

Prelude to the Match

We can now move swiftly on to the Kamakura games themselves, but it will be useful to recap the background and mention how the event was set up.

Recall that newspaper go in the early Showa period (from 1926 on) was a patchy affair unlike today's forest of tournaments. The *Asahi Shinbun* sponsored the Oteai rating tournament while the *Yomiuri Shinbun* first sponsored the match between the Nihon Ki-in and the Kiseisha, and after that a ten-game match between Suzuki Tamejiro and Nozawa Chikuchō. The *Mainichi* stable sponsored the Young Players Win-and-Continue tournament and the *Nikkei* economic daily held a win-and-continue tournament for 1 and 2 dans. There wasn't a single title event. It was hard to say, objectively, who was the best player, and as yet Honinbo Shusai was still unchallenged. The main competition was among the newspapers rather than the players. Indeed the journalistic rivalry changed history. The new era of Emperor Hirohito in 1926 was meant to be called Kobun, proclaiming the era as one when Japan's literary achievements would shine out, but a newspaper thought it had a scoop and printed the news too early. The Palace therefore changed the name to the slightly misplaced Showa (clarity and harmony).

Players' reputations counted, of course, but perhaps not as much as the newspapers' gimmickry, though Go Seigen benefited on both counts. The *Jiji Shinpo*, in particular, had often published games by Go since he came to Japan and attracted attention to him. They sponsored his first ten-game match with Kitani in 1933. That was the year of crazes in Japan. First it was the year of the yoyo. Then there was a craze for collecting rubber stamps to show places visited. If there was a year appropriate to a craze for new openings it was this, and both Go and Kitani were centre-stage. They were a highly marketable commodity. Eventually the fans would want to see who really was number one—but not just yet.

Recall, too, that although Go had been allowed to come straight in as 3-dan, at that time Kitani 4-dan immediately became 5-dan so there was a difference of two grades. Even long after that, Go was always a step behind Kitani. He had exhibited unrivalled strength except against Kitani—against him Go even lost with Black. The first time Go played White against Kitani was as 4-dan in the Oteai of spring 1932, when he took

White in the middle of the B-W-B series appropriate for a one-grade difference.

It was not until Go finally reached 5-dan and caught up with Kitani that people began to talk of the period as the “Age of Kitani and Go Seigen”. Both players were already highly popular—of equal popularity it was once estimated, but because it was a time when dan differences in grade were strictly observed, the ranking was Honinbo Shusai, the Meijin, at the head, followed by the 7-dans Karigane Junichi, Hirose Heijiro, Suzuki Tamejiro, and Segoe Kensaku, then the 6-dans Kato Shin, Onoda Chiyotaro, Kubomatsu Katsukiyo, and Iwamoto Kaoru, so that Kitani and Go were still only like the komusubi juniors in sumo program rankings. Therefore the time was not yet right to decide, other than by the traditional system, who was number one. In fact, their first ten-game match was described merely as the battle of the komusubis. It was the Kamakura match that was to become the battle of the yokozunas, or grand champions.

This ranking system was so pernicious that it derailed the *Jiji Shinpo* match. It was suspended after five games because Kitani was promoted to 6-dan while it was proceeding. Although this seems absurd today, it also explains why a ten-game match was then taken so seriously. It was not a case of lose this time, try again next year, as today. Being beaten down to the next handicap became a permanent stain. It was permanent in the sense that it governed the subsequent games between those two players. A player could only get back to level pegging if he played another match, but he could only play another match if he was already on level terms!

At the same time, this very same serious aspect made a ten-game match a candidate, in the absence of proper tournaments, as a means of determining the top player. The drawback with that, of course, was that the two players could not just be plucked out of the air. Since there was no formal method of deciding who they should be, they had to earn their places by acclamation. We have to wait until 1939 before Kitani and Go earned that acclamation.

