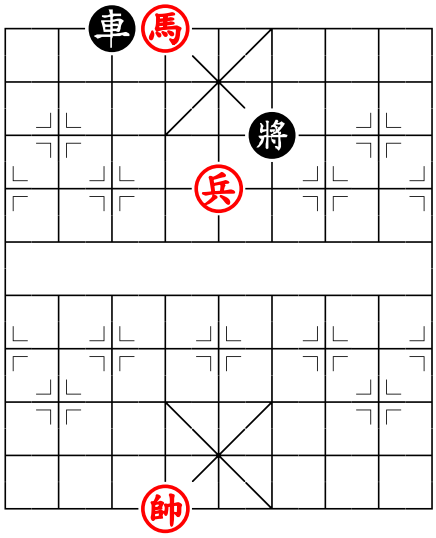
13: 1 solution 1 point



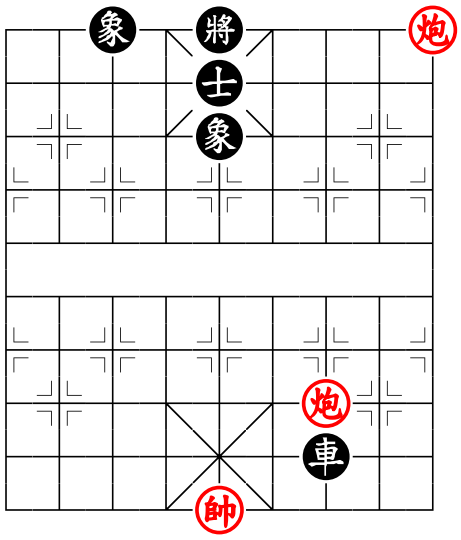
14: 1 solution 1 point



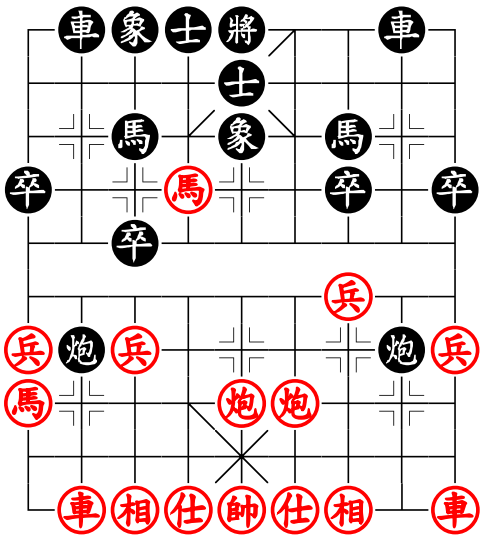
15: 1 solution 2 points



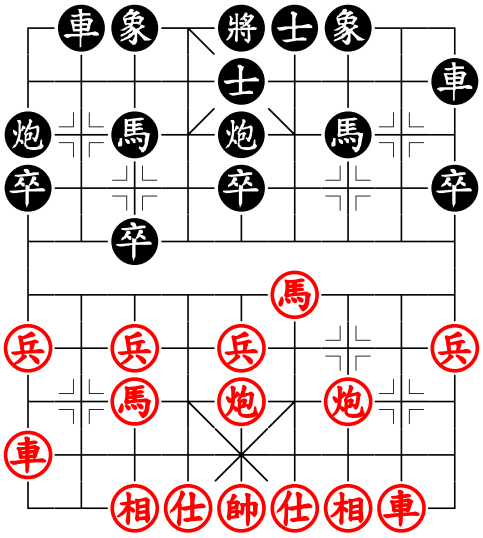
16: 2 solutions 2 points



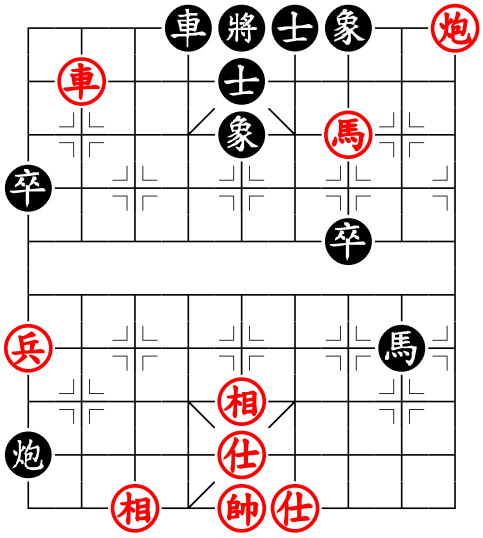
17: 1 solution 1 point



18: 1 solution 2 points



19: 1 solution 2 points



20: 1 solution 2 points

Solutions:

No	Move	Points
1	P6=5	1
2	K6=5	1
3	H1+2 / H1+3	1 + 1
4	H3+4	1
5	H6+4 / H6+8	1 + 1
6	R9=4	1
7	R4+8	1
8	A5+4	1
9	C1=6	1
10	K4=5	1

No	Move	Points
11	H5+3 / H5+7	1 + 1
12	C2+8	1
13	R8+6	1
14	P4+1	1
15	H2+3	1
16	P5+1 / P5=4	1 + 1
17	C3+7	1
18	H6+4	2
19	C3+7	2
20	R8=5	2

Total points: 27 **Your points: _____**

Your rating:

> 27 : You miscalculated. ☺

27: Straight A – You already play Xiangqi?

25-26:.A – Excellent! Have you mastered the AXF notation?

23-24: B – Well done! Be aware of the Face-to Face-Laughing rule!.

20-22: C – Still good! Stalemate is a victory like checkmate.
How does the Cannon do damage, capture or pin pieces?

<20: Maybe you repeat some basics?

17.2 Checkmate Sequences

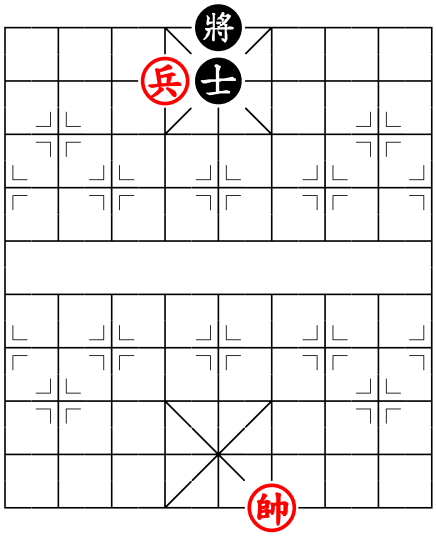
Precondition: Rules, checkmate situations, AXF notation, section 17.1

Learning target: Impact of pieces, cooperation of pieces, rudimentary checkmate sequences.

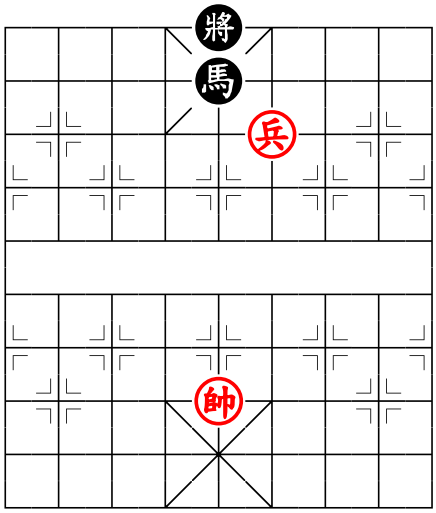
Exercise: Red to move. Red checkmates in two moves.

Task: Write down the solution in AXF notation! Try to find all variations.

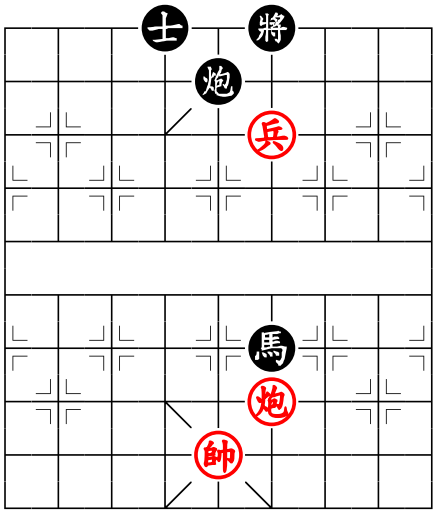
Note: Desperate sacrifices by Black to prolong the game do never add to the move count!



