

Flow Book 1:
AWAKENING YOUR MAHJONG POWER

SAKURAI Shouichi

translated by anon

How this book was made

This book is a Sakurai Shouichi's mahjong strategy manual that he bestows to everyone who wants to get stronger at mahjong.

In the late Shouwa 30's (early 60's) the author, who was a student at the time, was introduced by a friend to mahjong, and made to unfold his genius as master of victory and defeat. From then on, he split his attention between the world of a real job and winning money in high stakes mahjong for 20 years, during which he left behind the astounding record of not losing once; but in the mid Shouwa 50's (around 1980) he felt the emptiness of winning and retired. In his days as a high stakes gambler, he continued to chain win after win, staking his life unbowed by threats or violence; he ascended to unprecedented regions without the use of underhanded techniques, just by manipulation through thinking of the tiles; and earned himself the nickname of "mahjong demon".

In this life of ultimate stakes, he noticed that playing with a view that values the calculation of profit and loss clouds the power of one's heart, one's feeling.

This book is written in a question-and-answer form, so that you can become stronger by reading from anywhere, but I'll give you the details of how this book was created.

On 16 February 2014, the "Mahjong Saikyouisen 2014 Special Pro Commentary Qualifier feat. Sakurai Shouichi and Moriyama Shigekazu" was held. The Saikyouisen is a yearly mahjong tournament that is open to both pros and amateurs. In this qualifier, one of the 8 participating pros would win and advance to the finals to be held in December.

This project that featured mahjong demon Sakurai and Japan Pro Mahjong League president Moriyama commentating young pros' mahjong was livestreamed on Niconico and was also released on DVD.

However, the author felt that there were numerous parts that he could not explain in the live transmission format, despite feeling that the mahjong style of the pros contained many problems. The mahjong level of strong gamblers that the author played with in the past was simply not being attained by today's famous pros. The author, having succeeded in life after encountering mahjong, felt strongly that he wanted the pros to get stronger, and let the readers know about the correct, winning mahjong that is not deluded by calculations.

Therefore I placed the paifu from that day on the table and went through them discard by discard, raising various kinds of questions, and summarized them in this book in question-and-answer form. It is the first book by the 20 year undefeated legend Sakurai Shouichi that has him answering questions by a person who is not a “mahjong demon style” disciple of his.

By repeatedly reading this book, the quality of your mahjong will change, and you are guaranteed to become closer to a true strong player.

t. the editor

Participating pros

Table A

Katsumata Kenji, Ishibashi Nobuyuki, Shibukawa Nanba, Takizawa Kazunori

Table B

Sasaki Hisato, Arai Keibun, Suzuki Tarou, Sarukawa Masatoshi

Playoff

Sasaki, Katsumata, Arai, Ishibashi

Winner

Sasaki

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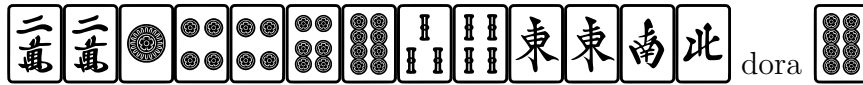
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
1 Farewell closed style: 16 CALLS that terrify even pros

1.1 Call the dora indicator kanchan


Question



East 1, East seat, turn 2









Would you call the ?

Answer

Chii and drop .

If you want to keep winning at mahjong with true potential, you must not get distracted by obvious ryanmen but look more forward. Of course, you will not always win as ideal but it's important to aim there.

If everybody just tries to win and win the hand before their eyes, the person who goes to create good iishanten and ryanshanten might not win hands, but will win in the end.

Think of drawing a block with  or . There are people who might chii and discard  or , but  and  are pair-only tiles like , in other words 's partners. You must not discard the partners by yourself.

1.2 Correct iishanten rather than wrong tenpai

Question

Why do you say that ending a round with a good iishanten is better than getting a bad shape win? Is it because of winning more easily in the next round?

Answer

Even without that it's better to aim for the correct sequence of plays.

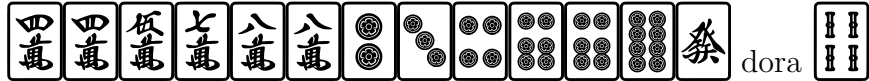
You can win a round and take 1st place by winning even with a bad hand, right? The other 3 players are winning bad hands and making bad plays, but bad things don't necessarily occur to them.

However, not just in mahjong, whenever something happens, there is a reason for it. This can be some close situation or something quite far away.

By not playing to win the obvious hand, but advancing the correct style of play just a little bit, something will certainly spring into life. That is the flow of luck.

1.3 Move aggressively with tanyao and no dora

Question



East 1, South seat, turn 3

Would you stay closed? What would you call?

Answer

Call 40,000, 60,000, 80,000, 4 dots, 5 dots.

Calling is just 1000 points, but it's faster than going closed, and by moving you can invigorate the field. People do not live alone. Similarly, in mahjong, by advancing the hand while borrowing the power of other players we create coexistence, co-calling.

In the game, the shape drew 2 dots and discarded 13 dots.

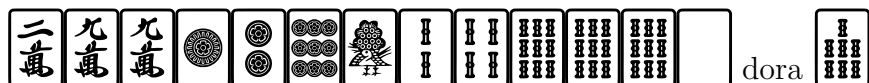
Like this, the hand has 4 pairs, and you must see chittoi or toitoi so you do not call.

However call 40,000, 60,000, 80,000, 4 dots, 5 dots.

With just one tile, the tiles you call will also change.

1.4 Notice the invisible sanshoku doukou

Question





South seat, turn 1

Would you call anything?



Answer


 pon.

This is clearly chanta. You can also see the sanshoku doukou of 9.

If you draw , you will be happy, but you should also call  pon before.

In the game, another player discarded  on the first turn, but you can't ignore this.

You must think "Ah! He didn't discard  but .

The player who discards the second  is important. For that person, he discarded it because it was a terminal, but from your standpoint he killed your hand, so from a luck standpoint he has the upper hand of you two.

That is what you must think.

1.5 Don't get confused by hindsight

Question




With this chanta hand,  came out on turn 5.






It's a 2000 point bad shape so would you call?


(In the game, Shibukawa called and was wedged between dealer riichi and a yakuhai dora 3 call, and dealt into mangan.)

Answer

Yes.

In the game, the player called chii and cut , which is okay. Calling is not for winning, but to advance one step.

However, after the dealer called riichi, he folded with  and dealt in, while I would have pushed . Also, the  came from kamicha's hand which was , and he should have normally discarded . When the caller dealt in it was not his fault, but rather the kamicha who let him call was weak.

If it had been me, I would have called pon on  on turn 4 and completely changed everything.

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ドラ


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(Diagram showing discard arrows from hand to discard pile)		
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(Diagram showing discard arrows from hand to discard pile)		
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(Diagram showing discard arrows from hand to discard pile)		
北家：勝又健志		持ち点 32000 動き 8000 積み棒 0 リーチ 1000 合計 41000
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(Diagram showing discard arrows from hand to discard pile)		

1.6 Instantly call yakuhai

Question





South 1, 1st place, West seat

Another player's first discard was , do you call?


Answer

Yes. Discard .

Because the dora is in souzu, you get rid of the far away pinzu and move towards honitsu in manzu.

After the pon, you would rather have  or  than the dora. Honitsu yakuhai 2 is an easy mangan.

From this we understand how important honors are. Using multiple yakuhai exhibits enormous power. Its ultimate expression are the yakuman daisangen and daisuushii.

Calling and narrowing the hand to 10 tiles narrows the necessary tiles ( here) as well, which I think increases clarity of thought.

With honitsu, we can make mangan in two ways.

1. honitsu yakuhai 2
2. honitsu toitoi

Calling does not equal cheap hand, calling creates big yaku.

1.7 Call from completed mentsu and create yaku

Question



Turn 2, dealer behind on points. How do you move forward with the dora pair?

Answer

Tanyao.

If comes out, you must always chii with . This has better taste than having a closed hand with .

You should also chii and pon . After calling, discard . After all tiles are tanyao, discard .

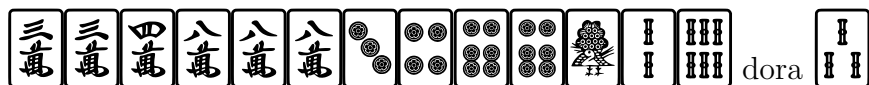
You can draw another so don't discard it yet. You have the ryankan, but you must discard soon and ignore . If you don't ignore it, it might come and you'll be left with an unfinished hand when someone calls riichi.

In the game, Ishibashi got the hand on turn 5 and didn't call chii on . I would absolutely chii and cut . This creates a mobile shape that can chii or . He is lazy for not calling this. He must have not seen from the start.

This is like 1st grader mahjong. Even an elementary school 1st grader can win a closed hand by drawing all the tiles. I am worried if pros don't attain 6th grade level mahjong.

1.8 Tanyao is better than dora 1


Question



South 2, 1st place, South seat, turn 2


What would you call?

Answer

Only pon .

Discard , and foresee tsumo of   .

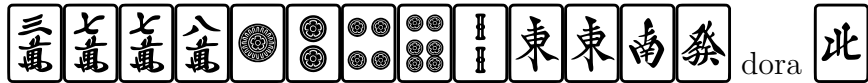
Exactly because you are in 1st and in South seat, you must move yourself to disrupt the dealer. Moving invigorates your own hand and the field.

Because dora 1 and tanyao are both worth 1 han, ignore the dora  acceptance and prefer open tanyao.


Don't call  and .

1.9 Don't hold safe tiles

Question



East 1, North seat, turn 3

Would you call ? The hand is cheap and it looks like it will have few safe tiles against a riichi.

Answer

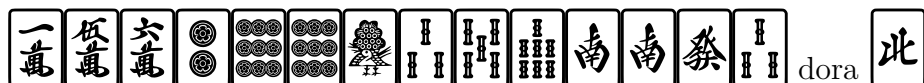
Call.

It's not bad because you have no safe tiles, it's interesting. This is the feeling you must have. Desiring effort instead of ease is necessary in mahjong.



Do not pay attention to score before South 3. Whatever the score, moving and facing to the win is important, and if you want to win against truly strong players, you must risk victory or defeat in difficult places.

1.11 Recognize the toitsuba

Question








East 1, South seat's haipai

Discard , but would you call ?

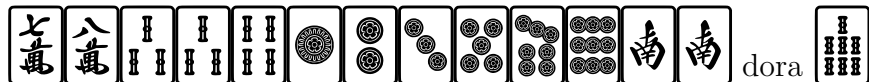
Answer


Of course.

With yakuhai, you should see extra han from honitsu or toitoi. After drawing a  pair with the first tsumo, you can feel the toitsuba with 3 pairs. With the  pair, attach importance to the  yakuhai and the  and  pairs, aiming for toitoi. You must leverage vertical combinations (honors) as well as horizontal (numbers).

1.12 Yakuhai dora 1 is an obvious pon


Question



South 1, 1st place dealer, first  comes out on turn 4

Call?

Answer

Of course, discard .

This is a hand that can only win by moving.

However, the player in the game did not pon, and when asked later why, he said “In 1st place, winning 2900 is not really meaningful, and with this shape on turn 4 it’s more effective to aim for 4000 all.”

I dare say the majority of mahjong pros is like that. I am the exact opposite. In the logic of democracy, where the majority opinion decides, I am in the minority faction. **Call hands that need to call, win, then win again next round.**

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南1局

ドラ 七萬



伍萬 北

【西家】勝又健志 32500



【東家】石橋伸洋 7200

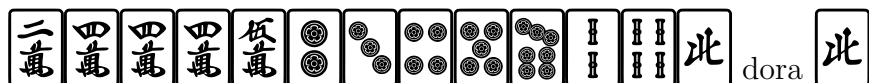


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【南家】新井啓文 35800

1.13 Call the bad shapes and retain the good shapes

Question



East 1, West seat, turn 5

Would you call anything?

Answer

Call 30,000, 10 bamboo, 10 bamboo, 10 bamboo.

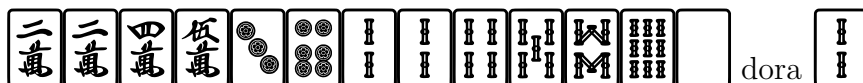
Only don't call 60,000. Move with tanyao and maybe sanshoku.

When calling, increasing the speed of the hand is important, but it's necessary to pay attention to the shape. Kanchan is a less comfortable wait than ryanmen. **In daily life, isn't it better to start off with the uncomfortable things? Resolve the difficult shape of the kanchan and leave behind an easy shape.**

Leaving the ryanmen and waiting with it until the win will also leave good results in the next haipai. On the contrary, if you win with an uncomfortable shape, the next haipai will also be uncomfortable. If you win by flailing about, another hand of floundering will come.

1.14 A hand with a dora pair is a chance to move

Question



East 1, South seat, turn 2

With dora 2, how would you call?

Answer

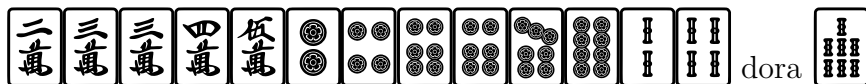
Pon or .

Call pon and discard , aiming for tanyao. Don't call the and ryanmen with this hand yet. If you get 345 or 456 sanshoku, the hand is mangan even without a dora pon. In the game the next draw was , but I would not even want draw to and discard , keeping .

Drop the mentsu first that you don't want to get and create a mobile hand. This is called "abandoning".

1.15 Call in a difficult way for both yourself and the opponents

Question








East 3, 3rd place South seat

Would you call anything on the 4th turn?

Answer

Chii  with kanchan.

Then drop . Calling with ryanmen has a feeling of ease, so show both yourself and the opponents that it's a difficult spot in the hand.



Like this, it's certainly good in any case to keep moving and win a 2000 point hand. If you draw two dora while dropping , drop , and if you draw  keep  as the head.

1.16 Pon the head even in tenpai


Question



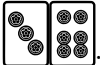


South 1, 3rd place West seat

In this  kanchan tenpai, would you call pon on .


Answer



Yes, and cut .

From my point of view, the end wait of this hand is not  but . Or .

In other words, draw or pon  and foresee a nobetan in pinzu.

There are people who might get afraid with such a short hand when a riichi is called, but because you have no genbutsu after coming this far, your only hope is to win.

It's wrong to think that will be with : you should see further than that.

Even if the head were a defensive tile like  instead, you were happy to call a good tile in  so call even more.

1.17 Chapter summary

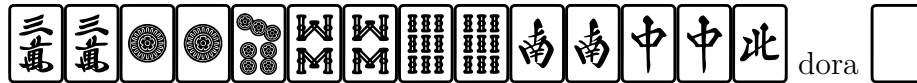
1. Chii the dora indicator tile
2. Call with tanyao or yakuhai and no dora
3. Safe tiles are not needed
4. Check for sanshoku doukou
5. Combine honitsu with yakuhai and toitoi
6. Create yaku by calling from completed sequences
7. Complete kanchan first
8. Improve the wait by calling from tenpai
9. Pay attention to toitsuba



Remember: calling invigorates your hand and the field!

2 Don't get mood swings about the result: 14 RIICHI or DAMA decisions

2.1 In tenpai, riichi without regard for your own discards


Question




In this chiitoitsu tenpai on , you can swap to the once discarded , but would you riichi?

Your own discards are , making chiitai obvious.

Answer

Call riichi on  tanki.