Once they reached that position, every newspaper wanted to be involved in deciding who was number one. The voracious press had already enjoyed a feeding frenzy in the spring of this same year, 1939, when one of the greatest upsets in sumo history occurred. The little known Akinoumi had ended the 69-bout winning streak of Futabayama, one of the greatest yokozunas

Game 3

THE ONE WITH AESOP'S FABLE

(W) GO SEIGEN 7-DAN (B) KITANI MINORU 7-DAN
 PLAYED ON 15 MARCH AND 8, 9 APRIL 1940
 AT ENGAKUJI TEMPLE, KAMAKURA
 HANDICAP: B-W, NO KOMI. 13 HOURS EACH.

The third venue was back in Kamakura, at the Engakuji temple, right outside the railway halt, Kamakura North, the station before Kamakura centre. It is a very leafy, intimate sort of place. The players liked it, especially the playing area in a tea-ceremony room.

The temple was a Zen institution founded in 1282. Like Kenchoji, it too had a Chinese monk as its first abbot. This was a period when many Chinese monks flocked to Japan in the wake of the fall of the Song dynasty in 1279. Unlike Kyoto, Kamakura gave them a special welcome.

Lafcadio Hearn was one famous visitor from the West in 1891—he especially liked the sound of the bell at Engakuji, though it is now very rarely rung. The famous historian of Japan, Sir George Sansom, lived in the Engakuji grounds for a while.

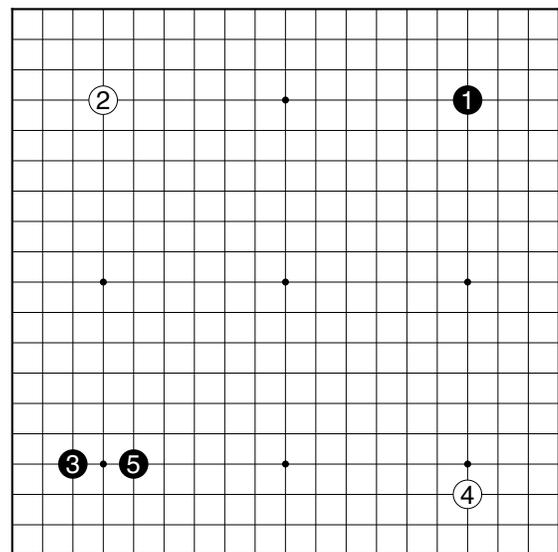
The Engakuji had hosted go games even before this. In his book of collected early games, *Seisei Shudan* (Steps on a Go Journey Westward), Ota Yuzo gives a game with Akaboshi Insei in 1820. Yuzo was only 13, but his opponent was just 10. It was obviously a special event. It is very rare in this book for Yuzo to mention the venue, and when he does it is always a special place such as a famous temple or a lord's mansion. However, he does not explain why this event itself was special. Probably it was the fact these two young prodigies were playing. Yuzo became famous as one of the Tenpo Four and through having the special dispensation of being allowed to play in Castle Games despite not shaving his head. Akaboshi Insei became Akaboshi Intetsu, who was Honinbo Jowa's victim in the famous "Blood-vomiting Game", and also author of the treasured book of go puzzles *Genran* (Glimpses of the Mysterious).

The game room was up some steep steps to the right of the main gate (now a cafe/shop is there) in a sunlit eight-mat Zen study room called the Kigen-in (Returning to the Source Temple). It was near the giant bell and also close to a templet called the Hut of the Sleeping Dragon. It was so bright that there was glare on the board and Kitani complained. The game recorder, Hagiwara Sachiko 1-dan pulled the southern storm shutter over

but that wasn't enough for Kitani so she had to close the eastern door. The room became very dark and the electric light was put on. Go gave a little grimace.



