

Seeking Balance in Harmony

Gu Li on the Three Star Opening (Sanrensei)

by Jiang Zhujiu (Jujo) 9P

from *Weiqi World*, December 15, 2005

translated by Dave Wong

There are many popular openings in today's go world. Gu Li likes to use openings that have been popular in the past that aren't used that often today. After some examination, he selected the three star opening, which matches his style.

A Modern Three Star Opening

Gu Li's version of the three star opening is different from that of the famous Japanese player Takemiya's "Cosmic Style". Takemiya uses the three stars to create a moyo-type opening, whereas Gu Li's style pays attention to both thickness and territory, creating a balance in harmony.

It is characteristic of Gu Li's opening that when, in the Basic Diagram, White plays Z, Gu Li as Black plays W. A classic player would play W as in Diagram 1, which shows a classic continuation.

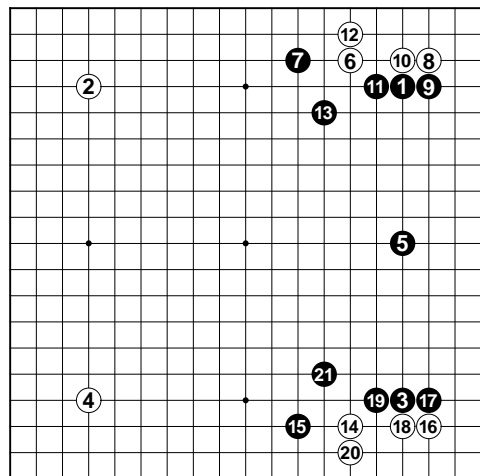
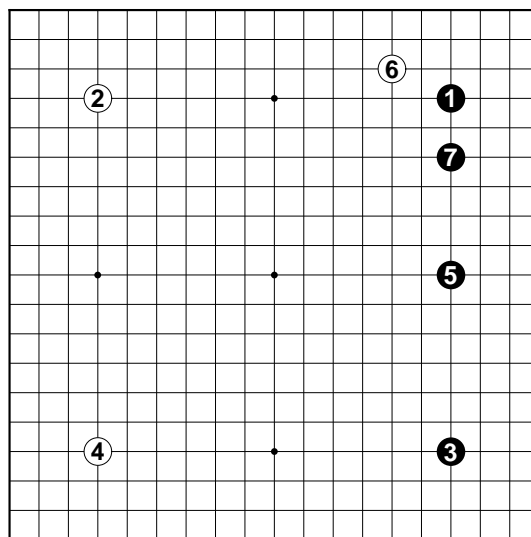


Diagram 1

Diagram 2: White may try to break away from the Cosmic Style development in Diagram 1 with Z. However, Black's response with X and following continues the Cosmic Style.



Basic Diagram

Diagram 1: The Classic Style

The aim in this style is to create a huge moyo. The pattern in the upper right is typical, as is the pattern in the lower right.

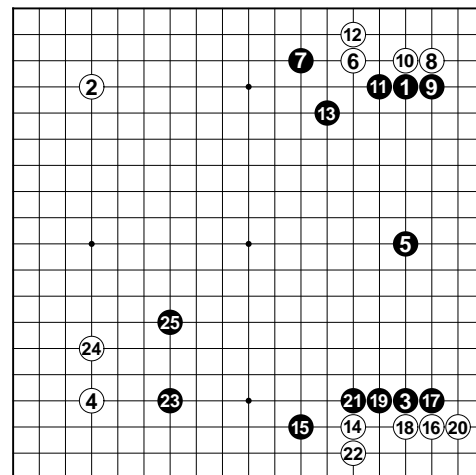


Diagram 2

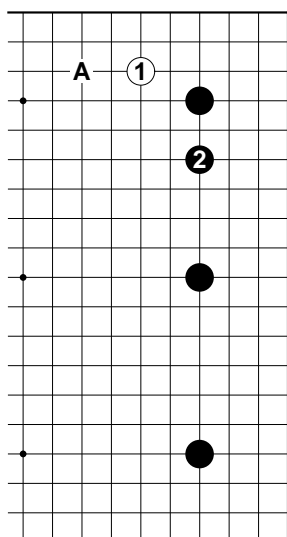


Diagram 3

Diagram 3: Gu Li's Style

The reason Gu Li plays w2nstead of A as in the Classic Style is that people nowadays will make a double approach as in Diagram 4. Very few people today would play A because of this.