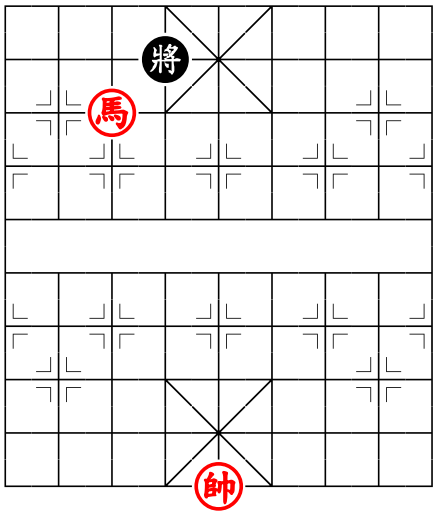
1: 1 solution 1 point



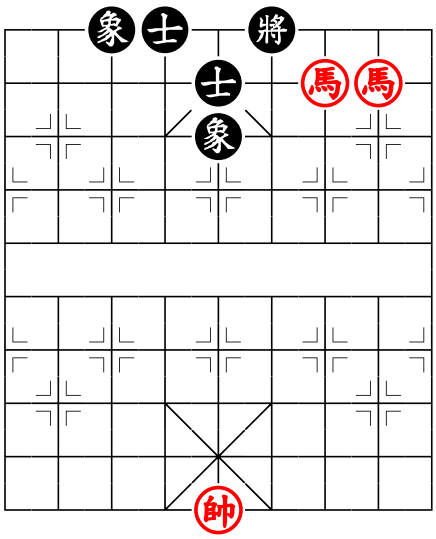
2: 1 solution 1 point



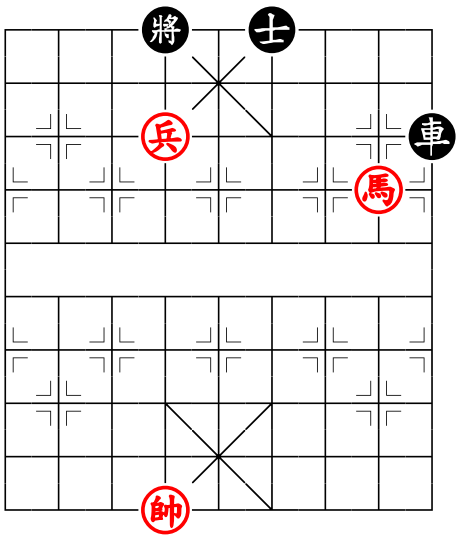
3: 1 solution 1 point



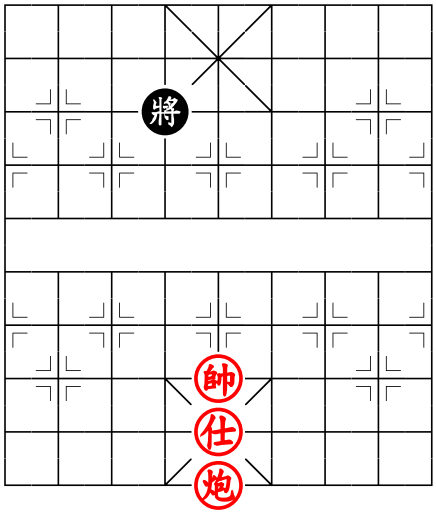
4: 1 sol., 2 variations 2 points



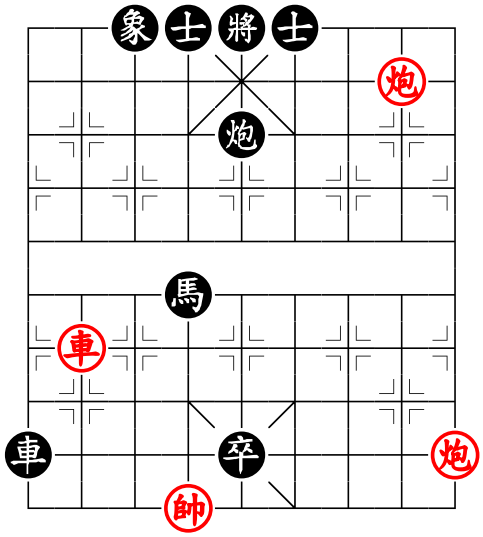
5: 1 sol., 2 variations 2 points



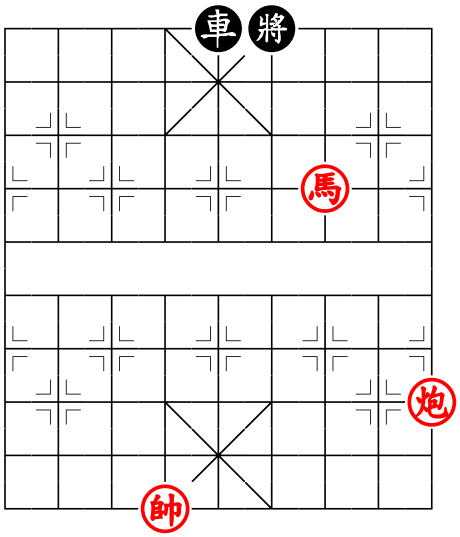
6: 1 solution 1 point



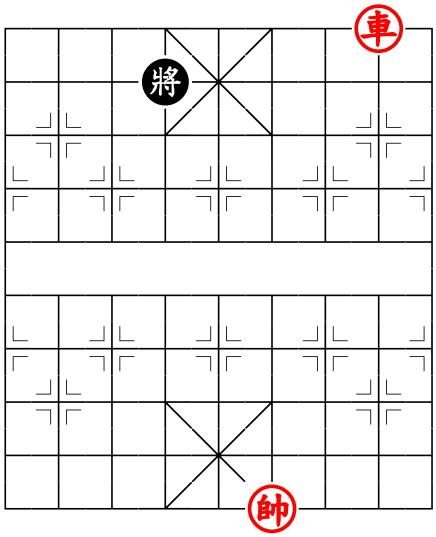
7: 2 solutions 2 points



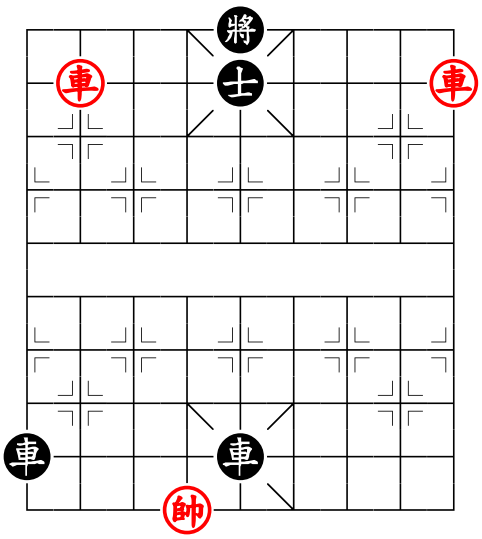
8: 2 sol., 2+2 var. 3 points



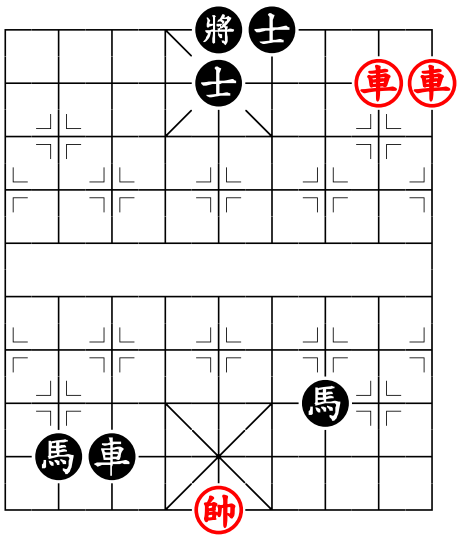
9: 1 solution 1 point



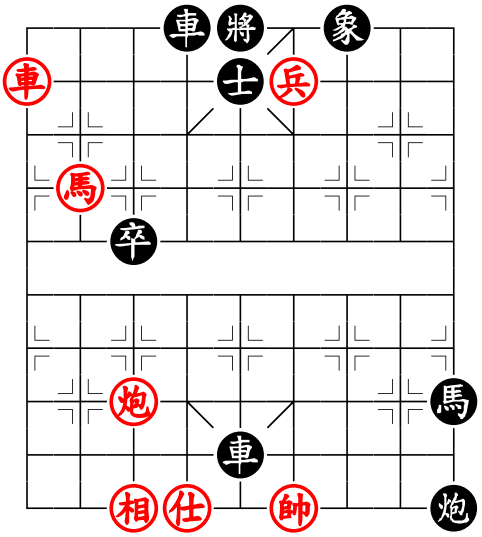
10: 2 sol., 1+2 var. 2 points



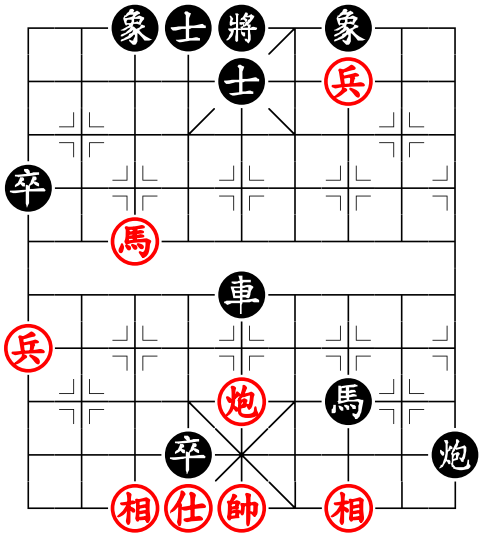
11: 2 sol., 1+3 var. 4 points



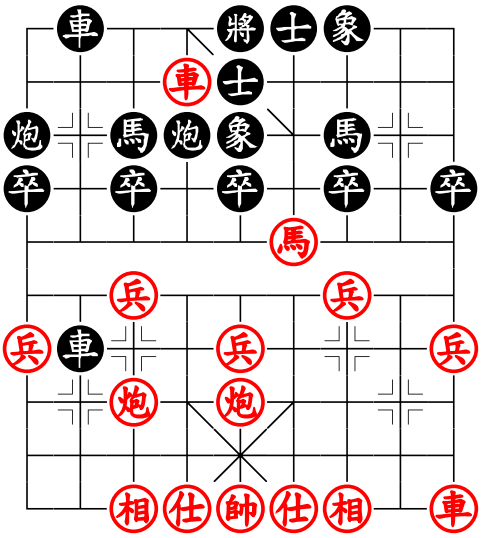
12: 1 sol., 2 variations 2 points



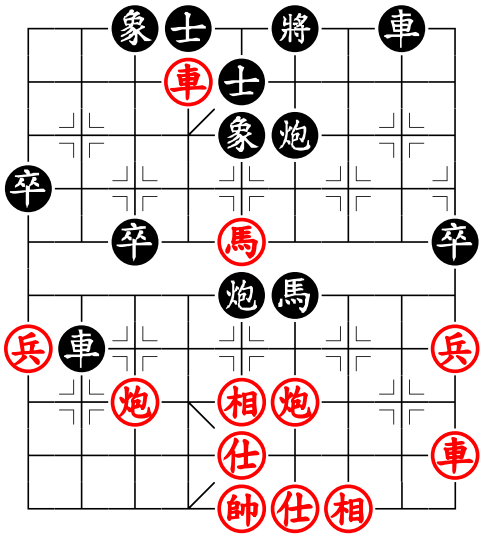
13: 1 solution 2 points



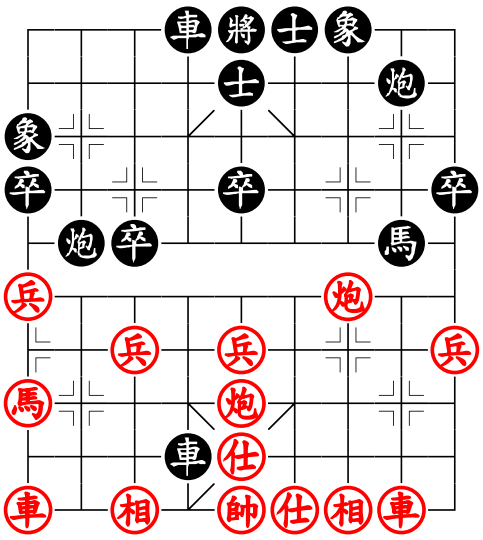
14: 1 sol., 2 variations 3 points



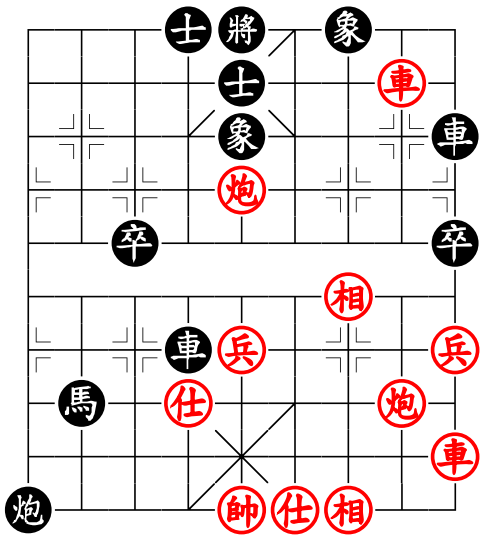
15: 1 solution 2 points



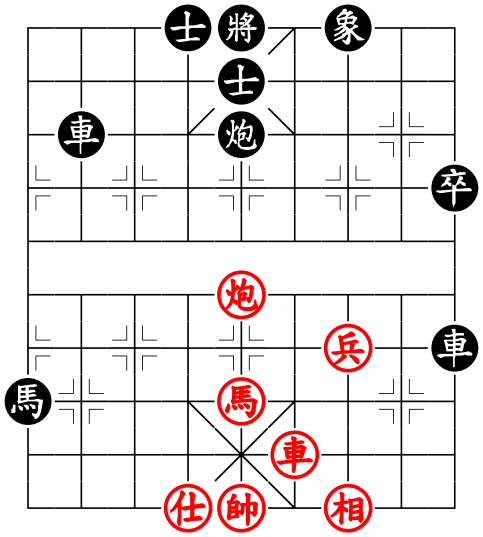
16: 1 solution 2 points



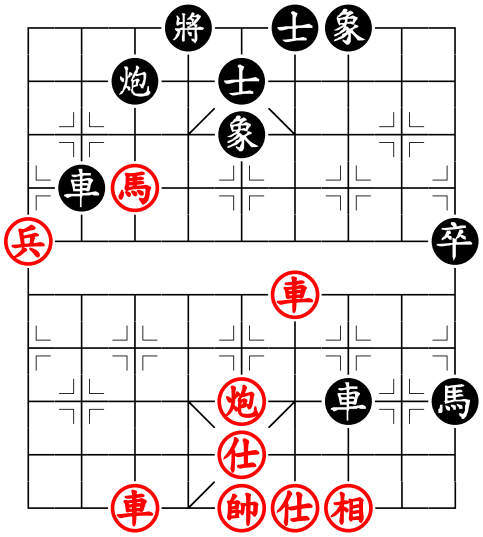
17: 1 sol., 2 variations 3 points



18: 1 sol., 2 variations 3 points



19: 1 solution 2 points



20: 1 sol., 3 moves 4 points

Solutions (*no order but completely on this page... , sorry!*):

No	Move sequence(s)	Points
1	K4=5 k5=6 P6=5	1
2	P4+1 k5=4 P4=5	1
3	P4+1 k6=5 P4+1	1
4	H7+8 k4-1 (k4+1 K5+1) K5+1	1 + 1
5	H3-5 k6=5 (k6+1 H5-3) H5+7	1 + 1
6	P6+1 k4=5 H2+3	1
7	A5+6 k4-1 C5=6 / C5=6 k4-1 A5+6	1 + 1
9	H3+2 k6+1 C1+6	1
10	K4=5 k4+1 R2=6 / R2-1 k4±1 K4=5	1 + 1
8	C2+1 a6+5 (k5+1 R8+5) C1+8 C1+8 a6+5 (k5+1 R8+5) C2+1	1 + 1 + 1

No	Move sequence(s)	Points
12	R2=5 a6+5 (k5=4 R5=6) R1+1	1 + 1
13	R9=5 r5-7 P4+1	2
14	H7+6 k5=6 P3=4 (P3+1)	2 + 1
15	H4+2 any H2+3	2
16	C7+7 k6+1 H5+3	2
17	C5+4 e7+5 (a5+X C3=5) C3+5	2 + 1
18	R2=5 a4+5 (k5=6 C2+7) C2+7	2 + 1
19	K5=4 any R4+8	2
20	R4+5 a5-6 R7=6 c3=4 R6+8	4
11	R8+1 a5-4 R8=6 R8=5 r5-7 (k5=6 R1+1) R1+1 R8=5 k5=6 R1=4	1 + 1 +1 + 1

Total points: 43 **Your points: _____**

Your rating:

43: Straight A – You are on your way to Master...

40-42:.A – Excellent! Have you missed a variation?

37-39: B – Well done! Don't hesitate to sacrifice for a checkmate!.

31-36: C – Still good! Not all maneuvers start with check.

<31: Maybe you repeat section 17.1?

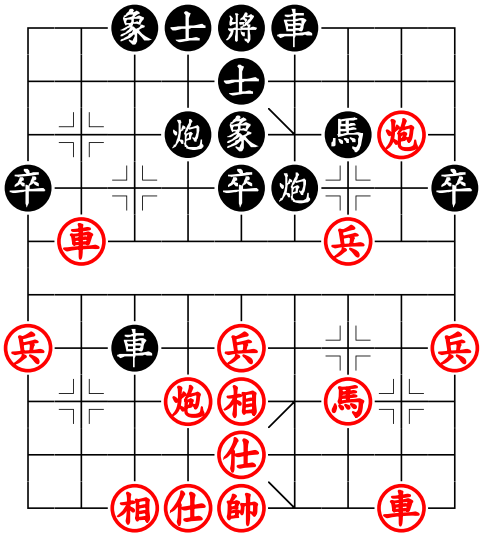
17.3 Tactics – Material Gain 1

Precondition: Value of pieces, fork, pin, skewer, zugzwang, section 17.2, chapter 7.Tactics

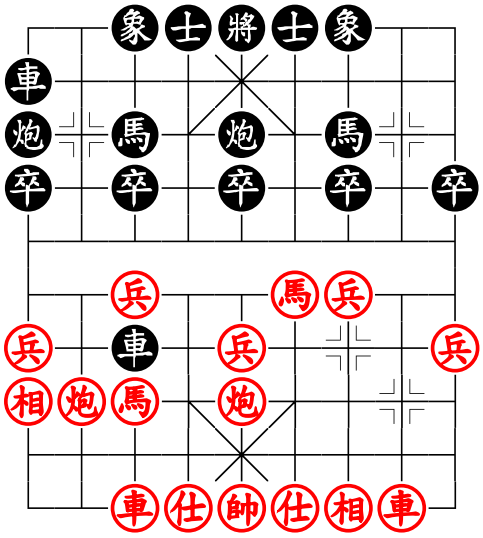
Learning target: Impact of pieces, cooperation of pieces, rudimentary tactical sequences.

