

The **Number** of Tiles That Can Pass is Doubled! Mahjong Reading Drill*

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0 Preface

Introduction to Mahjong Tile Reading Training

Introduction

The concept of this book is to provide content similar to that of Shogi (Japanese chess) puzzles. For fans of Shogi, solving Shogi puzzles not only imparts knowledge but also provides the joy of unraveling mysteries.

Building upon the theories explained in the previous work “The Ultimate Understanding of Mahjong Tile Reading,” this book compiles 80 tile reading problems that can be solved using these theories. If you find joy in the puzzle-solving aspect of Mahjong tile reading, then that’s wonderful.

Of course, improving one’s skill requires a lot of hard work. For example, judgment of offense and defense. While “The Ultimate Understanding of Mahjong Tile Reading” primarily focuses on the theory of tile reading, it doesn’t delve much into “how much the content read will actually affect offense and defense judgment.” This time, we will demonstrate some benchmarks for offense and defense judgment by facing the same discard with different hand compositions.

We believe that you will find enjoyment in both “improving your skills” and “solving puzzles.”

0.1 Prologue 1

How to Use This Book.

Thank you for choosing this book!

In this introduction chapter, I will outline the key points for studying Mahjong using this book and discuss the thought process behind “tile reading” in Mahjong.

For those who are eager to start solving problems right away, feel free to skip this chapter and come back to it later.



Encountering Different Scenarios.

This book adopts a layout with problem illustrations on the left and explanations on the right. Typically, conventional Mahjong books place the problems on the right side and the answers on the left side after flipping the page, fearing that readers might inadvertently see the answers while solving the problems. (Note: In Japan, books are read from right to left.)

Why did this book choose such a layout? It’s to “allow readers to carefully examine the problem illustrations while reading the explanations for learning purposes.”

While it’s possible to reprint the problem illustrations on the answer page for flat tile reading, it’s not feasible for three-dimensional tile reading involving discards.

Although solving “tile reading” puzzles is enjoyable, in actual games, you won’t encounter the exact same scenarios as those in this book. In other words, understanding why a particular tile can be passed, where the focus of discarding should be, etc., requires careful comparison between explanations and problem illustrations, which need to be thoroughly understood and digested, hence the adoption of this layout.

Furthermore, to prevent readers from accidentally seeing the answers while viewing the problem illustrations, I’ve hidden the answers within the explanation text, hoping that readers will carefully consider and thoroughly understand them by comparing the explanations with the problems.

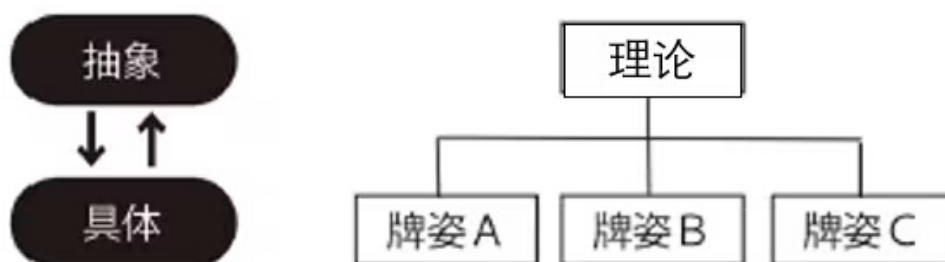
Difference from “The Ultimate Understanding of Mahjong Tile Reading”.

The statement “you won’t encounter the same situations as those in tactical books” is obvious, but I believe it’s a fundamental aspect of learning Mahjong. From another perspective, transforming “specific examples” of what to discard into theory, and then applying it to the tile shapes encountered in actual games = transforming “specific examples” into theory, is what improves your Mahjong skills. For example:



Dora 7m.

Some books state, “You shouldn’t discard tiles with this kind of hand.” The process of categorizing and summarizing what exactly constitutes “this kind of hand” is the process of abstraction.



知道牌形A的正解，但在实战中遇到牌形B或C的时候选择错误，说明需要把“牌形A时为什么这样打才对？”的理由抽象化为理论，这样才能活用到思考类似的牌形B或C上。

If you understand it as “a hand with very scattered tiles and no pairs,” and faithfully follow it.



Dora White.

This hand shouldn’t discard the white dragon, right? Indeed, the hand is quite scattered and lacks a pair, but the white dragon is a valuable tile. I think it’s fine to make a set with it.

The reason for such mistakes is that when abstracting, the standards related to point-scoring weren’t set. Many people might be able to make applications like “discard it if it’s a Dora tile” in actual games, but the more precise the judgment, the more likely such errors are to occur.

Even if abstraction is done correctly, one might forget about point-scoring in actual games and think, “It’s a hand with very scattered tiles and no pairs, so I shouldn’t declare a win.” This is an example of not correctly applying what’s been learned. Many people who have read plenty of tactical books but haven’t improved likely have this problem.

This book compiles the content of my previous work, “The Ultimate Understanding of Mahjong Tile Reading,” into a collection of problems. To be clear, the techniques explained are the same (or intentionally made the same). I believe that practicing the specific \leftrightarrow abstract exercises is essential for mastering the challenging subject of tile reading. “The Ultimate Understanding of Mahjong Tile Reading” explains the theory of tile reading, which is the so-called “abstract content.” However, to apply it effectively in actual games, you need the “training to apply theory to specific examples.” Therefore, I wrote this book, compressing explanations to the minimum and focusing on specific problems.

For readers who have read “The Ultimate Understanding of Mahjong Tile Reading,” please consider this book as exercises for transitioning from abstract to concrete. For readers who haven’t read the previous work, a brief explanation of the theory will also be provided at the beginning of each chapter. Please compare it with the problem pages to practice the transition from abstract to concrete.

Tile reading is not magic

I have written several books on tile reading so far, and each time I begin by discussing the “uncertainty of tile reading in Mahjong.” This may seem repetitive to readers who have read other books, but because it’s crucial, let me reiterate it.

Firstly, tile reading in Mahjong does not mean being able to see through an opponent’s hand with practice. No matter how much effort you put in, “there’s a significant range that can’t be read physically.” In the sense of “it could be guessed right or wrong,” the blind guesses of beginners are no different from the tile reading of pros. So, what’s the point of learning tile reading? It’s “for the sake of applying it to offense and defense judgment.” Let me explain the relevant knowledge of “offense and defense judgment” first.

0.2 Prologue 2

Tile reading without understanding offense and defense judgment is meaningless

The most important thing is your own hand

After the opponent declares Riichi (ready), you need to consider whether to discard dangerous tiles and move towards winning or break up your hand to discard safe tiles.

At this time, the most important criterion for judgment is “your own hand,” not whether “the dangerous tile the opponent might be waiting for.”



For example, with a hand like this, even if you read 5p as an extremely dangerous tile, you would still likely discard it without hesitation.



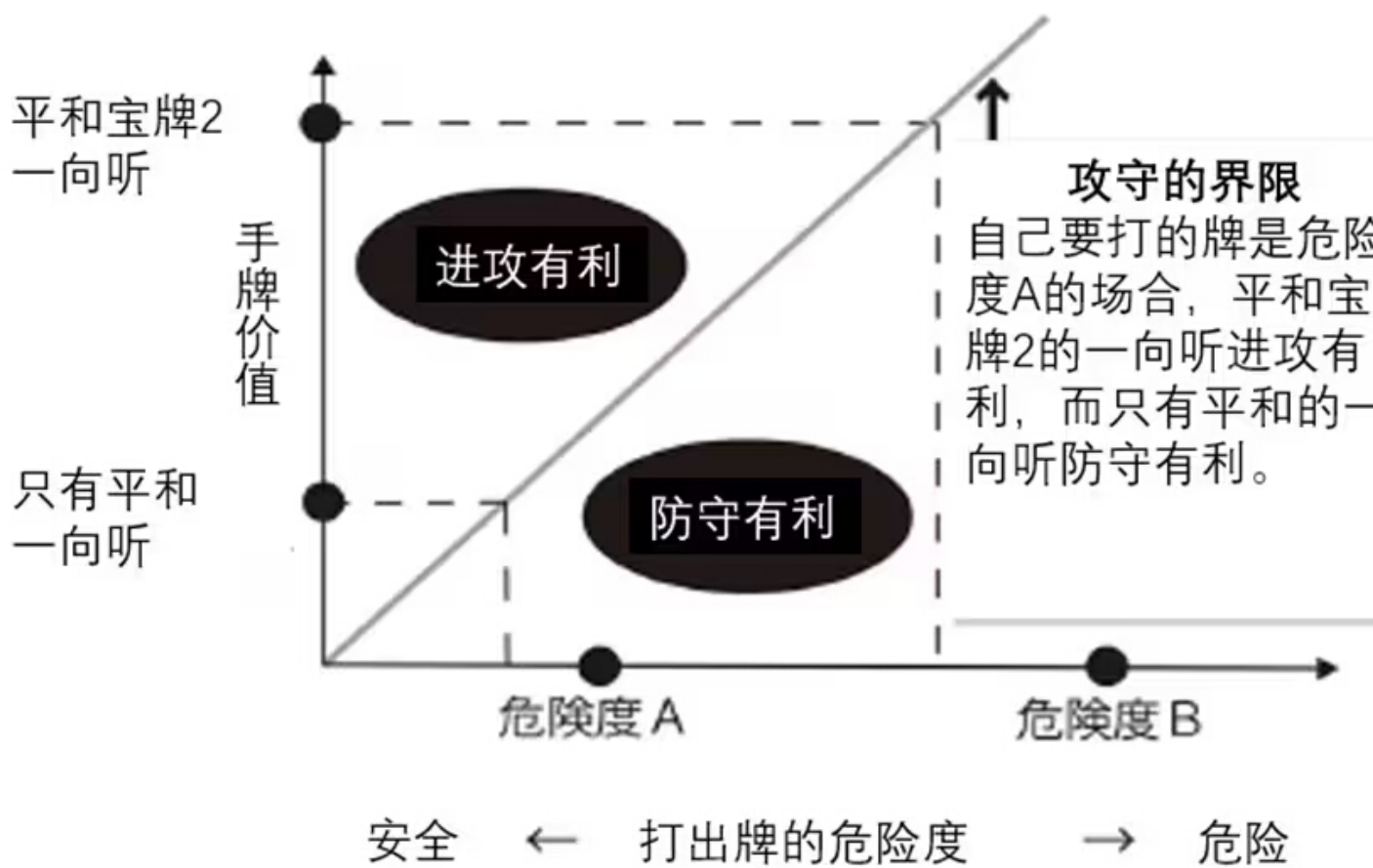
Conversely, with a hand like this, even if 5p seems passable for reasons such as being a vital tile, you would still prioritize discarding safe tiles if there are other tiles that are currently useful.

While these examples are extreme, they illustrate that there’s a line dividing “tiles of the same danger level that can be discarded in certain hands but not in others.”

Understanding the value of your hand to some extent is what gives meaning to considering the danger level of a certain tile.

Factors that determine the value of your hand include the number of tiles needed to complete your hand (how close you are to winning), the score you’ll get if you win, the strength of your winning hand, and so on. Considering “to what extent you can advance your hand” is the skill of offense and defense judgment. People who haven’t learned this way of thinking will only focus on “holding onto dangerous tiles and discarding passable ones.” But as mentioned earlier, there’s no absolute correct tile reading. It’s essential to consider the awareness of “what level of danger can my hand support in discarding tiles.” This is the mindset of offense and defense judgment.

If we were to visualize it, it would look something like this:



Suppose your hand is one tile away from ready with a balanced tile and a Dora 2. That means you can discard tiles of danger level A but not tiles of danger level B. Identifying whether the danger level is A or B is precisely what tile reading is about.

What's important here is that even if your tile reading skills are perfect, if a certain dangerous tile reads as only danger level A (relatively safe) based on the opponent's discards, but your hand is only one tile away from ready with a balanced tile, you still can't discard it.