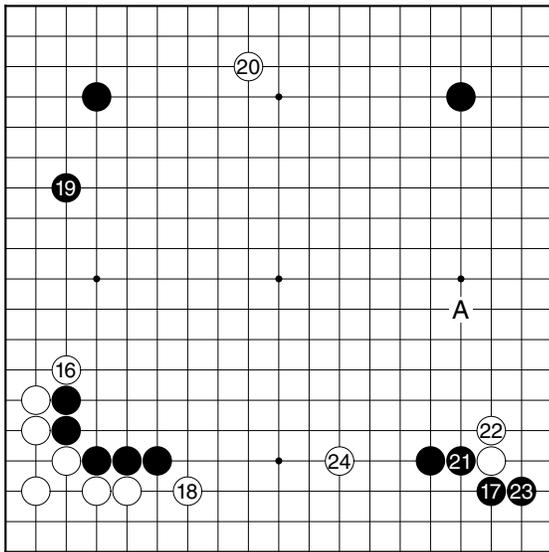
Prior to this game Go had beaten Kitani with Black in the Oteai. Did that give him a psychological edge? Probably not, because it was with different colours and Black was expected to win anyway.



1 - 5

There was a notion that it was correct to vary the openings in ten-game matches. We are into new territory here as early as move ④. This opening first appeared in this game, then apart from a brief outing in 1951, it disappeared until the 1970s, when it became and remained part of the normal arsenal. The change in popularity is almost certainly down to komi. Normally an opening with stones of the same colour in diagonally opposite corners is reckoned to lead easily to a fighting game, which Black would normally want to avoid in a no-komi game. Kitani is perhaps making a statement here.

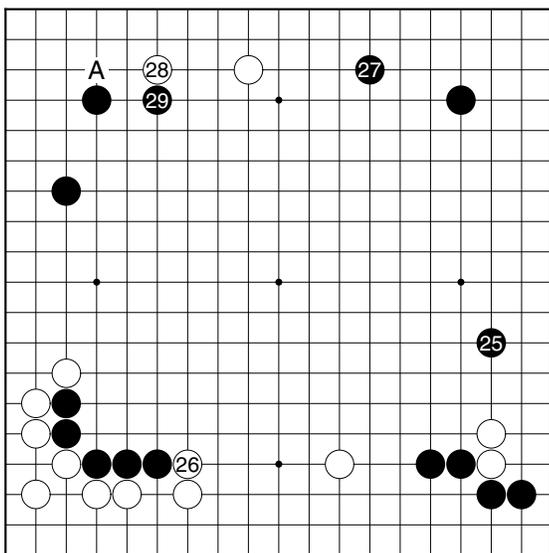
The modern approach for ⑤ is almost exclusively to attack the lower right corner. This allows White to contest the lower left corner, especially in no-komi play, as in Diagram 1 on the next page, though with current komis White usually tends instead to sit tight and play



16 – 24

⑱ is also typical of a Go-Kitani game: Go taking big points while Kitani inches along step by step. Ishida Yoshio agreed with Go's point that this does not mean Kitani was falling behind

However, Sakata Eio was not convinced. He wanted ⑳ to be played at A: "With ⑱ and ㉔ he is spending too many moves here and is surely falling behind in the game overall."



25 – 29

㉔ attacks slowly but steadily.

With ㉔, Black keeps on ignoring his lower left "bait" group (it is rather worm-like!) to take yet another big point.

The idea behind ㉔ is that, as White has a two-space extension, this will make him overconcentrated. Black can exploit fear of that result to create a thicker way of playing.

Simply blocking off the corner with A would be slack. That move would have been right if White's extension was three spaces wide. Black then has an aim at invading in the middle of it. What Black is hoping for is Diagram 4. White rejects this precisely because it leaves him overconcentrated.

