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# PLAY IT AGAIN

ASIAN GAMES AND PASTIMES

EXHIBITION AND SALE

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*In bamboo shadows with ivory pieces  
is a liubo game. Alas!  
Sides taken, move matching move,  
Unyielding, and pressing forward!  
Chuci ca 300 BCE*

# THE CHINESE GAME TABLE

*by*  
*Curtis Evarts*

AS THE CURATOR OF CLASSICAL CHINESE FURNITURE  
1990-1996 CURTIS EVARTS WAS INTIMATELY INVOLVED  
WITH THE FORMATION OF ONE OF THE WORLD'S  
GREATEST CHINESE HARDWOOD FURNITURE  
COLLECTIONS.

AS CONTRIBUTING EDITOR TO THE JOURNAL OF THE  
CLASSICAL FURNITURE SOCIETY 1990-1994, HIS  
RESEARCH PROBED MANY TECHNICAL AREAS OF  
CHINESE FURNITURE.

NOW RESIDING IN SHANGHAI, HIS INDEPENDENT  
RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS SINCE HAVE  
CONTINUED TO PROVIDE A CONSISTENT SOURCE OF  
NOURISHMENT FOR THE FIELD.

Old men huddled around sidewalk chess matches and the invisible clatter of mahjong tiles are familiar impressions throughout China; local teahouses serve as card parlors and casinos worldwide are favorite tourist destinations. The modern Chinese fascination with games of risk and strategy survives an ancient tradition rich with stories, legends, and relics. Amongst the latter is the game table.

Board games have been played throughout Chinese history and across lines of gender and rank. A specialized game table was not required, and matches were in large part played without them. Most often, game trays of lacquered wood or fine hardwood were set out on standard tables or sitting platforms. Board patterns were also woven into carpets or incised upon fragments of architectural stone; sometimes they were simply sketched on paper or merely scratched into the ground. The game table, however, was a more sophisticated response.

The game table appears throughout history in forms corresponding to the evolution of furniture. The earliest examples relate to the low tables of the ancient mat-level culture. A period of transition follows the Han dynasties (202 BCE-220 CE) when, with the influx of Indian Buddhism and exchange of cultural ideas across the Silk Route, the use of high tables gradually emerged. By the Song dynasties (960-1279), the full-height game table was of form, and by the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1912) dynasties, the multiple-use game table appears as a standardized category. Today, stylishly modern game tables as well as traditional reproductions are



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

produced. The following article will explore the unique marriage of gaming and furniture-making traditions that has existed for the last twenty-five hundred years.

### Liubo

The earliest game tables are associated with *liubo* and *saixi*, two board games that were widely popular during the Warring States period (402-331 BCE) and Han dynasties. Both employed a game board of similar pattern; however, *liubo* was played with dice and sticks, while *saixi* was only played with game pieces. The board design, which was also commonly incorporated as a decorative element of Han dynasty mirrors, is termed a 'TLV' pattern by Western scholars. The compass-like board pattern has been speculated to have been of cosmological significance and related to the practice of divination. However, the early written evidence and the frequent appearance of tables and game-playing figurines amongst *mingqi* works<sup>1</sup> suggest little more than popular entertainment.

Several *liubo* tables have been excavated from

Chu Kingdom tombs dated to the 5th century BCE (cf. Fig. 1). These low tables exhibit the elegant design and rich artistic expression that is typical of the sophisticated Chu culture. It was perhaps for tripod-like stability that the rectangular tabletops are otherwise curiously fit with three legs, which are also securely attached with long tenons that extend through the tabletop. The curved legs on two of these tables exhibit an early cabriole style resembling the hind legs of an animal, for which a precedent style is evident in Egyptian furniture dated to the 12th century BCE (Fig. 2). A concealed receptacle is neatly fitted at the center of the tabletop for storage of the game pieces.

*Liubo* tables surviving from the Han dynasty, including those of lacquered wood and carved stone, are of lower proportion than the Chu pieces and have four short feet. The puddingstone table illustrated in *Games People Play* is of typical Han style with bone inlays delineating the TLV patterns and central 'water' pool.<sup>2</sup> Lacquer tables excavated from Western Han tombs exhibit further developed complexity with removable tops, concealed compart-

Fig. 1 *Liubo* game table. Mid-Warring States period. Found in tomb 314 at Yutaishan, Jiangling, Hubei. Lacquered wood. 39 x 33 x 24 cm H. Jiangzhou Museum.