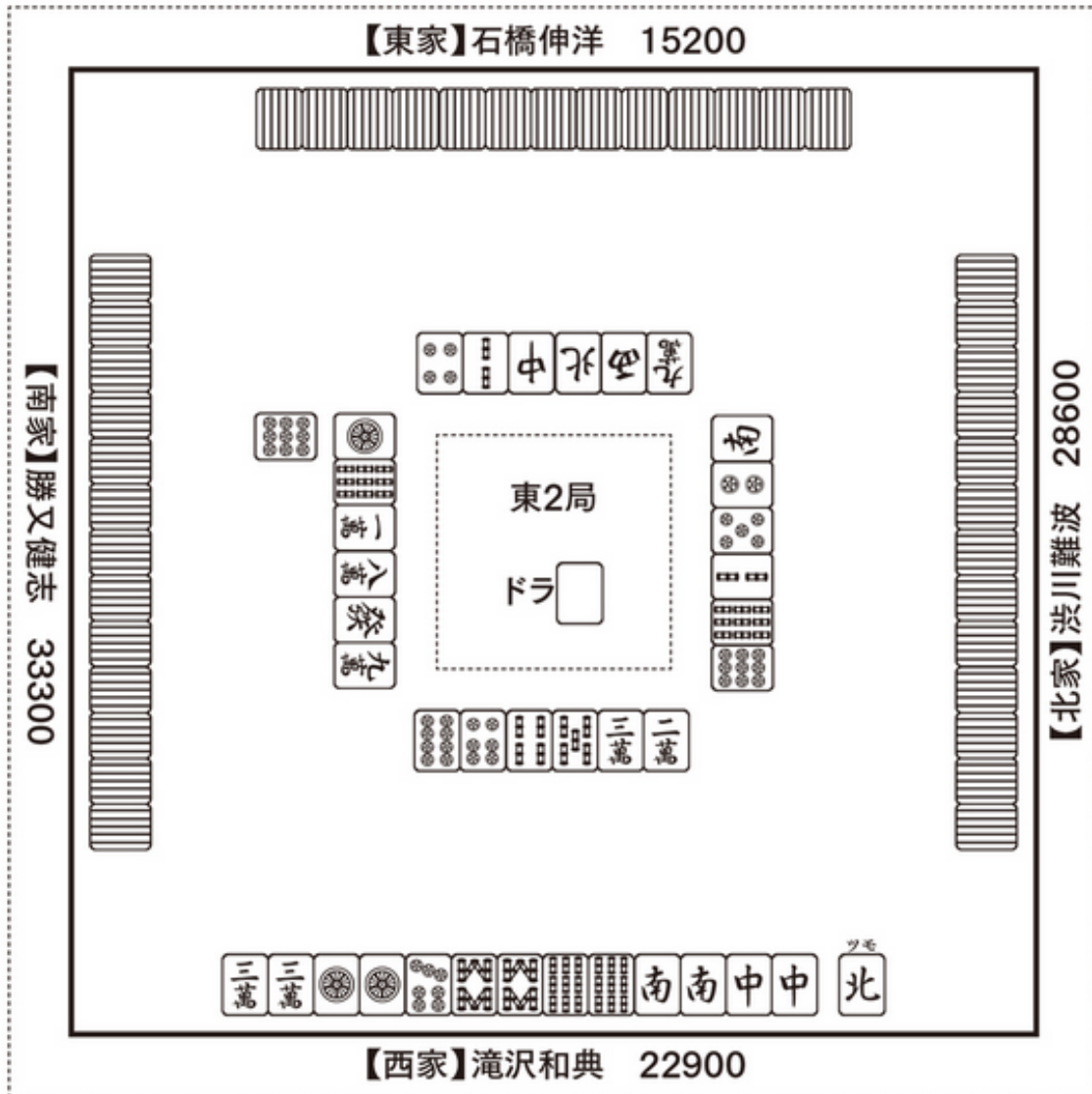
Even if it doesn't come out, you can tsumo, and the idea itself of it not coming out is funny. Strong players will discard  even against these discards if they don't need it.

You go dama because the opponents won't deal in otherwise and then win. If you're playing with a group who won't cut it, it destroys the game.

In mahjong, you must advance forward. **From tenpai to riichi, from riichi to tsumo, from tsumo to ippatsu or uradora: mahjong is a game of advancing.**

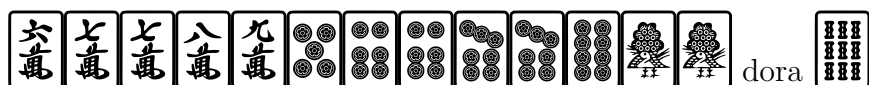
Since going damaten and winning like that means not advancing anymore, in the latter half you will encounter the "catch" of not being able to win in important places.

Isn't it better to not aim for ron and tsumo at the very end? Everyone pools his power on the way while building the hand by keeping the best tiles, but then at the journey's end tries to hide it instead of showing it. **This mahjong is different from the WAY (道): it is inhuman (非道).** Inhuman, in other words soulless (非道い).



2.2 If the hand can be improved, wait one turn

Question




Do you call riichi with pinfu only?




(Shibukawa, 2nd place in East 3, called riichi immediately.)

Answer

Wait one turn.

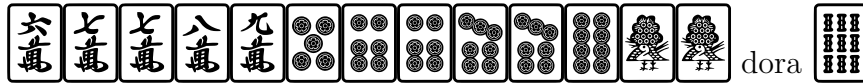
In the live broadcast, another player (Takizawa) didn't call riichi with a chiitoi  tanki in the previous round, so I felt that it would be good to apply energy to the table, and said "riichi would be good." But it's still better to wait for one turn with this hand.

The reason why is that the first turn after attaining tenpai is the most likely to improve the hand.

Waiting for one turn for an improvement, drawing   or  to of course instantly call riichi, and drawing the winning tile on ippatsu is a common story. **Don't try to win silently, but leave space, sense the interval.**

2.3 If someone is going for honitsu, call riichi even on an off-suit wait

Question



When someone is going for honitsu in souzu, would you riichi with a manzu wait? What about a souzu wait?

Answer

Riichi with either.

If he is going for honitsu of souzu, call riichi and tell him “I’m waiting on tiles that you can’t use.” With a souzu wait, call riichi too with the sense of going for his overflow tile.

Also, in the case it becomes a tsumo contest, the opponent’s hand is expensive while yours is just pinfu, so if you win and destroy the opponent’s decisive hand, it can be said to be an extremely meaningful win. Even if your hand is just 2000 points, if you destroy the opponent’s 8000 point hand, you can add it for a total value of 10000 points. You must not forget this added value. **Winning even a 1000 point hand in a decisive place like this, is like scoring a goal in soccer, an extremely valuable thing.**

There are many winning hands in mahjong, but my favorite is pushing a dangerous musuji against 3 riichi to win a 1000 open hand. I think exactly that is the real pleasure of mahjong. It’s not winning haneman or baiman.

Mainstream theory

Same suit → won’t come so **riichi** for tsumo

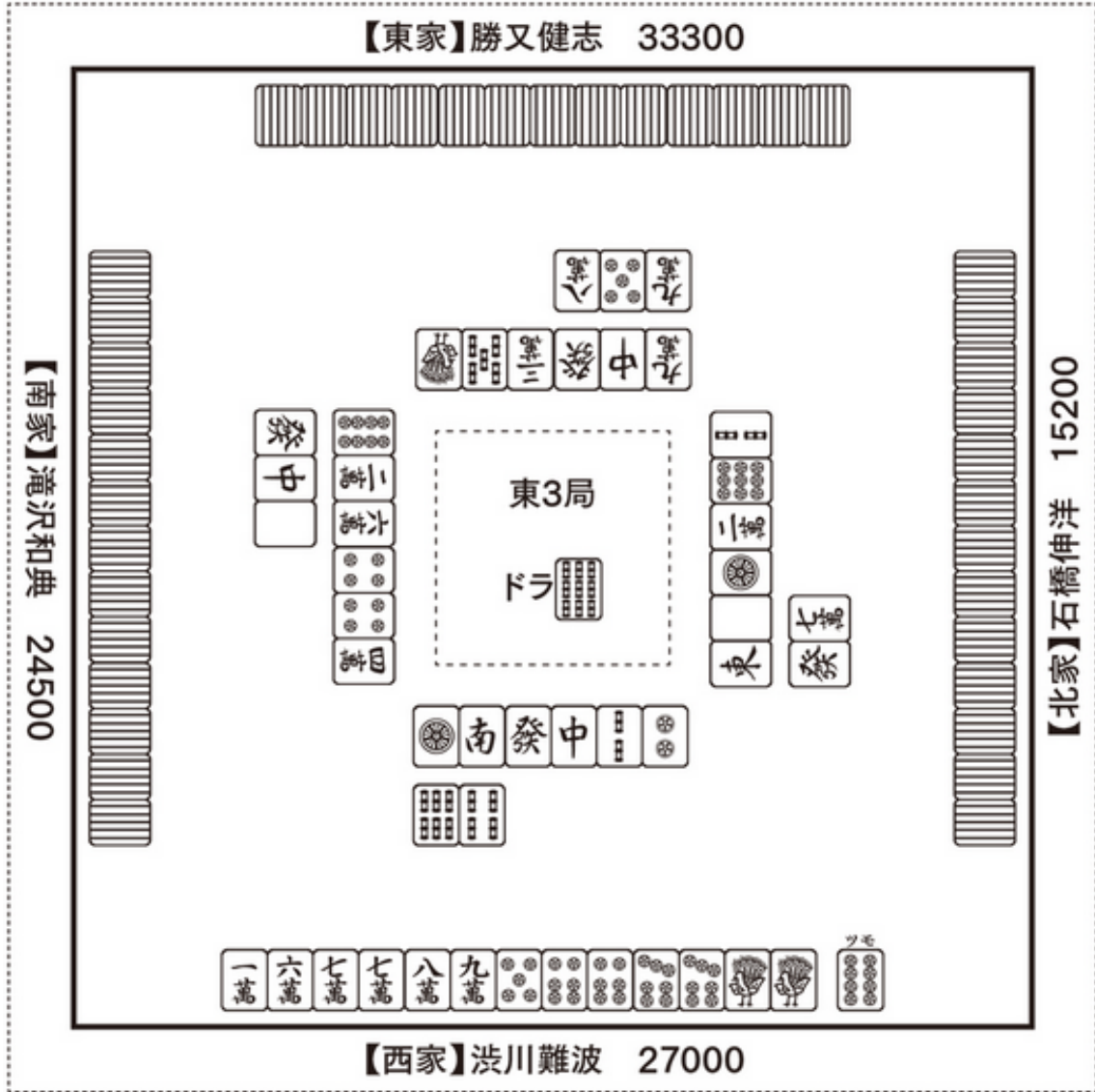
Different suit → easy to come out from other two players so **dama**

My theory

Same suit → **riichi** aiming for the overflow tile

Different suit → **riichi** aiming for the tile he can’t use

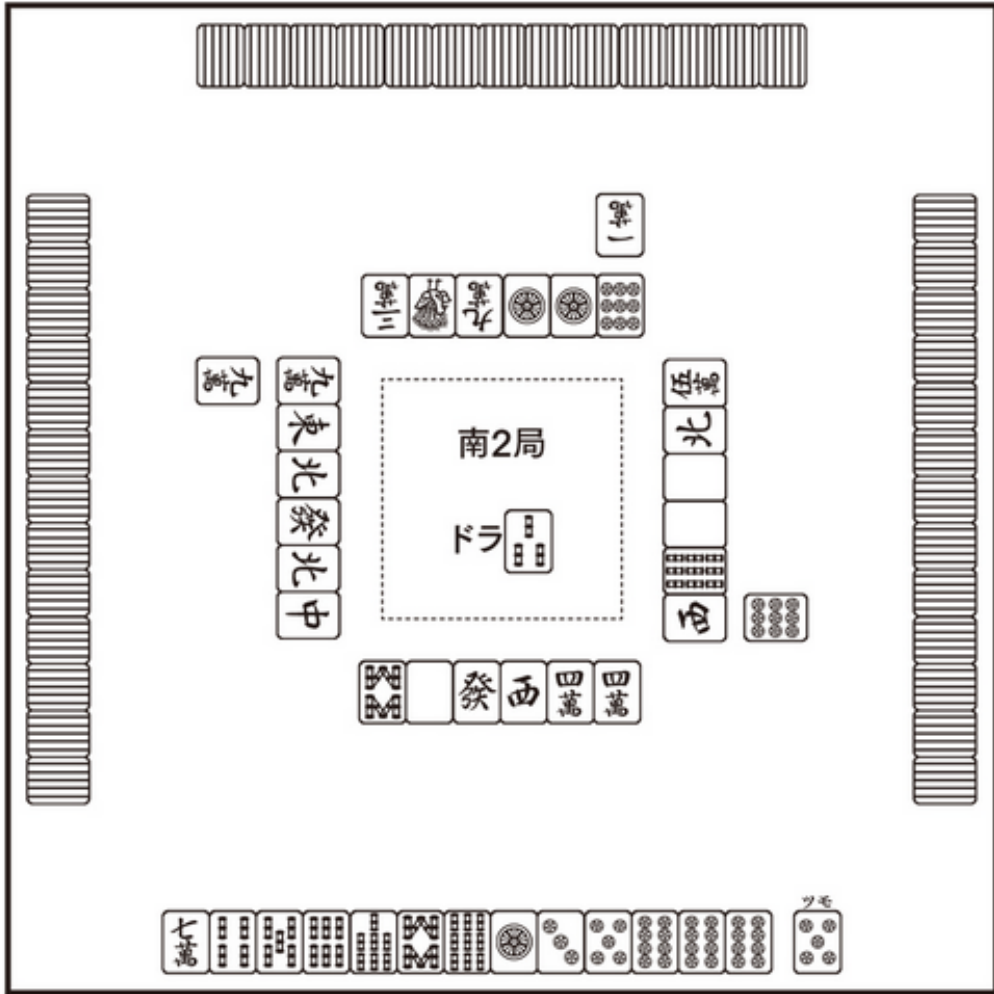
Let go of the idea that you can win stealthily with dama.
Call riichi to invigorate the field.



【北家】勝又健志 37700

【東家】滝沢和典 25100

【西家】石橋伸洋 13500



【南家】渋谷難波 23700

2.5 Wait one turn for sanshoku improvement



Question



Dealer's pinfu doradora tenpai, would you riichi? (Sasaki did)

Answer

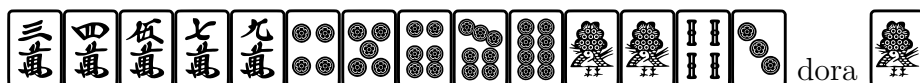
Wait one turn.

 improves to sanshoku,  to tanyao, so it's good to wait one turn.

It's not good to go damaten because you want to win with dama, but it's okay to go dama to make the hand more expensive. **Never just riichi haphazardly, that is the intuition called defense.**

2.6 Don't take kanchan tenpai

Question



As dealer, you have doradora tenpai on turn 6, but it's kanchan. Would you do the currently popular kanchan instant riichi? (Arai did)



Answer

Cut  and don't take tenpai.

Foresee an improvement to sanmenchan with  or sanshoku around .

Because you are dealer, you can say it would be a confining (足止め) riichi, but that is a sad idea based on the presupposition that the opponents will fold.


Not taking tenpai might be surprising, but in my mahjong you should sometimes not even declare ron, so it's only natural to sometimes not take tenpai. **There seems to be a saying that a kanchan without yaku should riichi, but this hand has yaku.** You can see both pinfu and sanshoku.

Only if  comes should you riichi with an unfortunate (仕方がない) feeling, and if  comes it's good to riichi shanpon with the idea to tsumo the dora.

In the game, the pro called riichi immediately, but it is a sad riichi. Did he not understand that this hand can still move forward?

The very word, the idea of the dealer's confining riichi is funny. It is something that destroys mahjong, a mahjong-destroying riichi. You must not destroy the game. You are also part of the game, so it is like destroying the boat you are sailing on.

The dealer is the captain. The captain must not destroy the boat and run away. Have responsibility for the game. This riichi is an irresponsible riichi.

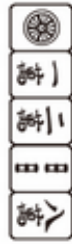
While you can call kanchan  riichi in the special case that there are no tiles left, calling it on turn 6 is like when just after a show starts, "THE END" suddenly appears.

You might say that you won't draw a ryanmen with , but pursuing the possibility that it might: that is mahjong.

【西家】猿川真寿 3400

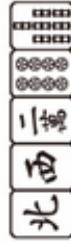


【北家】佐々木寿人 47400



東3局

ドラ



【南家】鈴木たろう 23700



【東家】新井啓文 25500

2.7 Closed honitsu kanchan is dama

Question



You are in the South seat just after the dealer has called riichi. The dealer's discards

are 50000, 33333, 44444, 北, 33333, 22222, 33333, 22222 (Katsumata went dama with 22222)

Answer

Discard 22222 but don't call riichi.

Take damaten and foresee accepting 20000 50000.

However, in this situation even if you draw 20000 and you can wait for 10000, 40000, 70000, 10000 was already discarded once, so the acceptance was poor, and you can understand that after waiting for an upgrade a few turns it's no problem to riichi.

There is also the upgrade to sanankou.

2.8 Closed honitsu sanankou is riichi

Question



In the same situation as previous question, you have improved the hand to tsumori

sanankou. Call riichi? The dealer's riichi has discarded (Katsumata stayed damaten with)

Answer

After improving to sanankou in damaten, the waiting had effect, so accept that improvement and call riichi.