Although it's been mentioned before, tile reading in Mahjong is not 100% accurate. Not all tiles of danger level B must be discarded, nor must all tiles of danger level A be kept.

There will also be cases where a tile of danger level B (appearing very dangerous) is discarded, while a tile of danger level A (deemed safe based on tile reading) is kept. Ultimately, tile reading is just predicting the intensity of danger.

In summary, when facing an opponent's attack (Riichi or declaring a tile), the judgment of whether a tile can be discarded is based on the value and danger level of your hand.

Tile reading is only the technique for judging the danger level axis. Those who don't consider "Does my hand value justify discarding this tile?" along the vertical axis haven't truly grasped the significance of tile reading.

After learning new knowledge, humans naturally want to test it in real situations. After reading this book,

everyone will naturally think, “With this discard order, this tile seems very dangerous...”

At such times, if you find yourself thinking, “Because it’s dangerous, even though it’s a potential winning tile, I should discard it,” or “This tile seems safe based on my reading, even though my hand is somewhat scattered, I’ll keep it,” it indicates confusion in your offense and defense judgment due to learning tile reading, making you weaker.

Ultimately, tile reading is just a tool to improve the precision of offense and defense judgment. Please don’t forget that evaluating the value of your hand is the foundation of offense and defense judgment.

0.3 Prologue 3

Criteria for Offense and Defense Judgment

The Difficulty Lies in One Tile Away from Ready

It was mentioned earlier that without good offense and defense judgment, tile reading cannot be utilized effectively.

This book mainly focuses on tile reading and won't delve into offense and defense judgment in detail. However, I'll briefly discuss some judgment criteria to a certain extent.

Firstly, the easiest to understand is the offense and defense balance against Riichi (declaring ready). Various books and studies have made significant progress in this area, and there's a general consensus among skilled players.

Therefore, explaining this aspect first and then comparing it with this criterion would make it easier to understand concepts like "this kind of meld requires the same level of caution as against Riichi" or "discarding this tile against this kind of meld is akin to discarding a tile that could complete a set."

The first key point is that being two tile away from ready generally leans towards defense.

Even if your hand can potentially form a winning hand after declaring Riichi, situations where it's advisable to attack with two tile away from ready are rare.

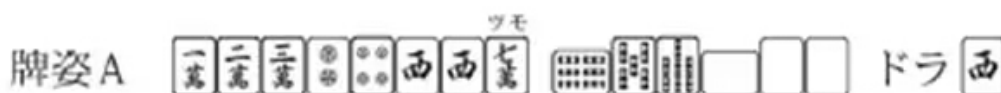
In other words, even if a certain tile appears safe based on reading, it's always risky to attack with two tile away from ready if you perceive the opponent's meld after declaring as equally threatening as a Riichi.

Conversely, the difficulty lies in low-point hands and when two tile away from ready.

In these cases, the judgment of offense and defense varies depending on the number of remaining draws and the danger level of the tile to be discarded. Therefore, when facing a meld (tile reading), these types of hands are the most prone to judgment changes.

Especially when facing a meld, unlike against Riichi, there's an element of determining whether the opponent is waiting for a tile, which further amplifies the influence of tile reading on offense and defense.

Let's look at some specific examples. Suppose you have the following hand when facing a Riichi or a meld that seems to be waiting for a tile (the criteria for judgment will be explained in this volume). Other conditions are East 1 round, South seat, and West is safe.



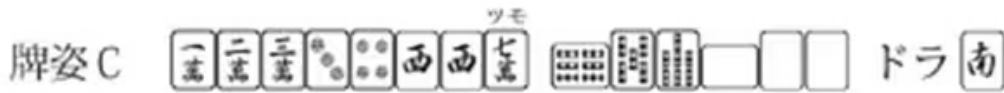
Draw 7m, Dora West

-> A hand worth 3900 points when ready is advantageous for attacking against Riichi in most cases. Therefore, when tile reading, you wouldn't discard tiles unless you're very certain they're safe.



Draw 7m, Dora 8p

-> A hand worth 1000 points in a foolish shape is quite delicate in offense and defense against Riichi. When facing a meld, the technique of tile reading is crucial, considering factors like “opponent’s point-scoring potential,” “probability of being in a waiting state,” and “danger level of 7m.”



Draw 7m, Dora South

-> A hand worth 1000 points in a good shape. Despite the low point value, if it’s completed, it holds value in countering opponent attacks. Therefore, it’s more advantageous to attack when in a good shape. When facing a meld, it’s like feeling “a bit hesitant only when drawing a tile that almost confirms a dangerous tile.”



Draw 7m, Dora 1m

-> Completely one tile away from ready with a balanced tile as Dora 1. It’s a delicate situation against Riichi, depending on the danger level of 7m. Therefore, when facing a meld, offense and defense should be determined based on the tile reading situation.



Draw 7m, Dora 1m

-> One tile away from ready with Dora 2, but the shape is poor, so it’s usually better to discard even against Riichi. Therefore, when facing a meld, if the threat level of the meld is similar to Riichi, discard; if it’s not as threatening as Riichi, make a judgment based on the safety of tiles like 7m.



Draw 7m, Dora 1m

-> One tile away from ready with a Dora 1 as Yakuhei. In situations like Riichi with low point value and no waiting hand, it’s usually better to discard. When facing a meld, careful judgment is required. Whether you

can determine if 7m can be safely discarded based on tile reading with this type of hand is crucial, and it has a significant impact on your score.

There are two types of situations where tile reading is crucial

Of course, precisely speaking, due to factors like rules and remaining draws, some may disagree with the above criteria. As mentioned earlier, this book doesn't focus on offense and defense judgment, so it won't be extensively discussed. The solutions in this book are based on the above criteria and incorporate tile reading. Understanding this point should make it easier to apply in real games.

So, in addition to holding a hand where offense and defense are delicate, another important situation for tile reading is when you have a hand where "it doesn't matter which tile you discard."



For example, in this hand, there's no difference between discarding 8m and 2p on the surface. If you determine that 2p is slightly more dangerous based on tile reading, then discard 8m. Although there aren't many choices like this in real games, this book focuses on explaining tile reading, so it selects many similar hand shapes. After reading solutions to similar problems, considering them as situations where offense and defense are delicate in real games should be useful in many instances.

0.4 Prologue 4

-> Discarding and drawing tiles

We can discuss observing discards after draws later.

When it comes to tile reading, confirming discards after draws is inevitably crucial. For intermediate players who are starting to learn tile reading, confirming discards after draws can be quite challenging.

In this regard, this book attempts to challenge by not marking discards and draws in the problems.

“Some might say, ‘This is supposed to be a tile reading book, yet it doesn’t mark discards after draws. What’s going on?’” There are several reasons for this:

The minimum requirement for tile reading is to observe the tiles discarded immediately after a meld. Literally, considering the varying skill levels of readers who pick up this book with the thought of “Let’s learn tile reading next!” suddenly requiring them to confirm all discards after draws would make it impossible for them to learn. At least, if we aim to compile a book that can improve the readers’ skills, the result of such thinking would inevitably be to introduce tile reading techniques that can be used even with minimal confirmation.

What’s referred to as the minimum requirement here is “remembering the tiles discarded immediately after a meld.” In fact, just remembering this point can reveal a lot. Specifics about what can be deduced will be discussed further in this book, but for those who haven’t considered tile reading before, it’s crucial to acknowledge this point.

The ability to observe discards after draws is easier to grasp after understanding the logic of tile reading. I suppose many people assume that “observing discards after draws” leads to “utilizing this information in tile reading.”

My perspective is quite the opposite. In other words, the sequence should be “understanding the logic of tile reading” -> “developing an awareness of observing discards after draws based on this logic, which is easier to remember.”

If people are suddenly required to remember discards after draws without knowing how to apply it in tile reading, it’s akin to memorizing a string of binary numbers. It’s joyless, and because there’s no joy, it’s easy to become distracted.

On the other hand, what if someone knows the pattern that “after discarding 6p, the opponent discarded 8p a few turns later, indicating they have more than one 9p in their hand”? In this case, when the opponent discards 8p from their hand, it leaves a deep impression, repeating the successful experience of realizing “the opponent actually has 9p!” This naturally draws attention to the opponent’s discards after draws.

Furthermore, suppose someone memorizes all discards after draws but doesn’t understand the logic of tile reading. In that case, this information becomes useless. It’s essential to learn the theory first, no matter how you think about it.

Of course, confirming discards after draws beyond those immediately after a meld can improve the precision of tile reading. However, if some thought is put into these tile reading logics when creating problems, they can still be understood by “only observing the discards immediately after a meld.”

Therefore, I compiled a problem set where observing discards immediately after a meld is the minimum requirement for information to proceed. After understanding all the solutions, I believe one will naturally begin to pay attention to discards after draws in other situations and apply the theory effectively.

1 Chapter 1: Foundation of Learning Tile Reading

1.1 Chapter 1-1

Organizing Public Information

Key Point 1: Consider the Opponent's Hand Composition

Before delving into the problems, let's briefly explain the minimum theoretical knowledge required for tile reading. Those confident in their tile reading skills can skip this section and proceed directly to solving the problems.

The first thing to remember is to "consider what yaku (hand composition) the opponent is aiming for with their melds."

Knowing if the opponent is aiming for a sanshoku (three color straight), then you should be cautious of discarding tiles from that suit.

Consider the opponent's hand composition as follows:

1.



For example, when the opponent melds mid-range tiles:

-> It's likely they're avoiding terminal tiles.

2.



For example, when the opponent melds honor tiles along with terminals:

-> They likely have yakuhai tiles.

3. When they aggressively discard tiles from two suits but meld from the third:

-> It's likely they're aiming for a mixed color straight.

Key Point 2: Organize Visible Information

Next, it's crucial to grasp and organize publicly available information, such as the tiles discarded by players or tiles melded by opponents.

Tile reading is essentially the process of inferring "hidden information," and the material for inference is publicly available information. A little thought can yield many benefits.

For instance, as mentioned earlier, if an opponent melds a terminal tile, they likely have yakuhai tiles, and the probability of them holding a tile already discarded from that suit is relatively low. Therefore, you should be wary of the tile they may draw.

Moreover, if a particular tile is visible in four copies, there's no chance of it being part of a pair. Constantly keeping track of such information can be advantageous.

Key Point 3: Tiles Discarded After Chow Are Dangerous

One of the fundamental principles in reading the opponent's hand is that "tiles discarded immediately after a chow are dangerous."

For example, if the opponent chows 6p to form a sequence and then discards 4s, if they achieve tenpai (ready hand) at this point, the area around 4s becomes hazardous. Although this information may be updated when they discard further tiles, it's essential to adhere to the principle of "remembering the tiles discarded immediately after a chow" and be cautious of the tiles surrounding it.

By the way, the area surrounding the tile discarded after a chow cannot be categorized as safe or dangerous.

Key Point 4: Beware of High-Value Melds

After starting to learn tile reading, there might be a period when every discarded tile seems dangerous. However, naturally, if you're on high alert for every meld, you won't be able to complete your hand.

Here, let's first be cautious and counteract particularly dangerous melds. Particularly dangerous melds refer to:

- Melds where two or more doras are visible.
- Melds of double east or double south.
- Melds indicating a specific hand composition (such as mixed suits or pure suits).

These three types of melds all have the potential to reach mangan or higher with just 1-2 additional yaku. Additionally, the first two types are publicly available information, and the discards for the third type are often obvious, making them easy to spot even for beginners. So, it's a good habit to be vigilant against these three types of melds.

Solution:

Since one 3p is visible, it's more likely that 8s will complete your hand, but the opponent's hand composition strongly suggests they're aiming for tanyao. There's no need to deliberately aim for the potentially dangerous 7s.

If you're only one tile away, it's better to discard the safer 9s. Even if you can't deduce exactly what the opponent is waiting for, by locking down their hand composition, you can predict the level of danger. Beginners should start by trying to think, "What is the opponent aiming for?"