Fig. 2 Chair leg. Egyptian, New Kingdom, c. 1250 BCE. Wood. British Museum.

Fig. 3 *Liubo* game table. Western Han Dynasty (c. 168 BCE). Excavated from tomb 3 at Mawangdui, Changsha, Hunan. Lacquered wood. 41.5 x 41.5 cm square. Hunan Provincial Museum.



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

ments, and drawers<sup>3</sup> (cf. Fig. 3). Thus, these early Han and Chu Kingdom examples not only demonstrate precedence for the game table, but also for the sophisticated compartmentalization that appears in later works.

These games gradually disappeared following the breakup of the Han dynasty. The penchant for gaming, however, merely shifted to *weiqi* and the new foreign games which migrated from Central Asia throughout the following centuries.

### Weiqi

*Weiqi* is the oldest surviving board game in China (if not in the world), and one that still enjoys wide popularity throughout Asia. The game is played on a square board with a criss-cross pattern of nineteen parallel lines, the intersecting points of which contestants place their respective black and white *weiqi* chips. Using war-like strategy, opponents attempt to occupy as much territory as possible while avoiding becoming surrounded. The game has long been regarded beneficial in promoting concentration and visualization. For this reason, *weiqi* is also associated with *literati* culture.

While the origin of *weiqi* bears legendary association with Emperor Yao of pre-dynastic times, exceedingly few early relics have survived. A stone table excavated from an Eastern Han dynasty (23 CE-220 CE) tomb may be the earliest dateable example. The incised tabletop bears a seventeen-line criss-cross pattern that corresponds precisely to a description found in a treatise on art and games

written during the Three Kingdoms period (221-265 CE).<sup>4</sup> Board pattern aside, the general style and form of this *weiqi* table is similar to the Han period *liubo* tables.

A miniature *weiqi* table excavated from a Sui dynasty (d. 631 CE) tomb survives as the earliest example of the standard, modern nineteen-line board.<sup>5</sup> This ceramic model, which was fashioned with *kunmen* openings and base stretcher, also exhibits precedent form for the classical Tang-style platform-table, and to which numerous *weiqi* and double-sixes tables belong.

*Weiqi* and double-sixes, the latter of which will be discussed below, were both very popular throughout the high culture of the Tang dynasty. A lady of an aristocratic family is illustrated playing *weiqi* in a silk painting excavated from a Tang period (618-907) tomb at Astana, near Turfan, Xinjiang (Fig. 4). It may well be that the deceased tomb occupants had particularly enjoyed games during their life, as *weiqi* (Fig. 5) and double six tables



Fig. 5

Fig. 4 Painting of a lady play *weiqi*. Excavated from a tomb at Astana, near Turfan, Xinjiang, Tang Dynasty (618 CE-907 CE). Colored pigment on silk. Xinjiang Uygur Museum.

Fig. 5 *Weiqi* table. Excavated from a tomb at Astana, near Turfan, Xinjiang, Tang Dynasty (618 CE-907 CE). Wood and colored pigment. Xinjiang Uygur Museum.



Fig. 6

were also sealed within the tomb for spirit use in the afterlife. The elegantly dressed lady in the painting sits upon a platform-style daybed as she prepares to place a chip. The table in the painting as well as the wood *mingqi* table are both of low, platform-style construction, with arched openings along each side and surrounding base stretcher. Another game table that appears in a painting of the Southern Tang Emperor Li Yu playing *weiqi*<sup>6</sup> further demonstrates what can be termed as a ‘classical Tang style’.

The dominant influence of Tang culture radiated in all directions, and the popularity of things Chinese—including *weiqi* and double-sixes—quickly spread to Japan. A popular Tang legend tells of a match between a visiting Japanese prince and the greatest Chinese player of the Tang period, Gu Shiyan, who saved the match at the last moment with a spectacular move.<sup>7</sup> In Japan, Chinese *weiqi* became known as *go*.

