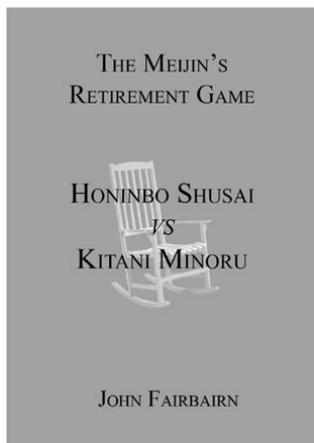


THE MEIJIN'S RETIREMENT GAME

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The book consists of 142 pages related to the famous game between Honinbo Shusai and Kitani Minoru, played in 1938. It marked the retirement of Honinbo Shusai and became a six month grind for both players, played over 15 sessions. The entire game was chronicled for a Japanese newspaper by the Nobel prize-winning novelist Kawabata Yasunari, but this did not appear in book form until 1954.

The initial 25 pages are a brief biography of Honinbo Shusai's life, with historical and cultural accounts and then a short chronological account of Kitani Minoru's life.

The actual game is commented over 73 pages, which covers the game's 237 moves with over 128 diagrams. It is a comprehensive account with very thorough commentary, detailed

moves and extensive variations. Most of the original commentaries on which the book is based were by Go Seigen, Kitani and Shusai.

There is a 27-page Appendix, addressing Kawabata's novel, *The Master of Go*. John Fairbairn summarises the novel chapter by chapter from his viewpoint as a Go player. You do not need a copy of the original novel or the translation to appreciate John's book, but he does recommend you read one or the other.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed reading the book and it was easy to follow the game commentary and numerous diagrams without the aid of a Go board. The interest was not just what happened on the Go board, but also what happened off it. Not wishing to spoil the story, I won't reveal the winner or summarise the events covered, which occurred before, during and after the six months of the actual game. Suffice it to say that these events were equally interesting to read about.

I found the author used clear and understandable language, and it was easy to follow the step-by-step moves and variations shown. As there was not much Go jargon used, less experienced players may also find it easy to follow.

I would say that some of the variations are rather long and drawn out. I did come across a point in the book when about 14 diagrams of variations were being shown. This felt over the top for me and a bit too deep – they were variations on life and

¹www.slateandshell.com

death of both players' groups with a ko. Even the commentary stated that this is a rather long and jaw-dropping digression, which shows us that not everything in Go is black and white.

Nevertheless, the book provides you with many possibilities to ponder over and the reader is given a good insight into the actual game. Great fun for the dan players and for some of the strong

kyu players, but perhaps, many kyu players might wish to skip over some of the variations.

To summarise, I found it a highly interesting read and I would recommend it. There is plenty in the book for all readers.

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