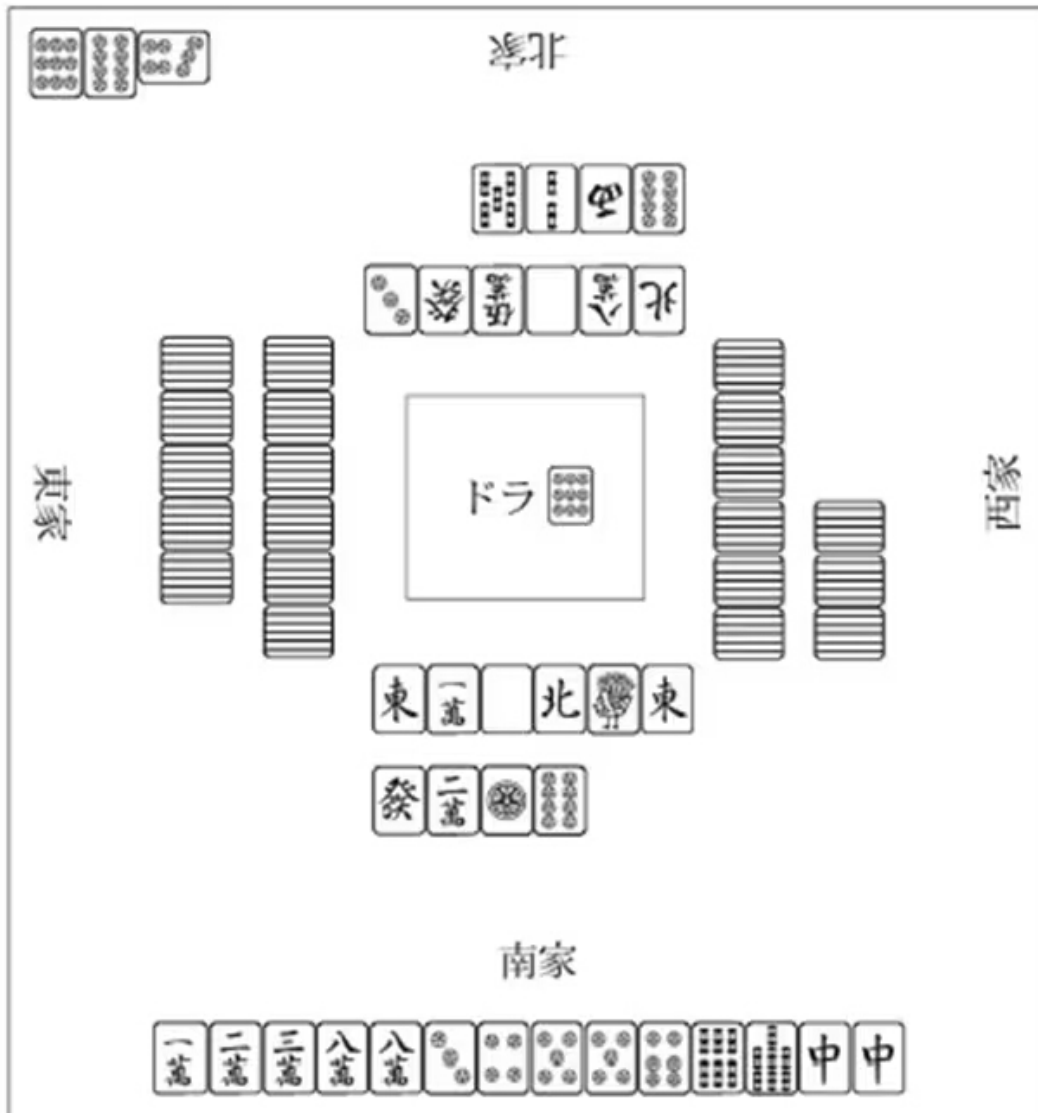
Solution:

This time, the opponent has chowed 789p, eliminating the possibility of terminals and honors. The only viable option for their hand composition is yakuhai tiles.

Opponent is North, and there are five possible yakuhai tiles: East, North, White, Green, and Red Dragon, among which four are visible on the field. Therefore, it's highly likely that the opponent's yaku is one of the Dragons.

Although the possibility of the opponent having a concealed set of Red Dragons along with a Single Wait for a winning tile is not zero, it would be reckless to gamble on such a scenario. In this situation, it's best to aim for a draw by winning on a self-drawn tile, and therefore, keep the Red Dragon and play the 3p as a safe tile.

Exercise 3:



Dora Tile: 9p

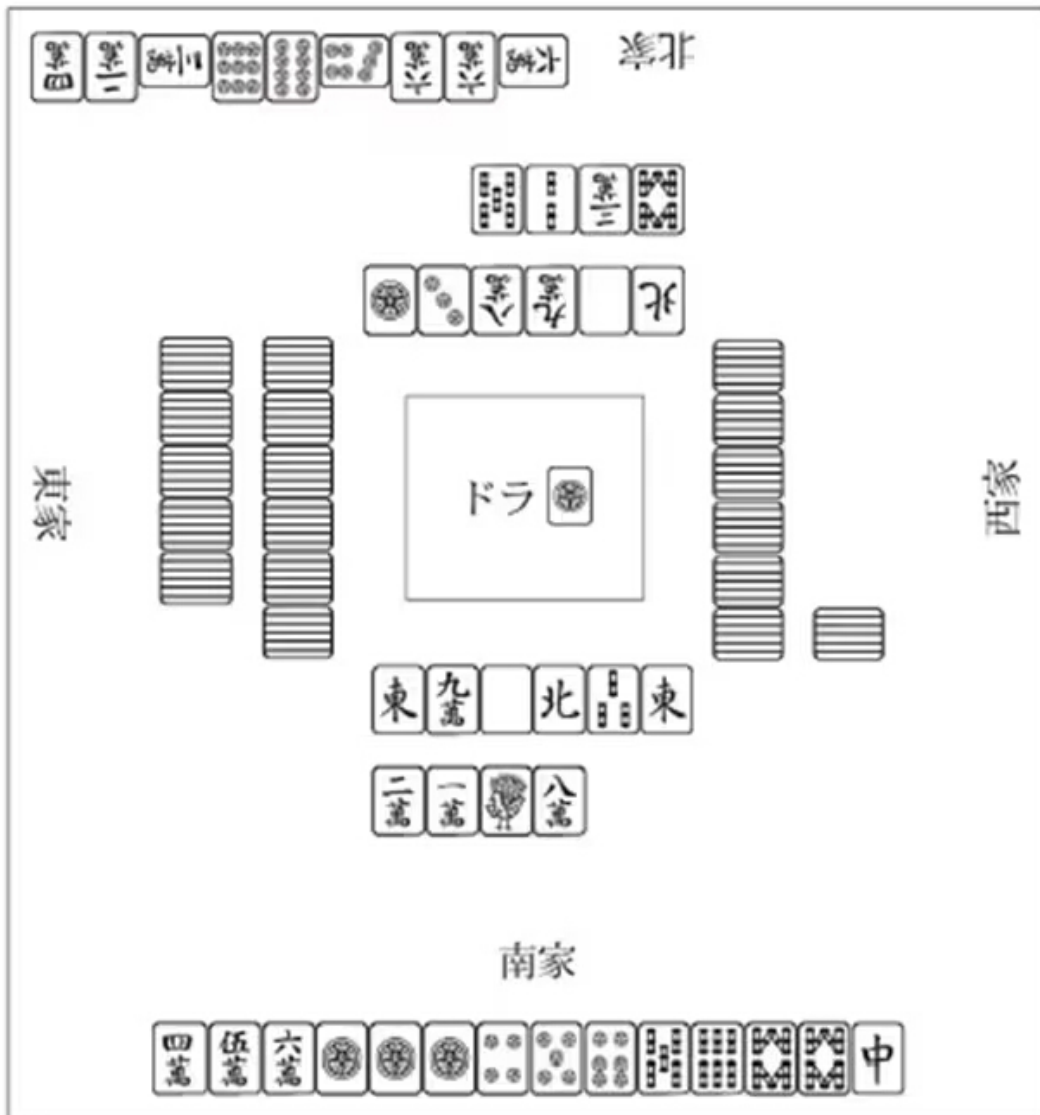
Based on the opponent's discards, how should you proceed with your hand this round?

Solution:

The opponent has only discarded one set of tiles, so it's uncertain if they have a yaku. It could be that they are aiming for Half Outside, Three Colors, Pure Straight, or less likely, Mixed One Suit.

However, most of these yaku can also be combined with a winning tile. While aiming for higher points, one must also be cautious of possible yaku combinations. This means that the only live tile in the possible yaku combinations should not be discarded. Given that there's a high chance that the opponent would discard the winning tile, if aiming for a win, it's best to regard the tile with the highest risk of being a dead tile, which is the Red Dragon. Therefore, it's better to discard the 8m.

Exercise 4:



Dora Tile: 1p.

The opponent has made three exposures, and you are in Tenpai. Should you declare Riichi?

Solution:

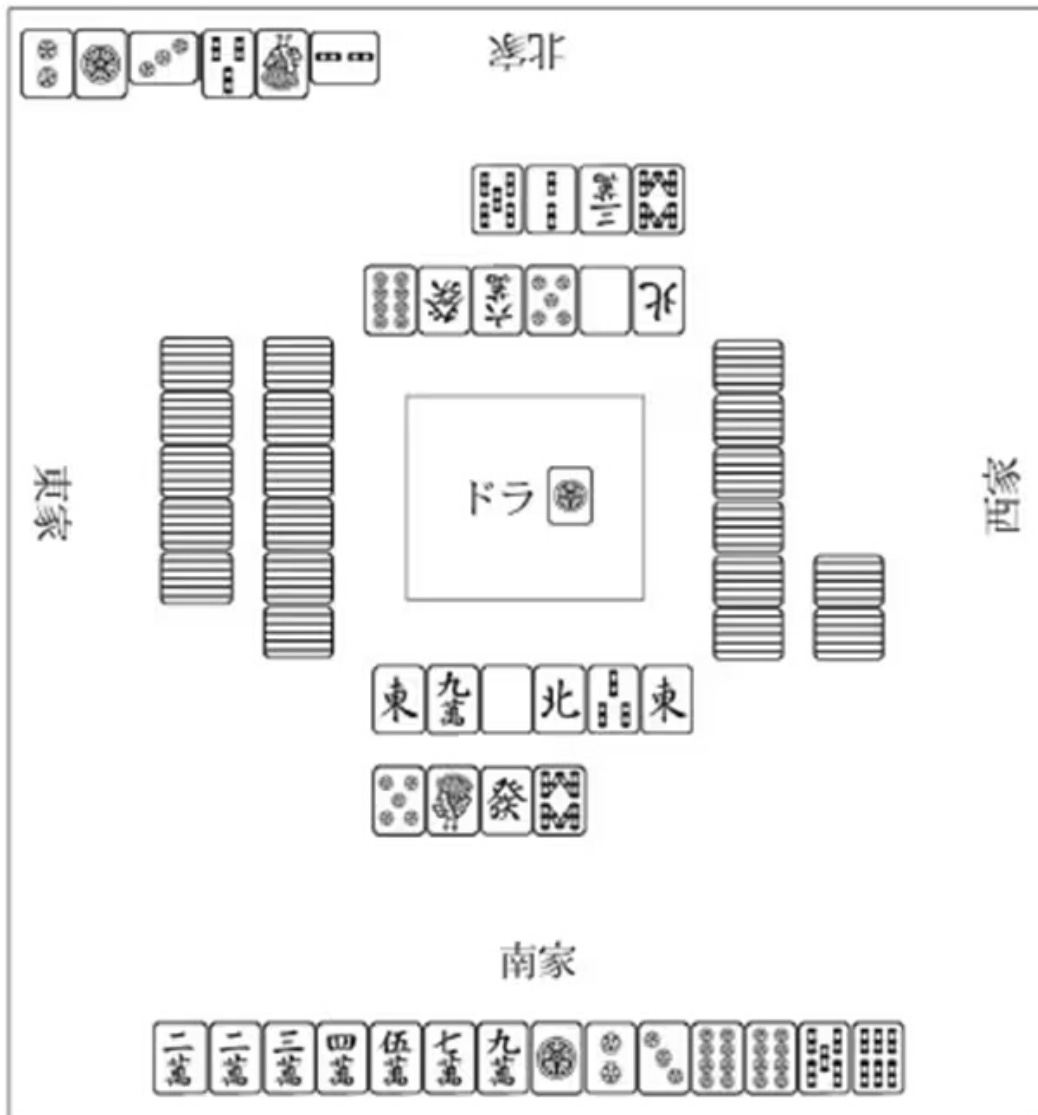
The yakuhai tiles that are yet to be discarded are the Green and Red Dragons. The opponent most likely has yakuhai tiles left. The Red Dragon would likely be the winning tile.