Several Tang-style *weiqi* and double-six (*shuangliu*) game boards that once belonged to the Japanese emperor Shomu (r. 724-749) are now stored at the Shosoin Treasure House at Nara. The Shosoin *weiqi* game table is frequently cited as ‘Tang-style’ furniture (Fig. 6), and indeed, it could well have been a gift from a Chinese emissary or some otherwise imported Chinese work. The basic low-platform pattern resembles the above noted Tang examples, but here finely crafted with precious

*zitan*. Semiprecious inlays of ivory, boxwood and ebony delineate fine geometrical borders and animate the surfaces with camels, hunting scenes, auspicious animals, birds and flowers. Two drawers on opposite sides are fit with turtle-shaped game-chip containers and linked with an internal mechanism for simultaneous opening and closing (Fig. 7). It is indeed a splendid work, and perhaps the consummate expression of the game table.

### Double-sixes

Double-sixes (*shuangliu*) is an early ancestor of backgammon. The game originated in India and migrated to China around the 5th century CE, and was otherwise played throughout Central and Southeast Asia. By the Tang dynasty, double-sixes had also become extremely fashionable amongst the elite. Contemporary game boards preserved at the Shosoin also attest to the Japanese tradition, where the game is still played in certain aristocratic circles.<sup>8</sup> The highly competitive game was sometimes accompanied by extravagant gambling: Liao dynasty (907-1168) stories record the fate of cities and territories being waged against the roll of the dice. The game had become widely popularized by the Song dynasty when, accordingly, ‘the rich stake their slaves, their horses.....the poor play for who will stand for the next round of drinks.’<sup>9</sup>

It was amidst such popularity that the double-sixes manual *Pu shuang* (d. 1151) was compiled. Therein, Hong Zun describes regional variations of the game tray:

Fig. 6 Detail of *weiqi* table. Eight Century. *Zitan* with inlays. 48.7 × 48.7 × 12.7 cm H. Shosoin, Nara, Japan.

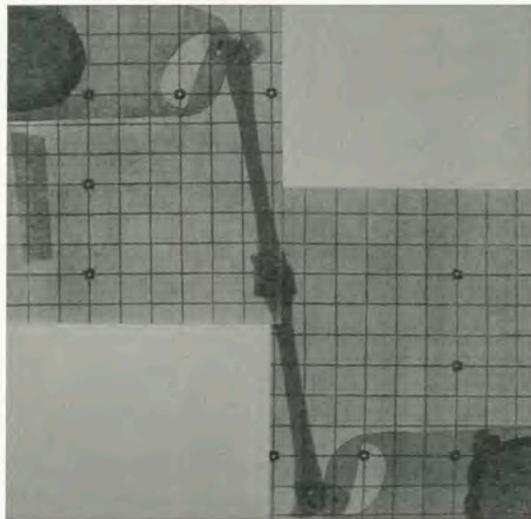


Fig. 7



Fig. 8

The northern double-sixes tray is half the length of a standard [square] chess board. The two 'doors' and twenty-four 'dots' are all shaped from ivory. A cover is made from Bohai *suo* wood; then, even without a lacquer finish, dust and dirt will not stain the surface. There are also those with semi-precious stone decoration and fitted with wood supports. The white horses are made from cypress wood, the black horses, ebony; luxurious ones are made from rhino horn and ivory. A round, flat base produces a sharp, striking sound. The top [section] is 3.2 inches (*cun*) long, the diameter at the top is .4 inches, and the bottom diameter 1.1 inches. The style is similar to the modern day mallet-shaped clothes beater that is commonly used by people in their homes.

People from Panyu (Guandong) play on game boards with black lacquer markings. Alternatively, they sketch the board pattern on paper or on the ground. The white pieces are made from boxwood (*huangyang*) and the black pieces of *guanglang* wood. The bases are flat, with short handles shaped like a stack of sliced persimmons or like a pagoda.

In Sanfoqi (Java/Sumatra), Dupo (Java/Malaysia/Malacca), Zhancheng (Vietnam), Zhenla (Cambodia) and Nanpi (Malabar), boards are made of *huali* wood with incised patterns. Many play the game at mat level. Otherwise, the rulers of these foreign tribes play with a board

that is fitted on the underside with bronze strings like a sounding board—when the game pieces are struck, a musical tone is produced. Ivory is used for the white pieces, and *wumei* wood for the black pieces; sometimes black ivory is used.