Exercise: Red to move. Red gains material (back) in two moves.

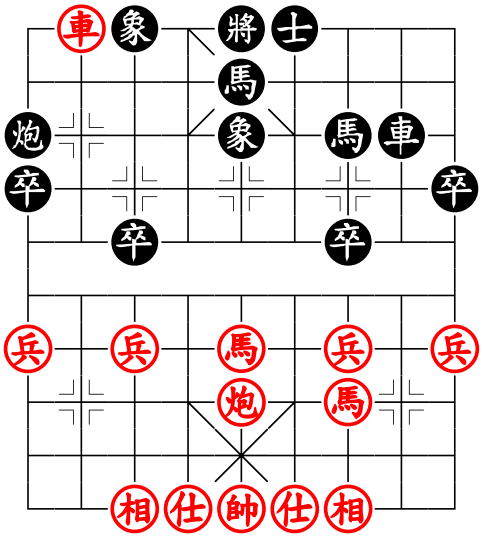
Task: Write down the solution in AXF notation! Try to find all variations.



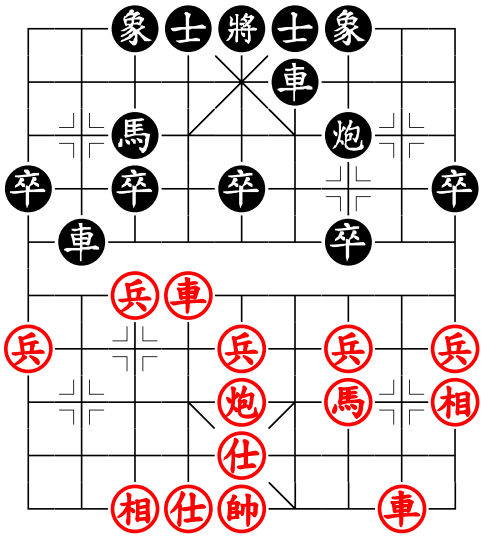
1: 1 sol., 2 variations 1 point



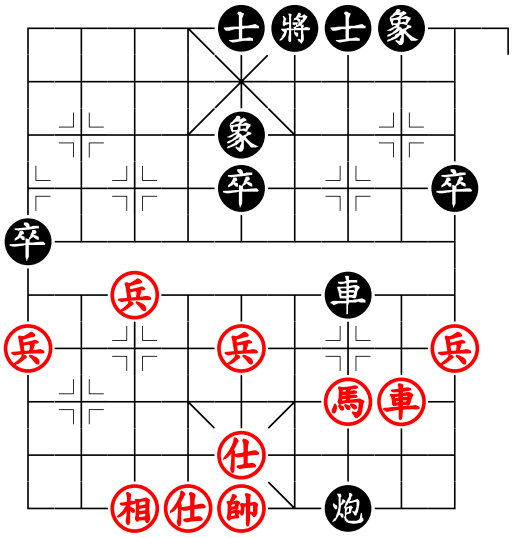
2: 1 sol., 2 variations 2 points



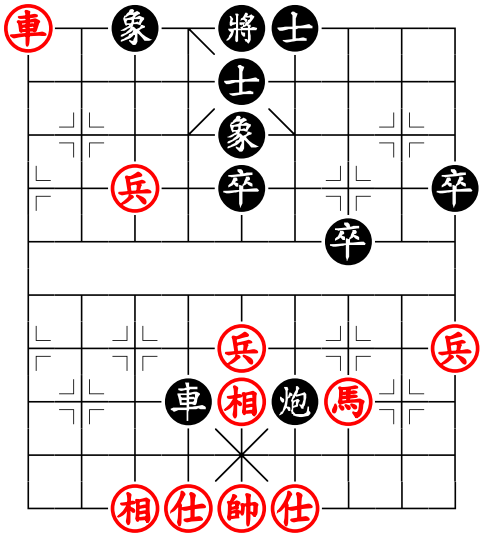
3: 1 sol., 2 variations 2 points



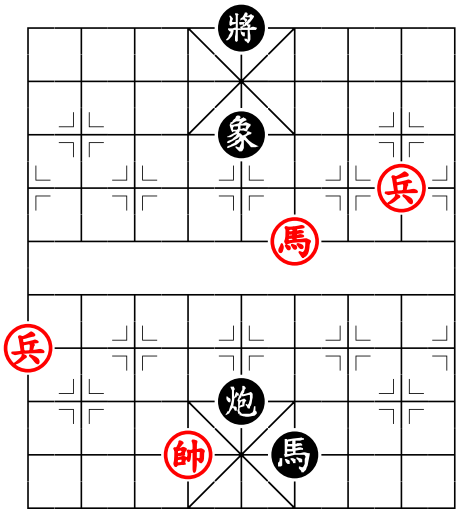
4: 1 sol., 2 variations 1 point



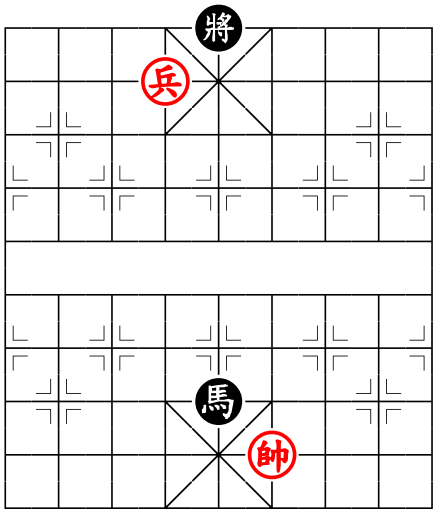
5: 1 solution 1 point



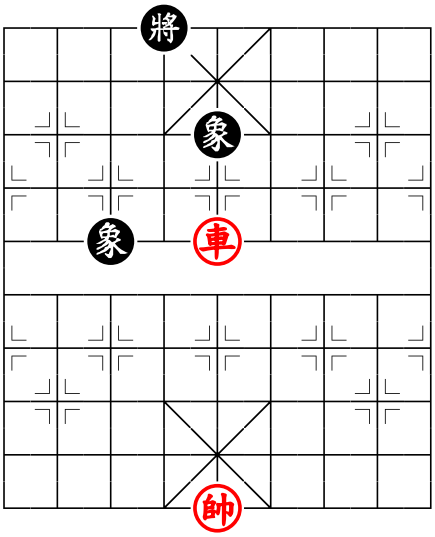
6: 2 solutions 1 point



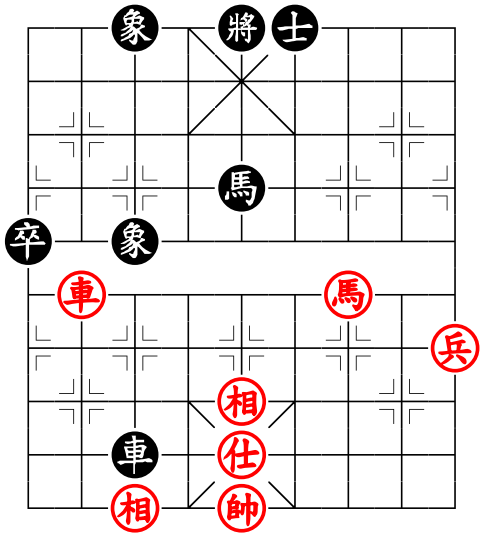
7: 1 solution 1 point



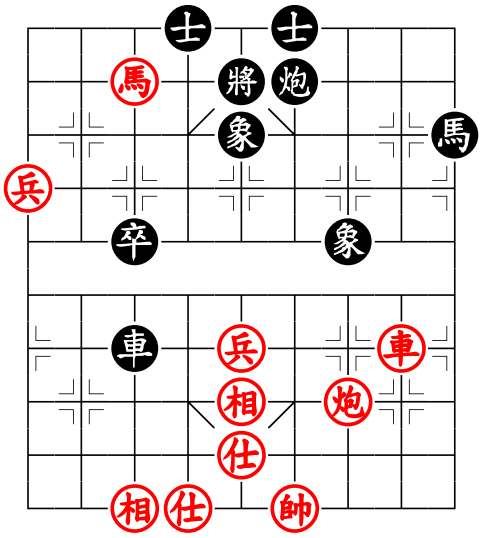
8: 1 solution 1 point



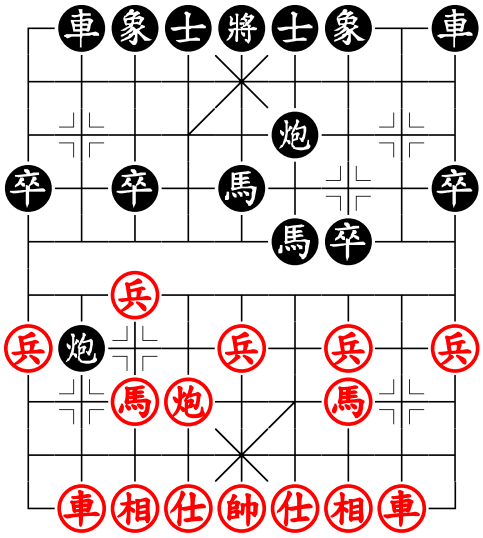
9: 1 solution 1 point



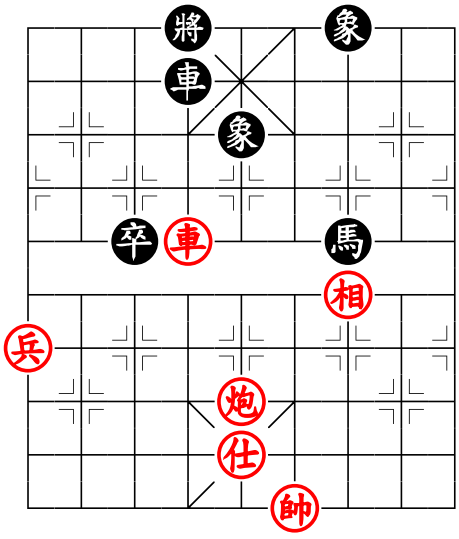
10: 1 solution 1 point



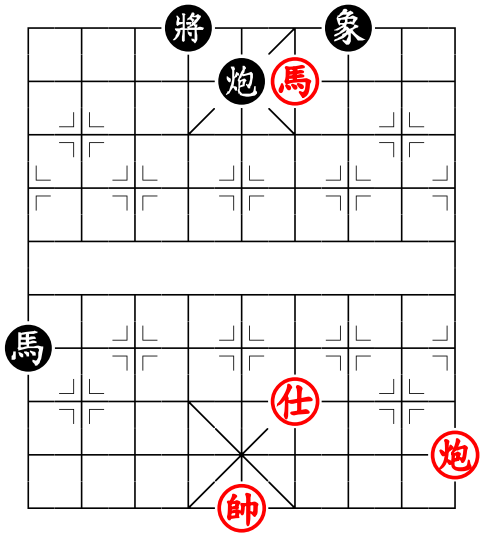
11: 1 sol., 3 variations 3 points



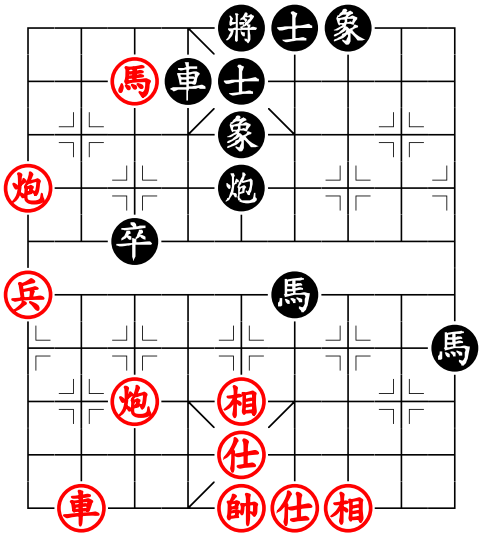
12: 1 solution 1 point



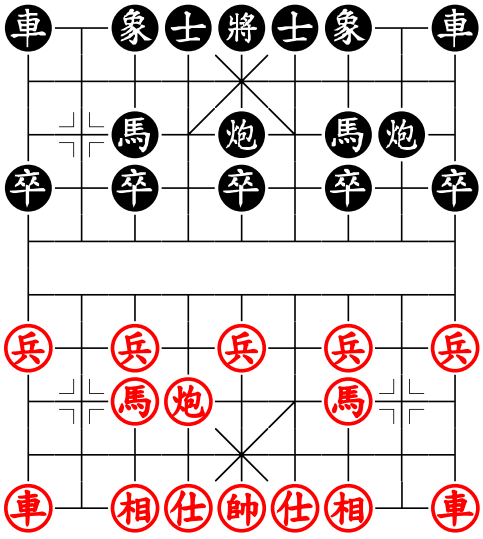
13: 1 solution 1 point



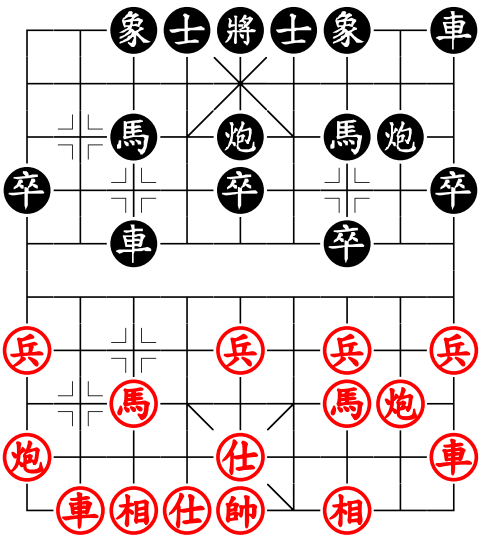
14: 1 solution 1 point



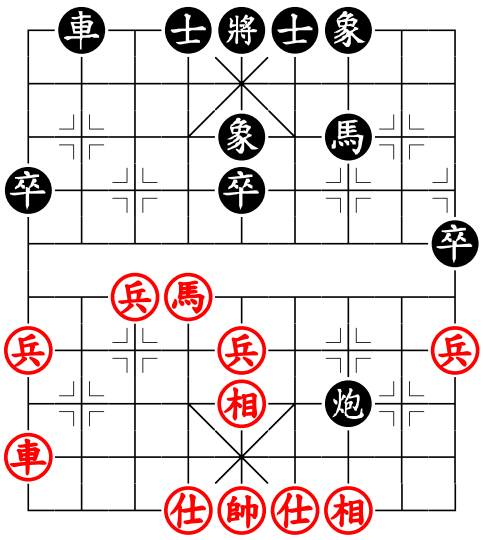
15: 1 sol., 2 variations 2 points



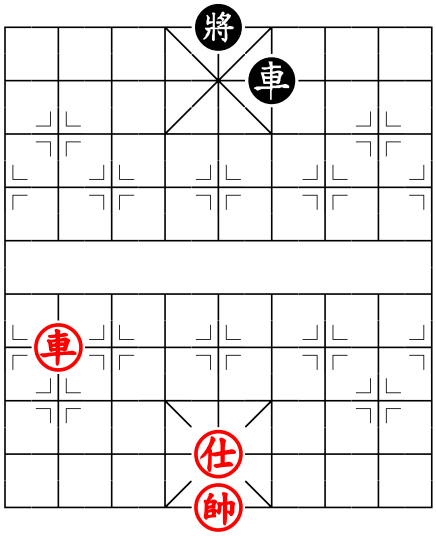
16: 1 sol., 3 variations 3 points



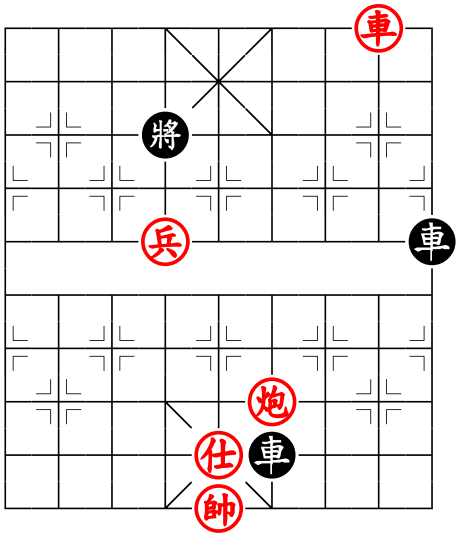
17: 1 solution 2 points



18: 1 solution 1 point



19: 1 sol., 3 moves 2 points



20: 1 sol., 4 moves 3 points