However, your hand is Tenpai with a range from low-scoring hands to a potential Yakuman. Also, considering that the opponent has discarded the 1p Dora tile, even if the Red Dragon is the winning tile, the maximum loss would only be “Red Dragon, Red 1” which is 2000 points. In this scenario, the risk and reward are balanced, therefore, it’s advisable to declare Riichi with the Red Dragon as the potential pair.

The lesson about reading tile values will be discussed later. However, the key point to understand now is that “dangerous tiles are not always forbidden to discard.” After learning how to read tiles, you may encounter situations where you think, “This tile seems risky, so I shouldn’t discard it,” but the most crucial aspect of Mahjong is your own hand. When your hand is in good shape, fearing to discard tiles excessively signifies falling into a state of being “manipulated by reading.”

It can be said that only when you can make judgments while enjoying the risks on the basis of understanding the degree of danger, can you be considered to be “applying reading skills adeptly.”

Exercise 5:



Dora Tile: 1p.

Your hand is most likely to progress with either 2m or 9m. What's the best tile to discard based on the opponent's exposures?

Solution:

The opponent's possible yaku is most likely the Dragons, but it could also be Three Colors or Half Outside Hand.

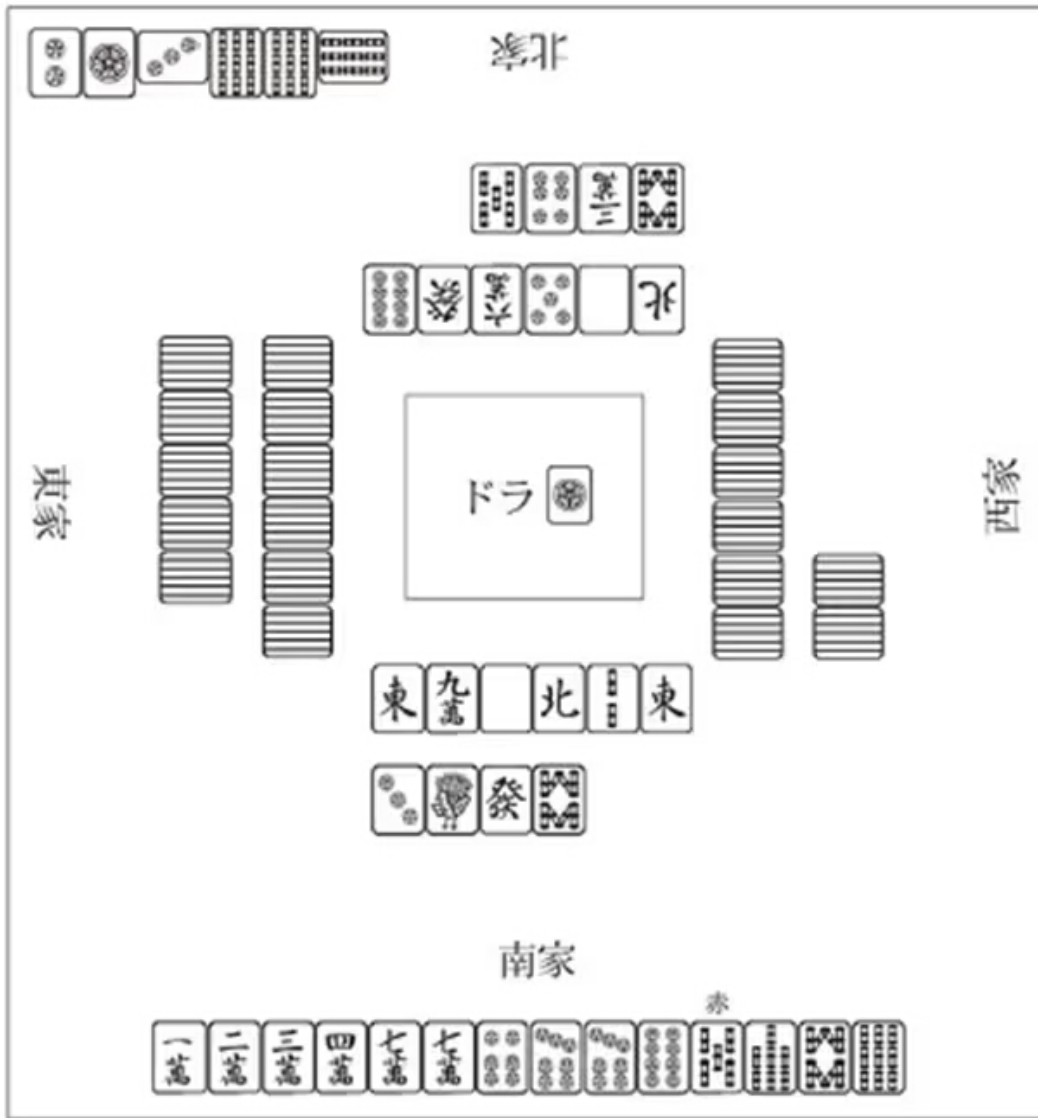
2m is necessary for Three Colors and Half Outside Hand, and 9m is useful for Outside Hand. Besides, if you can't play 2m, there's no difference between advancing with 8p or 9m in terms of tile efficiency.

Considering that your hand is waiting on two sides and you want to play conservatively, it's better to discard 8p.

In most cases, the exposed sets of tiles are "Terminal or Honor" or "yakuhai tiles." Just paying attention to these two is enough for now. However, in cases like this exercise, where there are two exposed sets that fit other yaku types (Three Colors, Half Outside Hand, Pure Straight, Mixed One Suit, All Triples), it's necessary to consider other possible yaku types.

1.3 Chapter 1-3

Exercise 6:



Dora Tile: 1p

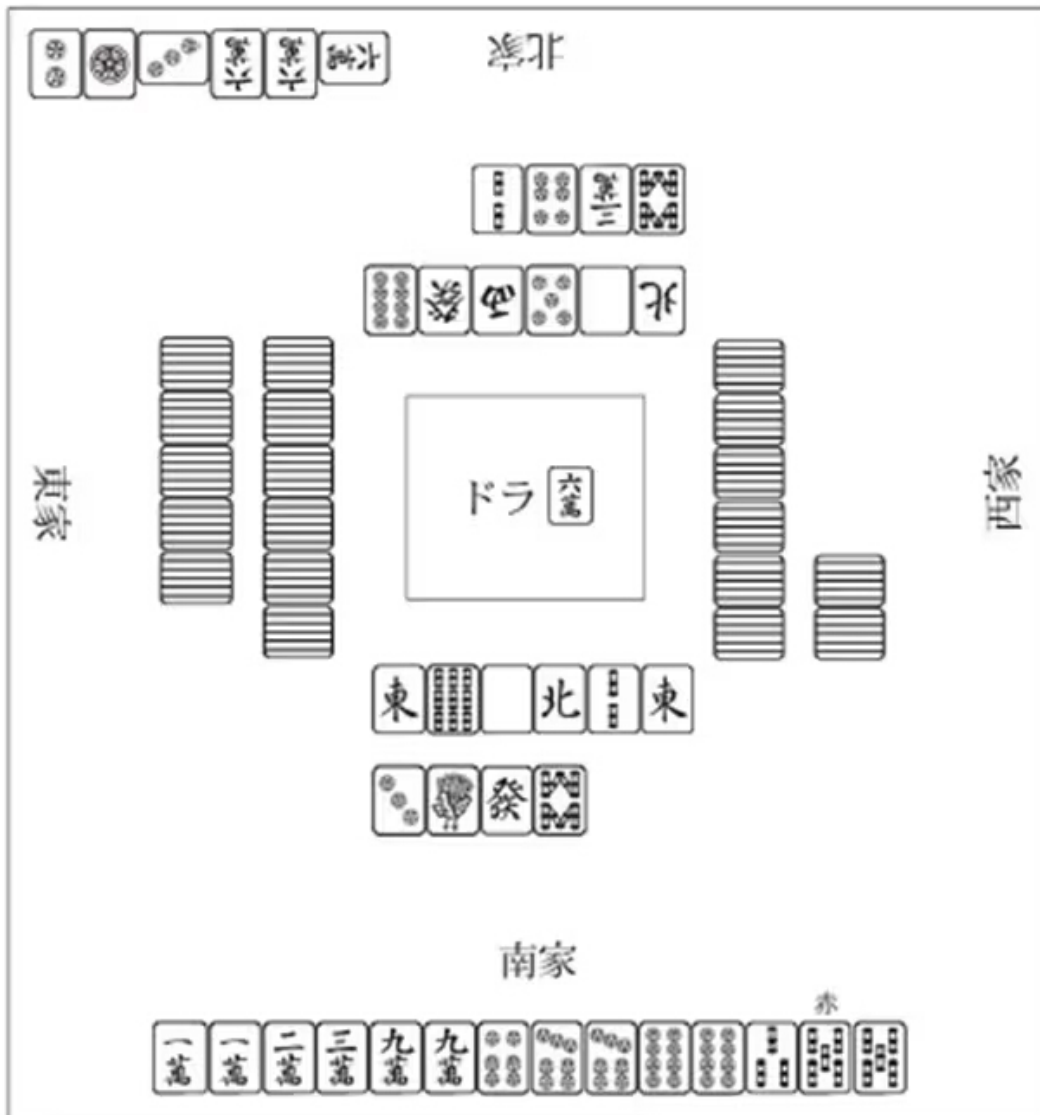
You have a good shape and are one tile away from a ready hand. Based on the opponent's discards, what should you discard?

Solution:

Although the opponent's main yaku is still likely the Dragons, with "two sets of exposed terminal tiles," there's a suspicion of potentially having Half Outside Hand. Especially when the dora tile is a terminal tile, "Full Outside Hand Dora 1" is worth 3900 points, and if there are two dora tiles or Three Colors, it would be Mangan. Therefore, it's crucial to pay attention to this possibility.

Hence, 1m must not be discarded to maintain the potential for completing the hand. To preserve the possibility of completing the hand, it's best to discard 4m. In this scenario, assuming it's East 1 round, in situations like when the point count is not critical and you just want to maintain a good shape, such as South round, discarding the Red 5s to potentially absorb another 1m tile could also be considered.