Persians play the game on carpets with woven game-board patterns and use game pieces similar to those of other kingdoms.<sup>10</sup>

Hong's text is laden with incidental information. Here we find reference to the dust-cover/tabletop that was common to game tables. Less common was the curious construction with tone-producing strings attached to the underside of the game board, which may be related to a noted Korean tradition.<sup>11</sup> The common use of (*huang*) *huali* throughout the Southeast Asia region during the Song period is also an important early reference for the study of hardwood furniture. The use of wood supports in Northern China for the game board is also consistent with the gradual elevation of the chair-height game table. An earlier example with folding-leg supports is depicted in a stone-engraved composition of a entourage of Tang court ladies (Fig. 8).

Fig. 7 X-ray detail of *weiqi* table. Eight Century. Zitan with inlays. 48.7 x 48.7 x 12.7 cm H. Shosoin, Nara, Japan.

Fig. 8 Detail of double six board with folding legs. Tang Dynasty. Stone engraving excavated from the tomb of Li Shou at Sanyuan, Shaanxi.



Fig. 9

The shift from mat-level furniture to chair-level is also well illustrated in the painting 'Ladies Playing Double Sixes', which is believed to be a close copy of Zhou Fang's 8th century work (Fig. 9). Therein, aristocratic ladies sit upon luxurious stools while playing at a raised game-board platform, which appears like a pair of low tables stacked on top of one another. The progressive evolution is demonstrated in the full-height game table depicted some four centuries later in Hong's double-six manual (Fig. 10). Similarly styled flush-sided game tables appearing in Song (cf. Fig. 11) and early Ming<sup>12</sup> paintings are further evidence of an established pattern that stretched onward for centuries.

Double sixes remained popular throughout the Ming dynasty; a fictional match recorded in *Dream of the Red Chamber* (Hongloumeng)<sup>13</sup> also suggests that the game was still being played well into the 18th century. The majority of surviving game tables that are fit with double-six boards also can generally be attributed to the 17-18th centuries. However, the popularity of the game fell off throughout the latter half of the Qing dynasty and, by the 19th century, had virtually disappeared.

Fig. 9 Detail from *Ladies Playing Double-Sixes*. Song copy of Zhou Fang's 8th century hand scroll. Ink and color on silk. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Fig. 10 Woodcut illustration of Northern double-sixes table. From Hong Zun, *Double Sixes Manual* (Pu shuang mu). Southern Song (d. 1151).

### Chess (xiangqi)

Chess is thought to have originated from northern India around the sixth century BCE. One explanation for the origin of the name for Chinese chess, which literally translates as 'elephant chess' (*xiangqi*), is found in the extended interpretation—'chess game from the land of elephants'. The game migrated to both the East and the West, resulting in the two distinctive versions known today. Appearance wise, Chinese chess differs from its Western counterpart in that 1) the pieces are uniformly shaped and differentiated by inscribed characters; 2) game pieces are placed at the intersections of the board lines; and 3) the game board pattern is interrupted at the center by a broad division termed the Heavenly River.

The lack of archeological or reference material relating to chess prior to the Song period suggests a slow gradual development in China. However, by the Song period, interest in the game had taken hold



Fig. 10

within the Imperial realm. Figure 11 illustrates the Southern Song Emperor Gaozong standing over a large square chess table of flush-sided *simianping* form with cloud-head feet and floor stretcher. The table, as well as the oval stool, the elegant incense stand, and floor screen all exhibit characteristics of Song period furniture.

Chess boards are often found on the reverse side of *weiqi* boards, and were typically included in the multi-board game table that were produced during the late Ming and Qing periods.<sup>44</sup>

### 'Ming-Style' Game Tables

The growing popularity of the game table during the Ming period is suggested by the entry 'square chess-board table' (*qipian fangzhou*) included amongst the furniture described in the carpenter's manual *Lu Ban jing*.