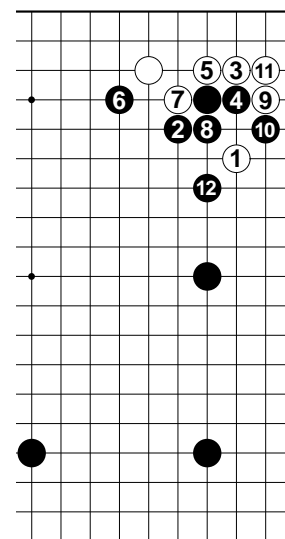


Diagram 4

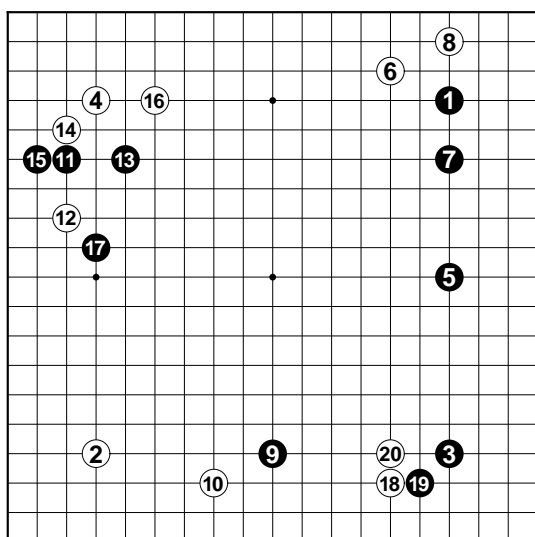


Diagram 5

Diagram 4: This is the way Takemiya would respond to Z! but Gu Li does not like this pattern.

Diagram 5: This is the game from the third round of the 4th CSK Cup between Gu Li and Lee Sedol 9P of Korea on May 3, 2005. × and ○ show how Gu Li uses the three star opening to make territory, emphasizing development on the right side.

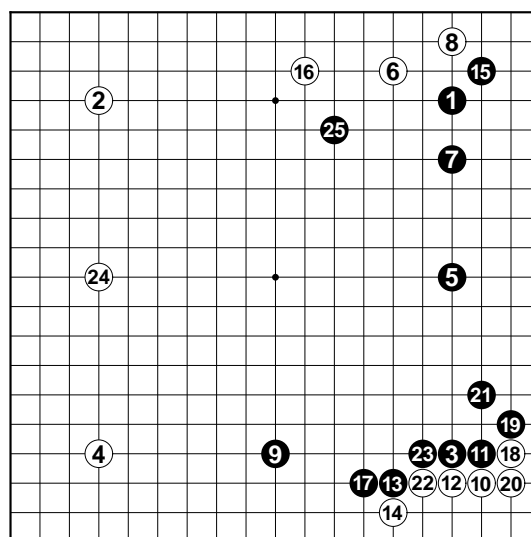


Diagram 6

Diagram 6: Taken from June 4, 2005, Gu Li in the 18th Fujitsu Cup against Song Taekon 7P of Korea. This is Gu Li's version of the Cosmic Style, making a large moyo, but he still begins with $w7$

Study Diagram 1: w2s the book response to Z ! However, Gu Li likes to play w2s in Diagram 1 below.

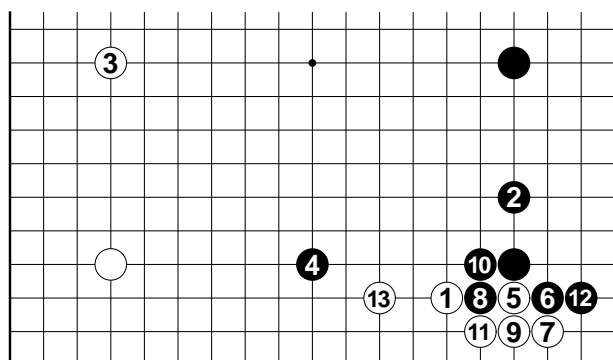
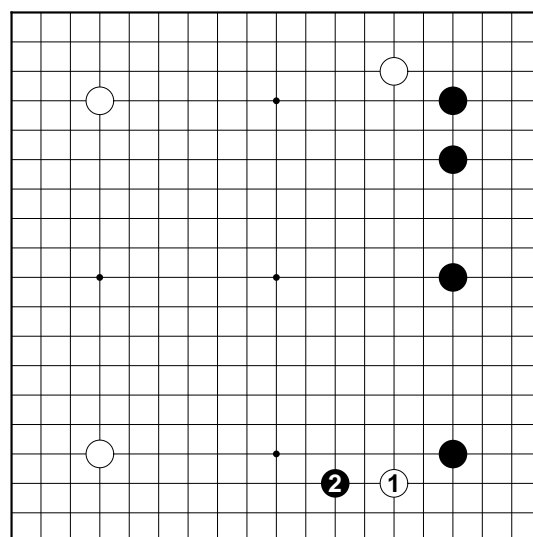