In the game, the player continued damaten with , then drew later and seeing that the dealer's first discard was , cut , missing a tsumo with .

Had he called riichi, he would have had baiman tsumo, and instead it was a draw. Sad!

Having come so far with this hand, you should push all dangerous tiles, and since you must win this at all costs it's good to call riichi. After drawing , you should go **"It passed!?! He must have completed that wait first (入り目でした)."** Indeed it was. Discarding the tile that gave tenpai to the opponent (入り目) and winning: you must burden razor's edge risks like that at some point.

During the live broadcast I also said "Shouldn't he riichi?" If you riichi this, even supposing you deal in you must accept it.

Take great pains to attack! Call riichi! When your hand says this and you get fucked from not calling riichi, you destroy your own flow.

麻雀最強戦2014特別予選 決勝(Q7、Q8の実戦譜)

南1局0本場 供託0点

ドラ 七萬

東家：新井啓文

持ち点	35800
動き	1500
積み棒	0
リーチ	-1000
合計	36300

配牌 伍萬 八萬 北 北 北 北 北 北 北 北 北 北 南 南

ツモ 北 七萬 九萬 三萬 三萬 三萬 三萬 三萬 三萬 三萬 三萬 三萬 三萬

捨牌 伍萬 北 北 北 北 北 北 北 北 北 北 北 北 北

手牌 七萬 八萬 九萬 北 北 北 北 北 北 南 南

南家：勝又健志

持ち点	32500
動き	1500
積み棒	0
リーチ	0
合計	34000

配牌 一萬 一萬 三萬 四萬 伍萬 六萬 西 西 西

ツモ 八萬 八萬 八萬 八萬 八萬 八萬 八萬 八萬 九萬 一萬

捨牌 三萬 伍萬 八萬 八萬 八萬 八萬 八萬 八萬 八萬 八萬 八萬 八萬 八萬

手牌 一萬 一萬 一萬 四萬 伍萬 六萬 九萬 西 西 西

10巡目 八萬 ツモでリーチすべき

西家：佐々木寿人

持ち点	24500
動き	-1500
積み棒	0
リーチ	0
合計	23000

配牌 三萬 四萬 六萬 七萬 八萬 九萬 發 中

ツモ 二萬 七萬 九萬 西

捨牌 發 中 東 東 二萬

手牌 二萬 三萬 四萬 六萬 七萬 七萬 九萬 西

北家：石橋伸洋

持ち点	7200
動き	-1500
積み棒	0
リーチ	0
合計	5700

配牌 一萬 四萬 伍萬 六萬 七萬 北

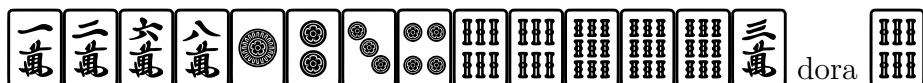
ツモ 二萬 四萬 南 中 中 發

捨牌 一萬 北 南 東 二萬 二萬 東 伍萬

手牌 四萬 四萬 六萬 七萬 南 發 中 中

2.9 Deny kanchan instant riichi

Question



South 1, South seat (2nd place)

With a dora pair, you are tenpai for kanchan. Instant riichi? (Katsumata cut and called riichi.)

Answer

Wait one turn.

Instant riichi is not bad, but there are several possible improvements. can make ryanmen, and or can make a dora shanpon.

In order of how happy you will be, you should try waiting for

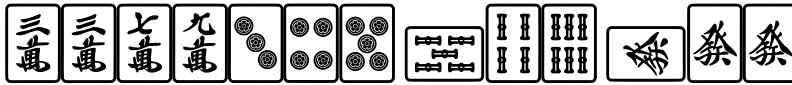
1.


2.

3.




If comes, you should think that the situation is good.

In the game, the player called instant riichi, and his ippatsu draw was . Had he stayed damaten, he could have cut to switch to dora shanpon, but was shimocho's winning tile, with



At times like that, don't think that calling instant riichi would have been good: rather, you should reflect about how it's you who made a mistake by letting shimocha call  into tenpai.

In the game, the player avoided dealing in by calling instant riichi, but afterwards last place tsumo'd a haneman and he ended up losing 3000 points. Wouldn't it have been better to deal into shimocha for a mere 2000 points?

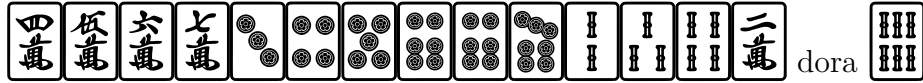
Let's think a bit about why he drew . As seen in the previous question, this player (Katsumata) missed a  shanpon menhon sanankou the previous round. Because he was dragged down by that bad form, he deals in with .

If you make a mistake one round, pay attention the next: it's important to think of such things when you play. It's good in the end to deal in, but still you must pay attention. Dealing in while paying attention and dealing in without understanding have completely different meanings.

On the other hand, you should attack after winning a good hand. Although a good hand does not necessarily mean that it must be expensive.

2.10 Calmly know the balance

Question



In the South round, you are clearly in last place with only 5700 points. 2nd place has called riichi, and 3rd place has called and appears to be in tenpai. Would you call oikake riichi with kanchan? (Ishibashi did)

Answer

Since 2nd and 3rd place are fighting with a riichi and a call, this is a situation where other people are having a good fight, so don't intrude on the contest for 1st place.

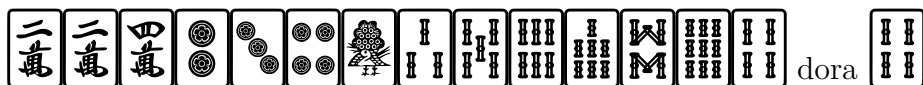
Here, only if you draw for 234 sanshoku, can you be one of the party, and take part in the contest.

In the game, the result was ippatsu tsumo with ura for haneman, but it certainly can not be called a good win.


Rather than that, it would be better to tsumo 500/1000 without calling riichi.

2.11 Confirmed ittsumi is riichi

Question







East 4, North seat, turn 6, slightly ahead in 1st

Confirmed ittsumi tenpai on , would you riichi? (Arai went damaten)

Answer

Yes.

Instead of going dama and aiming for ron to steal the opponents' luck and point sticks, you must instead go and take them with your own power. Also, if you end up not winning, you must not say "Ah, should have gone dama..." **If you advance forward first and fail to win, you should just think again of your insufficient power.**

This player drew another  with his next draw and should have switched to  nobetan if he thought  was bad, but he continued with .

This kind of thinking that tries to win sneakily with damaten might win the match before your eyes, but it has no potential.

2.12 Summary: riichi decision

1. Riichi with the final shape
2. Don't rely on ron, aim for tsumo
3. If there are possible improvements, stay dama for one or several turns
4. If the winning tile comes out while in damaten, there are cases where you shouldn't call ron (to make the hand more expensive)
5. Don't take meaningless kanchan tenpai
6. Dora shanpon is okay




**You must think every time whether the hand can win or can not win.
When the hand reaches the final shape you envision, discover your joy
and call riichi!**

2.13 Chiitoitsu hell wait is forbidden

Question







South 3, 3rd place West seat

Chiitai doradora tenpai.  has just been discarded twice,  is live. What would you discard? (Arai went dama on )

Answer

Take the  wait.

You must look at the field. For me, there is no reason at all to take the  hell wait. After the game, the player said “The live  wait felt bad.” If you think that because toimen just discarded  the last one will come out from somewhere, you must not think such soulless things.

Had he called riichi with , it would have been ippatsu tsumo, but unfortunately it was a draw.

2.14 There is no dealer riichi

Question

A dealer riichi has an average value of 9000 points, so I have been taught to fold from iishanten...

Answer

I think the reason is that in the teaching of the world people say “You must fold because the dealer called riichi.”

Because they have this mistaken prejudice, the result is that they allow the dealer to renchan, and make the game’s situation one-sided.

There are people who will drop an anko of a safe tile against a riichi to fold. You must have learned the teaching that you must fold clearly whenever you fold. I can’t stomach this pathetic, embarrassing giving up without a fight at all. Against a riichi, I will not allow myself anything but to keep advancing as far as possible.

There are no dealers or non-dealers. You must not recoil from advancing.

2.15 Designate an imaginary first place

Question

If you are tenpai with tanyao nomi while in first place, should you stay dama?

Answer

There is a saying that the rich man should not pick fights (金持ち喧嘩せず). This is the way of thinking that you should always take a stance that can fold, in order not to lose your hard-earned money.

However, exactly because you are rich, you should advance more and more not to spoil your current good hands. Instead of shifting the round with tanyao only, press on the opposition call riichi, believing in the tiles. Preserving your point sticks while losing the energy of the tiles is unfortunate. On the contrary, losing points in this game without losing the tile energy is fine.


When I gambled, **even if I was ahead by 30000 points, I would ignore that I was in first place and designate for myself an imaginary first place opponent, so that I could delude myself into thinking I need one more win, just a little bit to overtake him, as if I was in a close second instead of a faraway first.** Like that, I dispelled the situation and could always face forward, and created the way of the great lead dispersing complacency.

3 Fresh from the haipai: 21 FIRST DISCARDS to open your eyes

3.1 Feel the double 東 pair + something extra


Question



East 1, dealer's haipai. What would you discard? (Shibukawa cut )







Answer



Since you are dealer, you should think to leverage the double 東 and the dora .

At a glance you can see sanshoku of 234, but with double 東 it's not necessary to aim for a sequence-based yaku. Rather go for the pair-based honitsu.

You must already have this idea in mind for the very first discard and decide what to cut with it in mind. Therefore, don't discard pinzu, honors or pairs.

There are people who might feel that drawing  after discarding  is a backfire (裏目), but you should not let that bother you at all: it is a good backfire. For many players,  might be the useless tiles in this hand, but for me,  light up. That's why you discard them in that order. Because this round is toitsuba, you won't draw  or .

Your mental attitude in East 1 must be one of ignoring the state of your luck and playing aggressively in any situation. Don't get afraid and push your courage forward.

3.3 Show your posture from the first discard

Question

In the mahjong demon style (雀鬼流), why is it forbidden to discard honors and dora with the first discard?

Answer

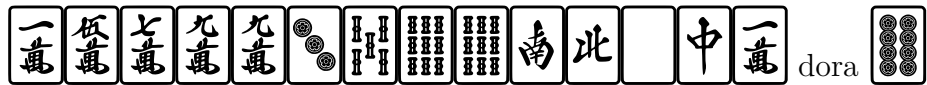
Discarding dora with the first discard is a play of overlooking or of a lack of concentration, a selfish play to deny calling it to the opponents, a play that does not think about the nuisance it causes: a cheap trick born from weakness and cunning.


Furthermore, not discarding an honor as the first discard is holding up the promise, creating a beginning, not committing the rudeness of disallowing opponents to call their winds: if everyone plays like this, it connotes persisting to the spirit of equality. And the most important of all is to **put yourself in a difficult place from the point of the haipai, and keep that playing posture until the end.** Apart from that, there is also learning concentration and creativity, ascertaining the good and the bad of your own intuition.

Only by doing this is mahjong perfected and does its content become deeper.

3.4 A hand with many honors is a chance for honitsu


Question






East 1, West seat's haipai. With 4 honors, this is not a very good haipai, so what would you discard? (Katsumata cut )


Answer



Since the first draw gave you a 3rd pair, discard the  which is useless for both honitsu and chiitai or toitai.

Advance the hand while seeing honitsu of manzu or toitai, and pon  or  if they come out after the hand advances.


By going for two suits from the start with , aim to go for one suit (honitsu or chinitsu) in the distant future.

Another tile which you must look for is . Advance the hand while looking for sanshoku doukou of 9.

3.6 Call rather than going for pinfu




Question








East 1, dealer's haipai. It looks like a pinfu hand that has trouble calling, so what do you aim for and what do you discard? (Shibukawa cut )

Answer

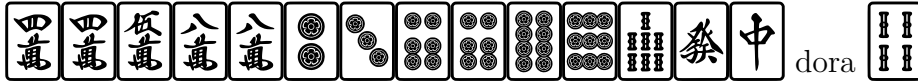



If you get this haipai, you must first notice the 789 sanshoku. Therefore, the key tile is . While thinking of your movements afterwards, don't look for  but for . Looking for it means wishing to draw it and checking the discards for it.

It's not the  that gets you closer to pinfu. Just by drawing the , you can call all kinds of tiles, and after , think of cutting   to go for sanshoku.

3.7 Two suits


Question



East 1, South seat's haipai. What would you discard? (Ishibashi cut )

Answer



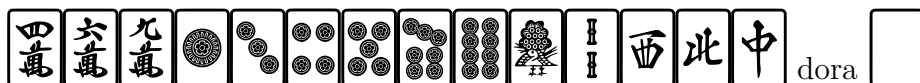
You can notice that since  is the only tile in souzu, you want to go for a two suit hand in pinzu and manzu.


Also, because you only have one tile in the dora suit, you can see that the hand is not suitable for dora. You must notice this meaning. Mahjong does not start from reading, but from noticing things.

Just like when fastening a button on a suit, in mahjong the first movement is important, so when you open the haipai you should always notice at least 3 or 4 things. Afterwards, it's interesting how the hand will develop. If you just advance the hand from haipai as it is without noticing anything, no improvement will take place.

3.8 A haipai with an easy to discard suji is good



Question



East 2, dealer's haipai. Not a very good haipai, so what would you discard? (Ishibashi cut )

Answer



You can see ittssuu in pinzu, and because you have  in manzu you discard . I think that there are people even outside the mahjong demon style who don't want to discard an honor as the first discard, and this haipai has one tile which is easy to discard even for them, which makes it good.


In the same round, South seat's haipai  is similar.

If you can find a number tile that's easy to discard just like that, this is a good omen.

3.9 Two suits II

Question





South 1, dealer's haipai. What would you discard? (Shibukawa cut )


Answer






This is a hand that wants to take two suits and move towards a single suit of manzu.

When  or  come, discard all of the souzu even with the dora acceptance.

Drawing any of , ,  is also fine.

In the game, the player discarded , so we understand that he did not see honitsu.


After discarding , he could have drawn another  and cut .

Start with two suits, and before long go for one suit. Rather than simply advancing the hand as it is, an easy hand without dreams, you must pursue the hand with dreams even if the road is long.

3.10 Notice the two sanshoku

Question



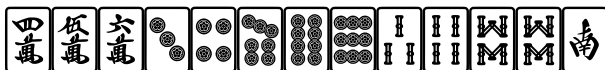
East round, 1st place dealer's haipai. What do you think and what would you discard? (Sasaki cut )

Answer

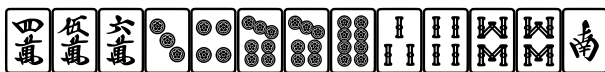


You won't draw honors but discard anyway. It would indeed be good to have after drawing for 678 or 789 sanshoku or as the head (for tanyao pinfu), but you should ignore that and see the 345 sanshoku. Since it's good to exchange the for when it comes, this sanshoku is better.

What you don't want to draw with this hand is .



This hand has difficulty moving. You are happy with , but you would rather have another or over .



Like this, you can easily use the dora after drawing or . You must already have all of this in mind when you make the first discard.

Also, since you can see the sanshoku in your own haipai, you must also see the sanshoku in your opponents' hands (that it is there).

Since the opponents' hands can be seen from your own hand like shadows, and just like to find the shadow, you must always play a mahjong that is like the shining of the Sun. There is no need to hide the shadow of your own hand. You must always play to reveal the shadow.

3.11 A hand with many honors is a chance for honitsu II

Question



East round, North seat's haipai. What would you aim for and what would you discard? (Sarukawa cut 10000)

Answer



Obviously aim for honitsu. 10000 is also fine, but discarding 40000 ignores the direction of the opponents so it is better.

Afterwards, move forward foreseeing drawing one of 東 or 中. Since you have two suits from the start, go for one suit in souzu.

Don't discard 60000 70000 immediately, but it's not a sequence you want to complete. **Drawing another honor pair makes for a better hand.**

In the game, the player drew 70000 the next turn and cut 南, then drew 南 two turns later. From this we understand that he did not see honitsu.

3.12 Call to invigorate the hand with a dora pair





Question






Dealer's haipai with a dora pair. What would you discard? (Arai cut )



Answer





Discarding  is simple, but it's too offhand. In this haipai, you must first see the 789 sanshoku. After calling chii for , you can draw  to create ittsumi, so you can also chii .




Like this, discarding  with the first discard foresees these future improvements. Transfer to ittsumi after getting  and : this is the idea you must already have in the beginning.