[The table is] 2.93 feet square, the legs 2.5 feet height and 1.5 inches (*cun*) [square], and the table



Fig. 12

frame is 1.2 inches thick by 2.4 inches wide. The four carved animal masks (*sichi tuntou*) are each 7 inches long, 1.9 inches wide. [Plain] (*taohuan*) or [carved] (*renwu*) panels separate the central [waist section] from the base. Beaded

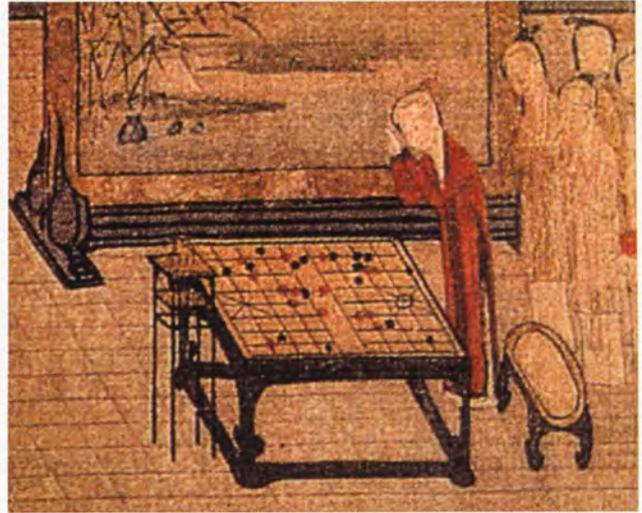


Fig. 11

edges are raised with relief carving.<sup>45</sup>

The patterns described within *Lu Ban jing* are frequently abstruse and incomplete—the classic text serving more for the rites of the Lu Ban cult than as a manual of practical application. Nonetheless, the pithy formula here approximates an early-traditional-style square table with *taohuan*-paneled high waist and carved animal masks decorating the shoulders of the legs.<sup>46</sup> That the 'square chess-board table' was simply a table upon which chess games could be played is a distinct possibility, and one that is further suggested by the separate entries for 'chess boards' and '*weiqi* boards'.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, game boards on top of normal tables is also what appears in most illustrations of board game activity dated to the Ming and Qing periods (cf. fig. 12).

Nonetheless, a specialized game table was also produced during the late Ming and Qing periods, of which a dozen or more recorded examples have survived. These multi-functional tables were typically constructed to appear as a standard table that could serve for normal use; however, concealed under a removable table was an entertainment parlor with game boards and game-piece compartments.

The earliest surviving examples of this type are predominantly of rectangular form. Such is the black-lacquer game table illustrated in figure

Fig. 11 Detail of chess table from *Auspicious Omens of the Emperor Gaozong* by Xiao Zhao (c. 1130-1160). Palace Museum Collection, Beijing.

Fig. 12 Game Table. Detail from woodblock print illustration to *Qian jin ji* Late Ming dynasty.



Fig. 13



Fig. 15

Fig. 13 Game Table. Late Ming dynasty. Lacquer on Wood. Dimensions???  
Shih Shuiwang Collection, Taipei.

Fig. 14 Recessed-Leg Game Table (pictured with top removed). Late Ming  
dynasty. *Huanghuali*, 87.5 x 59.5 x 79 cm H.

Fig. 15 Corner-Leg Game Table. Late Ming dynasty. *Huanghuali*. 98 x 70  
x 84.5 cm H, Philadelphia Museum of Art.



Fig. 14

13, which exhibits late Ming characteristics from the Huizhou district in Anhui province. The high-waist style (which was also prescribed in *Lu Ban jing*) was well suited for the construction and concealment of inner compartments. The tabletop removed reveals a reversible *weiqi*/chess board and *weiqi* counter receptacles at opposite corners; a deeper recess under the chess board houses a double six board with game-piece compartments along each side. Two drawers at opposite corners are also neatly concealed amongst the high-waist *taohuan* panels. Such arrangement is typical for most game tables.

A few *huanghuali* game tables that are stylistically attributable to the late 16th/early 17th period are also of rectangular form. Several are of recessed-leg 'wine table' style<sup>8</sup>—a small rectangular pattern commonly used as a dining table during the late Ming dynasty (cf. Fig. 14); the somewhat deeper than average aprons provides sufficient depth for the inner compartments. Another *huanghuali* table at the Philadelphia Museum of Art also exhibits early style flush-sided, corner-leg construction with giant's arm braces (Fig. 15).<sup>9</sup> These *huanghuali* game tables, which are of plain, minimalistic style, as well as the lacquer table from Huizhou, clearly predate the majority of surviving square game tables.