Solutions:

No	Move	Points
1	P3+1 c6+3 (h7-8 P3=4) P3+1	1
2	H4+6 r3=4 (r1=3 H6-7) H6+7	1 + 1
3	C5+5 k5=4 (h5+3 R8=7 h3-4 and C5=2) C5=2	1 + 1
4	R6+3 c7+4 (hxxx R6=3) R6=7	1
5	E7+5 r(7+1) E5-3	1
6	Ax+5 r4.3 A5+4	1
7	K6=5 ...	1
8	K4=5 k5=6 K5+1	1
9	R5=6 k4=5 R6=7	1
10	R8=5 any R5+2	1

No	Move	Points
11	R2+5 k5=4 (h9+7 C3+4; h9-8 R2+1) R2.4	1 + 1 +1
12	C6=5 a6+5 C5+4	1
13	C5=6 any (r4+1 R6+2) C6+6	1
14	C1+4 any C1=5	1
15	C9+2 k5=4 (r4=3 C3+6) C9=6	1 + 1
16	C6+5 h7-x (c5-1 C6=2; r9=8 C6=3) C6=2	1 + 1 + 1
17	C9=7 r3=x C7+6	2
18	R9.3 h7+8 (c7=x R3+6) R3+1	1
19	R8+6 k5+1 R8-1 k5-1 R8=4	2
20	C4=6 k4=5 R2=5 k5=6 R5=4 k6=5 R4-8	3

Total points: 31 **Your points: _____**

Your rating:

31: Straight A – You are a monster to your opponents!

28-30:.A – Excellent! Have you missed a variation?

25-27: B – Well done! Cannons can do surprising damage.

22-24: C – Still good! Are you confused by many Chinese pieces on a full board?

<22: Maybe you repeat chapter 7 Tactics?

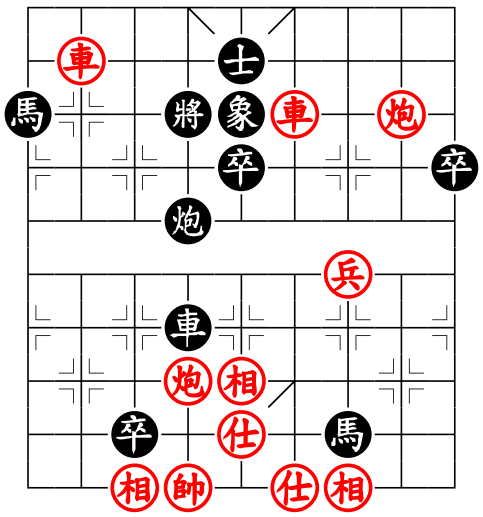
17.4 Tactics – Material Gain 2

Precondition: Value of pieces, discovered check & attack, deflection, overloading, section 17.3, chapter 7 Tactics

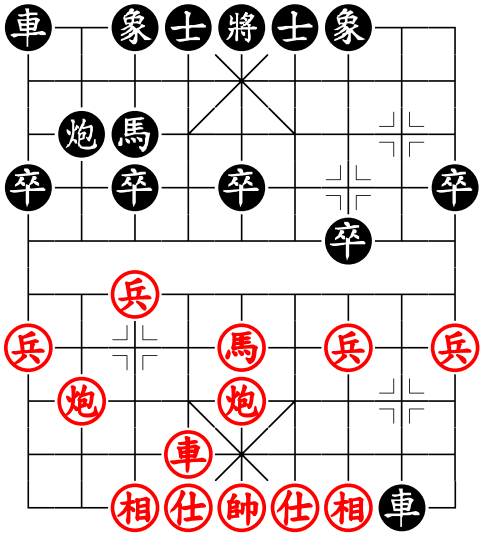
Learning target: Impact of pieces, cooperation of pieces, rudimentary tactical sequences.

Exercise: Red to move. Red gains material (back) in two moves.

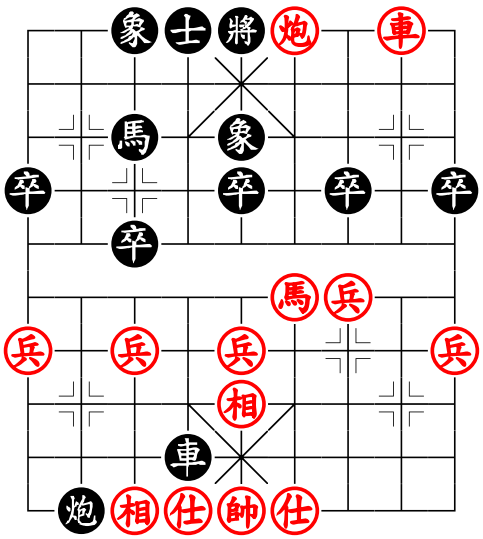
Task: Write down the solution in AXF notation! Try to find all variations.