Discarding  and drawing a tile around  creates a mere hand. In the mahjong demon style we don't discard honors with the first discard and try to discard something else because this requires creativity.

Even a beginner can hold on to  for pinfu. Seeing ittsumi with  requires creativity.

It's not frustrating to draw   after discarding .

The immediate loss of  is a small story. Being able to see the faraway sanshoku requires both imagination and creativity. Like that, a story begins from the start: isn't that interesting?

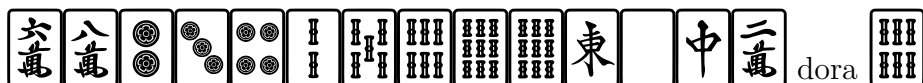
Everyone thinks in confusion: what should I do when a riichi is called, what should I do when I'm in tenpai. By playing interesting moves from the first discard, you can gauge whether it goes or does not go as you have imagined.


Even if the tiles don't come as you thought in this round, improvements will occur in the next rounds, so you should play mahjong in this way.

It would be good to improve like this, is what you should constantly think. Right now, everyone's playstyle isn't improving (変化) but just strange (変). I would like to see a purer, more natural improvement.

3.15 Discard the terminal pair to go for tanyao


Question



South seat's haipai. What would you discard? (Katsumata cut )

Answer



Since I think this will be tanyao, discard  even though it's the only head, with the idea of making a new head at some point. Aim for 234 sanshoku after drawing another dora.

The nature of mahjong is to get rid of the useless and bothersome things you think in your head and search for things you can't see. If you don't do this, the quality of your mahjong will not improve, and to win in the long run you must improve its quality. People who want to win at mahjong shouldn't desire to win first, but to get better, in my opinion. If you focus on the wins that are swinging like a carrot before your eyes, you will be influenced by short term things like "isn't that a loss" and will never improve. First think to improve.

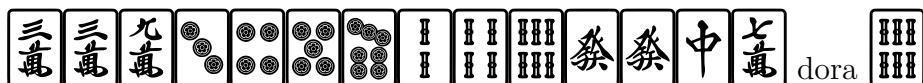
Many people wish for a good haipai to come before they open it, but a too good haipai, one that is far advanced and full of easy shapes is a synonym of misfortune. There is a saying that **"after trouble comes opportunity"**, but only those who display true effort and skill when they are in trouble will be visited by opportunity.




You can say **"do your best precisely during an opportunity"**, but it will go well in this case even if you leave it be, so it is not a long-lasting opportunity. This is a coincidental opportunity, not a created one.

Even if your environment and your talent are not satisfactory, you must devote all your power.

3.16 Confirm the dora acceptance in a ryankan

Question









West seat's haipai.  seemed good to discard but you drew . What would you discard? (Sasaki cut )

Answer



Ignore the  kanchan that can't use .

Of course you can also discard , but that is an easy first discard which has no severity. By discard  instead of , the player can show that he is able to see through this hand.

You can see , but rather than that he is seeing . In pinzu, it is .



This is the kind of final form I imagine. If there is a number tile that's easy to discard with the first discard, that already indicates the situation is good. On the other hand, if you draw a tile next to the one you were going to discard, the situation is not good.

3.17 Notice the invisible ittsumi

Question








South round, last place, North seat's haipai. What would you discard? (Ishibashi

cut )

Answer



After drawing souzu with the first draw, I want to extend souzu. You can see ittsumi after drawing  and . Since you can make 3 sequences in souzu, you only need 1 more mentsu elsewhere.

With this kind of haipai, you really want to discard  or . It would be a waste to draw tiles around , right?

There are people who think mahjong is a game of intellectual power. People who are smart are also said to win often. They are likely to mention probability and statistics. Humans from our educated society who only rely on knowledge think that is the road to victory.

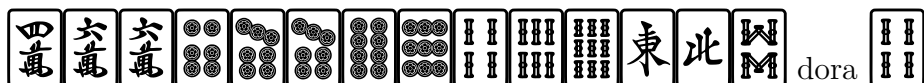
However, although having knowledge is a bit more useful than not having any, it's not all-powerful. People who over-rely on just their head, just their knowledge, can't perceive the real deal.

Extending. Grasping. Obtaining. Knowing. These things are certainly not capable of one-way traffic. When knowledge and action walk hand in hand as best friends, only then does achievement become possible.

In the game of mahjong, you will not win unless you keep the balance between three things: the heart, the body and wisdom.

3.18 Confirm the dora acceptance in a ryankan II

Question



South 1, last place, South seat's haipai. What would you discard? (Ishibashi cut



Answer



Foresee tanyao by drawing around and swapping for , and drop .

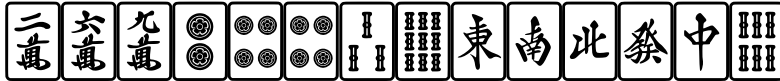
Rather than making a sequence with , you would rather draw or .

Since is dora, you would rather draw than anyway.

If you compare mahjong to human life, the haipai you receive is “destiny” (宿命, *sors est sua cuique ferenda*). If you don't like it, you can't run away from it. Then, the calls and tsumos that change it are “fortune” (運命, *faber est suæ quisque fortunæ*). If you don't grasp and feel all of the haipai that you have received in the beginning, your destiny, you won't be able to move your fortune.

3.19 With a scattered hand, foresee drawing yakuhai



Question



South round, West seat's haipai. With this awful hand, what would you discard?

Answer



This hand is a bit far away from winning, but since it has a pair of , I think you can go forward relying on the power of yakuhai. Only foresee stacking . Until you draw one of those, the hand won't advance, but as soon as you do, face to the win. That's how important honor tiles are.

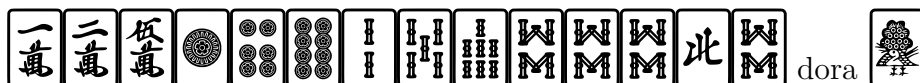
Until that happens, you can for example discard all manzu to make two suits, then move to a honitsu or chinitzu.



When people say something, it is always “freedom, freedom”, as if freedom were something like justice, **but you should also be very grateful for unfreedom, as I think it is a pleasant thing.** In mahjong, being blessed with good haipai which extend freely is considered good, but at times like that I consider mahjong a bit boring. When all that comes is trash hands, the tsumos don't extend, you do your best with utmost effort but are shadowrealmed by dealing into mangan: when that happens, I think, wew, I'm grateful mahjong exists.

Spring comes silently. Until then advance by yourself, and try to taste some of that unpleasant cold.


3.20 Discard a tile from the haipai kan



Question



East 4, first place North seat's haipai. With the first draw,  became a kan. Would you call kan? (Sasaki cut )

Answer




Don't call kan and discard .

This hand has many kanchan, and you want to call  or  in the near future. If you call kan with and open hand, you don't just increase the dora, but also increase the uradora when someone calls riichi, which disorders the field for no reason.

Since this hand doesn't want to call kan, you should show that from the start.

In the game, after two riichis being called, he was tenpai with



and because he didn't want to discard , called kan, even though that's dangerous with a kanchan wait, but it couldn't be helped. Because 2  were visible, I would have gone for it and discarded . Instead of thinking it's dangerous (to deal in) because you have all 4, the idea is that you can go for it.

By the way, in mahjong demon style, you can only call kan when you are in closed tenpai. This is to take responsibility for the uradora.

In this match, I saw several kans from pros, but they were all in dangerous situations. You shouldn't be afraid because you have all 4, but you should take the risk. If everyone takes responsibility like that, it creates trust.

Irresponsible riichi, irresponsible folding, irresponsible kan. Mahjong like that is wrong.

There might be pros who say that the rules don't say anything about responsibility, **but to increase the level, humanity should go before rules.**

In a game, if you die you can go and try again right after, but a human being can't. It makes sense that viewpoints would be different between myself, who came from matches where losing even once meant death, and today's mahjong pros who view it as a game, but pros must be shown what gambling (勝負) means. **The feeling of compassion, the feeling of becoming a sacrifice and gathering the chestnuts from the fire is also gambling.**

Gambling does not just mean winning, but also includes compassion, and often having to do things that are a loss for yourself.

3.21 Discard the dora only in tenpai

Question

With a mentanpin hand where a guest wind is dora, isn't it good to discard it early before opponents can draw a pair?

Answer

That is selfish mahjong.

People like that, when they see the dora getting called for mangan, forget their responsibility for letting that player call and immediately try to run away and hide. In the end, when someone else deals into the mangan, they even say "Ah! That was good."

That kind of playstyle is a cowardly mahjong which is a disgrace to men. It is nothing less than exposing your true ugly character on top of the table as if it were the most normal thing in the world. This kind of people, will in normal social life, even when they have the intention of understanding love or compassion on a level above knowledge, tend to do something completely different when push comes to shove.

Only get rid of the dora when you have a shape with which you can take responsibility. For having kept it so long, even if as a result you end up dealing in with it, it clearly leaves behind purity, compassion and conviction, so it is better in reality.

Whether a person looks down on mahjong with contempt or cherishes it, can be found out just from his way of dealing with the dora. And the goddess of victory will certainly smile on those who cherish the dora. Those who don't win in mahjong are those who don't cherish the tiles.

3.22 Chapter summary

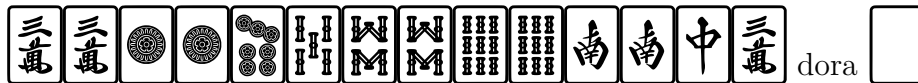
1. Look for honitsu, chiitai/toitai, sanshoku, ittsumi
2. First go for two suits, then see single suit (honitsu, chinitsu)
3. A hand with many honors is honitsu or toitai
4. Take the hand building course that doesn't let go of dora
5. Think where to make 4 groups and 1 pair
6. Check the discard for the tiles you want
7. Look for a non-honor tile to discard


From the moment of drawing the haipai, put your head in full gear and look for the tile to abandon!

4 Even pros got it wrong! 19 WWYDs of correct mahjong

4.1 If you draw an anko with chiitoitsu iishanten, check the discards





Question



With chiitoitsu iishanten, you have drawn an anko. What would you discard? (Tak-izawa cut )

Answer



You must look at the field. Since  has been discarded once and  twice, you must ignore suuankou and discard . In the game, the pro discarded  which shows that he wasn't paying attention.

【東家】石橋伸洋 15200



中北西



東2局

ドラ



【南家】勝又健志 33300



【北家】渋川難波 28600



【西家】滝沢和典 22900

4.2 Basics of discard reading

Question



These are the discards of a player who called riichi. Would you discard 此 against this, since it looks like it would be expensive?

Answer

Unless it's kokushi musou, this hand is not expensive.

Since the discards contain all three suits, this hand is not honitsu. If it were a single suit hand, it would indeed be expensive to deal in with 此, but with these discards you must ignore the possibility of chiitoitsu and discard it.

Whenever you stop on a tile consciously, unnatural things are generated and breathing becomes difficult. Abiding by the natural flow and stopping or being stopped naturally is the proper intrinsic form. In the breathing (呼吸) of a real game, it is also thus.

If you stop consciously, it instantly becomes difficult, but when you are straining your ears or are dumbfounded and hold your breath unconsciously, you forget the passage of time.

4.3 Notice the invisible sanshoku III


Question







What would you discard? (Katsumata cut )

Answer



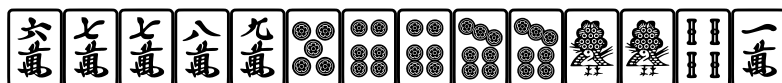
Although this was already the case before drawing, the tile you must see in this hand is . Advance while foreseeing sanshoku of 567.



In the game, the player drew  and discarded , which shows that he didn't see sanshoku. Had he seen , he would have discarded .

See the yet invisible sanshoku and select the required taatsu. Doing familiar things with precision while seeing those that are faraway: that is the right way of action both in mahjong and in life.

4.4 Read the progress of a honitsu hand from the honors




Question

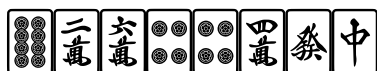


This is a worthless tsumo, but in this situation we understand that kamicha is going for a honitsu of souzu. If you discard  now, will it pass? (Shibukawa cut )

Answer

It will still pass.

Kamicha's honitsu is still slow. The  and  that came out have been discarded twice by other players, so you can understand that he is matching them. At a time like this he is clearly not yet in tenpai, so discarding  is completely fine.



With discards like this that indicate a player is going for either honitsu or chiitoitsu, we can determine their state of progress: **whether the discarded honors have already been discarded or if they are live. If they discard what are live tiles from their point of view, they are tenpai or iishanten.**

【西家】勝又健志 33300



東3局

ドラ



【北家】滝沢和典 24500



【南家】石橋伸洋 15200

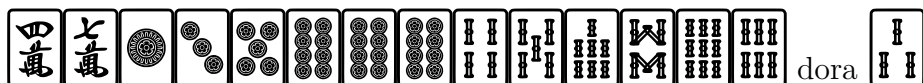



【東家】渋谷難波 27000



4.5 Notice the invisible sanshoku IV


Question

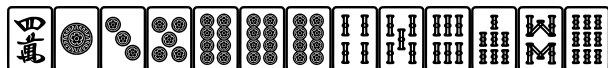


South round, 3rd place North seat. You have completed a ryanmen in souzu. What would you discard? (Shibukawa cut )

Answer




In the game, the player discarded , but you must not ignore the 345 sanshoku.

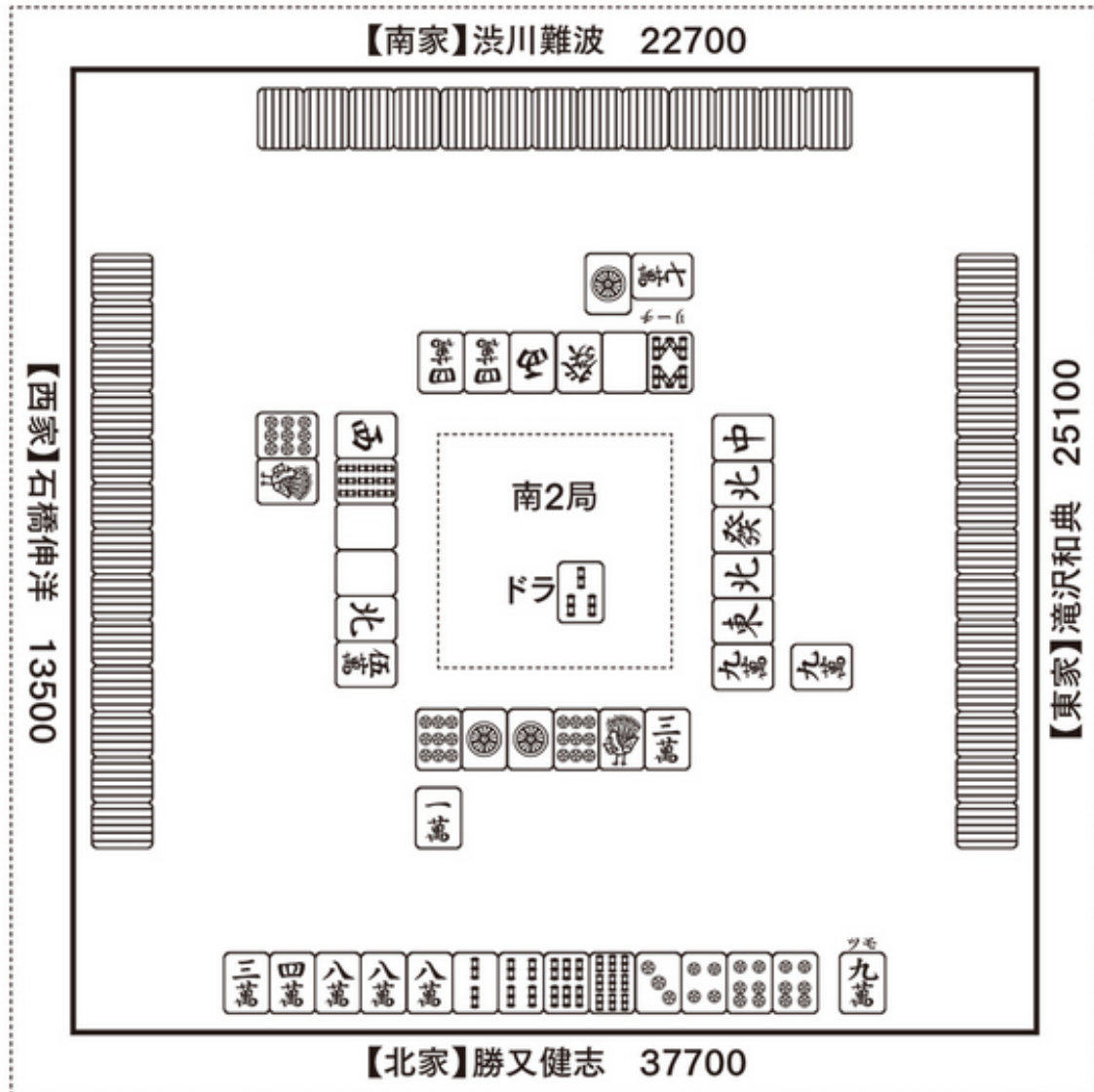


With this hand, you can chii the dora.