The black lacquer game table housed at the Palace Museum, Beijing is a rare example of a Ming-period game table (Fig. 16). The surfaces retain a heavily crackled lacquer finish typical of the period. The integrated design is furthermore unique in con-



Fig. 16

ception. The layered structure has wing-like extensions that provide a triple-sized table surface with game boards and inner compartments exposed at the center. When retracted to square table form, the segmented structure is virtually concealed within the bamboo-like styling of the layered table top and split legs. Attributed to the Wanli period (1573-1620), this work can be also considered to be an early expression of bamboo-style furniture.

The majority of extant hardwood game tables can be attributed 17th and 18th centuries. Of these, it is also bamboo-style constructions were most often repeated.<sup>20</sup> This layered pattern was well-suited for a removable top, and inner compartments were easily created by enclosing the openings between the stretchers with panels and drawers. Whether the bamboo décor of game tables bore any association with the *literati* tradition is open to question. Regardless, imitation bamboo furniture also became widely popularized throughout the 18th century, during an era when mimic styles were fashionable. Such artifice appears in the *huanghuali* game table formerly of the Geis Collection, which is also carved like bamboo (Fig. 17).<sup>21</sup> Stylized bamboo patterns without carving are



Fig. 16



Fig. 17

Fig. 16 Expandable Game Table. Late Ming dynasty. Lacquer on Wood. 48 x 84 x 73 cm H. Palace Museum, Beijing.

Fig. 17 Carved Bamboo-Style Game Table. 18th Century. *Huanghuali*. 86.4 x 86.4 x 87.6 cm H. Formerly in the Geis Collection, Hong Kong.



Fig. 18



Fig. 19

also evident in the *huanghuali* table in the Dr. S. Y. Yip Collection (Fig. 18)<sup>22</sup> as well as the *zitan* table of the former T. T. Tsui Collection.<sup>23</sup>

Game tables of other construction styles were also experimented with varying success. The cabriole leg game table in the Liangyi Collection is of exceptional note (Fig. 19)<sup>24</sup>. The long, elegantly shaped legs are reinforced with dragon-shaped spandrels, and the curved aprons are carved with dragons and *lingzhi* in a deep relief style with a smoothly worked ground. Aside from the standard inner compartmentalization, small drawers are neatly fitted into the aprons on all four sides.

The game table was made up of many independent, removable components. Throughout the generations of neglect, social unrest, and unmentionable other inevitable misfortunes, pieces were often lost or misplaced. It is rare to find a game table with all original fittings. Indeed, in some cases, it is only the basic structure of the game table survived—removable table top, game boards, chip containers and drawers are all long gone. While unfortunate, the inevitability of replacements must also be viewed in light of the relative rarity of this special category.

### Low Game Tables

The low table tradition did not completely disappear amidst development of chair-height furniture, but rather continued to be used on platforms as well as the ground. Such customary use is illustrated in a Yuan dynasty woodcut where in two gentlemen engage in a double-sixes match while sitting on a *luohan chuang*; the low table form appears as a deep double-six tray mounted upon a base with cabriole legs and base stretcher (Fig. 20). A later version housed in the Palace Museum Collection, Beijing is of classical Ming style; the base is constructed of *zitan*, and the reversible tabletop/double six board is of *nanmu* (Fig. 21).<sup>25</sup> The use of this table may have been as illustrated by the 18th century court artist Jiao Bingzhen in his painting of palace concubines playing games under the candle light on a summer evening; therein, the elegantly dressed ladies entertain themselves sitting upon daybed and playing *weiqi* upon a square *kang* table (Fig. 22). Additionally, the extent group of *kang* tables fitted with drawers were also used as game tables.<sup>26</sup>

Fig. 18 Bamboo-Style Game Table. 18th Century. *Huanghuali*. 86.4 × 86.4 × 87.6 cm H. S. Y. Yip Collection, Hong Kong.

Fig. 19 Cabriole-Leg Game Table. 18th Century. *Huanghuali*. 91 × 91 × 89 cm H. Liang Yi Collection, Hong Kong.

Fig. 20 Detail from *Playing Double Sixes*. Yuan dynasty woodblock illustration to Chen Yuanjin's *Shilin Guangji*, Yuan dynasty (1276-1368).