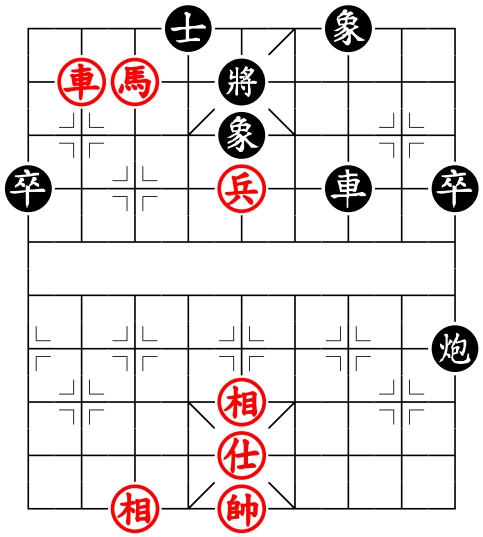
1: 1 solution 1 point



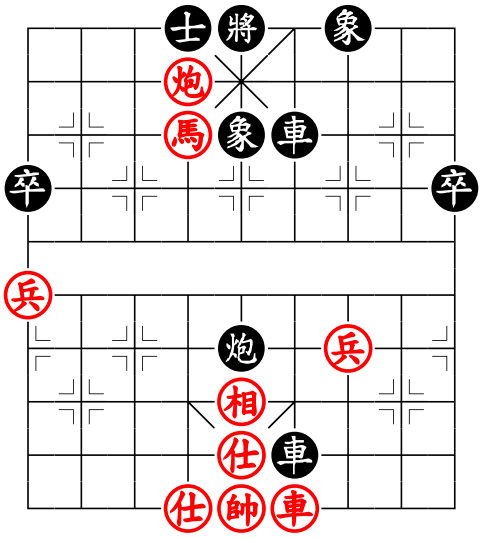
2: 1 solution 1 point



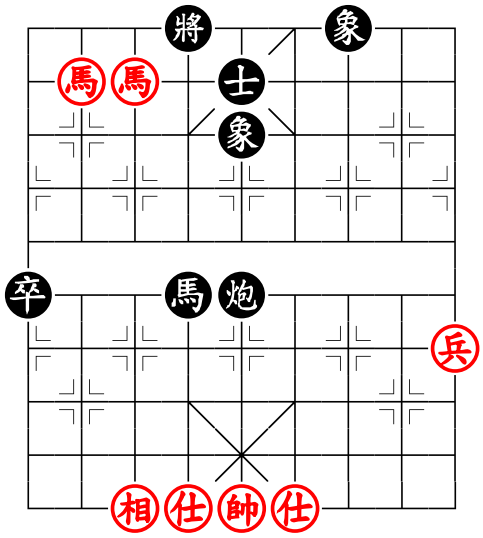
3: 1 solution 1 point



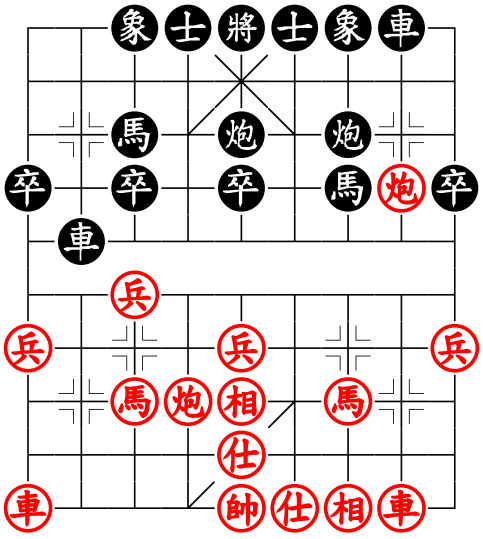
4: 1 solution 1 point



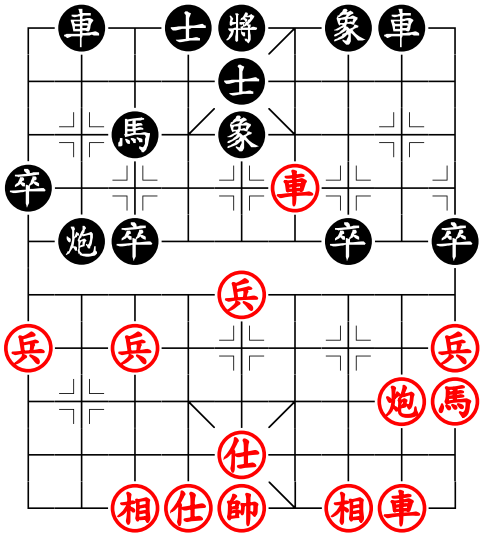
5: 1 solution 1 point



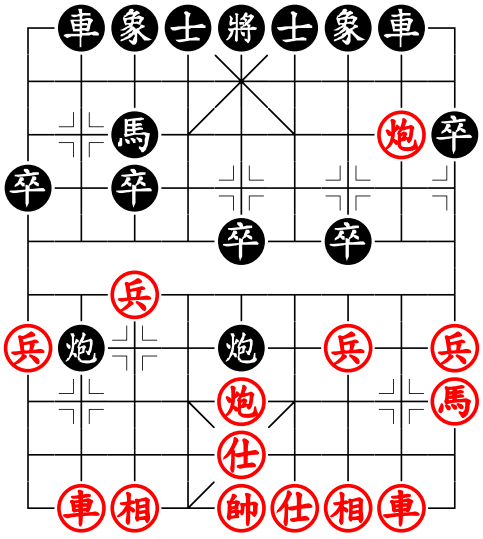
6: 1 solution 1 point



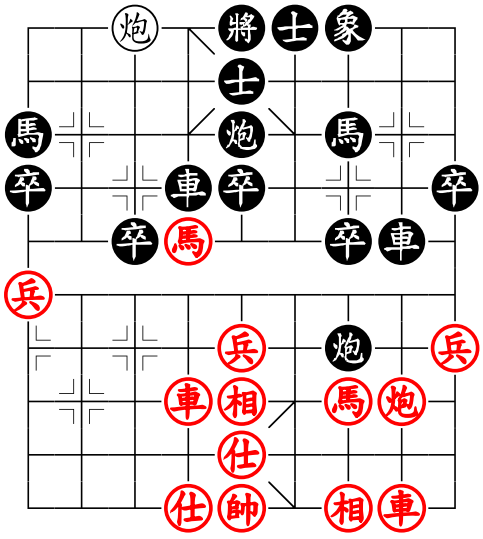
7: 1 solution 1 point



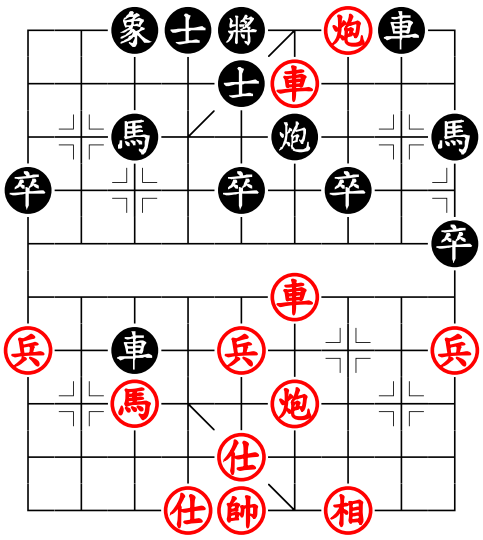
8: 1 solution 1 point



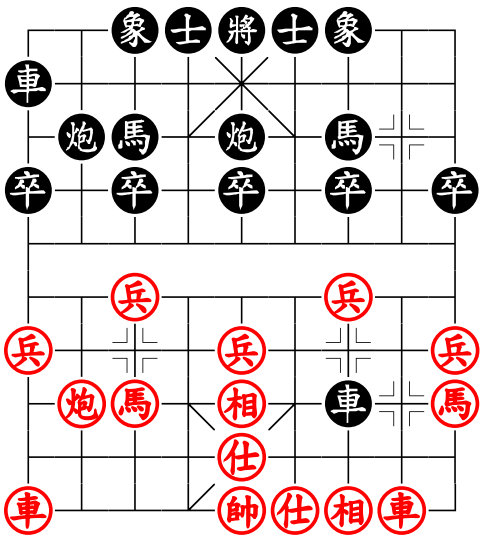
9: 1 sol., 3 moves 2 points



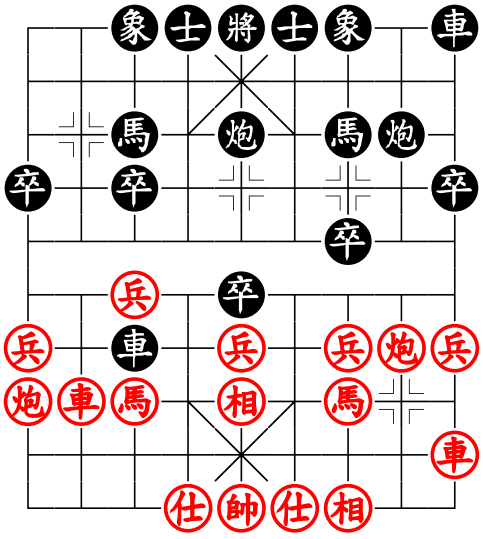
10: 1 sol., 3 moves 2 points



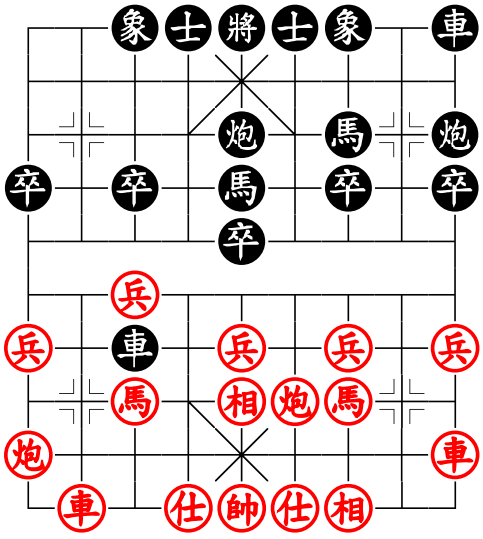
11: 1 sol., 2 variations 2 points



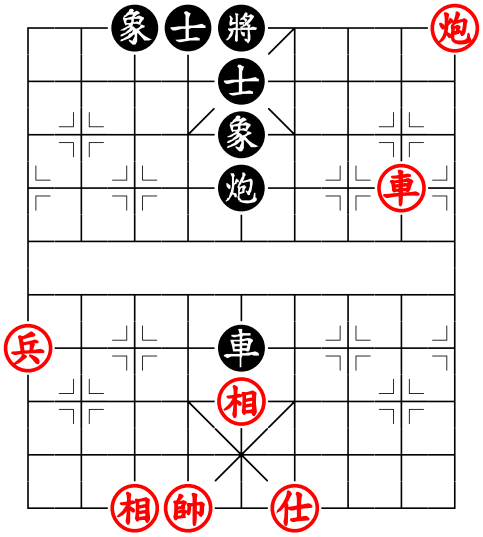
12: 1 solution 1 point



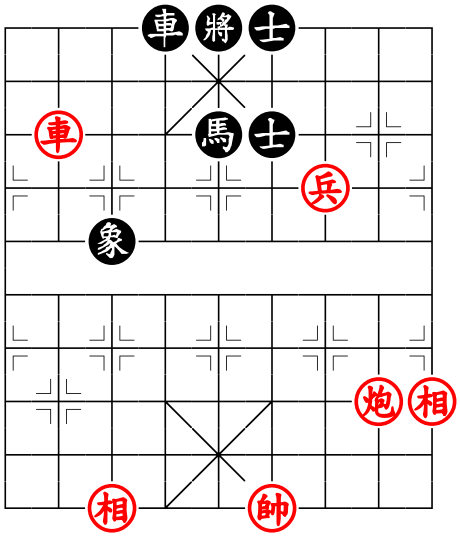
13: 1 solution 1 point



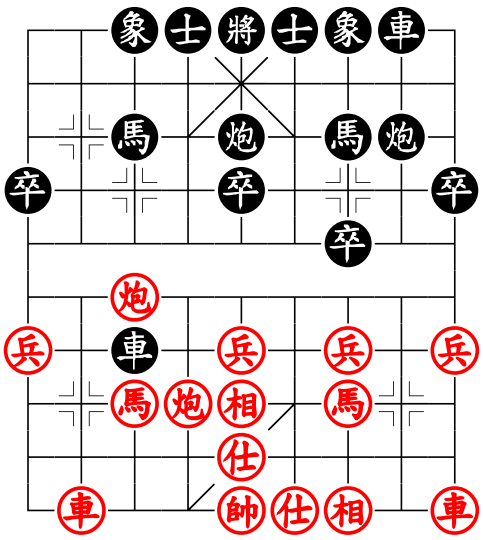
14: 1 sol., 3 moves 3 points



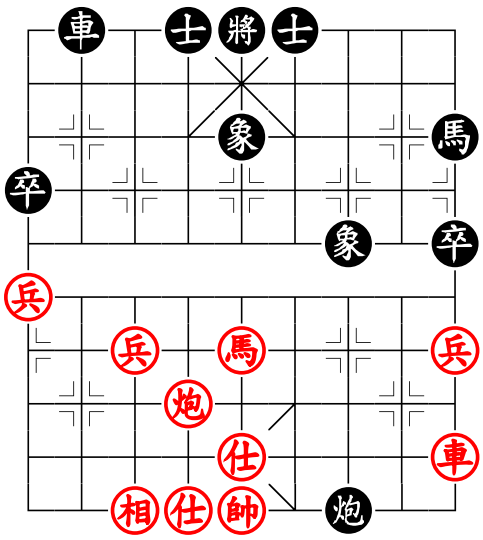
15: 1 sol., 3 moves 2 points



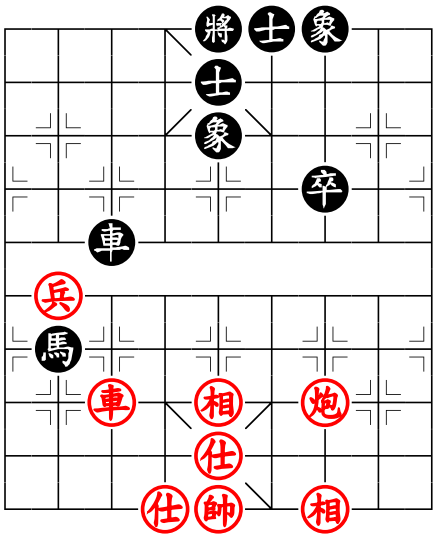
16: 1 sol., 2 variations 1 point



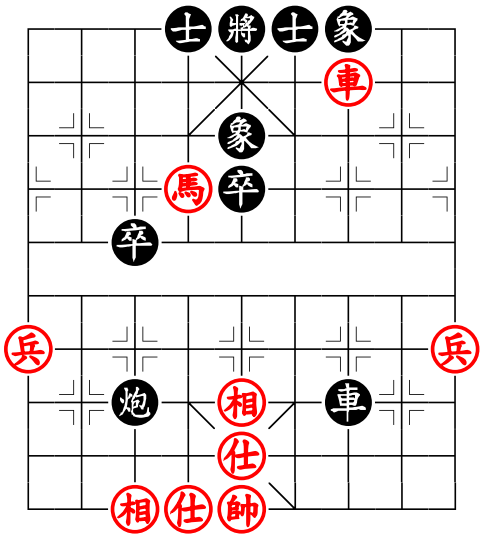
17: 1 solution 1 point



18: 1 sol., 3 moves 2 points



19: 1 solution 2 points



20: 1 solution 1 point

No	Move	Points
1	R4-4 e5-x R4=6	1
2	H5-3 any H3-2	1
3	C4-2 k5+1 C4=7	1
4	H7-5 k5-1 H5-3	1
5	C6.4 k5+1 C4-7	1
6	H7-6 k4=5 H6-5	1
7	C2=5 h3+5 R2+9	1
8	C2=8 r8+9 C8+7 h3-2 H3-2	2
9	C2=5 r8+9 C5-4 ex+5 H1-2	2
10	H6+4 r4+4 H4-2 r4-2 H2+3	2

No	Move	Points
11	R4=7 r8=7 (r3-1 R4+1) R7-1	1 + 1
12	H7+6 r7=9 R1+2	1
13	P3+1 r7+1 R8.7	1
14	R1=6 (p5+1) C9=7 r3+1 C4=7	3
15	R2+3 a5-6 R2-6 a6+5 R2=5	2
16	C2+7 (a6+5) C2=6	1
17	C7+3 (a4+5) C7-5	1
18	H5-3 r2+5 E7+5 c7=4 K5.6	2
19	R7+3 (e5+3 C3+7)	2
20	H6+7 c3-6 R7-6	1

Total points: 29 **Your points: _____**

Your rating:

29: Straight A – Why don't you go to become the 1st western IGM in Xiangqi head on?

27-28:.A – Excellent! When do you start to teach Xiangqi?

24-26: B – Well done! Consider the whole board.

20-23: C – Still good! Situations sometimes are very complex.

<20: Maybe you repeat chapter 7 Tactics?

Checkmates and tactics covered in the four tests are summarized in the table below. Sometimes checkmates have special names. Please refer to the basics section of "Xiangqi in English" and the free book from the WXF "Basic Xiangqi Checkmate Methods".

Nr		Combination (Checkmate)
1	**17.1**	Pawn (Stalemate C.)
2		Pawn-King (Face-to-Face-Laughing C.)
3		Horse-King (FtFL Stalemate)
4		Horse-King (FtFL Stalemate)
5		Horse-King (FtFL Stalemate)
6		Chariot-King (Face-to-Face-Laughing C.)
7		Chariot-King (Face-to-Face-Laughing S.)
8		Cannon-Advisor-King (FtFL Checkmate)
9		Cannon-Pawn-King (FtFL Checkmate)
10		Pawn-King vs Advisors (FtFL S.)
11		Horse-King vs Advisors (FtFL C.)
12		Cannon vs Advisors (Smothered C.)
13		Chariot-King vs Advisors (FtFL C.)
14		Cannon-Pawn-King vs Full Guard
15		Horse-Cannon
16		Horse-Pawn
17		Double Cannon
18		Horse-Cannon (Iron bolt C.)
19		Cannon (Smothered C.)
20		Chariot-Horse-Cannon

Nr		Tactics
1	**17.3**	fork by Pawn
2		fork by Horse
3		fork by Cannon
4		fork by Chariot
5		fork by Elephant
6		fork by Advisor
7		fork by King
8		pin by King, zugzwang
9		pin by King, undermining
10		pin by Chariot
11		pin by Chariot
12		pin by Cannon
13		pin by Cannon
14		pin by Horse
15		pin by Horse
16		skewer by Cannon
17		skewer by Cannon
18		skewer by Chariot
19		skewer by Chariot
20		skewer by Chariot

1	**17.2**	Pawn-King vs Advisor
2		Pawn-King vs Horse
3		Repatriation of the Buddha
4		Horse-King
5		Double Horse C.
6		Elbow-Horse C.
7		Cannon-Advisor
8		Double Cannon C., Chariot-Cannon C.
9		Horse-Cannon C.
10		Chariot C. ; FtFL C.
11		Double Chariot C.
12		Throat Cutting C. (FtFL C.)
13		Throat Cutting C.
14		Palcorner Horse C.
15		Elbow-Horse C.
16		Angler Horse C.
17		Double Cannon C. ; Smothered C.
18		Smothered C.
19		Iron Bolt C.
20		Sacrifice for Chariot-Horse-Cannon C.

