



by Chuck Henry

"When you're settled in Zen, your mind is serene, unaffected by worldly distractions. You enter the realm of enlightenment, and transcend the ordinary world, leaving the world while in the midst of society."

-Zen Master Fenyang

Background

"Praxis (prak'sis) n., 1. the application or use of knowledge or skills; practice as distinguished from theory. 2. convention, habit or custom." -Webster's College Dictionary.

Praxis is a chess variation that incorporates the Zen philosophy of opposing forces defining the Way. Ancient books, such as the I Ching, show the interaction of these two forces, Yin and Yang, and their effect upon human life. Praxis is an attempt to bring these forces into a game that already presents the struggle between opposing forces.

Equipment

Praxis is played on a standard 8 by 8 chess board using the all the standard pieces. However, four more pieces are required. These pieces represent the Yin and Yang contained in both teams. Therefore, there must be two sets of two pieces in which the colors are opposites. A suggested set of pieces is; one clear stone (White Yin), one translucent black stone (White Yang), one opaque white stone (Black Yin), and one opaque black stone (Black Yang).

Play

Game play is identical regarding en passant, castling and general rules. The difference however is that the player moves a normal piece and then a meta-piece. There is an exception to this procedure. This exception is covered in the Meta-move section.

The object of Praxis is the same as regular chess.

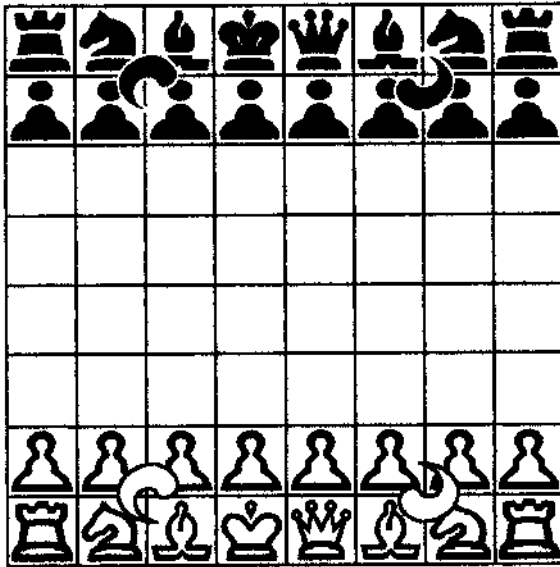


Figure 1

Initial board layout is depicted in Figure 1. The White Yin is located on the intersection of lines between White queen's bishop, knight and two pawns. The White Yang is located on the intersection of lines between White king's bishop, knight, and two pawns. And likewise, the Black's Yin is located on the intersection of lines between the Black queen's bishop, knight and two pawns. The Black Yang is located on the intersection of lines between Black king's bishop, knight, and two pawns.

The Meta-pieces

All the standard chess pieces move in the same fashion as during normal play. These pieces represent the everyday struggle between men and their ideals. To incorporate the Yin and Yang, which are not physical but philosophical, these pieces are positioned on the intersection of lines. These pieces cannot be captured or blocked by the forces of man. Both the Yin and Yang can be moved horizontally or vertically along any unobstructed path as far as is desired. Examples of piece positions are listed on the accompanying pages. Yin and Yang cannot capture each other, nor the ordinary pieces. However, the Yin and Yang interact with each other and the normal pieces.

Yin or a Yang, being non corporal entities, have special powers over the normal pieces. This power is manifested in three different ways.

The first way is when the meta-piece is standing alone without another meta-piece in adjacent intersections. In this case, the meta-piece protects any piece that matches the alignment of Yin or Yang. This protection extends to the four squares that surround the intersection in which the meta-piece sits. For example, a Yin meta-piece could protect any White piece that is located in the squares around it. That White piece is protected regardless if the Yin itself is Black or White.

This means that a White piece that sits in a square near the point a Yin positioned is protected from

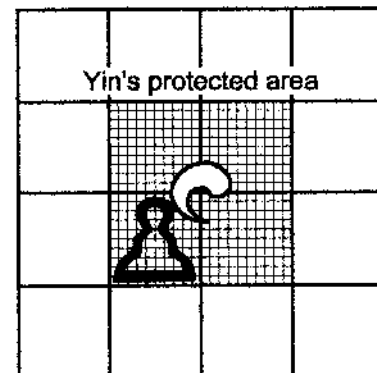


Figure 2

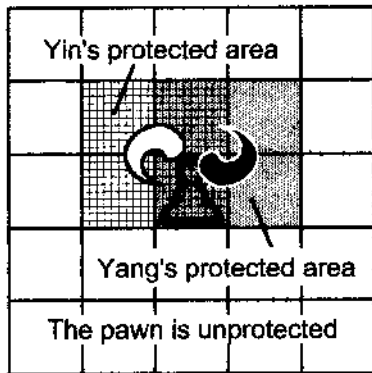


Figure 3

capture (Figure 2). Conversely, a Black piece sitting near a Yang also has protection from capture. This protection is not extended to the king, however; the protection cannot stop a king from being checkmated.

The second way the Yin and Yang's power is manifested is if a Yin and a Yang are on intersections adjacent to each other. Regardless of the color of the meta-piece, if a Yin and a Yang are on intersections adjacent to each other horizontally or vertically, the two squares that their protections

overlap are considered unprotected (Figure 3). This is because Yin and Yang are opposites; their powers negate each other. If a Yin and a Yang occupy intersects diagonally, their powers only overlap in one square. This one square is considered unprotected.

Next, Yin and Yang are the most dangerous when they are paired with like alignments together. If the Black Yin and the White Yin occupy two intersections adjacent to each other, like in the last example, a piece with the like alignment (White) in the overlapping area square then can make a queen's move during that turn. Capture by that piece with this special move *is* allowed.

And the last combination of Yin and Yang is the Union. A Union occurs when a Yin and Yang of the same alignment are on adjacent intersections. When this occurs, all pieces with the opposite alignment that are located in, or end a move in, the overlapping area are frozen. They cannot be moved by their owner. For example, if a Black Yin and a Black Yang occupy adjacent intersections they create a Union. If a White piece is located in the area in which their protection overlaps, it cannot be moved by the White player. It stays frozen until the Union is broken by either of the Black meta-pieces being moved. However, a Black piece also located in that area may be moved if desired. Kings cannot be frozen.

The Meta-Move

"Open yourself to the Way, then trust your natural responses; and everything will fall into place."

-Tao Te Ching

This move is powerful, yet useless. It involves the complete rearranging of the pieces surrounding one of a player's meta-pieces. This is powerful. However, there are some rules governing the ability.

For instance, if the White player wished to perform the meta-move on the pieces surrounding his Yin piece, he would forfeit his normal move and meta-piece move and then rearranging those pieces surround it any way he chooses. However, while he does, the other player is entitled to rearrange the pieces around the

White player's Yang piece. This makes the move useless in a manner of speaking.

Legal Stuff

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