Fig. 20



Fig. 21

### Square Table

As noted above, the common square table, which was ubiquitous throughout the Qing period, also served as a game table (Fig. 23). Its universality of such use is evident in the Western 'card table', which is nothing more than a folding leg square table. Square tables additionally fitted with drawers on each of the four sides continue to be called 'chess table' (*qi zhuo*) in China—the drawers being well suited for betting coins or chips.<sup>37</sup> Of large and small size, these tables also reflect the popularity of other gambling games such as mahjong, dominoes and others that were popular throughout the 19th century.

Perhaps any table that serves as a game-playing platform can be called a 'game table'. The special-

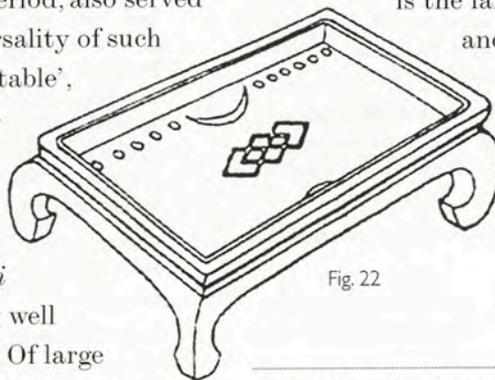


Fig. 22



Fig. 23

ized game table, however, was a unique expression reflecting the Chinese joiner's ability to respond to the widespread love of games. Adapted to traditional forms, it served in customary manner; however, when opportunity arose for amusement and diversion, its formal shell was easily set aside, revealing a parlor-style entertainment center. Barely touched upon through the narrow window of the game table

is the larger realm of gaming traditions and affinities, which indeed opens upon a unique, yet largely unexplored region, of Chinese culture.

**Curtis Evarts**

Shanghai, March 2004

Fig. 21 Detail from *Playing Weiqi*. Album leaf painting by Jiao Bingzhen. Early 18th Century. Palace Museum, Beijing.

Fig. 22 Drawing of double sixes game table with removable top, late Ming or early Qing. *Zitan*, *nanmu* and mother-of-pearl inlay. 51.6 x 38.6 x 13 cm H. Palace Museum, Beijing.

Fig. 23 Detail of mahjong game. Woodcut illustration by Wu Jiayou. Late Qing dynasty (c. 1884).