In mahjong, there is heavenly luck and earthly luck (天運・地運), in other words the natural flow and the artificial flow, but since heavenly luck is a natural flow, the power of humans does not compare to it. However, earthly luck receives a kind of artificial influence from human effort and skill, or indeed from mistakes, so it changes from moment to moment.

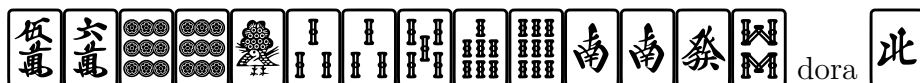
To cultivate earthly luck whether you win or not, a correct course of action is required.

This time,  is a tile that appears as if it will certainly pass, but even when you have to deal in with a tile that makes you go “hmm, this is his winning tile”, you should still deal in. In other words, it should rain. If you try to make it sunny, the crops will not grow and people will get in trouble. **Don't think in terms of profit and loss.** Even when you know you will deal in, follow the natural flow of mahjong and deal in.



4.7 Drop the unneeded ryanmen

Question



South seat's hand. On turn 3, you have completed a kanchan in souzu. What would you discard? (Sarukawa cut)

Answer



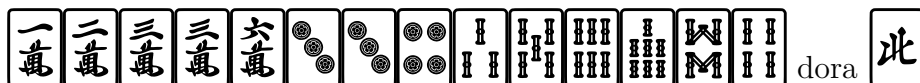
You can see honitsu and toitoi from the haipai, and with drawing the feasibility of honitsu has increased, but don't drop toitoi yet.

By getting rid of the useless manzu ryanmen, you advance while seeing both honitsu and toitoi. You must also discard the intuition of feeling wasteful when you draw or . It is a sequence that is useless, a sequence you don't want to complete.

Accidentally ending up with honitsu and winning, and focusing your aim from this stage and winning: they mean two different things.

4.8 If you can see tanyao pinfu, confirm the head

Question





Dealer, turn 6. You have drawn . What would you discard? (Suzuki cut)

Answer



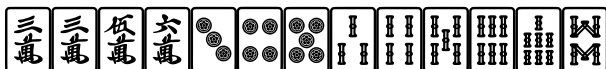
Turning the  into the head, foresee drawing around the  or an ittsumi in souzu.

Because  is the only non-tanyao tile, it is the dirtiest tile in this hand. If you discard , the hand ends up cheap.

In the game, the hand ended up as the following riichi:

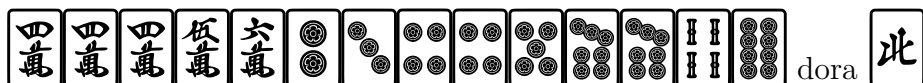



but with the same draws, I would have made the following riichi:



4.9 Open tanyao rather than pinfu


Question



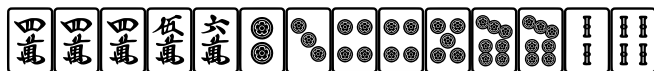
East 1, West seat's hand. What would you discard? (Sasaki cut )




Answer




With this hand, you should leave a callable shape while seeing 456 sanshoku, especially because  has already been discarded 3 times.

In the game, the player discarded  from



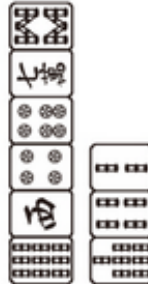
which is okay. Since you see 456 sanshoku with , you don't need . But if you draw , this is a tile you must discard again.

In the game, he did in fact draw the last  and made pinfu tenpai, but it was better to go for a more movable shape.

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4.10 Tanyao consciousness and penchan dropping

Question







In a penchan shape with a 1 and a 2, which one do you discard first?

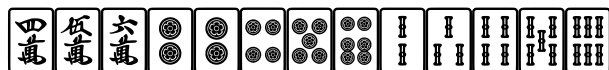
Answer

Start with the 1.

For example, in the game, a pro (Suzuki) had

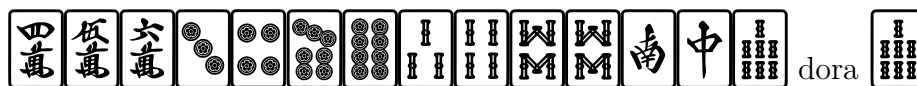





From this hand he discarded , but if you want to break up pinzu starting with  is the correct course of action. After discarding , you can draw another  to move closer to tanyao, or draw a  and then  to make a ryanmen. Whatever happens, the feeling of adding tanyao and advancing the hand is important. With the previous hand, you must envision a final shape like



4.11 The head in a pinfu hand

Question



Dealer, turn 2, you have drawn the dora. Would you discard  or ? (Sasaki cut )

Answer



After drawing the dora with this hand, if you want to use the dora the head of can't be used, so the hand needs a head. Since making a head with adds pinfu, you should keep it over .

Since it's a tanyao pinfu shape, this is not a hand to use and win with .

In mahjong, substance is more important than winning or losing. Rather than trying to win with any trick possible, it's more difficult, but also more valuable, to play a mahjong with the right substance. Despite that, people keep throwing off the right way and choosing the easy way.

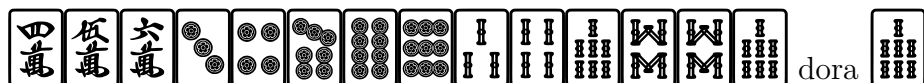
Manly friendship, compassion, honor, determination. These things must be at the center of mahjong. For example, when there is a person with a trend of getting lucky, the other three must play cooperatively and not let him luckshit. That means not letting him call important tiles carelessly and not dealing into him. Furthermore, to prevent the lucky person's big dick hands before they happen, the other three should deal into each other's cheap hands.

This is not a fight of the numbers before your eyes: it is drawing a good picture, a good performance rich in feeling on top of the table.

There are two ways to victory. Taking the win with your own power, and stumbling into the win without any significant effort. The path of one who wins a victory that is not accompanied by effort resembles the way followed by the prodigal son who lives by eating up his parents' inheritance.

4.12 Call even from pinfu doradora



Question



Answer



After drawing the dora, this is a hand that can call.

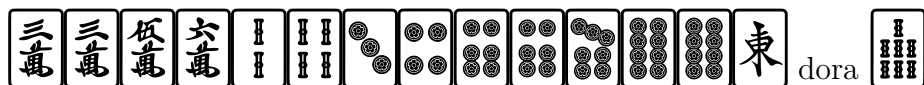
If  comes out and you call, 5800 is enough to aim for, and if you get  afterwards you can add sanshoku.

By the way, mahjong pros get asked by many people “What should I do if I want to get stronger at mahjong?” At those times I say “**Don't do what embarrasses you.**”

Sleeping in late, telling lies and deceiving people are also like that, but there are many things that make you lose to yourself. If you lose at all those things and only want to win at mahjong, you are making a mistake.

4.13 How to betaori

Question



As South seat, dealer has called riichi last turn so you discarded the safe . The dealer has discarded and you have drawn the 3 times discarded . What would you discard? (Arai cut)

Answer



Discarding the previous turn is a bit strange, but if you play that it would be strange not to discard now. Since another player might also call riichi, if you don't want to deal at any cost, you should hold on to .

It certainly can not be said that betaori is good, but if you are going to betaori you should betaori clearly. That is the correct course of action.

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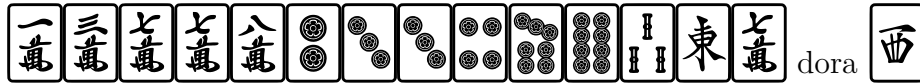


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4.14 Get rid of kanchan and try to stack double 東

Question



East 1, East seat, you have drawn an anko of 七萬 on turn 2. With a floating double 東, what would you discard? (Arai cut 東)

Answer



Since you are aiming for 234 sanshoku with this haipai from the start and foreseeing 四萬, you don't need 一萬. Instead of 二萬, you must see 四萬. Not one step ahead but two steps, three steps ahead.

You might draw another 東 since it is still live, so it's still too early to discard it. Cutting 東 here can not be called abandoning a bad shape.

4.15 3 and 7 are bottleneck tiles

Question



South seat's hand on turn 8. You want to go for honitsu in pinzu, but shimocha has

called making it hard to discard souzu. What would you discard? (Katsumata cut)

Answer

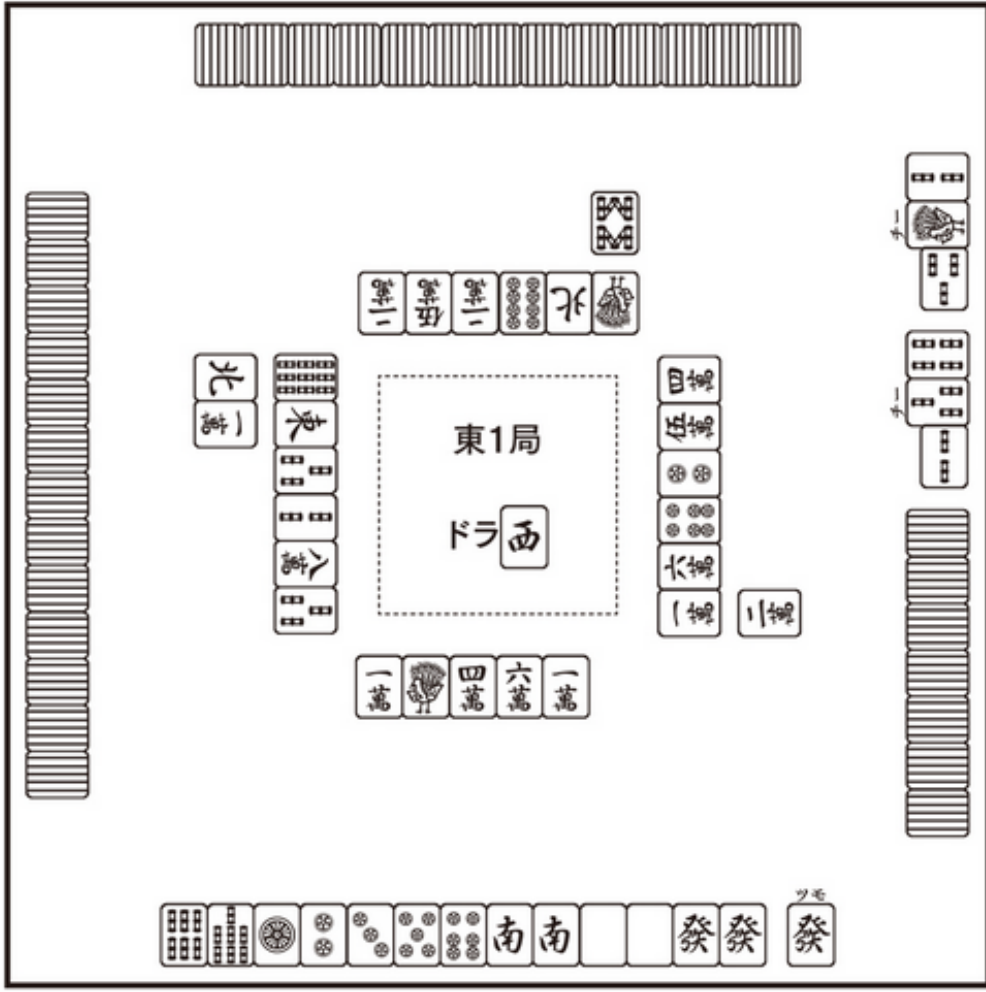


With this hand, you can not give up on honitsu. Discard and .

However, since 7 is a bottleneck tile, discard first. When shimocha is going for honitsu, 3 and 7 are bottleneck tiles, so pay attention to those.

Don't discard or .

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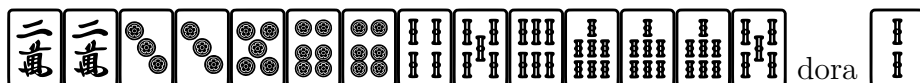
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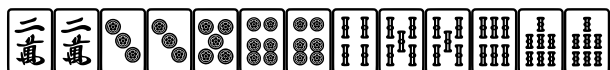
4.16 Chiitoitsu or normal hand


Question




South 3, first place, dealer's hand. Iishanten for both chiitoitsu and a normal hand, so what would you discard? (Sasaki cut )



Answer



Like this, you are iishanten for chiitoitsu and can move towards tanyao pinfu tenpai while chiitoitsu tenpai after drawing .



 leaves open both chiitoitsu and a normal tanyao hand, but rather than leaving behind a weak shanpon wait, it's better to break up the triplet and focus on chiitoitsu.

In the game, after discarding  he immediately drew another one and missed tenpai. Afterwards when  came out, he didn't call pon, **but if he took the regular hand acceptance and screwed up chiitoitsu, he should have called to correct, to repair the hand.**

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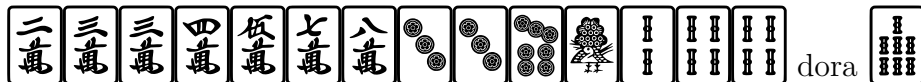
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【北家】佐々木寿人 29900

4.17 The correct playstyle is important

Question






East 4, dealer's hand. On turn 5, you have drawn . What would you discard?

(Takizawa cut )

Answer



All the other tiles are tanyao, and even if you draw  you still complete a sequence.

 becomes very important if you draw a tile like , so it's still too early to discard

it. The discarded  was called, but this is a playstyle mistake.

If you make mistakes in hand building like this, you did not practice enough. Olympic athletes start by undergoing severe training every day, but how many people are there in the mahjong world who do that? If you are always idle and only try to win at mahjong, it's not very pro-like at all.


You must not think about whether you won or lost the game before your eyes. Not pursuing immediate profit, in other words: not a personal mahjong, but playing for everyone.

4.19 Basic techniques of pinfu

Question




East 2, turn 2, dealer's hand. You have 3 honors but what would you discard?

(Ishibashi cut )

Answer




You don't have a pinfu head in this situation, and since  is already used once as the dora indicator, discard it and look for a pinfu head.

In the mahjong world, no people with a towering amount of talent appear, and people keep repeating winning and losing. That is because no true strong player has appeared.

In the tide of those who prefer kindness as the way of man, people have become contented with increasing their knowledge and techniques and relying on others for the part of “strength”. However, even if those who have cast off strength hide their body under the armor of kindness, it is not true kindness, but only half-heartedness in their course of action. **True kindness can only be born from strength.**

4.20 Chapter summary

How to learn the correct playstyle

1. For the correct play, look at both your hand and the discards
2. Notice the invisible sanshoku
3. Don't discard double  too easily
4. Measure the progress of opponents by their honor discards
5. Discard a ryanmen you don't want to complete before honors
6. 3 and 7 are bottleneck tiles, don't let opponents call them early

It's not about winning right now or not winning: play the right playstyle that matches the field!

5 Don't get red in the face even when you deal in: 24 ways to strengthen your mental game

5.1 Recognizing toitsuba

Question

A round where not sequences but pairs are easy to make is called toitsuba (対子場), but how should you play when you have decided it's toitsuba?

Answer

If there are at least 3 pairs (especially honor pairs) in your haipai, it is already toitsuba.

You should think to leverage the pairs.

In mahjong, there are 28 honor tiles that come in the 7 kinds

東	南	西	北		發	中
---	---	---	---	--	---	---

: **toitsuba is only possibly because there are honors.**

There are two kinds of motion in mahjong, horizontal (sequences) and vertical (pairs, triplets and kans), but people who can't play only see one of the two. It feels like they are running down a one-way road.

The mahjong tiles contain the

東	南	西	北
---	---	---	---

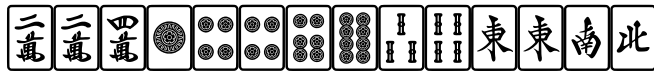
 direction tiles, and the players are also named East, South, West and North, and the rounds are divided into East round and South round. There is no other game which uses the names of the directions. That's how important the directions are.