Diagram 1



Study Diagram 1

Diagram 1: This is one pattern Gu Li would play instead of the classic style. Emphasis is on the right side territory. With Z #White makes a three star formation on the left. w4 takes another star point. White settles his group up to Z A Before we can say who is better, we must consider whether the black stones are over-concentrated.

Diagram 2: When White approaches with Z ! and Black pincers at w2 there is a lot of danger for Black in this situation. White goes to the 3-3 and up to x at looks like Black may turn the right side into territory. However, there are two weak points, A and B, that White can exploit. Diagram 3 shows one possibility.

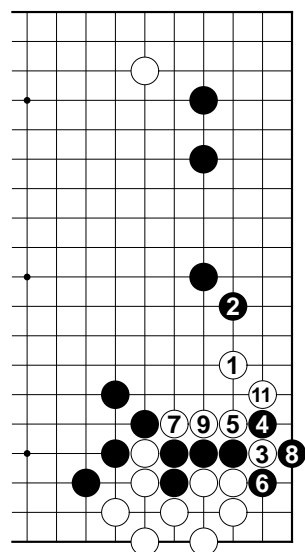


Diagram 3 (x at Z #

Diagram 3: Up to Z A there is a big fight, but Black doesn't have enough liberties. White breaks into the right side and captures several black stones.

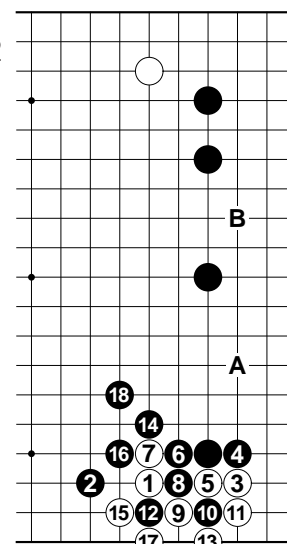


Diagram 2

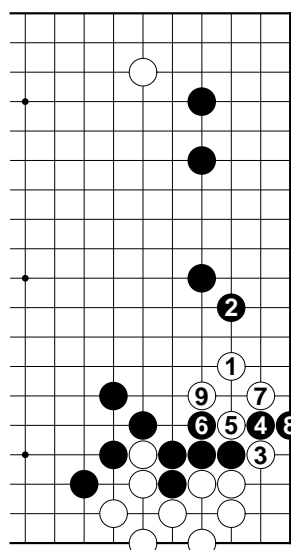


Diagram 4

Diagram 4: This is a variation on Diagram 3, with a different black response with w6 This becomes a ko fight that is very heavy for Black.

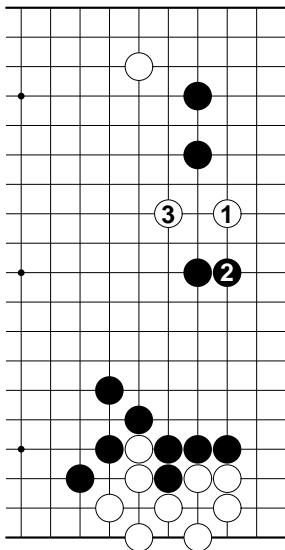


Diagram 5

Diagram 5: This is the other weakness. Black cannot capture Z ! and Z #and it is painful.

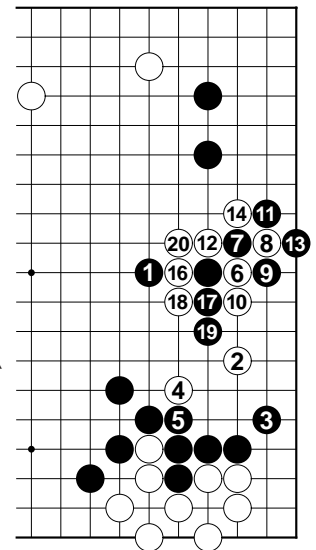


Diagram 6

Diagram 6: How can Black prevent these white invasions? This w1s one possibility, but White can still invade. The peep at Z \$s a good move. Z ^ attaches and Z #hanes under, a tesuji. In the end Black has difficulty capturing White's stones. So this doesn't work.