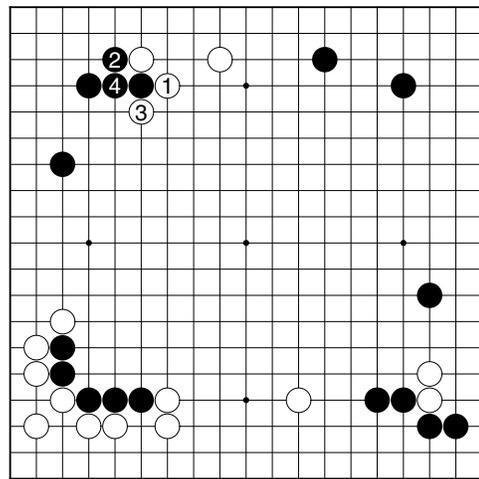
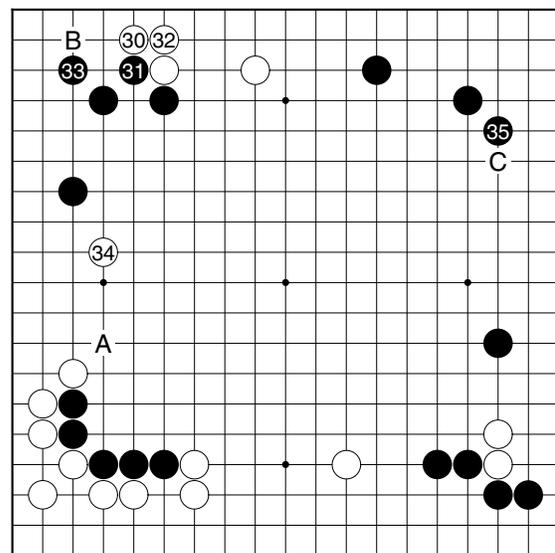


Diagram 4

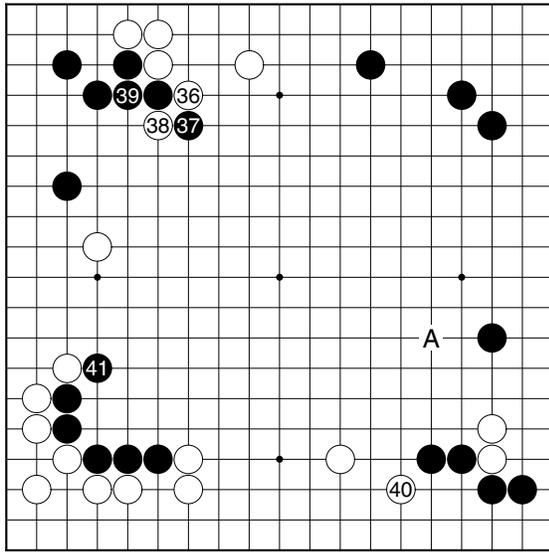


30 – 35

Apart from avoiding Black's plan, ⑳ is also designed to get sente—the moves to ㉓ are then standard. ㉓ is indeed the soundest move. Greedily trying to block off the corner with A would lead eventually to a White invasion in the corner, especially the attachment at B.

Sakata objected to ㉔, with which White is trying to expand his lower left framework. He would have played

at C. His argument was that White is definitely lagging behind once he allows Black to take solid territory and yet another big point with 35.



36 – 41

If White omits 36 before turning to 40, Black attacks severely as in Diagram 5, taking away White's eye shape.

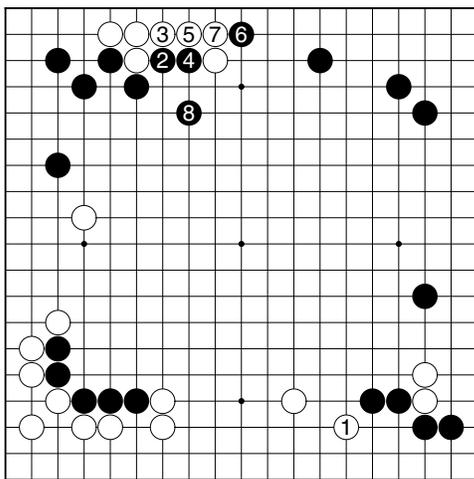


Diagram 5

The exchange of 36 for 37 does not solve all the problems but defers them and softens the impact of a Black attack here.

Sakata said 40 was too early since Black was never likely to reply, though Go said it was bigger than it looks. Also, it was part of the same package as 34. With these two moves Kitani was expanding his own sphere of influence while waiting to see how Black intended to deal with the right side.