Exercise 7:



Dora Tile: 6m

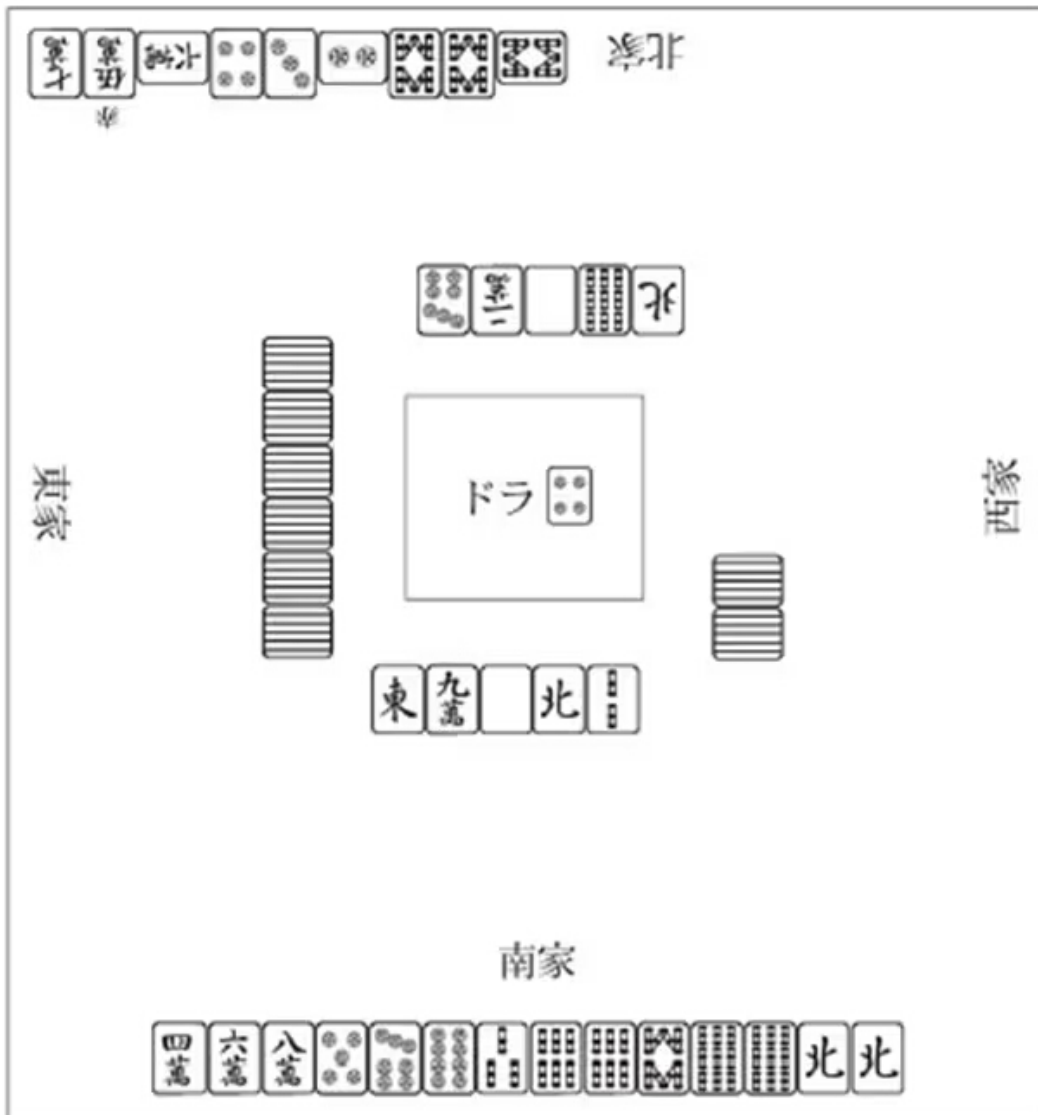
The opponent has made a triplet with the dora tile. Your hand is a mix of a standard hand and a seven pairs shape. What strategy should you adopt?

Solution:

As previously explained, one of the benchmarks is “mainly be cautious of terminal tiles and yakuhai tiles; if there are two exposures related to other yaku types (such as Three Colors), be wary of those yaku.” This time, the opponent made a triplet with the dora tile. Because it has a high point value, even if you “over-cautiously” consider some other possibilities, it’s not unreasonable. The Three Colors 123 should also be within the scope of attention.

Considering this, it’s difficult to discard 1m and 3s from your hand, and it’s safer to aim for a ready hand in seven pairs. Therefore, maintaining the one-tile away from ready in seven pairs, it’s better to discard the live tiles 6p or 3m.

Exercise 8:



Dora Tile: 4p

Based on the opponent's discards, what strategy should you adopt in this round?

Solution:

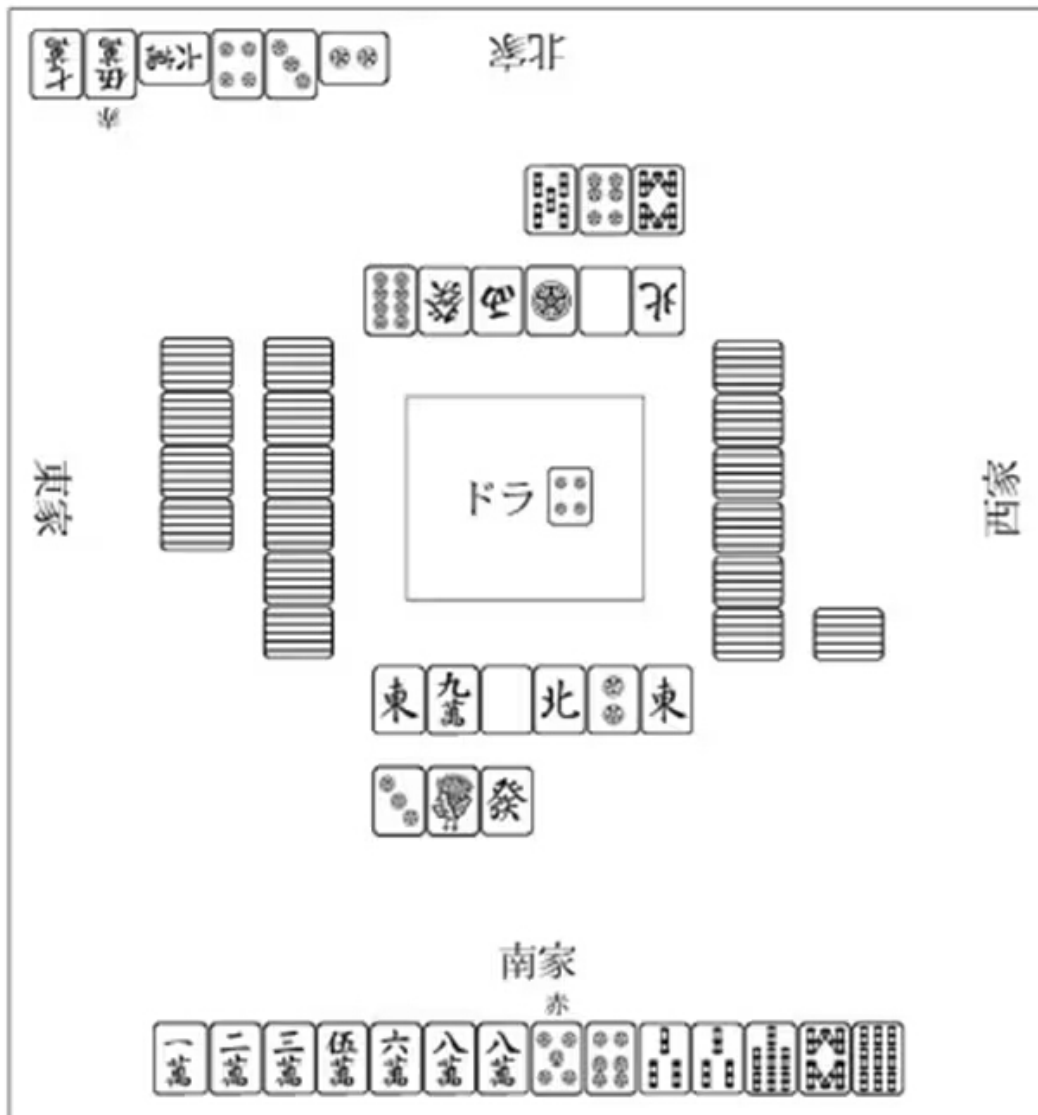
This question actually asks to what extent should you be cautious when facing the opponent's exposures. As a rough guideline, I think it's about "be cautious when the opponent has called three tiles from the first row, two from the second, and one from the third," then they are likely "probably ready".

In this case, the opponent has already called three tiles from the first row, indicating they are "probably ready". Of course, they might not be ready yet, or even if they are, you might not know what they are waiting for.

However, facing an opponent who is likely already waiting for a winning tile, with a hand of scattered tiles with no melds, you simply cannot win by discarding a hand like this. Therefore, it's best to fold. Keep the pair of North tiles for potential defense against other players' Riichi, and start by breaking apart the pair of 9s to see how the situation unfolds.

Conversely, if your hand were a one-tile away from ready with a good scoring potential or shape, at this stage, discarding dangerous tiles for points would still be acceptable.

Exercise 9:



Dora Tile: 4p

To advance as safely as possible, which tile should you discard?

Solution:

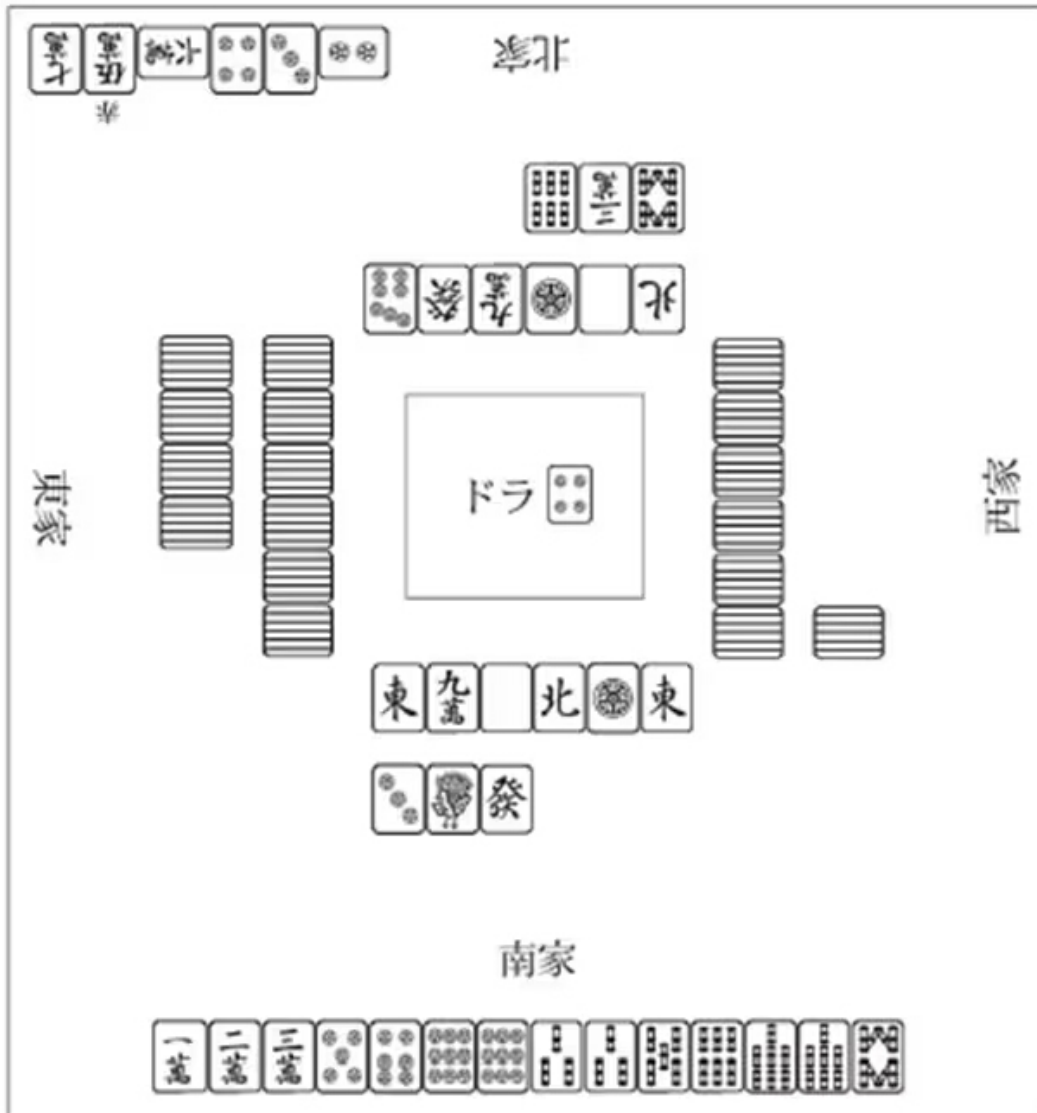
Your hand shape requires you to break apart either the pair of 8m or 3s, so consider which one is safer.