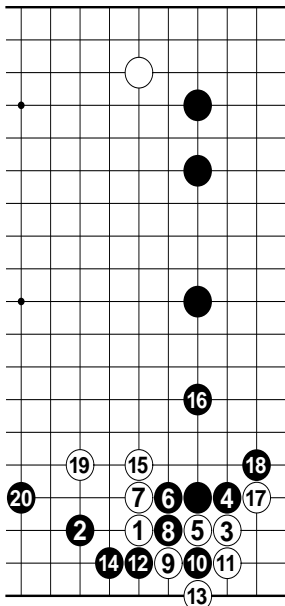


Diagram 7

Diagram 7: Here Black plays differently from Diagram 2 on the previous page. This pattern has been discussed before; it is not an invention of Gu Li. This stops the invasion at A in Diagram 2 and creates a weak white group to attack. Black needs to know this pattern when he pincers after Z ! This is Gu Li's favorite plan. The sanrensei is good for people with strong fighting skills. You can see this in Gu Li's use of this response to White's invasion at the 3-3 after the pincer.

Diagram 8: Taken from the CSK first round game on May 1, 2005 by Gu Li against Yoda Norimoto 9P from Japan. This is a little different from Diagram 7. Yoda did not hane with Z #and Gu Li made a two space jump with x # instead of a knight's move. White is again being chased. This is how Gu Li uses the three star formation.

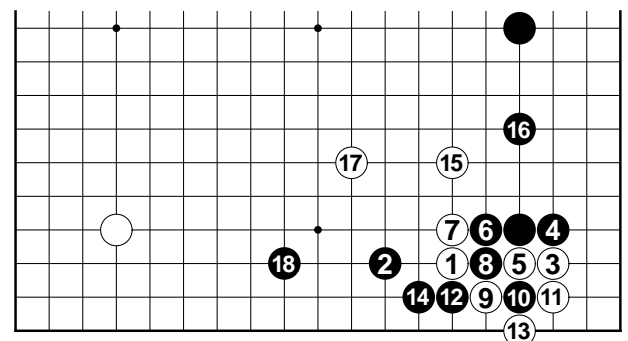
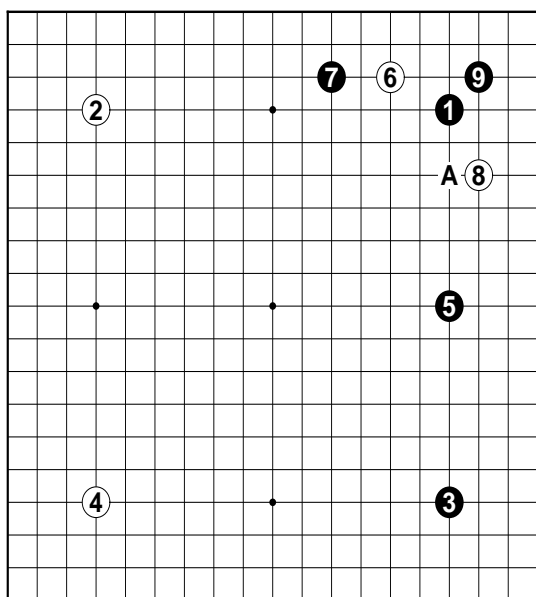


Diagram 8



Study Diagram 2

Study Diagram 2: ∇ is not usually played because of the possibility of the double approach. If White uses a double approach after the pincer of ∇ , Diagram 1 shows the normal response, but this is good for White; ∇ is awkwardly placed. ∇ in Diagram 2 is also awkwardly placed. However, Gu Li will sometimes play ∇ in Basic Diagram 2. So what is he thinking? We have discussed what happens if White goes into the 3-3 point. Now we will see how the double approach works out.

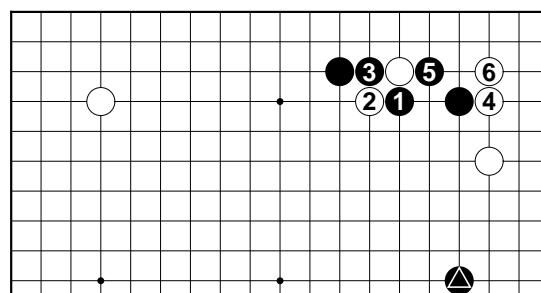


Diagram 1

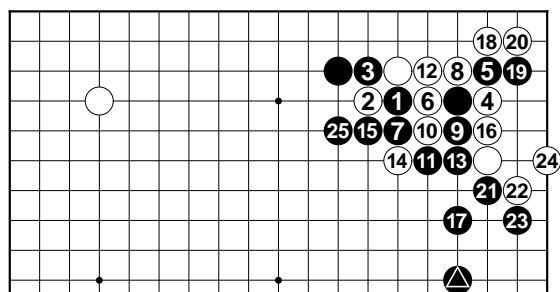


Diagram 2

Diagram 2: If the play goes this way, ∇ is too close and again in an awkward position. So this pattern does not work for Black.