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> E&J Frankel. *Games People Play: Ancient Pastimes of Asia*. New York, 1999, pls. 15-16.
- <sup>2</sup> E&J Frankel. *Games People Play: Ancient Pastimes of Asia*. New York, 1999, pl. 18.
- <sup>3</sup> A lacquer *liubo* table excavated from a Western Han tomb in Sanjiaowei, Tianchang county, Anhui was fit with two drawers on either side.
- <sup>4</sup> *Yijing* (Treatise on Art and Games) Three Kingdoms, 3rd century CE. Handan Xun
- <sup>5</sup> Li Zongshan. *Zhongguo jiaju shi tushuo: huace*. p. 426.
- <sup>6</sup> See painting by Zhou Wenju (act. 961-975) illustrated by Chen Zengbi in "A Thousand-Year-Old Daybed." *Journal of the Classical Chinese Furniture Society* 4:4 (Autumn 1994), p. 27.
- <sup>7</sup> Handler, Sarah. *Austere Luminosity of Chinese Classical Furniture*. Berkeley: University of California Press: 2001, pp. 186-187.
- <sup>8</sup> *Shoso-in Office. Treasures of the Shoso-in: The North Section*.
- <sup>9</sup> Gernet, Jacques. *Daily Life in China on the Eve of the Mongol Invasion 1250-1276*. Translated by H. M. Wright. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962, p. 227.
- <sup>10</sup> Translation by author from Hong Zun. *Double Sixes Manual* (Shuang pu) (d. 1151) in the Ming dynasty compilation *Xinshang bian* edited by Shen Jin. Republished Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 1999.
- <sup>11</sup> E&J Frankel. *Games People Play: Ancient Pastimes of Asia*. New York, 1999, pp. 9-10.
- <sup>12</sup> A *weiqi* table of similar style is also illustrated in the painting *Literati Gathering in the Apricot Garden* by Xie Huan, (d. 1337), Metropolitan Museum of Art. See
- <sup>13</sup> Cao Xueqin. *Honglou Meng* (Dream of the Red Mansion). 3 vols. Taipei: Zhongguo gudian xiaoshuo xinkan, 1996, p. 310.
- <sup>14</sup> cf. Ellsworth, Robert Hatfield. *Chinese Furniture: One Hundred Examples from the Mimi and Raymond Hung Collection*. New York, 1996, pl. 53.
- <sup>15</sup> Revised translation by author. Ruitenbeek, Klaas. *Carpentry and Building in Late Imperial China: A Study of the Fifteenth-Century Carpenters Manual Lu Ban jing*. Leiden: E. J Brill, 1993, II 46.
- <sup>16</sup> cf. Evarts, Curtis. c. L. *Ma Collection: Traditional Chinese Furniture from the Greater Shanxi Region*. Hong Kong: c. L. Ma Furniture, 1999, pl. 86.
- <sup>17</sup> Ruitenbeek, Klaas. *Carpentry and Building in Late Imperial China: A Study of the Fifteenth-Century Carpenters Manual Lu Ban jing*. Leiden: E. J Brill, 1993, II 84, II 85.
- <sup>18</sup> Jacobsen, Robert D. *Classical Chinese Furniture in the Minneapolis Institute of Arts*. Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 1999, pl. 37; Ellsworth, Robert H. *Chinese Furniture, Hardwood Examples of the Ming and Early Ch'ing Dynasties*. New York: Random House, 1970, pl. 74; Kates, George. *Chinese Household Furniture*. New York: Dover Publications, 1962, pl. 33.
- <sup>19</sup> Ellsworth, Robert H. *Chinese Furniture, Hardwood Examples of the Ming and Early Ch'ing Dynasties*. New York: Random House, 1970, pl. 73.
- <sup>20</sup> cf. Bruce, Grace Wu. *The Dr. S. Y. Yip Collection of Classic Chinese Furniture*. Hong Kong: New Island Printing Co. Ltd., 1991, pl. 28; Handler, Sarah. *Austere Luminosity of Chinese Classical Furniture*. University of California Press: Berkeley, 2001, p. 201; Christie's, New York, Sale 1330. *The Gangolf Geis Collection of Fine Classical Chinese Furniture*, Thursday 18 September 2003, lot 21; Pu Anguo. *Ming Qing Sushi jiaju* (Suzhou-style furniture from the Ming and Qing dynasties). Hangzhou: Zhejiang sheying chubanshe chhu ban faxing, 1999, pl. 116;
- <sup>21</sup> Christie's, New York, Sale 1330. *The Gangolf Geis Collection of Fine Classical Chinese Furniture*, Thursday 18 September 2003, lot 21.
- <sup>22</sup> Bruce, Grace Wu. *The Dr. S. Y. Yip Collection of Classic Chinese Furniture*. Hong Kong: New Island Printing Co. Ltd., 1991, pl. 28.
- <sup>23</sup> Handler, Sarah. *Austere Luminosity of Chinese Classical Furniture*. University of California Press: Berkeley, 2001, p. 201.
- <sup>24</sup> Evarts, Curtis. *A Leisurely Pursuit: Splendid Hardwood Antiquities from the Liang Yi Collection*. Hong Kong, 2000, pl. 45.

- <sup>25</sup> Chen Zengbi. "Double Sixes." *Journal of the Classical Chinese Furniture Society* 2:3 (Summer 1992), pp. 53-55.
- <sup>26</sup> A *huanghuali* square kang table with drawers on each side is found in the collection of Shih Shuiwang, Taipei.
- <sup>27</sup> cf. Zhu Jiajin. *Ming Qing Jiazhu (shang/xia)* (Furniture of the Ming and Qing Dynasties: I) Vols. 54 *Gugong bowuyuan-cang wenwu zhenpin quanji* (The Complete Collection of Treasures of the Palace Museum). Shangwu yin shu guan (The Commercial Press Ltd.), Shenzhou: 2002, pl. 76; Tsai c. Y. *Zitan: The Most Noble Hardwood*. Taipei: My Humble House Publications, 1996, pl. 78.