An important theory to note here is that “the area around the tile discarded after a chow by a potentially waiting opponent is very dangerous.”

With the opponent discarding two tiles from the second row, it’s reasonable to assume they might be “probably waiting.” The 5s here might have been discarded from a sequence like 455s or 566s, making the 3s (if they are already waiting) a highly likely winning tile.

However, even with this assumption, you cannot be certain the opponent is already waiting, and the threat level is not high enough to warrant folding. Start by breaking apart the pair of 8m tiles first, and if the opponent is indeed waiting, plan to counterattack with a Riichi.

Exercise 10:



Dora Tile: 4p

The opponent has chowd 2p and discarded 6s. For a safer advancement, which tile should you discard?

Solution:

Your hand shape requires you to break apart either the pair of 9p or 3s, with breaking the pair of 3s being more conducive to completing the sequence for 4s.

However, here the opponent has discarded 6s after chowing. As discussed in the previous question, the area around this 6s is very dangerous. This danger zone doesn't only include tiles like 47s and 58s, but also encompasses the possibility of the opponent waiting for 3s after discarding 6s from sequences like 246s.

While it's not certain that 3s will lead to a win, considering the opponent has discarded 8s, denying the possibility of waiting for 58s, the 3s becomes even riskier. On the other hand, if the opponent is going for a terminal-less hand, then 9p is definitely not a winning tile.

In such a situation where you're only one tile away from completion, it's better to compromise and discard the safer tile, 9p. Suppose you discard 3s and successfully complete the sequence for 4s. You'll still have to discard the risky tile 7s, which is unfavorable.

Solution:

With the opponent discarding two tiles from the second row, it's reasonable to assume they might be "probably waiting." The area around the discarded 6s after the chow is very dangerous. Especially since the opponent has also discarded 8s, denying the possibility of waiting for 58s, the likelihood of waiting for 6s from sequences like 566s or 246s has increased.

Therefore, 4s is a major target, and discarding 6s would enable you to safely wait for your hand to win.

Understanding the above content, you should discard 4s and declare Riichi.

Looking solely at your hand, discarding 4s provides both a safer wait and better potential for scoring. It's crucial to focus on your hand's strengths. If your hand is a high-scoring opportunity hand, such as a Mangan ready hand, then ignore the opponent's chow and play at your own pace.

Solution:

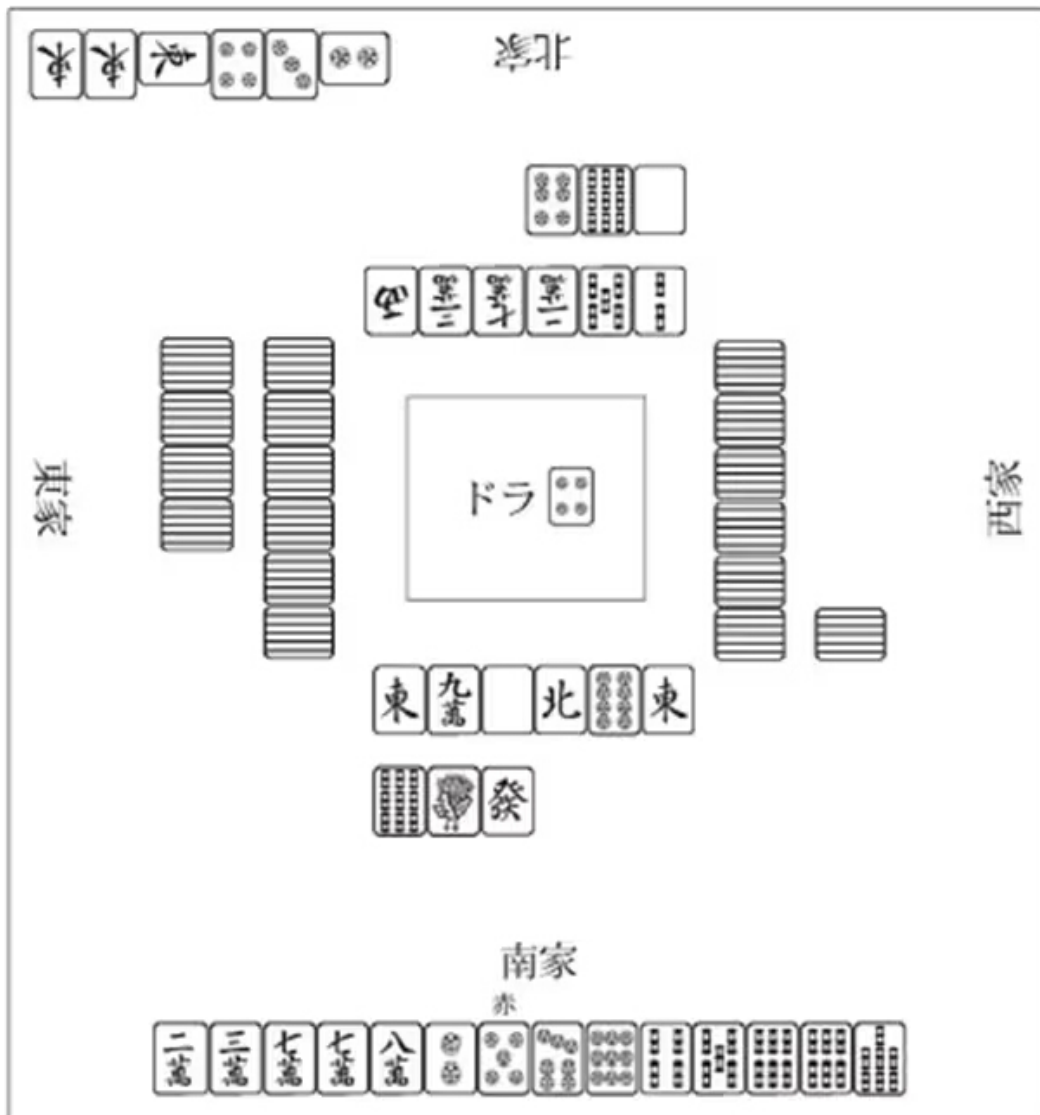
In contrast to the previous question, this time the opponent has confirmed high-scoring potential. With a double East and dora 2p already exposed, the score is already at least 5800 points. Considering the possibility of another dora being drawn with the red dora rule, be prepared for a potential 12000-point loss if you deal in. Furthermore, as the opponent is the dealer, letting them win another consecutive hand is even more detrimental to you.

Again, with “two tiles discarded from the second row,” the difference in damage (risk) when dealing in is too significant. Such exposed tiles with three-fan value must be handled with care.

Additionally, your hand being one tile away from a ready hand is also a key point. Relying solely on your hand and disregarding the risk is very risky. Sacrificing some potential for improvement, it's better to discard 8p.

Remember, “the borderline of a potentially waiting hand” + “exposed tiles with a three-fan value” = caution required.

Exercise 13:



Dora Tile: 4p

The opponent has chowed 2p and discarded 6p. How should you view the opponent's hand, and what direction should you take this hand?

Solution:

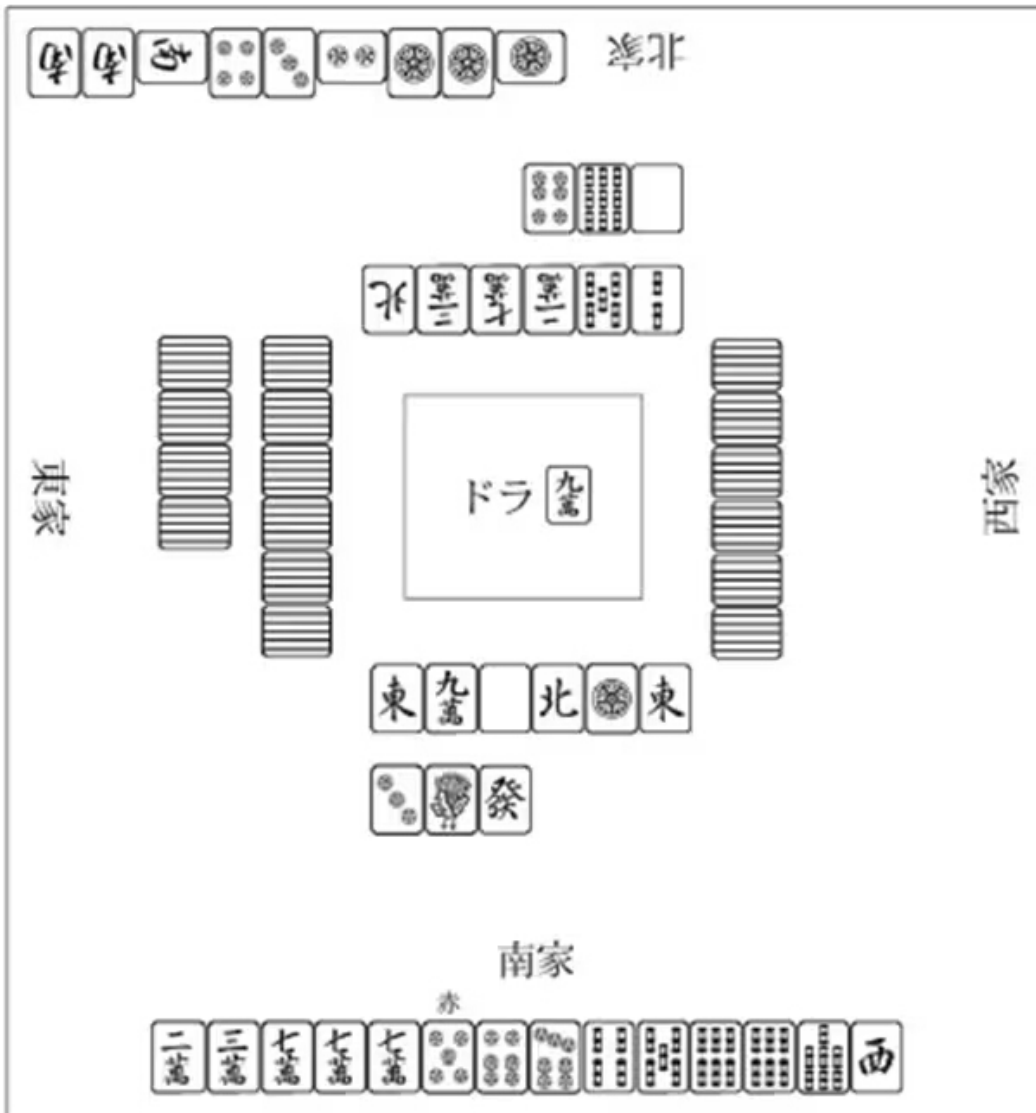
The key point of this question lies in whether you can discern if the opponent is going for a half-suit hand (Honitsu).

The opponent's discards here are quite straightforward, making it apparent that recognizing Honitsu in such real-game situations is crucial.

In the case of Half-suit, apart from the number of chows, the principle of "high probability of waiting when discarding a tile from your flush" can be applied. Since the opponent has discarded 6p, a readily available tile from the suited set, it's highly likely they are waiting.

You cannot discard 2p from your hand, and the terminal tile 9p, which is part of a sequence, cannot be discarded either. Considering this, it's already quite challenging to win with your current hand. In such a situation, discard 7m or 23m from the character suit. Only consider advancing your position once you have tiles that can potentially improve your hand.