Diagram 3: This is a game of Gu Li's against Zhou Junxun 9P in the semifinals of a special Internet tournament. In this case ∇ and \times are well positioned. ∇ is forced very low.

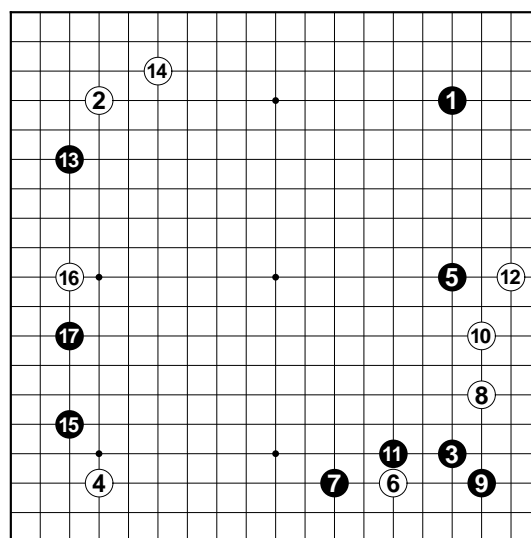


Diagram 3

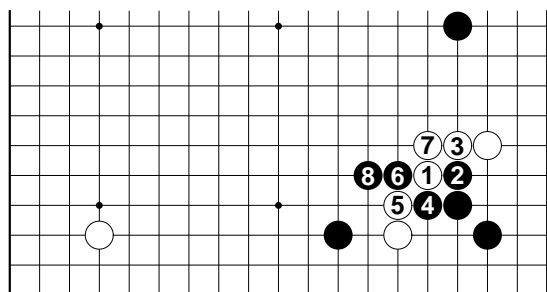


Diagram 4

Diagram 4: If White doesn't play ∇ in Diagram 3, he can instead close Black in the corner. However, this doesn't work well for White, who is in a painful situation.

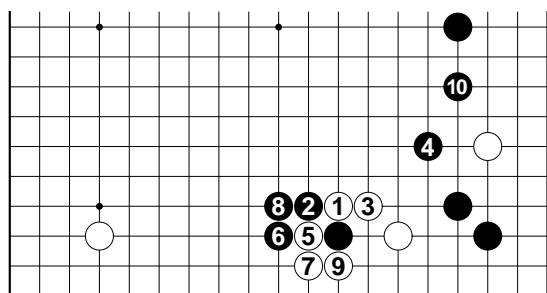


Diagram 5

Diagram 5: If White tries to get out at the bottom, the white stone on the right gets captured. So we see that Z And Z An Diagram 3 on the previous page are necessary. Gu Li's strategy in Basic Diagram 2 makes sense.

Diagram 6: Gu Li Playing the Four Star Opening as White

This is Gu Li playing White against Lee Changho 9P on April 18, 2004 in the 18th Fujitsu. Z As Gu Li's usual response. The four star formation is rare.

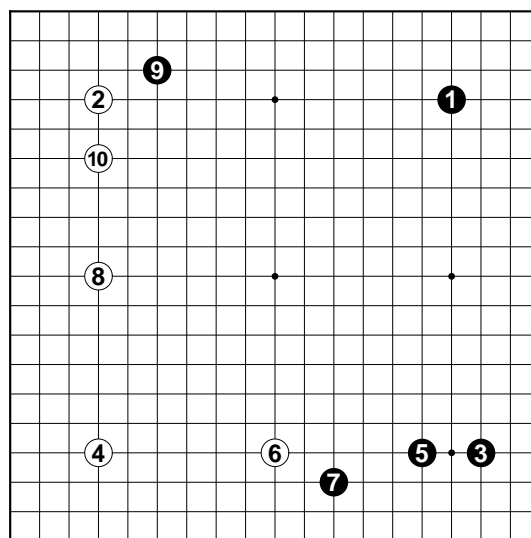


Diagram 6