1	**17.4**	discovered check by Cannon
2		discovered check by Cannon
3		discovered check by Chariot
4		discovered check by Chariot
5		discovered check by Horse
6		discovered check by Horse
7		discovered attack
8		discovered attack + zwischenzug
9		discovered attack + zwischenzug
10		discovered attack
11		discovered attack
12		trapping a Chariot
13		trapping a Chariot
14		trapping a Chariot
15		discovered check
16		skewer by Cannon
17		fork by Cannon
18		trapping a Cannon
19		overloading, deflection
20		overloading, undermining

18 Opening Principles

The opening principles in Xiangqi and Chess are similar. Strategic factors of the game are defined by both players during their first moves. This self-study section is composed like a self-test. Instead of calculation and pattern recognition, you practice a more general approach. The solution part includes a systematic explanation of the options.

Precondition: Opening principles, piece mobility, activity, tempo, piece value, control of riverbank; tactics, AXF notation, orientation on the board (left/right)

Learning target: Basics of often played openings, inclusion of abstract criteria into move selection (calculation is not everything).

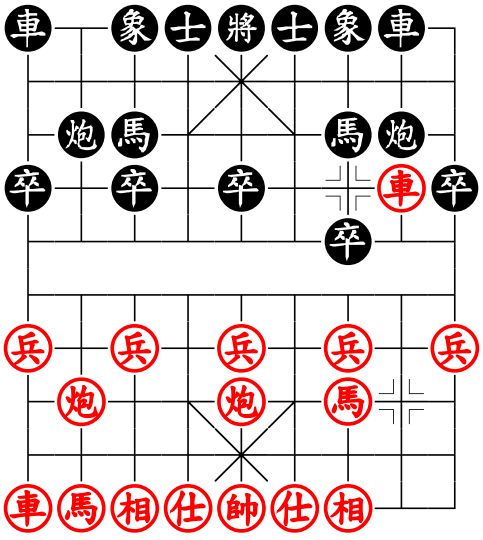
Exercise: Red/Black develops or extends his position.

Tasks: Find the proper move (Variation A, B or C). Questions and statements suggest correct and false thinking. Make up your own opinion!!!

Play the opening variations from Red's and Black's view on your Xiangqi board.

Search for the openings at “Xiangqi in English” (XiE).

ECCO, what is it and how openings are categorized there? Consult XiE!



1: 3 points

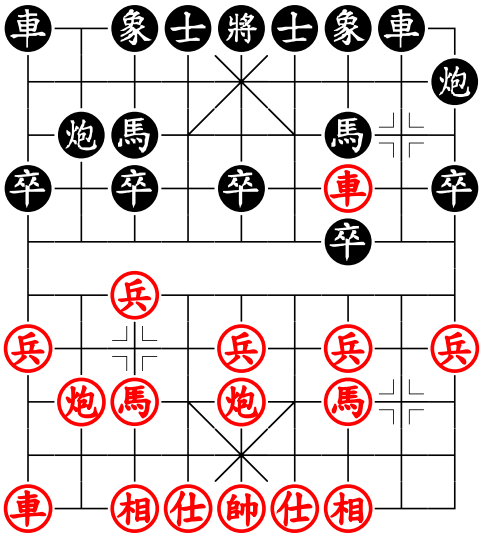
Screen Horses Defense 1 **ECCO Cxx**

1. C2=5 h8+7 **2.** H2+3 r9=8 **3.** R1=2 p7+1
4. R2+6 h2+3 **5.** ????

A: P7+1
Doesn't Red delay his piece development by moving a Pawn?

B: H8+9
Isn't a Horse at the edge a pain?

C: R2=3
How effective is Red's attack on the riverbank Pawn?



2: 3 points

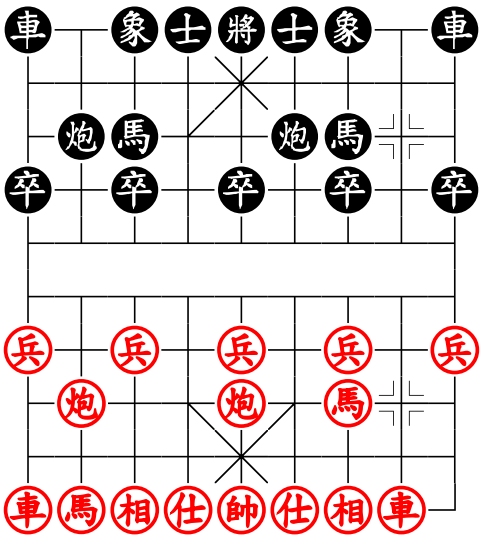
Screen Horses Defense 2 **ECCO C44**

Continuation of board 1:
5. P7+1 c8=9 **6.** R2=3 c9-1 **7.** H8+7 ????

A: h3-5
Can Black trap Red's Chariot (c9=7 next)?

B: a6+5
Why does Black care for safety on the central file? I don't know.

C: a4+5
It doesn't matter which Advisor moves up.



3: 3 points

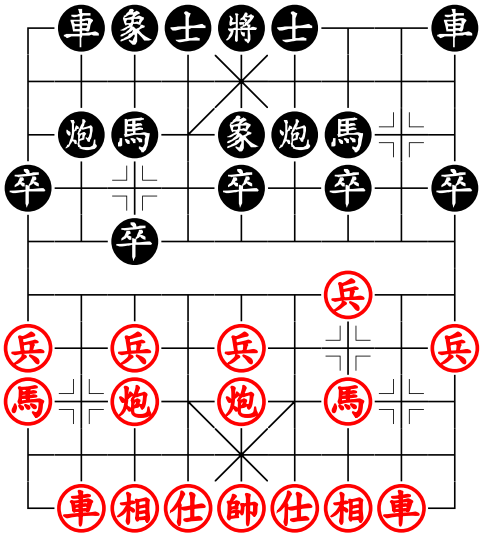
Sandwich Horses Defense 1 **ECCO B4x**

1. C2=5 h2+3 **2.** H2+3 c8=6 **3.** R1=2 h8+7
4. ????

A: R2+6
Red crosses the river with his Chariot like against the Screen Horses Defense. There is no difference.

B: H8+7
Horse development has priority now to equal Black's. Black's formation is a defensive one.

C: P3+1
Free the Horse and stay flexible.



4: 3 points

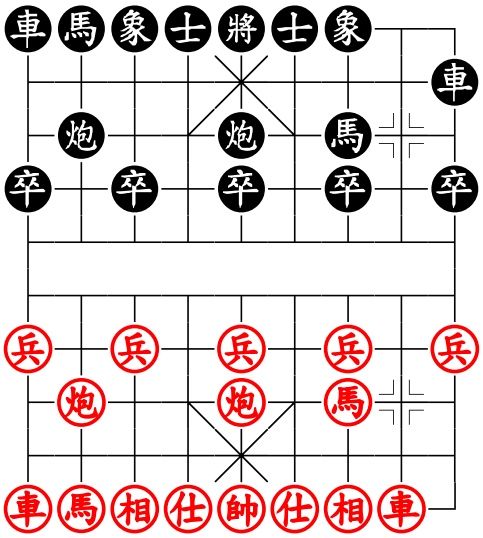
Sandwich Horses Defense 2 **ECCO B56**

Continuation of board 3:
4. P3+1 p3+1 **5.** H8+9 e7+5 **6.** C8=7 r1=2
7. R9=8 ????

A: a6+5
Defends the central file, roots the palcorner Cannon and clears way for the left Chariot.

B: c2+4
Forestalls H3+4 because of c2=5 and blocks Red's left Chariot.

C: r9=8
Black offers a Chariot exchange and frustrates red R2+6.



5: 3 points

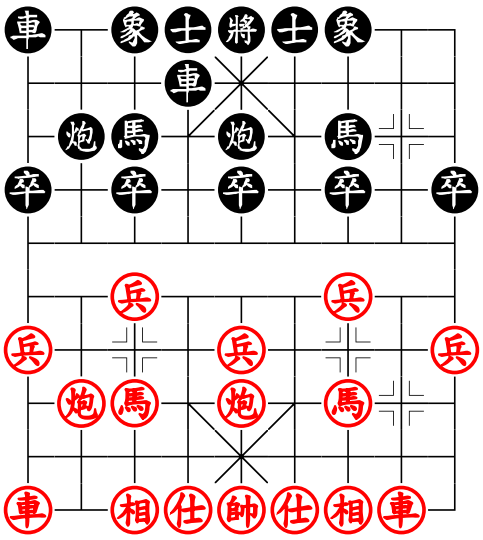
Same Direction Cannons 1 **ECCO D2x**

1. C2=5 c8=5 **2.** H2+3 h8+7 **3.** R1=2 r9+1
4. ????

A: C8=6
It is against opening principles to move the Cannon to a point where it can be attacked immediately with r9=4.

B: P9+1
Black plays unorthodox. Special measures have to be taken.

C: H8+7
That's much too normal piece development.



6: 3 points

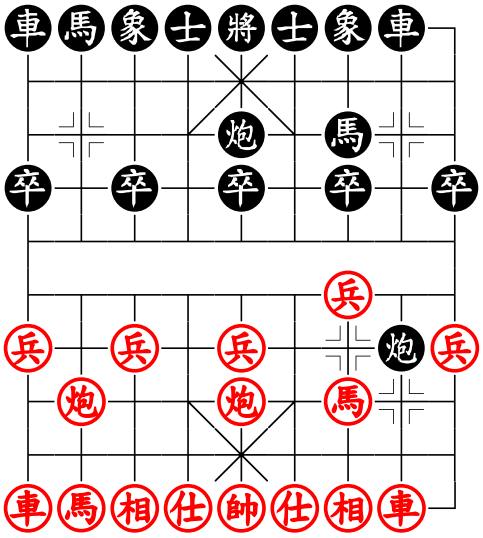
Same Direction Cannons 2 **ECCO D28**

Continuation of board 5:
4. H8+7 r9=4 **5.** P3+1 h2+3 **6.** P7+1 ????

A: r1+1
Black organizes resupply before crossing the river with his 4th file Chariot.

B: c2=1
The Cannon steps aside to move the right Chariot to the 2nd file.

C: a4+5
Before moving aggressively r4+5 the central file has to be defended.



7: 3 points

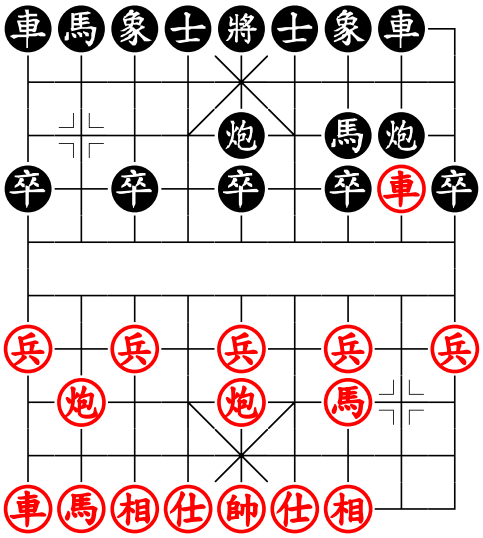
Opposite Direction Cannons 1 **ECCO D33**

1. C2=5 h8+7 **2.** H2+3 r9.8 **3.** R1=2 c8+4
4. P3+1 c2=5 **5.** ????

A: A6+5
Black has build a very aggressive formation. Red better plays a flexible defense and waits what Black has in store for him.

B: H8+7
In this situation protecting the central Pawn a second time is best.

C: C8+5
Attacking Black's left Horse with the Cannon will give him a headache.



8: 3 points

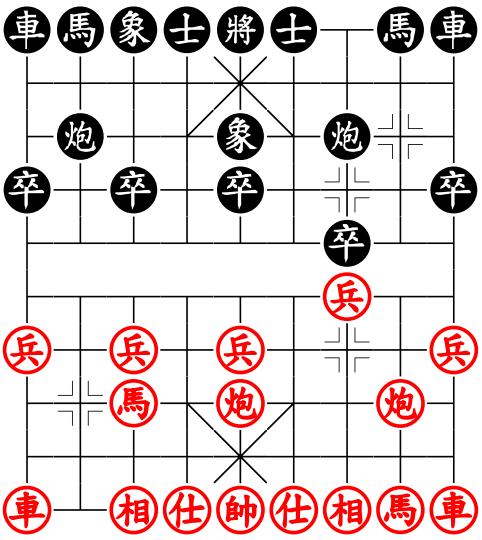
Opposite Direction Cannons 2 **ECCO D53**

1. C2=5 h8+7 **2.** H2+3 r9=8 **3.** R1=2 c2=5
4. R1+6 ????

A: h2+3
Black's right flank is underdeveloped. Red can not capture the Pawn anyhow.