Sakata preferred to make use of 34, now that it's there,

as in Diagram 6, to continue the work of making a powerful framework. In this diagram if 2 is at A, White obviously blocks at 2. If 2 wedges in at 4, White's plan will be to play at 2, 6, 3.

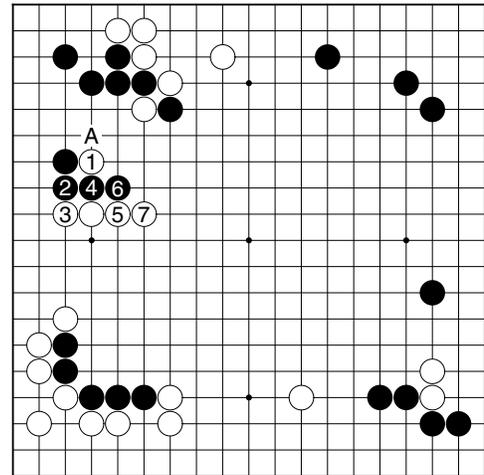


Diagram 6

There were other possibilities for 40. If it is at 41, the likely result is that Black will play at A so that there are frameworks facing each other left and right.

If White considers running away as in Diagram 7, Black will expand his framework smoothly with 2. This is not good for White.

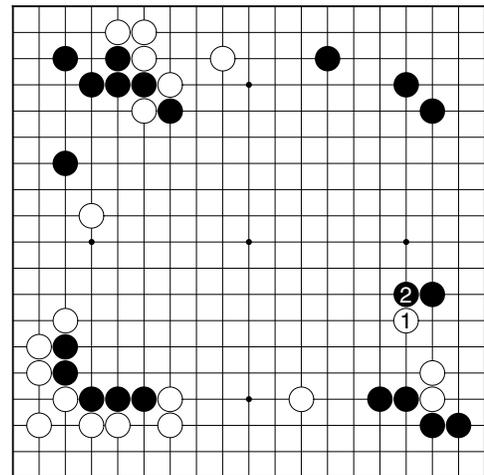
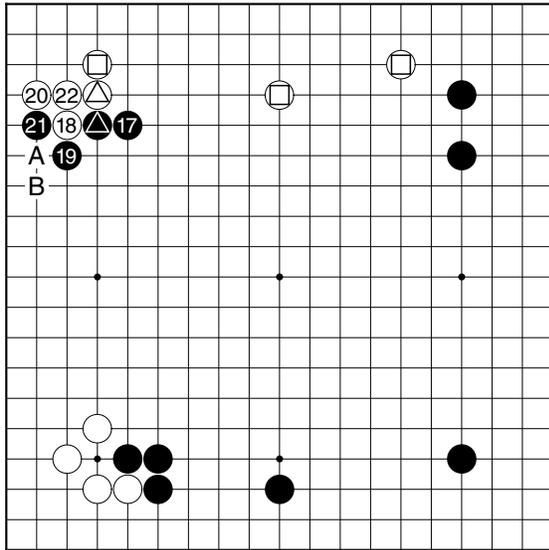


Diagram 7

41 was the sealed move on the first day.

Apart from rewriting fuseki theory and opening strategy, both Go and Kitani invented many new corner patterns, although in Go's case some of his most notable contributions were to come later.



17 – 22

17: extending up towards the centre rather than down as in Diagram 3 is usually considered better in this opening. 1 in this diagram would just help White create his framework. For that reason it becomes difficult for Black to push at A here in place of extension at 5, but that has a defect at B.

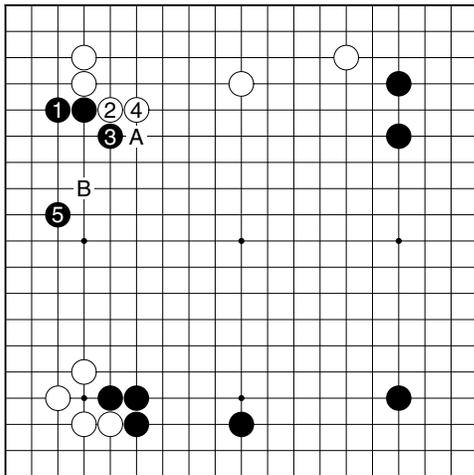


Diagram 3

20 was not at 1 in Diagram 4 as this does not compel a response from Black (although this is playable in some cases) and he will switch to the big point on the right.