We can put the honor tiles on a graph as the y (vertical) axis. By lining up 3 of the same tile, they are tiles of the vertical axis. Numbers are the x (horizontal) axis. Many players only think about making number combinations faster than other players, in other words they only look at the x axis. However, the original form of mahjong is not like that, and it will not go smoothly for them.

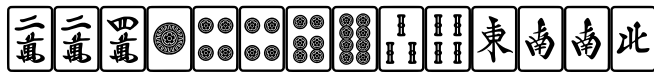
There is both an x and a y axis, and it will not go smoothly unless you use both axes.

What is born when both are used? Revolution (回転) is born. In mahjong, we call this flow (流れ). By obeying the tiles, your will be able to create flow yourself naturally. If you don't obey them, you fall into biased thought like closed hand supremacy (門前主義).

In mahjong demon style rules, it's forbidden to discard honors with the first discard. One of the reasons for that is **to notice the y axis that you wouldn't notice normally**. For example as East round dealer, the hand










is toitsuba, but even the hand



is also toitsuba.

Also, whenever you are toitsuba yourself, opponents are also likely to have

toitsuba. The reason is that when you have pairs like , other players who have floating  or  are more likely to draw another  or  than  or . This is called synchronicity.

Synchronicity doesn't apply to just toitsuba, but also to honitsu and san-shoku.

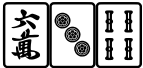



5.2 When you have 3 musuji, put them in order

Question

In pros' strategy books it says if you have 3 non-suji tiles against riichi, you should go betaori?

Answer

Even with 3 musuji, don't betaori. Think which one is the most likely to be targeted and put them in order.

For example, if you have , and you think the opponent is waiting in souzu, you can calmly discard even musuji  and . Only with  should you discard it with the feeling that it might be the one. Discarding the ones you think are safe puts your intuition to the test.

If you deal in with the first or second one, you understand that your intuition is still not good enough, and when you go for the next deal-in, you should think that you still need to practice.

At the start, your reading will miss a lot and you will often deal in at the very start, but progressively you will be able to keep the target tile until the very end. If you are afraid from the beginning, you will not improve like that, and the feeling that every musuji tile is dangerous will only be a minus.

Because mahjong is a living thing, the negative thoughts of the players enter into the tiles. On the contrary, if you think that everything will pass, the positive thinking will affect the tiles. It is indeed like that.

Also, **while there are many people who think dealing in is a loss, aren't there many cases in which dealing in turns out to be good?** For example, someone might have won an even more expensive hand.

You must not get desperate about winning, but discover the value of dealing in.

5.3 Let the ayahai flash across your mind

Question

It is said that you should remember the winning tiles because they are ayahai (アヤ牌), but how should you remember them? I feel like I can't remember them all without taking notes?

Answer

It's fine to just let them briefly flash across your mind.

It is indeed good to remember the winning tiles. That doesn't just apply to winning tiles, but also to uradora, the suit of honitsu wins and other things like that. However, they are not things that should be remember by taking notes, but each one should flash across your mind in its own extent.

In shougi, the pieces that you moved in the opening tend to be very useful much later, and similarly remembering ayahai will often be of use later.

Furthermore, by playing mahjong with this kind of consciousness, you will notice other things more and become more exact in evaluating the situation.

5.4 Throw off calculation

Question

Is dealing in bad?

Answer

No.

If you avoid risk and keep following the road of playing everything safe, strength will not be born. Risk is not something that should be avoided, but something to be surpassed.

For example, if you are playing with 1000 points equal to 100 yen and deal in, there are people who say it makes their wallet hurt, **but in the past I used to bet mountains**. No matter how high a rate you play, when strong players are collected, there are never any niggardly cheapskates among them. This is a strong statement, but there really are no strong players among people like that.

For example, you enter all last as first place. Players who try to stingily fold and run away by folding are not strong players. That's because even when you deal in, there is something you should notice.

Dealing in all last means there was a reason for it. Dealing in itself is not a problem. There is a cause (reason) and by searching for it, you can understand that the opponents will call riichi in the endgame, so you can join forces to use it even if it comes. In that sense, a meaningful loss has more "potential" than an obvious win.

If you only think of profit and loss and risk in your daily life, you get the idea that dealing in is bad. **If you want to play a strong and attractive mahjong, first change from your normal life.**

The feeling that you don't want to let go of things you have obtained: calculation calls fear to people's hearts. The animal called human is obsessed with work or study and only values "obtaining" things, and is therefore extremely afraid of "letting go", and always lives frightened. Only when letting go is nothing can people face that fear.

In the common strategy of mahjong, dealing in is the end, and breaking up your hand and not winning is extolled. But is that really true? For me, it is mere sophistry born from the desire not to lose.

Winning and dealing in exist concurrently: that is the correct form true to natural law. If you overvalue either of these, a bias is created and balance is split up and destroyed.

We live in the middle of the natural world. There are sunny days, and there are rainy days and windy days. If you defy that and wish for it to always be sunny, or wish for it to always rain, if it were really like that the natural world would be destroyed. You can't have only sun (wins) or only rain (dealing in). When harmony is upheld, it is the best state. And if you can move on one more step and use both sun and rain freely, that is the ideal.

5.5 With every musuji you push, you get stronger

Question

After reading this book, won't I be the only one not folding and dealing in, without the other players returning the favor?

Answer

It can happen depending on the group, but you should still continue.

However, just because your hand is good doesn't mean you should push everything recklessly. There is a difference between courage and recklessness. You should strive to read precisely and push musuji with courage.

At the start, your reading will not work and you might deal in with the first musuji, but you should not think that is bad. Jumping outside the ring and folding whenever a riichi is called is embarrassing.

A long time ago, people who came to the mahjong demon dojo also kept dealing in at the start, but after training there for a year they stopped dealing in. That is strength.

5.6 Don't hide the progress of your hand

Question

How should I hide the progress of my hand?

Answer

There is no need to hide it at all. In mahjong, leaking information to the opponents is good. If other people understand what you are doing, you are doing it right.

Players who can't be understood, for example mahjong beginners, make you anxious when you look at their play because you never know what they will discard. People with whom you know what they will discard can be called advanced players.

If you make your wait known, you might say that people won't deal in, but if someone else is aiming for a big hand and you have a cheap tenpai, people will deal in on purpose. You can expect that only if you play in a way that makes your wait understood, but if you camouflage it you can't.

If your opponents can't tell what you're doing, and people who are looking at you from behind can't tell what you're doing, then you yourself don't know what you're doing either.

Only a victory won by fighting and applying effort and skill fair and square is worth anything. If you go dama, lay traps, fold bad hands, and win with sneaky tricks like that, what meaning does it even have?

Even if you win like that, it does not show true skill, and you will not become a true strong player.

5.7 Shibori is unnecessary

Question

Teach me about shibori (holding on to particular tiles so they can't be called).

Answer

Shibori is unnecessary, let opponents call your discards all the time.

If you don't sow the seeds of plants, no fruits will grow. If you sow seeds in spring, there will be fruits in autumn.

The providence of nature is like that and so is mahjong. Mahjong is also a living thing, a raw thing, and I play thinking it has to be deep fried/elevated (あげる, TN: I think this is a pun). In mahjong the seeds that you sow will also certainly bear fruit, so let others call and don't be afraid of dealing in. If you only want fruits, it will not go smoothly.

By letting opponents call, the 4 players invigorate the table and the mahjong itself improves in quality. A mahjong like this pro match where everyone looks like they're dying is not okay.

5.8 Reading uradora starts from daily life

Question

How do you read uradora? (In the televised match, Sakurai predicted the uradora twice and got it right both times.)

Answer

I dare say that (you) can't read uradora.

In mahjong, necessity and coincidence are mixed together, and reading coincidental things is an extremely difficult deed. To learn this, profound mahjong experience and analytical ability is required, and on top of that precognition ability. If you want to pursue the real way of certain mahjong victory, this precognition ability is absolutely indispensable.

All people possess this ability to a certain degree, but as society's civilization electrified and progressed, this ability concealed itself in the innermost depths of people's hearts. For people and animals who live in the wild, precognition of nature and danger is an essential condition for survival, and I think that artisans and artists who have amazing skills also excelled above ordinary people in this ability before they started learning their art.

In my life, I have trained my prediction and precognition abilities in many different places outside of mahjong. Therefore, I can also predict things in mahjong like who will deal into who in the next round for how many points, and when the person across me will light his cigarette and when he will stub it out.

Of course since I can see the winning tile and the strong suit of the round, and the patterns of the honor tiles, seeing the uradora is also part of that.

In particular, you can't think to try to see it, but should "notice" all kinds of things and follow them to arrive at the uradora. The reason normal people can't see it is because they spend their daily lives just looking at the surface, without looking at the other side (uragawa).

5.9 Strength needs no numbers

Question

Strategies based on numbers like 30% being the chance of getting uradora with pinfu, or 50% being the win rate of pre-emptive kanchan riichi are popular right now, but what is your opinion on them?

Answer

Strength does not need any numbers.

The idea of probability is very useful, and it can be used for modern things like machines and computers, but it doesn't really apply to humans themselves.

4 years ago, I had the honor of speaking with the late professor Mori Tsuyoshi (森毅), an authority on mathematics, who said "The scientists who try calculate anything with the idea of probability are usually not very good at mathematics, and mathematics and probability are in fact totally inapplicable to the majority of things." I consider this man a mathematics professional.

On the contrary, people of a lower level tend to say "If you are good at mathematics, you can calculate anything."

I am very bad with numbers, and the only phone numbers I remember are those of my dojo and my house. I don't know people's birthdays or even what day today is. Despite that, I win at mahjong.

People who are strong with numbers are strong at mahjong: that only applies within that level of people. There is in fact another level far above that that can never be reached with numbers.

It's the same as with mahjong pros who think for a long time but still make the wrong play.

5.10 Inexpensive wins and cheap wins are not the same

Question

Are you ever afraid that if you win an inexpensive hand while first place dealer in the South round, you will have to pay dealer tsumo payment the next round?

Answer

That doesn't happen with inexpensive (安い) wins, only with cheap (しょぼい・せこい) ones. It's not because they are not worth many points.

Even if the hand is the same, and the 1500 points are the same, promising 1500 hands do exist. Not just trying to win the obvious hand, but winning 1500 by applying your energy bodes well into the next round.

You can't swap cheapness for skill. **And if you deal in, you won't lose any luck.** Dealing in is also necessary.

If you play naturally and honestly with a little bit of courage, it is good mahjong.

Promising renchan

Calling the right tiles, pushing at the right times

→ **Win again next round**

Cheap renchan

Calling ryanmen from a closed hand, somehow winning a bad shape 1500 or 2900

→ **Big tsumo payment next round**

The same renchan can have different influences on the next round!

5.11 If you play with sneaky players, the sneakiest will win

Question

Why can't you win just by relying on profit-and-loss calculation?

Answer

In mahjong, you must let opponents live to live yourself. If you play calculatingly by denying the opponents calls and folding, you kill them but at the same time kill yourself too.

Understanding your opponents creates trust. You must not try to sabotage your opponents, but play to leave behind a feeling of trust.

Mahjong pros play a sneaky style that is only about profit or loss, and regular people try to imitate them. When sneaky people fight, the one who wins is the sneakiest one.

If you look at it from outside, the mahjong world seems to consist only of sneaky people. There are people who think that keeping winning without dealing in is interesting, but they do not understand the real fun of mahjong. If you are afraid of dealing in, you shouldn't be playing mahjong.

I haven't been involved with competitive mahjong for a long time, but while commenting these games, I saw that nothing had changed in the previous 20 years. I pity the people who play mahjong right now.

Rather than calculations, I want to say things like **“Oh, good deal-in!”**, **“This mangan right now, that's even better than winning a hand!”** and **“It was a deal-in to invigorate the field!”**


5.12 Get rid of the motionless mentsu


Question

What is a dead mentsu?


Answer

A motionless mentsu, like when you have  in the haipai but can't draw  at all is called a dead mentsu. **If you leave it, you will not be able to win the**

hand: it is a trap. Of course, there are many cases when  will be deep in the wall, but there are also many cases where they all end up going to opponents and you can't complete the mentsu.

In this situation, it's necessary to get rid of  and replace it with a different taatsu.

By the way, I first used the concept of “dead mentsu” during the Youjou Mahjong Taikai, and it was then widely spread by the mahjong novelist Asada Tetsuya who was also present.

If he drew something like , he would be tenpai with the souzu wait but because souzu is weak, he would still probably lose. It's sensible to understand such things beforehand.

Of course, the flow from the previous round can last for many rounds, or suddenly change, so this should not be taken unconditionally. If you compare it to weather, it also can happen that it rains in the morning and the sun shines in the afternoon, or there can be a passing shower. There are different kinds, so it is good to become aware and start noticing these different kinds. By doing things like remembering the suit of the winning tile, you will soon start to notice things.

When manzu and pinzu were strong last round

→ **manzu and pinzu are also strong next round**

→ **souzu waits are weak**

This is really only a general example, and it's difficult to discern how long the trend will continue.

Notice strong suits and ayahai based on the dora, uradora and winning tiles of previous rounds! This is also the way to read uradora!

5.14 Learn the artists' techniques

Question

To win at mahjong you can rely on your own potential (地力) or acquired skill (他力), but how do I increase my potential?

Answer

Mahjong strength is not just the power to win hands, but also the power of dealing in, the power of resilience. The power to turn the situation around even after you deal in. This is potential.

How do you increase your potential? **It is by always dealing in when you need to deal in, by throwing away wins when you need to not win.** Even if it's a yakuman or baiman and the winning tile comes out, if you don't feel like it, throw it away.

Most people have probably never thrown away a baiman, but porcelain artists or painters will often completely destroy things they made with great pains, even if other people think they're good, if they don't like them themselves, and start over from the beginning to improve. It is the same sense as that. Is it not possible that by adopting this idea from professional art into mahjong, it can be separated from gambling and elevate itself into a different world?

It's not that art is better than competition, but **unless you adopt this kind of artistic thinking, you won't really get stronger.**

But in reality, I feel like the people who play mahjong are not that kind of people. That's because most mahjong players start playing mahjong as a form of escapism or low-stakes gambling, and there are barely any people who rise to the level of an artist.

When I started out in my student years, I also started in low-stakes gambling, but then moved on to high-stakes. This is because the only strong players were in the high-stakes world. However, no matter if the rate was 50 yen or 100 million yen, my mahjong was the same. In my youthful naïveté, I thought money was something dirty.

5.15 Winning means narrowing the hand

Question

I'm afraid that my hand will become too narrow if I call a lot. How should I deal with that?

Answer

Some time ago, pros like Itou Yuukou, Tsuchida Koushou or Baba Hirokazu came to my dojo to learn. As pros, they should have studied and trained many times more than amateurs, and be able to show a mahjong that has many times the content. Nevertheless, they had studied less than the amateurs at my mahjong demon dojo, and their posture was confused as well. And above all, they didn't call enough.

Therefore, I told them to above all call more. Closed hand supremacy was invented when writers working for magazine publishers and the like played, for the players who originally played and won in mahjong parlors were all people who called all the time.

Indeed, calling makes the hand shorter and runs the risk of not being able to fold when someone calls riichi.

However, the hand already becomes narrower as it progresses. **2-shanten → 1-shanten → tenpai: from a wide start, you make it narrower by steps, and end up winning.**

Also, narrowing the hand is not just aiming for the win, but also deciding what tiles you can accept and what you will discard when someone calls riichi. Measures like discarding the winning tiles of other players beforehand also arise naturally from calling.

Closed hand supremacy is the state of always having 14 tiles, of always being able to fold, of always being wide: it can not be called facing the win.

5.16 Create flow by calling

Question



Is flow real?

Answer







Regarding flow, many current pros talk about flow, and there are also many people who say that flow isn't real. **However, there are many kinds of flow in mahjong.**

The flow I'm talking about is for example



With this hand, while other players have 2 calls down, you chii  and cut . Calling to match the opponents' 2 calls is one kind of flow.

In sumo, the wrestlers don't just run into each other at random, but beforehand they synchronize their breathing by going "hakkeyooi". In mahjong too, **if opponents call, you should also match them by calling**, synchronizing your breathing in the same sense.

Also, what you shouldn't be looking for isn't  but . Drawing  and discarding , drawing  and discarding : this kind of continuity is also flow.