B: c8=9
Black should ask Red what his plans with his Chariot are.

C: p7+1
The Pawn saves itself by moving up.



9: 3 points

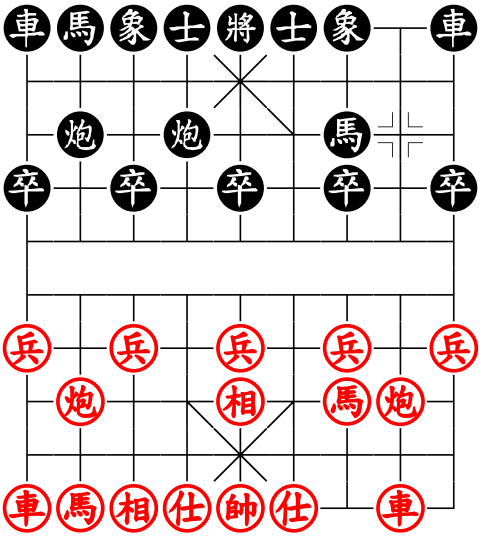
Angel's Pawn Opening **ECCO E3x**

1. P3+1 c8=7 **2.** C8=5 e7+5 **3.** H8+7 p7+1
4. ????

A: R9=8
Developing the Chariot is not urgent. Black's Cannon is rooted by the other.

B: P3+1
Before Black wins this Pawn for free Red should exchange the Pawn immediately.

C: H2+1
The Horse escapes the X-ray of Black's Cannon on the 3rd file and developes to the edge.



10: 3 points

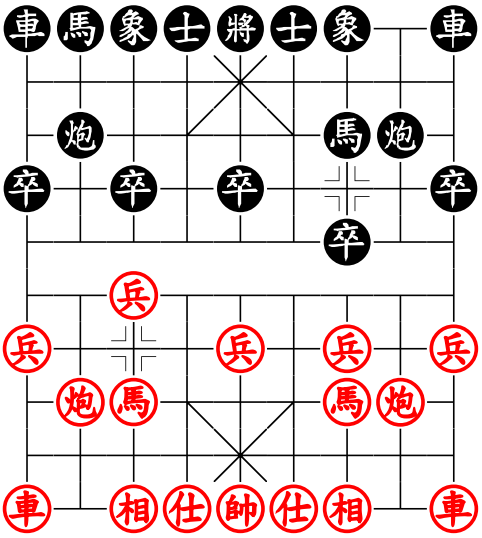
Elephant Opening **ECCO A3x**

1. E3+5 c8=4 **2.** H2+3 h8+7 **3.** R1=2 ????

A: p7+1
Open the door of the stables quickly where two Horses are opposite each other.

B: r9=8
Countering Red's Chariot before the red Cannon moves sideways is well advised.

C: h2+1
Black prepares the „Tiger“ to get at the elephant.



11: 3 points

Horse Opening **ECCO A4x**

1. H2+3 p7+1 **2.** P7+1 h8+7 **3.** H8+7 ????

A: h2+3
Black imitates Reds formation. That is never bad.

B: e3+5
Black keeps his right Horse at the bottom and prepares the option of h2+4. A solid way of playing.

C: r9+1
There is no target on the left flank for Black's left Chariot. Therefore it aims for the right flank.

Solutions (for better unequivocal reading Black's pieces are denoted by small characters) :
Each option A, B and C is commented in detail.

Nr.	Opening / Variations	Points
01	**Screen Horses Defense 1 ECCO Cxx**	
	A: P7+1 Red blocks further development of Black's right Horse by denying his 3rd Pawn to advance. The stable door for his own left Horse is opened to gallop to the riverbank later.	3
	B: H8+9 Compared to H8+7 Red keeps himself open the possibility to move his left Cannon to the 7th or 6th file. A slower approach to the game.	2
tempo	**C: R2=3** Granting Black a move. Normally Black needs three moves to get his Cannon behind the Horse: c9=8 c9-1 c9=7. Now Black can omit the 9th file and play c8-1 and c8=7 in only two moves. In case Red captures Black's riverbank Pawn his 3rd file will become vulnerable to attacks by Black's Cannon there. We rather make only poisoned presents to our opponents!	0
02	**Screen Horses Defense 2 ECCO C44**	
	A: h3-5 Red's Chariot is not trapped. It can move R3-1 c9=7 (or e3+5) R3=6. Or Red may move C8+4 threatening C8=5.	0
tempo	A developed Horse retreats to the centroid blocking both Advisors and the King. Normally a prestage to disaster if the Horse remains there.	
	B: a6+5 Black's left Chariot already developed to the 8th file controlling it. There is no plan to move it to the 6th file next to the King.	1
mobility	Different Black's right Chariot: It has not moved yet and would control the important 4th file when getting there. Wrong Advisor! Which Advisor or Elephant to play to the central file often creates a headache.	
	C: a4+5	3
safety	Black defends his palace against upcoming attack by Red along the central file in advance. Additionally his right bottom palace corner is free for the Chariot or King to move there. Continuation: a4+5 H7+6 c9=7 R3=4 r8+5 C8+2 e3+5 C5=6 p3+1 P3+1 r8-1 A complicated game where both sided have their chances. Note: In case Black moved a6+5 Red's Chariot would deny Black's King to step sideways.	
03	**Sandwich Horses Defense 1 ECCO B4x**	
	A: R2+6	1
tempo	Black will counter with r9=8. When Red exchanges Chariots with R2+3 he has gained nothing but reduced materials. Does Red capture the Pawn R2=3 r8+2 will follow. Black can become aggressive by moving c2-1 and c2=7 next. Different from the Screen Horses Defense Red is at the disadvantage. After sidestepping with R3=4 when attacked by c2=7 Black can h7+8 because his Cannon is rooted by the Chariot. Would Red continue with R4=3 in this situation he would lose a Horse after c6=7! Red has to look for a cheat with P5+1 immediately after r8+2.	

Nr.	Opening / Variations	Points
	B: H8+7	
material	Red has to know that he has to sacrifices two (!) pieces for an attack: **4.** H8+7 c6+5 **5.** C5+4 c6=2 **6.** C5-2 c2=7 **7.** R9=8 r1=2 **8.** R8+6 Red is one Cannon and one Horse down. He will get back one piece. If the remaining activity compensates for the sacrifices piece is dubious.	1
	C: P3+1 The mainline, continued in the next board. Also possible are C8=6 or H8+9.	3
04	**Sandwich Horses Defense 2 ECCO B56**	
	A: a6+5	0
riverbank space	Red continues R8+4 patrolling the riverbank and hence controlling the game having the space advantage, e.g.: … a6+5 R8+4 c6+2 R8=4 r9=6 P7+1	
	B: c2+4	3
mobility	Black has to block Red's Chariot from advancing to the riverbank to save his chances. A likely continuation is: … c2+4 P7+1 p3+1 P3+1 p7+1 R2+4 c2=3 (or p3=2) and both sides go at it.	
	C: r9=8	-1
tempo initiative	After the exchange r9=8 R8+9 h7-8 Black has retreated a Horse and lost the right to move. Two pains for the price of one. Red will use the move to advance his Horse H3+4 or his Chariot R8+4 to the riverbank.	
05	**Same Direction Cannons 1 ECCO D2x**	
	A: C8=6	2
tempo	Black can ask the Cannon what it aims at with r9=4 any time. But A4+5 is a solid reply. Nevertheless, being forced to make a pure defensive move C8=6 is not the most active way of play, eg: C8=6 r9=4 A4+5 h2+1 P9+1 r4+4 or C8=6 h2+3 H7+8 r1=2 R9=8 c2+4 C6+5 r9=7 R2+6 c2=5	
	B: P9+1	1
	Odd but not without a plan: Red opens the way for the development of his left Horse via the edge, the 7th file remains free for the Cannon: P9+1 r9=4 H8+9 h2+1 C8=7 r1=2 R9=8 r4+3 Black is satisfied.	
	We don't recommend this. To provoke your opponent to make a mistake you better keep things complicated for him.	3
	C: H8+7	
centralization	Since there is no tactical refutation the second Horse is developed properly to the center. The central Pawn is protected twice. One Horse is not bound to the duty of protection and can move freely. Cannons are now connected by the Horse as cannon mount. This variation is to be continued in the next board.	
06	**Same Direction Cannons 2 ECCO D28**	
	A: r1+1	3
backup resupply	Black backups his 4th file Chariot by driving his right Chariot to the throat rank freeing it from defensive duties there and becoming a resupply in times when the river is crossed with r4+5. Controlling the second rib file with r1=6 is possible later on: … r1+1 E3+1 r4+5 H3+4 r4=3 R9=7 p3+1 R2+5 c2+4 R2=7 r1=6 or … r1+1 E3+1 r4+5 A6+5 r4=3 R9=7 r1=6 a complicated game where both sides have chances.	

Nr.	Opening / Variations	Points
	B: c2=1	
space	Red can spoil Black's plan by blocking Black's 2nd file Chariot: … c2=1 R9=8 r1=2 C8+4 r4+6 R8+2 r4-3 R2+8	1
	C: a4+5	
tempo mobility	Additional defense on the central file is not required in this situation. A Cannon is already in front of the King keeping Red's Cannon under control. Chariots cannot maneuver freely on the throat rank if an Advisor is at the centroid.	0
07	**Opposite Direction Cannons 1 ECCO D33**	
	A: A6+5	0
development	The aggressive Black formation requires not to fall behind in development of major pieces. Moving the Advisor does not add to that.	
	B: H8+7	3
development safety	Stabilizing the central Pawn twice is often a good move in situations where the opponent has a central Cannon. The 8th file is cleared for the Chariot, Cannons are connected. One move aiming at three targets... Possible continuation: H8+7 h2+3 R9=8 p3+1 H3+4 r1+1 C8+4 r1=4 C8=7 e3+1 a full game where no side has the advantage.	
	C: C8+5	3
	Forcing the exchange of Black's central Cannon. For those who like clearly arranged positions: C8+5 h2+3 C8=5 e7+5 H3+4 r1=2 H8+9 r2+4 P3+1 c8=7 and Black is satisfied. ***Other commonly played variations are P7+1 and H3+4:*** ***X: P7+1***	
	P7+1 h2+3 H7+8 r1=2 R9=8 r2+4 C8=9 r2=8 R8+6 c8=7 R2=1	◀
	Y: H3+4	
	H3+4 h2+3 H4+6 r1=2 H8+7 r2+2 C8+4 r8+4 P3+1 p7+1 R9=8 *and you are in midst of a fist fight.*	◀
08	**Opposite Direction Cannons 2 ECCO D53**	
	A: h2+3	2
	Correct, Red does not gain much after eating the Pawn with R2=3, but it is possible: h2+3 R2=3 r1=2 C8=6 r2+8 R3+1 c8+2 R3-2 c5-1 and Black will gain Red's left Horse after c5=8 for material equalization. More common: h2+3 H8+7 c8=9 R2+3 h7-8 R9=8 r1+1 C8+8 p3+1 P3+1 h8+7 Red is slightly better.	
	B: c8=9	3
	Black wants to get rid of the pressing red Chariot and offers an exchange. Red now has the choice between Chariot exchange and Pawn capture: c8=9 R2+3 h7-8 H8+7 h2+3 R9=8 p3+1 P3+1 r1+1 C8+8 h8+7 Red is better, or c8=9 R2=3 r8+2 C8+2 r1+1 H8+7 p3+1 R9+1 r1=6 R9=6 c9-1 a game of fireworks.	
	C: p7+1	-2
	Losing tempo and a pawn by invitation of R2=3 h7-5 C5+4 Black's palace is clogged and pinned by Red's Cannon.	

Nr.	Opening / Variations	Points
09	**Angel's Pawn Opening** **ECCO E3x**	
	A: R9=8	3
	Red sacrifices his 3rd file Pawn for rapid development. He can recapture a central Pawn by C5+4 if necessary. Continuation: R9=8 p7+1 H2+1 r1+1 R1=2 r1=6 A4+5 r6+4 C5+4 a6+5 Black is behind in development, both Horses are still at their original positions. Red has a slight advantage, Black's formation is nevertheless stable due to connected Cannons.	
	B: P3+1	-3
	Simply losing a Chariot after c7+7 K5+1(A4+5) c7=9.	
	C: H2+1	3
	Just another move order leading to option 1 after p7+1 R9=8.	
10	**Elephant Opening** **ECCO A3x**	
	A: p7+1	3
	Flexible play forestalling red P3+1. Possible continuation: p7+1 P7+1 r9=8 H8+7 h2+1 R9+1 e3+5 R9=6 a4+5 C2+4 p3+1, if now P7+1 then c2=3. A complex situation is reached.	
	B: r9=8	3
	Black does not concede the file to Red: r9=8 C2+4 p7+1 C2=3 e3+5 R2+9 h7-8 H8+9 p1+1 R9+1 h2+1 Red might have a slight advantage.	
	C: h2+1	3
	Black is preparing the 3-step-tiger formation on his right. It is characterized by an edge Horse, a 3rd file Cannon and 2nd file controlling Chariot: h2+1 P3+1 c2=3 H8+9 r1=2 R9=8 r2+4 C8=7 r2=8 P9+1 p1+1 When Red offered the Chariot exchange Black's Chariot already had moved three times Red's only twice. In situations like this the exchange is often avoided not losing a move. Chances are about equal.	
11	**Horse Opening** **ECCO A4x**	
	A: h2+3	2
	Playing symmetrical Black is a move behind? h2+3 C2+4 h7+8 R1+1 e3+5 C2=7 r9+1 R1=4 r9=4 R4+3 a4+5 This position seems equal.	
	B: e3+5	2
	Preparation to reply h2+4 after H7+8, but: e3+5 C8=9 h2+3 R8=9 r1=2 R1+1 c8=9 C2+4 r9=8 C2=7 c2+5 Not clear.	
	C: r9+1	3
	Red's 7th file can be attacked by maneuvering the left Chariot there: r9+1 R1+1 r9=3 C8-1 c8=9 R9+2 e3+5 H7+6 h2+1 R9=4 r3=8 Black can be satisfied after C2=1 a4+5.	

