

# THE GAME OF WEI-CHI

Harry Fearnley

This book by Daniele Pecorini and Tong Shu was originally published in 1929 and was re-issued in 1991. At first sight it might seem to be of historical interest only, but I found more. The Game of Wei-Chi was the fourth book in English on the subject of Go, and was the first such from a Chinese viewpoint. Apart from Smith's 1908 *The Game of Go*, which can still be found, it is now the earliest book in English that is in print.

It has 155 pages, 28 full page figures, and no index. It contains a 5-page abstract (by Giles himself) of Horace Giles's 13-page 1877 article (the first in English on Go). It contains three full game (17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> Centuries) records, two of which are commented in detail, using modern style diagrams with numbered stones. It also has a handful of classical problems, and some special positions, including triple ko, and a double-headed dragon, but not chousei (eternal life).

The description of the rules and tactics is often opaque, but this is made up for by 20 pages of general information, including some delightful historical anecdotes. Some of the terminology, being Chinese, may be unfamiliar, e.g. knot=ko; flying=keima or knight's

move; mouth=kaketsugi or hanging connection.

For me there was one real gem! The rules that it describes are old-style Chinese rules: you get a point for every stone that you can safely leave in place on the board. Some people, of a mathematical bent, now call these Conway Go Rules. They have been criticised by Ing in articles (in *Go World*, and elsewhere) about his own 'Goe' Rules, as imposing a 2-point 'tax' on a live group. Personally I wish that we could go back to using this simpler, and more elegant, rule set.

For those who know Smith's *The Game of Go* (republished by Tuttle & Co.), most will probably prefer the explanations and game commentaries there. This is not surprising when one realises how much they owe to Korschelt's excellent 1880 work, which was translated, and republished (by Tuttle & Co.), as *The Theory and Practice of Go*.

## Availability

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