Furthermore, the flow of the table is similar to sailing in one ship. **Depending on who takes the rudder, the flow can incline in a good direction or in a bad direction.**

If you are carried away by opponents with bad qualities, no matter how orthodox you play yourself, you will go to stagnant places.

On the contrary, if you match with people with the best qualities and create good flow, it becomes a fight wherein everyone's power is maximized and exhibited. A high level meaningful mahjong where the one with true strength wins is created.

Another kind of flow is like the flow of a river: if the water is shallow, you won't get swept off your feet, but if the water is deep, even if the strength of the flow is the same, your entire body can get carried away.

In other words, depending on whether the flow is shallow or deep, your way of feeling it changes. In my case, I am sensitive to flow with my entire body, but people with less technique might not be able to tell if it is shallow or deep.

Furthermore, since all four players contribute to the flow, there can occur changes based on that. If the flow of one person is stronger than the others, I can not resist this flow but get swept up in it. Therefore, I think "I can not accept this strong flow!" and try to follow the river and cross diagonally to the opposite shore, and try to pierce into that opponent's bosom.

5.17 Dealing in is only bad when you are folding

Question

I've heard that you lose luck by dealing in. Is that true?

Answer

There are people who for some reason say that you lose luck when you deal in, but that is absolutely false, your luck stays the same.

You must feel the pain of dealing in yourself, and by knowing this pain you will become more resilient and utterly collected even when dealing in.

Because mahjong is competitive, you can't expect to just win every time. The idea that you can somehow avoid all deal-ins is too good to be true.

For example, if someone calls riichi and you focus only on not dealing into it, and end up dealing into an expensive open hand, that means you are not really good at folding. You try to avoid pain by folding, but end up dealing in anyway.

This kind of deal-in while folding causes much more damage than the points sticks you lose. It makes many people lose all confidence in themselves and destroy their own flow.

This kind of people with low confidence are easy to distinguish, and if you ever play against them, you should delay riichi until you have trapped them in a situation where they can't fold, then go in for the kill.

5.18 Winning while you are folding is also bad

Question

You can sometimes win by accident while you are folding against riichi: is that a good omen?

Answer

While dealing in while folding against riichi is embarrassing, it sometimes happens, even in pro mahjong, that you accidentally get into tenpai and win.

This is just as embarrassing as dealing in. It is not a high skill technique. Because it's a manly competition, you must fight.

Winning while folding is effeminate.

Women have always been something that must be protected. Their role is to wait at home and to know in what month they should pick what kind of fruit.

Men are a sex that must go out to hunt. When you pursue prey, you must chase after a moving target, not in a direct way, but chase it moving in a circuitous way. This can take up to 2 or 3 days.

In mahjong, you must also move (call). No convenience store culture of eating only ready-made things: I feel you should apply time and effort when going for the win. This applies even more to mahjong pros.

5.19 By setting traps, your tsumos become weaker

Question

Is discarding  from  as a trap riichi a useful tactic?

Answer

Trying to trap opponents to discard your winning tile: this is a devious, niggardly riichi.

You might say that devious people do well in the world, but the world is not a good place. Not just now but also throughout history. The things people do keep getting further away from nature. You shouldn't just try to win with any method possible.

Beginners who have just learned mahjong pull such traps calmly because they think they are easy to draw. But as you acquire more knowledge, you realize these difficult spots are often the bottleneck of the hand.

If you only know mahjong half-heartedly, you will learn this kind of devious trap-laying, but if you do that your tsumo power will atrophy.

To increase your tsumo power after having acquired this knowledge, it is necessary to do things with attacking power like calling riichi. There is no real defense (防御) in mahjong. There is only acceptance (受け). Pitching (in baseball) is also attacking.

If you think it's good to fold, your tsumo power becomes weaker. The ideal is everyone discarding 4, 5 tiles and being tenpai or iishanten, everyone entering the battlefield. You must feel that **ending in noten or a draw is more embarrassing than dealing into mangan.** Clean up round by round.

You must not let your feelings or movements bend. Though it's good to bend to the side when you call riichi.

5.20 Don't pursue easy wins

Question

Do you think easy wins are good from a mahjong energy viewpoint?

Answer

In mahjong, there can be 4 or 5 different possible winning shapes depending on the haipai and the draws. **However, even when there are 5 final shapes, you must pursue the one best suited to the field, to the situation: that is true quality mahjong.** If you are okay with winning as long as it's in the top 3, the top 2, you don't really understand mahjong and you have no power.

The same can be said of human life, but if you follow through to the very best outcome, the light of hope shines ahead for you.

If you only go for easy wins every time, it will certainly not bear fruit, and it will come to backfire in the future.

5.21 Sense your own shadow

Question

What is the single most important thing in discard reading?

Answer

In mahjong, reading is not just about what tiles an opponent's riichi is waiting on. That is just a single part of reading.

Rather than that, it's more important to read the situation.

It depends on the person, but many people will unwittingly disturb the balance of their emotions when they are blessed with good draws and get frustrated when their draws are bad.

However, strong players understand that mahjong is not just about haipai, and measure the flow from the first draw on. Then, **if they can't enter a flow that doesn't align with their mind, they become aware of it and take in their "shadow."** If they feel that shadow, they place their own feelings in a posture of alertness, and try to discern on whom the sun is shining, and avoid deal-ins that are like traffic accidents. Taking in this shadow of yourself and the sun shining on third parties is reading the situation.

Those who can understand this meaning of the flow of the tiles with their heads and apply it with their hearts are people with deep experience in mahjong.

5.22 I thought I was going to die if I lost

Question

Is the world depicted in the manga *Showichi* real?

Answer

I have not read the book called *Showichi. The Sound of the Tiles: Secret Stories* is based on actual interviews with me so I have looked through it, but *Showichi* is a gekiga (dramatic manga) so I have not looked at it at all.

However **it is true that I played with extreme stakes several times.** When I started out, I was not afraid that I would lose my life playing mahjong. That's because I thought I would die if I lost.

Die if I lost once, or else leave Tokyo and spend the rest of my life in the deep mountains. I was too embarrassed to lose so there was no helping it. However, I am not proud of that anymore. I think it was foolish. I know now that there are much more important things than that.

5.23 Lose against stronger players

Question

What kind of people should I play against if I want to get stronger?

Answer

It's important to play against people who are stronger than you and lose.

Knowing your true power, knowing yourself is the way to becoming stronger.

Then, set your aim not on immediate win or loss, but on a high level mahjong with good content. The consciousness of trying to win should not come first. Even if you win at a low level, it is not a meaningful victory, and you will never become stronger.

5.24 Fight with all your power and grasp luck in your hands

Question

There are people who say luck isn't real...

Answer

It is a fact that luck exists, with individual differences.

When you are lucky, if you want to describe what it is like, it is as if a mysterious something has possessed your body.

When that happens, there is no meaning in playing mahjong with four people. The opponents' tiles become visible like glass, and you can even see your next draw clearly, so it's completely as if you were playing mahjong by yourself. When that happens, no one can stop you.

If you want to grasp that luck in your own hands, your attitude towards normal mahjong is important. You must fight with all your power every single round. Playing easy mahjong like this match's pros, who betaori whenever someone calls riichi, has no heart.

Of course, you must also draw the line between right and wrong (ケジメ) in your life apart from mahjong. **People whose daily life and hearts are like clouded glass can't be expected to win important battles.**

5.25 Chapter summary

Putting your mental game in order

1. Perceive the toitsuba
2. Shibori and camouflage are unnecessary
3. Perceive the dead mensu
4. Don't deal in while folding, don't win while folding
5. Don't win easy hands, deal in with strong power
6. Don't think about numbers
7. To get lucky, fight with all your power

Throw off profit-and-loss calculations, throw off your desire for obvious wins and your fear of dealing in: awaken your unbreakable mental attitude!

6 Teachings of the undefeated one

6.1 Is pro mahjong interesting?

The origin of this book is myself and Pro League president Moriyama commentating games between young mahjong pros, but the question is whether there are people who watch this mahjong and think it's interesting. To be honest, I do not consider it interesting.

They all fold as soon as someone else calls riichi and don't try to challenge it. In boxing, this would be called going for the win on points. In my opinion, people watch boxing matches to see a knockout rather than a win on points.

Right now, pro mahjong is not interesting, and it is also not strong. In my dojo, people lose all the time even when they win 24000 in East 1, which is much more interesting.

6.2 Why I'm not a mahjong god but a mahjong demon

The fact that I have kept winning at mahjong so much might have been due to skill and intuition, but there is also a large part of strong luck to it. Luck is not the same for everyone. If there was a god in this world, everyone might be born equal, but in reality there are huge differences in wealth, intellect and so on. There is no god, it's something created by humans. But you could say that it's precisely because people are different that they can be fascinating.

That's why when the founder of Takeshobo, Noguchi Kyouichirou, called me a "god", I told him he should call me a "demon". A demon is also something created by humans, but a demon who goes around with a lantern, enlightening the dark world is something good. A demon who goes around eating people (or whatever) is bad though.

6.3 The power to correct

When something goes bad, don't throw it off right away just because it's bad, but fix the situation, repair it: this feeling also lives in mahjong.

If you have the power to correct by winning 3900 after dealing into 8000, there is nothing scary about dealing in.

Look for the moveable shape from the haipai: that is the idea of repair compensation.

6.4 The lifestyle of not chasing “numbers”

Because people derive meaning from “numbers”, suffering and evil passions (煩惱) swell up from there. This goes for everyone who plays mahjong. They start playing the game from an attitude of matching numbers, get into mental anguish when the “numbers” don’t go the way they wanted, and advance with the wrong ideas and the wrong knowledge. They look to improve in the world of “numbers”, but lose sight of themselves, forgetting even about people and nature.

Children also throw away real education under the name of studying, and chase only after getting good grades. When you graduate, it’s also about being successful, achievement at your company, living only to earn more points.

If you want to be a so-called winner in this kind of society, should you really pursue this logic of “numbers”? If I had never played mahjong, I might have never noticed this, and ended up sitting somewhere on top of this world of “numbers”.

To not make your essence as person like that (obsessed with numbers), you must never use “numbers” as a decision criterion or as a goal. It’s not like I feel perfectly that I have noticed that that isn’t where the essence is.

When you play mahjong, throw away the thing called “numbers” the next time, and play as if the table were a perfectly white canvas. Mahjong is not number matching, but something like drawing a picture with a brush.

6.5 Love comes from weakness

Parents loving their children and children depending on their parents: both come from weakness.

In the usual love between man and woman, the majority is not a love born from strength but a love born from weakness and necessity. Consider that so-called love

can quickly turn into betrayal and lovers can become enemies who hate each other. You might think this is because of the love being broken, but it's more like "love-hate": in the love of the ordinary world, hate is the other side of the coin.

Loving your country means killing another country's citizens, loving the religion you believe in means killing adherents of other religions: that's what's going on in today's world.

6.6 50 yen a cup ramen

Until several decades ago, I played mahjong for money. Since I was playing mahjong all the time, 10000 yen notes stacked up below my feet like a mountain. I played at rates of 1000 points equal to 2000 to 5000 yen, which is something that makes you feel "Whoa, this is really high stakes."

If you play regular fixed rate mahjong where hundreds of millions move at a time, as a reward you can get yourself extravagant amounts of cash or expensive cars if you win. However, I never spent a yen, didn't get into the car they had prepared for me, ate a cup of 50 yen ramen and went home.

6.7 The dealer's renchan is the South seat's responsibility

To make the mahjong progress smoothly, it's very important for South seat to do his job.

To avoid unnecessary renchans, South seat should play firmly. Going resolutely for your own win, calling chii from the dealer, calling pon from the other players, occasionally letting West seat and North seat call and dealing into them: this is the kind of things you have to keep in mind. If the dealer keeps taking the oars in his hands, the mahjong will never end.

If the East seat is the parent (親), then the South seat is the eldest son. West seat and North seat are the second and third sons, and in the end it's fine for the third son to do whatever he wants, but the eldest son should till the rice field. The idea is that the second and third son will see the eldest son's hard work and join in.

6.8 What is effort?

For example, if you pour water on the hot sand of the desert, it will dry up again in no time. I think effort is something like that. It's a bit different from learning.

Do it over and over, keep repeating it until you die. When I see that one of my students is getting dry, so to speak, I pour water on her. If she dries up, I do it again.

If you keep doing this, eventually, something that isn't that person's habit will appear for a moment. Then she will also feel "Now, I got it."

However, just because it gets wet, you can't always get something to the right temperature. It will dry out again right away. That is, you can't do it again. Not being able to do things is a matter of course, and it's fine. To say it in another way, I teach things that are impossible even after training your whole life.

I don't want to people to learn them. Just for a moment is fine: I want to people to feel with their skin that things like that can happen. Aren't people who have touched something, even just for a moment, better than people who haven't touched anything?

6.9 It's pointless to look only at results

Until now, everyone who has studied mahjong has only tried to come up with answers. What should you discard, who won the hand and who dealt in, only looking at the results and finishing with asking who won.

It also applies to this game, but the result is only decided by fortune. The actual potential of the people involved doesn't come up one bit. You can sum up everything by asking who was the luckiest. And the writers and readers who propagate this can't observe or judge the players on their potential.

Pros who don't know mahjong have nipped the intentions of anyone who wishes to really get stronger at mahjong in the bud. Whatever they say about methods of certain victory, from my point of view, I feel like I'm more often saying that a play is funny, a play is mistaken than that they understand it.

The pros are fumbling around for a method of certain victory that they don't understand in the least. They are really fumbling in the dark.

6.10 Mahjong is a microcosm of society

In mahjong, the person with the most point sticks did not necessarily play a good mahjong. It's the same in the real world: when someone is very rich, it doesn't mean they are necessarily a good person. In this way, mahjong is a microcosm of society, and there is no justice in winning.

It's important to not let it go on like that, but to let those who play good mahjong win, to play to get into the flow yourself too.

6.11 I don't get excited when in the lead

This might be a minority opinion, but I don't get excited when I have a big lead. Mahjong is a 4 player game. Since you have opponents, isn't a mahjong game where everyone's points are close more interesting? The ideal is for the game to be decided in the last two rounds.

First of all, I would like mahjong pros to step up the quality of their game. If they don't, I feel sorry for the tiles. If they step up up their game, the mahjong of ordinary people is bound to improve too. I believe that mahjong tiles won't lose to shogi pieces.

6.12 Passion and earnestness are not the same

Being passionate about mahjong and being earnest about mahjong is not the same. Passion is just an entrance, and earnestness is something that can change your way of life. To become earnest, you must have the "spirit of unity" that can combine opposites like calmness and courage at the same time.

This is what I tell adepts at my dojo constantly.

"If you play mahjong earnestly, and also want to win, never pass the flow to players of a lower level. Entrust the flow to players of a higher level."

6.13 Adding one thing is just adding

At my dojo, there was a person who said something like this: “I’m spending so much time meeting women, it’s interfering with my job”, and other such marvelously humble things. What should be done about such weakness?

If you add a relationship, you have more things to do, but there is no need to sacrifice other things. Keep doing whatever you did before firmly, and also what you added. It’s not like you’re no longer able to do what you did before: you can still do it the same. Having more things to do is something to be happy about.

6.14 Today’s love

In today’s love, there are many people who say they’re in love, but actually just chose you because it’s worth more to date you than that other guy. They give presents because they want psychological or financial compensation, or to display their thoughtfulness. This is not true love.

There is also the word “charisma” (人望) but its contents are mostly money. You’re just being deceived by words. You would be disgusted at the thought of your wife having chosen you because you’re a benefit for her children.

In the same way, point sticks obtained through calculating means will leave you again.

6.15 In all last, second place is good

In all last, it’s better to be second place than first place. If you overtake first place and win, you will have better flow next game than if you had just kept your first place. If you are third place in South 3, play with the intention to get second place this round.

Being first place isn’t interesting. The fun in mahjong is in things like these.

6.16 Don't destroy the competition

Mahjong is played with 4 players, so it's most interesting when all 4 players are alive. That's why competition is not something to be destroyed but rather to be created. If you take the last point sticks from the person who is losing, you destroy the competition, so if he is playing a good mahjong, you should skip rons on him and deal into him on purpose to let him live.

When I was a rep player, we also did this even when gambling for huge sums of money. When someone who plays a dirty mahjong somehow gets into first place, it's difficult to change that situation by yourself. People who play good mahjong will lead you in a good direction.

6.17 The moment I thought "I got outplayed"

When I was a rep player, I was always looking how good my opponents were at mahjong.