Rather than the potentially eye-rich shape set up by 20, the straight descent is considered a little heavy. That matters as Black is likely to get some forcing moves against the corner on the upper side. Go will take cog-

nizance of that by treating the black stones lightly here as bait, as he did in Games 1 and 6.

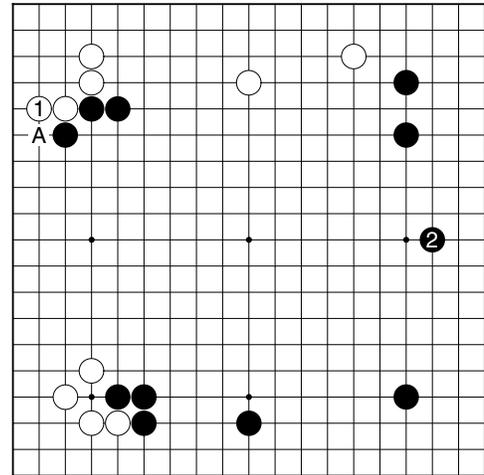


Diagram 4

Nevertheless, the descent in Diagram 4 was played by Kitani against Go in the 1st Nihon Saikyo in April 1957, as in Diagram 5. Go again treated his outside stones lightly there and you may wish to study that game for comparison.

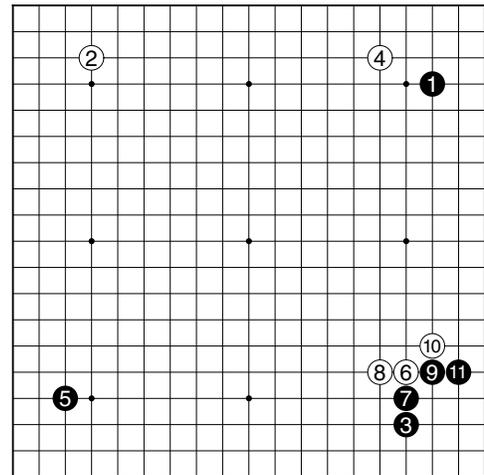
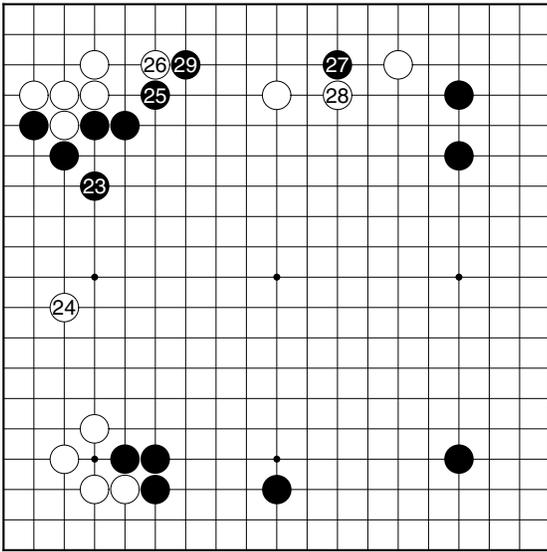


Diagram 5 (Go-Kitani, 1957)

21 is a standard technique to ensure that if White plays at A, a Black move at B can block his encroachment along the edge.

With 22 White has achieved his aim of securing territory in the corner.

Indeed, his innovative bumping move at 16 (△) may be said to have worked so well that it has become normal nowadays to meet the white shape at the top 4, 12, and 14 (the □ stones), with a low approach at 19 rather than 15 (△).



23 - 29

If Black omits 23, he will get caught up in a difficult fight, as in Diagram 6. In other shapes White can move out at A instead of 6, and naturally he always has the nice attack at B.