Total points: 33 **Your points: _____**

Your rating:

33: Straight A – Are you an IGM in disguise?

30-32:.A – Excellent! Your understanding of Xiangqi is quite remarkable!

27-29: B – Well done! In different situations different opening principles may be more important.

22-26: C – Still good! Be aware of tactical blunders in equal positions!

<22: Maybe you repeat chapter 10 Openings?

19 Epilogue

Chess and Xiangqi are too good a game not to be shared with kids!

Some say Chess is like life, others compare life to Chess. Anyway: When you have learned Chess or Chinese Chess, you possess a treasure for lifetime. For many Chinese, Xiangqi is also a form of art, a philosophy.

Chinese Chess (象棋 – Xiangqi) at School

Motivation:

Chess is an ancient cultural property, which has spread throughout the world. Its large educational values are internationally known and recognized:
Chess as a mind-sport and strategy game cultivates mindfulness, concentration, perseverance, logical thinking, planning ahead and creative thinking; in general, the mental capabilities. It keeps mentally agile and has friends in every age group. Chess Sports meetings strengthen the self-confidence and increase the social skills.
Chess can contribute to personal development of children and young people. There are studies proving that student achievements in Chess correlate with those from other fields.

Chess study groups in school promote in particular:

- 帥 Social learning
  - 兵 action takes place in a non-homogeneous group (age, ability, ethnicity, gender)
  - 兵 brings children together, promotes friendships
  - 兵 tutoring system - stronger help weaker
  - 兵 team development; "School spirit"
- 仕 Emotional competence
  - 炮 dealing with victories and defeats
  - 炮 strengthening of self-confidence - find a sense of achievement
- 炮 Ability to concentrate
  - 兵 in chess lessons, children are working intensively and longer with a theme
  - 兵 improves spatial and systematic thinking
- 馬 Promotion of expression and communication
  - 炮 becomes apparent when analyzing and explaining
- 車 General education
  - 兵 chess history is cultural history
  - 兵 chess is international and peacemaking
  - 兵 wakes interest to people of other cultures and their cultural heritage

Not to be forgotten are the aspects:

- 將 Fun & enjoyment
  - 卒 competitive character
  - 卒 inclusion of modern technical media (Computer, Internet)
- 士 Democratic
  - 炮 no elite sport, costs little
- 象 Fascinating
  - 卒 easy to learn, never to learn quite
- 馬 Longevity
  - 炮 not to unlearn - "Gift for Life"
- 車 High-status
  - 卒 with parents highly regarded

Xiangqi, in addition, lets school kids meet with the culture of China and East Asia, a region of growing international importance, right from the start, as Xiangqi is extremely common and popular in China, as well as in Vietnam , Thailand and Indonesia.
Via Xiangqi, kids might find an easy introduction to the Chinese language, as the "figures" of the game are circular wooden discs with Chinese characters denoting the piece.
Special charm Xiangqi wins by unique figures such as the Cannon, which moves like a Rook, but captures by jumping over a piece.
For schools, Xiangqi is attractive since costs for Xiangqi sets are lower than that for International Chess sets. They can even be manufactured easily by the kids themselves.

It is a crime to let children watch TV or play computer games for hours and withhold Chess or Xiangqi from them. The age of kindergarten and elementary school kids is perfect to make the first playful steps in Chess. The number of mind sports courses at middle and high schools is increasing.

Ask the school manager of your child's school about mind sports education!
Look for a Xiangqi or Chess club in your area that has youth teams.

20 References

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D2. Xiangqi diagrams: Xiangqi Font
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Computer / Software
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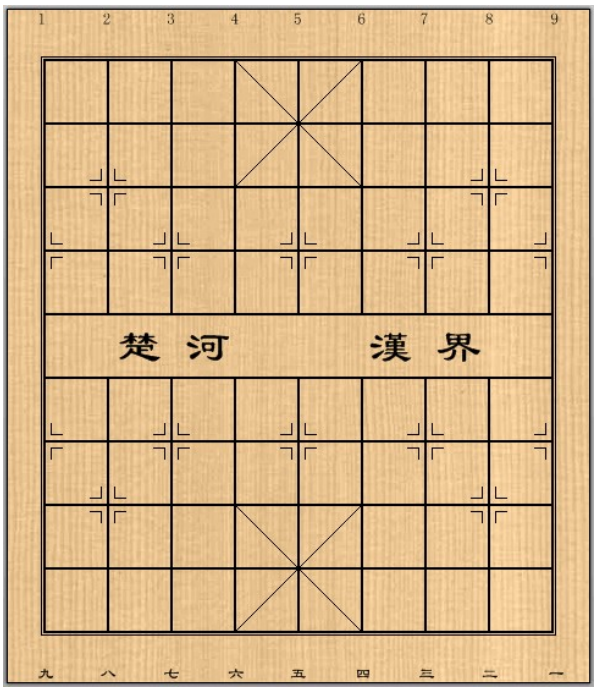
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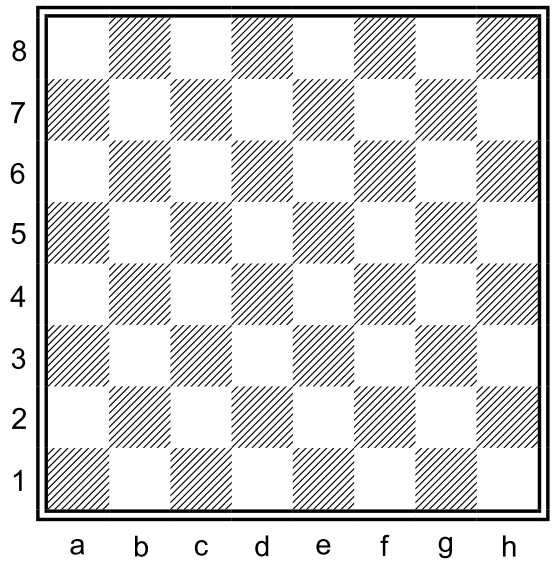


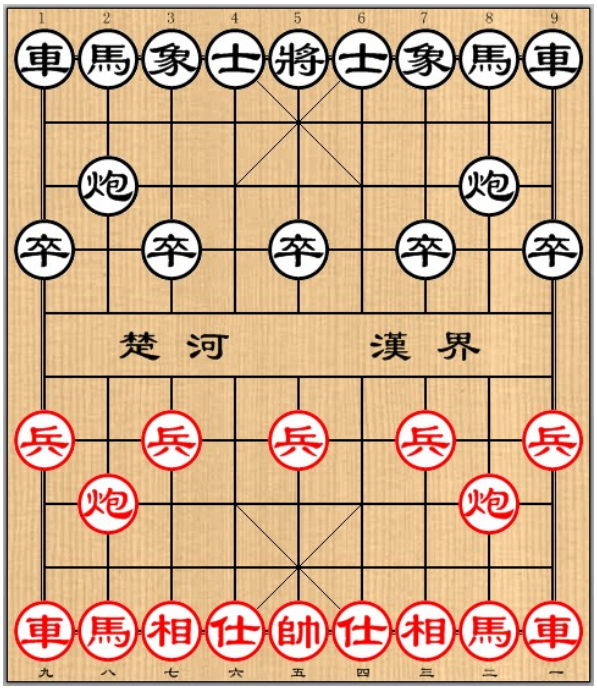
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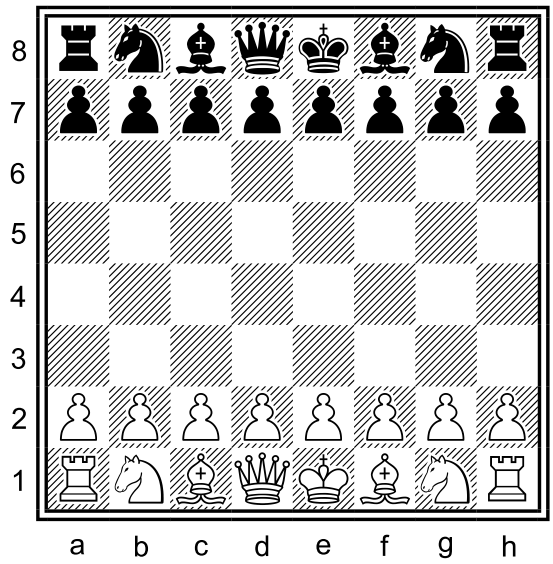
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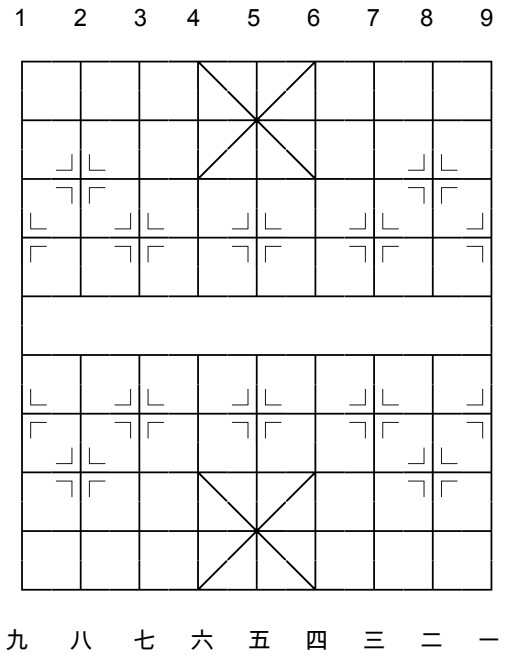


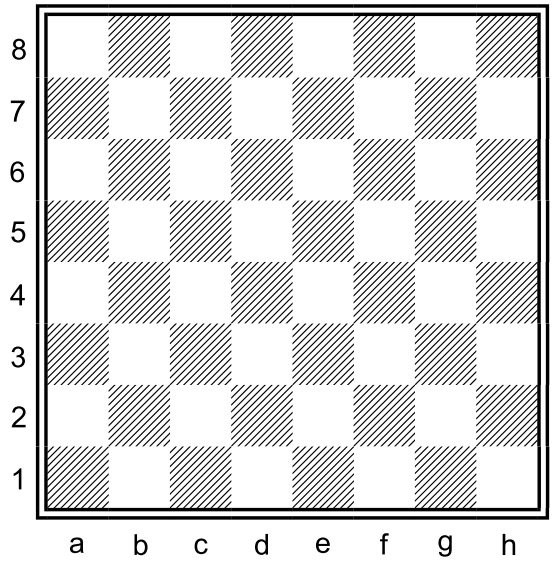


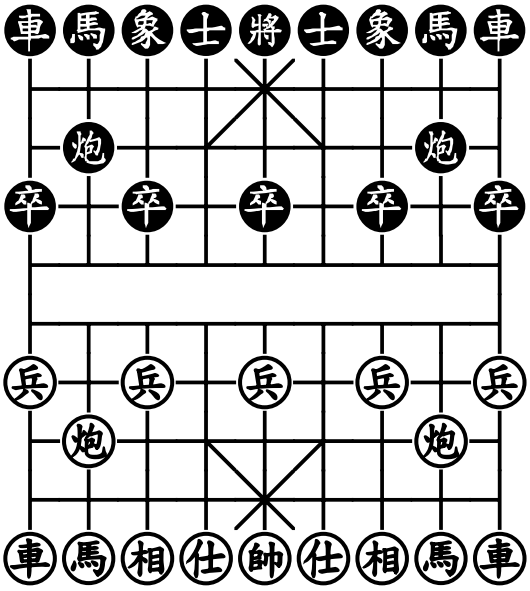


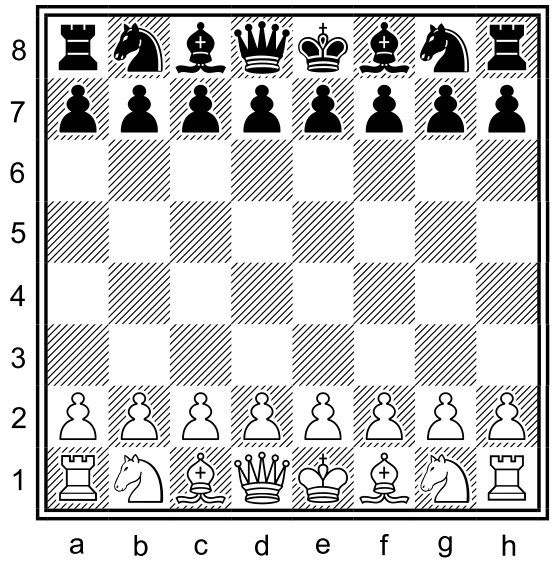
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