Then, as I thought I was going to deal into a weak player on purpose next turn and put his winning tile on the right edge of my hand, my toimen made the exact same movement and dealt the exact same tile.

It was the winning tile. Of course, he discarded the tile from a completed sequence. When I saw this, I felt that I got outplayed, that he saw through me perfectly. It's not when someone else wins a baiman or yakuman.

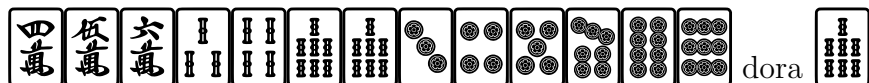
6.18 The "job" more difficult than winning




Discarding people's winning tiles on purpose and dealing into them on purpose is called "doing your job" at my dojo, and is considered more important than getting first place. Letting weak players call difficult waits is also doing your job. Beginners can win hands and take first place, but they can't do this "job".

Since mahjong pros play mahjong as their job, I want them to remember this kind of "job" too when they play.

6.19 The meaning changes depending on which tile you tsumo

When you call a ryanmen riichi and tsumo, the two winning tiles have different meanings. For example,









With this  wait, the score for both tsumos is the same, but if you tsumo , you should notice that's it's more towards the middle, and you almost had a sanshoku, while if you tsumo , you notice it's an edge tile. Even if the score is the same, with a ryanmen wait the meanings are different and you must try to predict which one you will tsumo. Notice the flow, for example if you are drawing tiles from high to low. It's in moments like these that your gambling sense is developed.

6.20 What are pattern tiles?

Pattern tiles (アヤ牌) are things that make you do a double take, a bit like bottle-necks.

When you keep winning on manzu tiles, when the uradora keeps being honors, when the rain keeps falling in drops. They are connections like that.

For example, suppose you win with . Then if you have one each of  next round, you should discard  last. Also, even if your haipai is mentanpin except for a lone , you should keep it in hand longer than usual. You must play to give last round's win some meaning.

Of course, you will have to discard  at some point, but you must think that you are being lucky. It's not that you won with  one round that you are bound to win with it again next round.

Mahjong is unlike shogi in that you can't see the wall or opponents' hands. The competition is who can see those the best. That's why I became conscious of these patterns.

6.21 Paifu and footprints

If you look at footprints from a natural point of view, when someone old walks, the heel is imprinted and when someone young walks, the toes are imprinted, so you can understand who walked from the footprints. Similarly, if you look at the paifu afterwards, you should be able to tell whether it was played by young players or by experienced old men.

I want young mahjong players to play with an animal-like instinct, but unfortunately there was no such vigor in the paifu of these games.

6.22 Slow play is forbidden

Once upon a time, the teaching that dealing in is bad, that letting others call is bad was popular. This is still left in the mahjong world. That's why sly techniques were created such as North seat refraining from calling pon to not give the dealer more draws.

There are a lot of lazy people in the mahjong world, and it's been sleeping for 40 years without making progress. It's time for it to wake up.

While I was watching these young pros' matches, there were things I understood in an instant but they couldn't notice even after a long pause. It would be better if they discarded quickly instead of thinking for a long time.

After the game is over, the pros talk about things like "If you didn't discard that tile in all last, you wouldn't have gotten overtaken." and other such irrelevant post mortems. Getting overtaken is okay. I want you to play tough battles. In golf, slow play is forbidden. In mahjong it is the same: long thinking pauses or slow play is a violation of manners.

At my dojo, you will get warned for drawing and discarding slowly due to thinking or slow moupai (touch reading), but tilting your head or nodding is also not allowed.

Concentrate without letting your mind or body waver, keep advancing forward, is what I teach. You must firmly grasp suffering with your mind and body: only then can joy and fun be born.

6.23 Unseasonable mahjong

In this mahjong, just because someone won a honitsu in souzu doesn't mean that souzu is strong in the field. That's because that win wasn't due to his own potential. If he was strong and won, it would have been souzu, but this is evidence that he isn't.

While watching these young pros play, I saw that they play without understanding the changing of the suits, the changing of the seasons, so it was like watching someone wear a thick coat in summer, which is displeasing. It's an unseasonable mahjong.

The strong suit, which can also include the fourth suit, that is honors, appears in the situation of all that occurs, like winning tiles and uradora. And just like spring, summer, fall and winter, it turns round during the hanchan.

6.24 Feeling is important

In mahjong, you shouldn't think only after you draw. You must already prepare what you will discard on what draw before drawing.

Furthermore, thinking (考える) is connected to confusion (迷い). Instead of thinking, it is important to "feel" (思う). Feeling is connected to very good words like coming up with an idea (思いつく), remembering (思い出す), compassion (思いやり), memory (思い出).

In mahjong, inconceivable (思いもよらぬ) things can happen. "Inconceivable draws."

If you play by feel, inconceivable things can happen: that is the fun in mahjong. If you play with the hidden side of the tiles, this kind of thing can happen. You can only see 30%, so you must estimate, feel the remaining 70%.

That's why you should try to call riichi to see what happens, to discard tiles to see what happens.

“Whoa, I played just to see what would happen and it’s a win I never would have thought of.” That’s how you estimate whether opponents are a plus or a minus.

6.25 Mahjong demon style and other mahjong

There are some people who say that because the rules used at my dojo and the rules of regular mahjong are different, the strategy of the mahjong demon style doesn’t apply to regular mahjong. However, the rules are the same. The mahjong demon dojo has scraped off unnecessary things and then added “things above the rules”.

For example, not discarding honor tiles with the first discard is keeping a promise, creating a beginning, and so on.

In regular mahjong, you can do anything as long as you don’t trespass against the rules, and society is also like that, but the mahjong demon style considers humanity more important, for example keeping your promises.

Since I started doing that, many famous people who don’t play mahjong (such as the shogi player Habu Yoshiharu or the table tennis player Hirano Sayaka) have come to my place. I think that perhaps this element of “plus alpha” that goes above the rules is what finds common ground with the foremost exponents of other fields.

I’m a master gambler, but it’s not something that I particularly desired to be, and I feel more like an old man who owns a mahjong parlor and who’s caused a lot of books to be written, not just about mahjong.

6.26 Mahjong is a microcosm of life

In pro games, the player who’s rich with point sticks folds and doesn’t work, while only the one who doesn’t have any keeps attacking recklessly. But it would be better if the same person also attacked while having a lot of sticks.

Only attacking when you have the initiative is an extremely selfish and calculating way of thinking. You won’t lead a good life that way.

6.27 Imposing constraints expands your ideas

In shogi, there are also illegal moves. In mahjong demon style, we also forbid discarding the dora early and discarding honors with the first discard. Forbidding means imposing constraints in order to expand yaku creativity and ideas. Constraints that close you in are no good, but constraints that make you rich in ideas are.

Like drawing a katana from a narrow sheath, it's about expert level. That's what we aim for.

6.28 Can Tokyo University students get a Nobel Prize?

I've talked about the mathematics professor Mori Tsuyoshi not believing in numbers, but there is another interesting thing he told me. Tokyo University and Kyoto University students are both quite good at mathematics, but the Tokyo ones keep working painstakingly on the same old research all the time, while the Kyoto ones look if there isn't something new to be done because they're not as smart, which is why they keep discovering new things and getting all the Nobel Prizes. This is the kind of thing he said.

I also live without thinking anything is conclusive evidence. Almost everything will change. It's not about the gain or loss of point sticks before your eyes, but how will your destiny turn out? Playing this way is more interesting.

6.29 Excuses and evasions

While watching the pros' mahjong, I was severe. Commentating and saying "Whoa, that was good!" or "Amazing!" is no good. Shouldn't you tell the viewers the truth about what is going on?

Straining yourself to make the winner look good is no good either.

The mahjong world is full of excuses and evasions. It's time to change that.

6.30 Daily life and mahjong

At my dojo, I don't really teach about mahjong, but more about attitudes to daily life like being polite, being on time and so on. That's because slovenliness or carelessness in your daily life will surface in your mahjong too.

Also, I touch the young people's bodies at my dojo. Sometimes, they let me ride on their backs. When I was little, my mom and dad would carry me on their back or in their arms, touching each other. There are few people who keep doing this when they grow up, but by touching, you can understand that person's weakness, brittleness, health state and so on, and you can feel unconscious or subconscious things that person isn't aware of.

6.31 Saikyousen

When weak mahjong players like these play, the one who wins will be one who played a weak mahjong. There's no reason the strong guy will win.

Mahjong demon style players have appeared before in the Saikyousen tournament. Sasaki Hideki and Yamada Eiki won, but when Yamada won, it was because Iida Masahito-pro also played a strong attacking mahjong. Thanks to him, it was easier for Yamada to play.

That game, two people were fighting for the top and Yamada got a close victory, but it wouldn't have been strange if Iida-pro had gotten a good hit on Yamada and won himself.

In a fight to determine the strongest, there must be a direct battle. If that doesn't happen, who is really stronger will remain undecided.





6.32 Open riichi

Nowadays, I only play mahjong for fun with the adepts at my dojo, but when I do, I call open riichi a lot. I say things like "I'll tsumo this with my second draw" and then it actually happens. Sometimes you can just feel things like that.

It's something only I am able to do, but I like to show off when playing for fun.

6.33 My first impression of the mahjong tiles

When I saw mahjong for the first time, I thought “Wow, these tiles are really pretty.” The tiles looked to me like pictures, just like in hanafuda.

, this is something that looked very powerful to me. It's like Miyamoto Musashi himself brandishing his two katana in a relaxed down-pointing stance.  was a sumo wrestler,  was a tank,  was a jet fighter.

Pinzu were of course flowers, the souzu were straight-growing bamboo. (TN: souzu actually depict strings of cash)

6.34 Good things are just for some

Good things aren't for everyone. In the world, there are very few really good things, and they are there just for a part of the people. Most people don't have a good heart, so they turn their backs on good things.

It's the same for people and the same for books.

6.35 Attacking style and defensive style

Gambling styles can be broadly divided into attacking styles and defensive styles. However, both attack and defense are not something that can exist on its own, but are contraries, so they must be considered together. Attacking while defending or retreating is fundamental.

That's why instead of clearly differentiating between attack and defense, I consider neither attacking style nor defensive style, but a “combining style” the best way to play.

6.36 There are two ways to winning

There are two ways to winning: that is, winning through your own power, and getting the win handed to you without any great effort.

If you talk about constant victory or certain victory, it is only something that can be delivered by sticking with the former. If you win using the latter, it will only be a modest victory, and you might start losing again next time.

6.37 Winning all the time is harsh

Winning all the time is not like a dream, but actually very harsh.

If you don't know whether you'll win or lose, you can be happy about winning once in a while, but for a rep player like me who won every time, I had to face jealousy and envy from other people and feelings of emptiness and guilt.

6.38 Good or bad condition

If you come into contact with mahjong for a long period of time, you will encounter battles so meaningful that you will feel that all 4 players were winners regardless the point outcome. However, this is very rare, and games that are completely focused on the outcome are much more common.

In mahjong, even if the same players play, the outcome is heavily influenced by that day's meaning. This is something else than luck, namely good and bad conditions.

I consider that mahjong skill does not lie in results but in the process. In the process, it's exactly because the peculiar motions of that person on that day become apparent that you can judge the situation already before any results.

6.39 Playing fast

In mahjong demon style, a hanchan takes less than 30 minutes. One move must also take less than 2 seconds. Why is that? As you know, this society's adults have

a body full of flabby unnecessary material below their presumptuous clothes, and psychologically, although they call it intelligence or education, their heart is also full of excess flesh.

If you know your own playstyle to a certain degree, taking unnecessary time inconveniencing other players is the same as calmly breaking your promise and coming late. If you know that thinking turns to overthinking, discard reading turns to overreading, you will certainly decide on your choice before it becomes too much.

6.40 The demon inside myself

When they do something that they shouldn't do, a lot of people forgive themselves for it. I never forgive myself anything. There's another me inside of me, but I don't listen to that bastard.

Just like everyone, I sometimes want to run away into excuses and pretexts, but another me won't let myself deceive myself. This is my demon.

6.41 Common sense and lack of common sense

It's better to have common sense than not, and it's better to have knowledge than to be ignorant. However, common sense has limits, and if you become a slave to common sense you can only win within those limits.

In mahjong, if you rely only on data and existing theories, you reap decent wins and results. But, your thoughts will stop there and you won't be able to deal with new situations, and your human desires will somehow enter and be transformed into evil knowledge.

It's not a problem that common sense is wrong, but that common sense leads people into temptation because they are weak.

6.42 Don't believe in yourself

Mahjong pros often say "I played believing in myself" but this has to be a joke. You should know better than anyone else that you are not a special or important human

being at all. It's exactly because you can't fully believe in yourself that you worry about things, thinking neither this nor that.

In really serious gambling, you can only win if a monster-like power that isn't your own can rise up from you. There is nothing to be won with belief alone.

6.43 Strong people and regular people

Strong people are those who are somehow able to overcome impossible challenges, and enjoy that. In running, there is a phenomenon called runner's high. You overcome the pain of running, and get high. It's the same as this. Regular people have the common sense of thinking something is impossible and immediately lose. It doesn't work out for them because they already set their own boundaries.

If you can overcome the wall of "impossibility" there is "pleasure" and you can obtain "strength". Overcoming the amount of points you thought was impossible is exactly what gambling is about.

6.44 I'm the bad guy

I don't think that I'm a good person, or that I'm right and so on. I think that I am a bad guy. Precisely because I'm a bad guy is why I want to get even a little better. It's not the idea of being allowed to do evil things because I'm the bad guy, not at all. If I thought that, I would be the same as yakuza or gangsters.

On the contrary, if you think you're a good person and so on, you immediately become arrogant and that's the end. You sink to the level of a real bad guy.

Afterword

3 years ago, around the time of the great Tohoku earthquake, we solicited donations at my dojo under the name of the Shanpon Fund.

Shanpon is the nickname of one of the young guys at my dojo. I thought it would be presumptuous to use my own name, so I gave it the name of Shanpon-kun, who's one of the most vigorous people at my dojo.

We put a donation box at the dojo, and a lot of people came to donate. I think it's thanks to Shanpon-kun's personality that a lot of people who don't know any mahjong showed up to donate too.

We asked some of the people from the afflicted parts of Tohoku what they wanted most, and they wanted to eat some fresh food. So we enlisted the help of a tunamonger I'm close with and bought a large quantity of raw tuna, which we then shipped to the area divided over several trucks. There, we sliced the tuna, cooked rice, made miso soup and handed it all out to several thousand people.

Before going to the afflicted area, I told my adepts the following: "Guys, you aren't going there to do good deeds, just to watch and learn, all right?" My son told me he wanted to go too, but I said "If you think you're gonna do some good deeds, you're not allowed to go. Just learn from what's happening."

Because the other person is in trouble, you pool everybody's power and go to help. Letting them know people care about them, that's the only thing we wanted to tell them.

My adepts kept going there several times, but the one who went there the most was Shanpon-kun after all.

I also drove a truck there at 11 in the evening.

As I reached Ishinomaki, at a place where everything had been swept away by the tsunami, there was some food lined up that had been left in the remaining warehouses of stores that had been destroyed. Next to it was a sign saying "Take what you need."

This was a place where the stores had been swept away and there was no electricity. It was food from the warehouses of people who had themselves been victims.

I've been outplayed, I thought. It's not worth a thousand points, but it's still amazing.

We weren't affected by the disaster ourselves but still went there, but people who were victims themselves were helping out too.

After we were done handing out food, we drove right back without sleeping.

The place's mayor asked if he could pay his respects to me, but I refused. I could absolutely not face him and let him think it was in any way my own accomplishment.

The fact that we did such a thing 3 years ago is because we got this feeling from playing mahjong that wasn't about profit and loss, but about everyone. At my dojo, there were a lot of young people who were actually quite bad at mahjong. At that time, I thought: you know, strong mahjong players can go eat shit. Even though I'm one myself (laughs). People who were really bad at mahjong kept going the most.

Regarding mahjong, what I want to talk about is "being worth a thousand points". Rather than haneman or baiman, I want to talk about the value of 1000 points. I think the way of thinking that "you should call only because you have a good hand" is disgusting.

It's not about doing things because the outcome will be good. I also do this sometimes, but when things aren't good you should move as well.

I suppose nearly all the people who have picked up this book want to get stronger at mahjong. However, you must not think about getting stronger only at mahjong. I want you to play a mahjong that also makes you stronger at all the other things that go together with it. Not descending into ruin.

This is much more important than the right play in mahjong: the right feelings.

May 2014, Sakurai Showichi