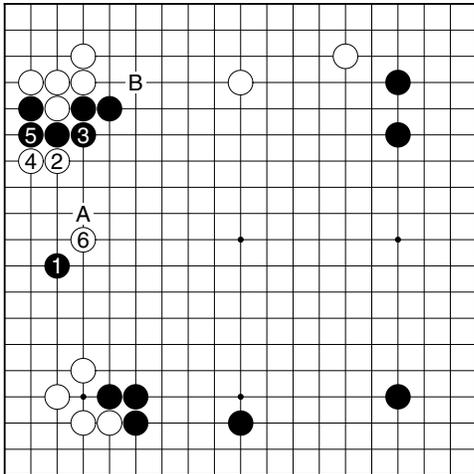


Diagram 6

If Black resists the other way in Diagram 6, White still has a strong attack as in Diagram 7.

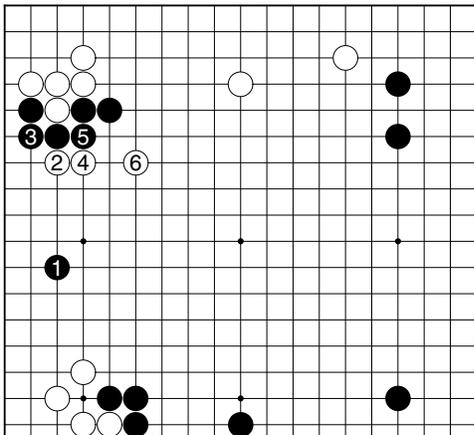


Diagram 7

The aji-creating exchange of 25 (the “only move” according to Ishida Yoshio) and 26 before the invasion at 27 is typical resourcefulness on Go’s part. Its purpose is to restrict White’s response when Black plays 29 next.

The reason 25 is important can be shown in the line of Diagram 8 offered by Kitani. As the five black stones attacked by 2 and 3 run away, the upper side will be strengthened in a natural way. Black needs to act there before it turns into solid territory.

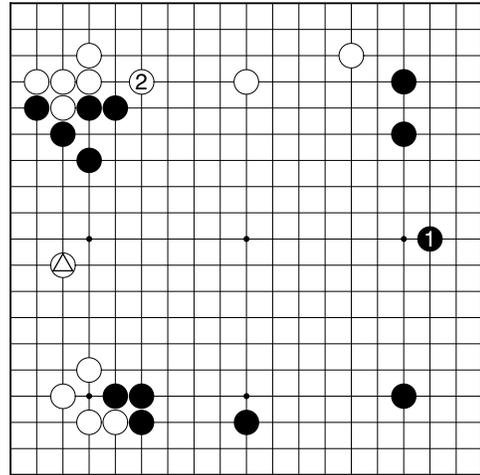


Diagram 8

The reason for 26 is shown in Diagram 9. 2 is an excellent forcing move. White can live with 3 and 5 but this is submissive. The straddling move at A looks like a tesuji for him, but Black can safely play B. White could ignore 2, but then Black will connect at 3, forcing White C. That leaves a potential carpenter’s square ko shape in the corner that becomes a reality once Black plays D, and D of course makes an invasion at E a piece of cake for Black.

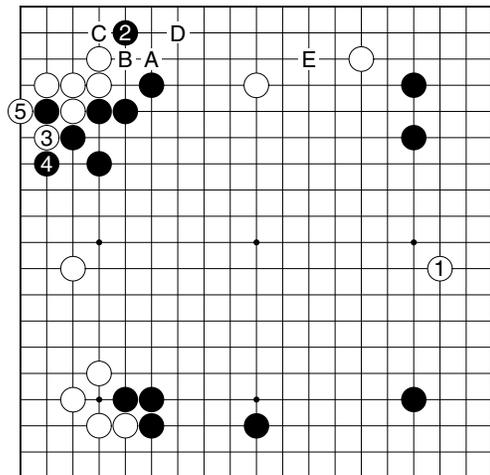


Diagram 9