Exercise 14:





Dora Tile: 9m

The opponent has pung 1p and discarded 6p. How should you view the opponent's hand, and which tile should you discard?

Solution:

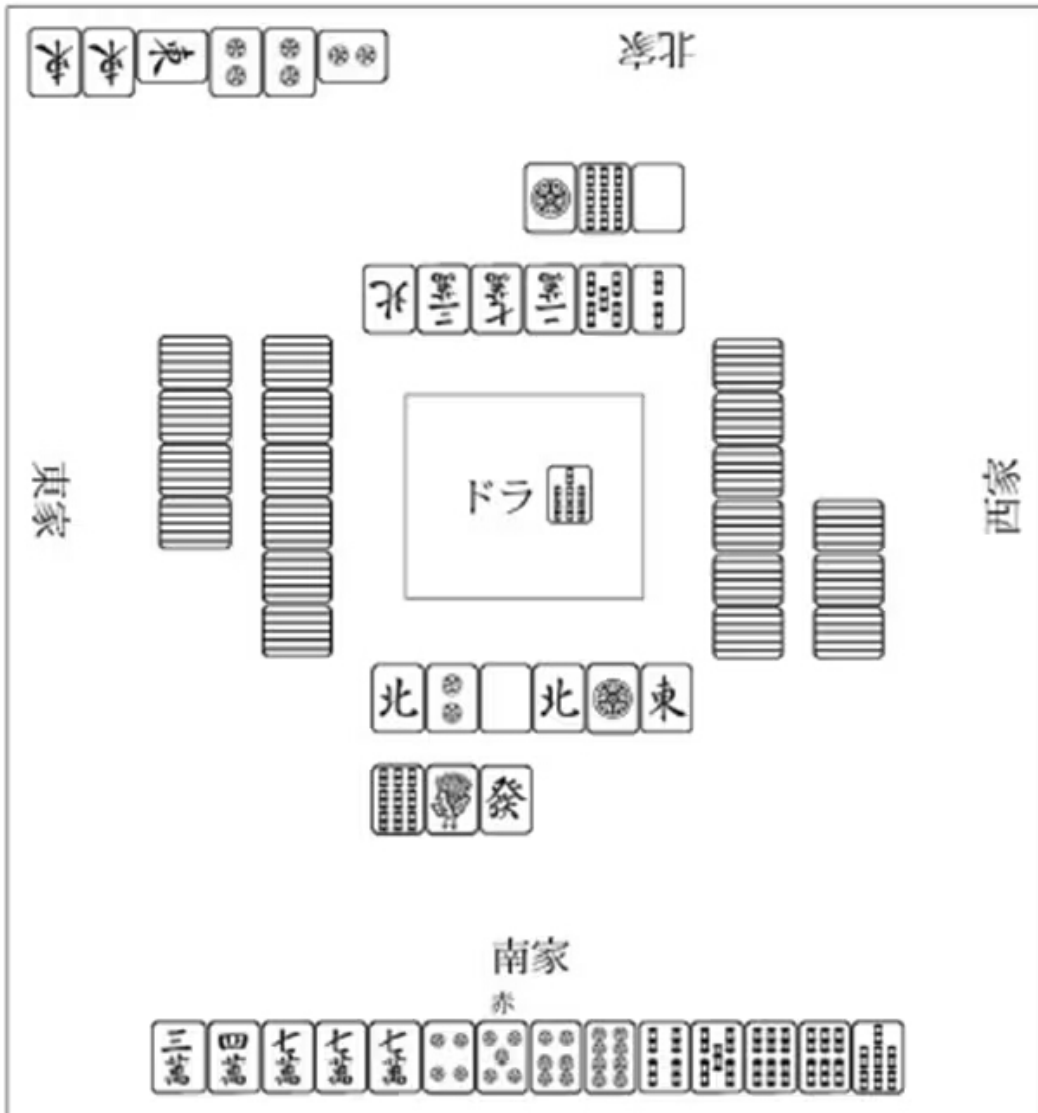
This time, the opponent seems to be aiming for a half-huit hand, as they discarded 6p, indicating a strong inclination towards tenpai. Honor tiles and tiles from the pin suit are very dangerous... However, in this situation, discard West.

The key point here is scoring potential. The tile indicator is not from the pin suit, and there are no yakuhai tiles in the opponent's three calls. Moreover, you still have the red 5p in your hand, so even if the opponent wins with West, it won't be a significant loss.

Specifically, a single-wait hand like  would be worth 5200 points, while a more common wait like  would be worth 2600 points.

Although aiming for a half-suit hand is a noteworthy hand type, in situations like the one described in the exercise where it's apparent that "even if they win, it's only a half-suit hand," there's no need to be overly concerned.

Exercise 15:



Dora Tile: 7s

The opponent has pung 2p and discarded 1p. How should you view the opponent's hand, and which tile should you discard?

Solution:

In this question, the opponent appears to be aiming for a half-suit hand as they discarded 1p, indicating a strong inclination towards waiting. However, this may not necessarily be the case.

Why is it assumed that an opponent aiming for a half-suit hand is likely waiting when they discard a tile from their suited set? It's because in mahjong, players typically discard tiles in sequence from the least useful to the most useful, suggesting that someone who discards a tile crucial to their hand's progress is likely close to winning.

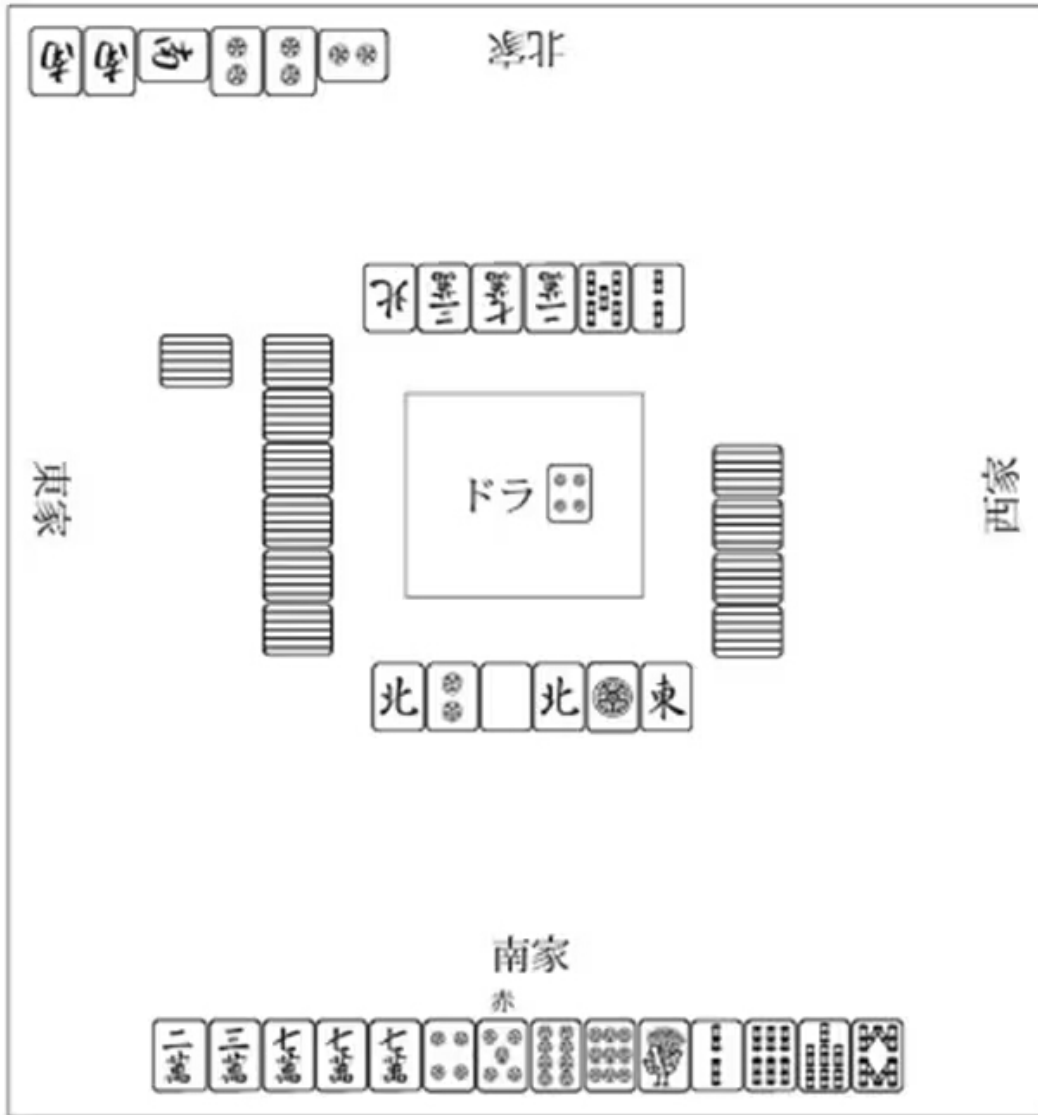
Apart from a half-suit hand, a similar logic applies to someone discarding a middle tile from the dora suit (easily usable and high-value tiles).

Here, although the opponent did discard a tile from the bamboo suit, the fact that 2p is visible four times and 1p is their second discard suggests that 1p may not be crucial to their hand's progress. Therefore, it's not considered a "crucial tile for their hand." When someone discards a tile that's difficult to use, such as in this case, it's not necessarily a sign of a strong waiting hand.

Of course, if your hand is very scattered, you should still pay attention even if the opponent discards an edge tile. However, given the good shape of your hand in this exercise, you can disregard the opponent and discard 8p.

1.5 Chapter 1-5

Exercise 16:



Dora Tile: 4p

The opponent has pung 2p and discarded North. How should you view the opponent's hand, and which tile should you discard?

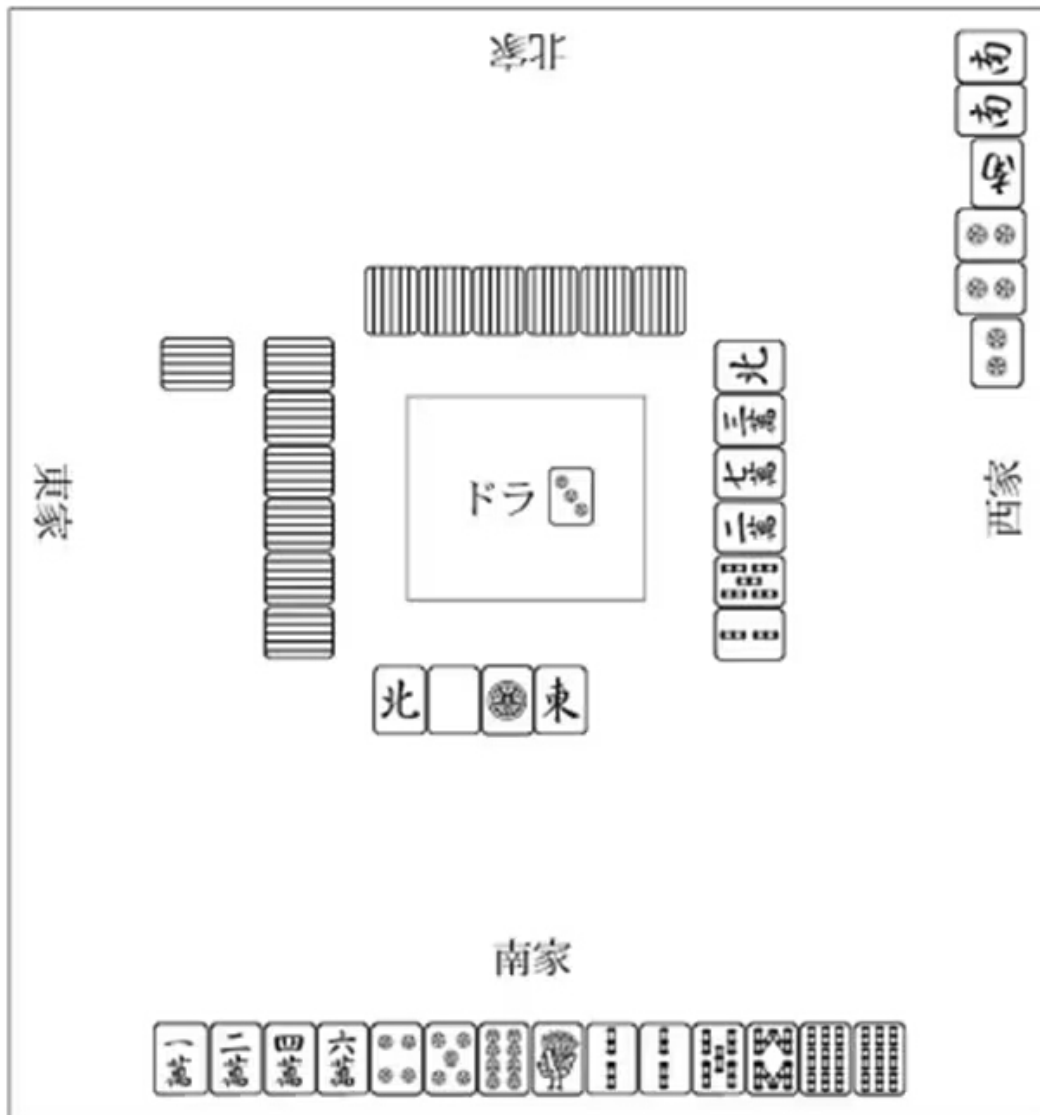
Solution:

In this question, the opponent seems to be aiming for a half-suit hand, as they have only discarded two North tiles, and their hand's speed cannot be determined. For now, let's assume they haven't reached the waiting stage yet.

Here, it's important to consider "trying not to wait on the opponent's suited tiles as much as possible." While it's not a big problem with a two-sided wait, waiting for tiles from the same suit as the opponent's will make it considerably harder to win.

So, despite the risk of being punged, it's better to discard 8p or 9p to increase the chances of waiting on other suits. There's a possibility that if you wait too long to discard, you won't be able to discard a tile at all. Therefore, when you notice that your opponent is aiming for a half-suit hand, it's important to think about where to make your five pairs.

Exercise 17:



Dora Tile: 3p

This time, the player who made the meld is the player after you. Please consider your strategy for this round.

Solution:

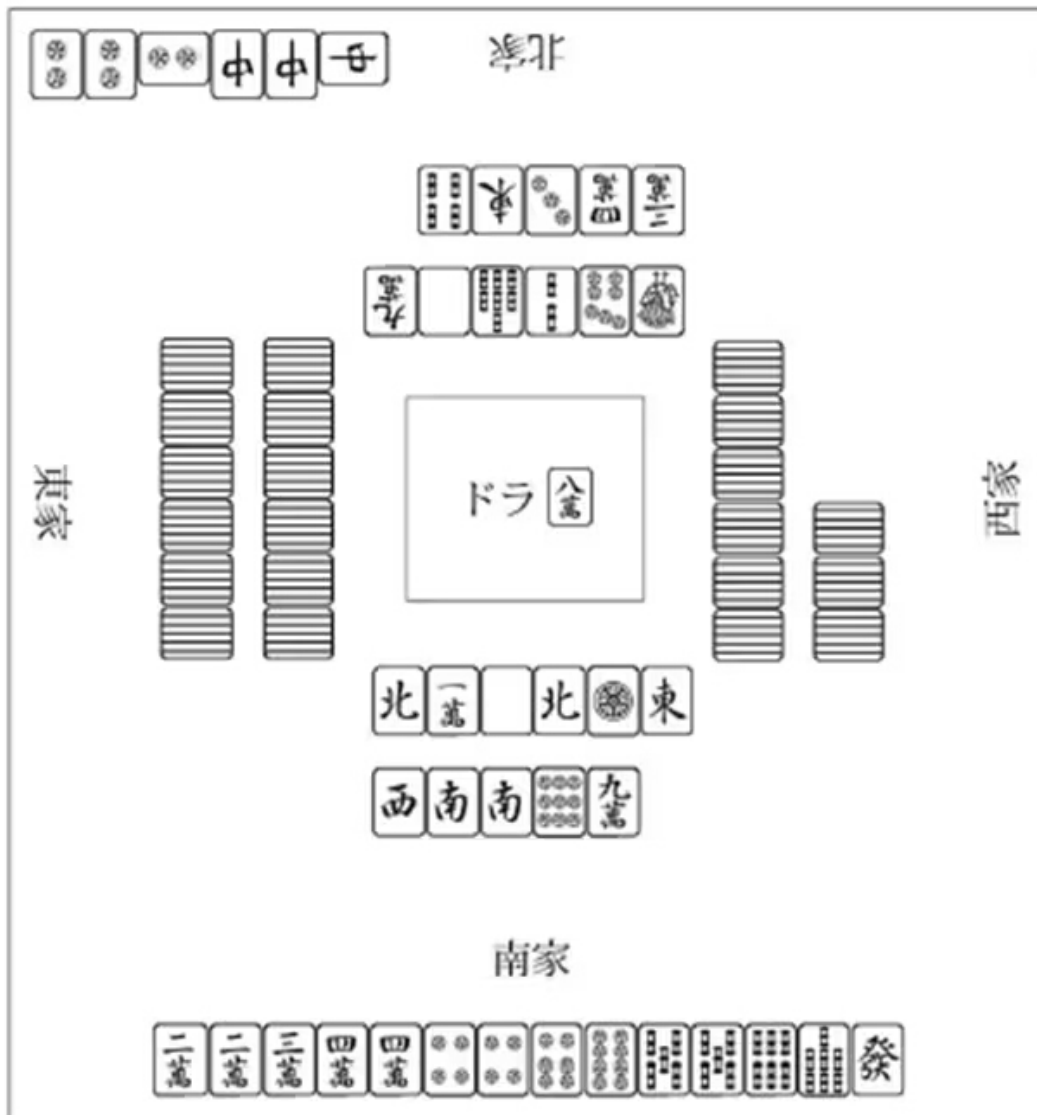
In this question, the player after you seems to be aiming for a half-suit hand. Being after you increases the possibility of them eating the tiles you discard.

Basically, hindering the opponent doesn't benefit you much. Not discarding tiles from their suited set will only cause you and the player after you to suffer by keeping useless tiles and not being able to meld tiles, while the player and the player before you benefit. Therefore, if your hand is good, there's no need to worry about these things.

The judgment criteria depend on factors like the number of turns. Here, the player after you has already called twice, so the possibility of them melding once more and being ready to win is high. At least, you should be in a one-away-from-winning state to fight back.

Considering this, if your hand is scattered, it's better to discard 1m or 5s and focus more on defense by holding onto the bamboo tiles.

Exercise 18:



Dora Tile: 8m

What combination is the opponent likely to aim for with their meld, and how should you respond to their progression? There is no information available from the tiles in the discards of your neighbors.

Solution:

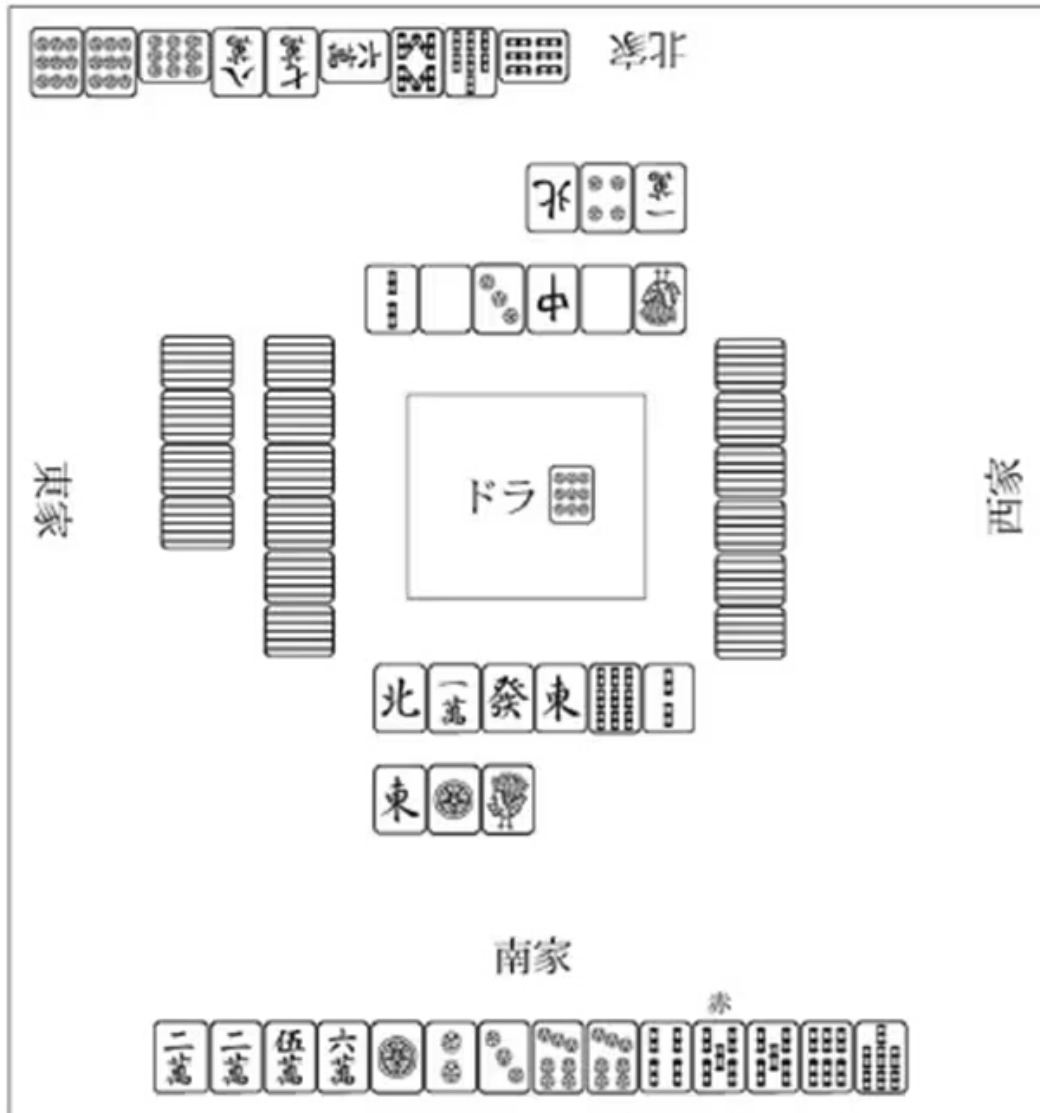
To begin with, the opponent seems to be aiming for a Toitoi. Looking at the two melds with honor tiles, they meet the condition of “having two melds that fit a specific hand type.”

Of course, it’s a bit hasty to say it’s definitely Toitoi just based on this. However, the opponent doesn’t seem to be aiming for a half-suit hand, and they’ve also discarded many middle tiles. Since Toitoi doesn’t require sequences, there’s no need to keep isolated middle tiles, making the tiles in their discard pile quite distinctive.

Therefore, although it can’t be said to be “definitely Toitoi,” it must be recognized that “the possibility of Toitoi is quite high.” In this case, the only live tile for their meld with honor tiles is the dealer’s seat wind, as holding two isolated tiles in one’s hand makes it difficult to meld.

You can decide what to discard based on the tiles in the discards of your neighbors. However, discarding a tile like 3m to prepare for a Seven Pairs hand is also a good choice.

Exercise 19:

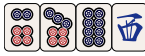



Dora Tile: 9p

Assuming you haven't seen your hand yet and it's your turn to discard, what can you deduce from the opponent's melds? Based on this, what should you discard?

Solution:

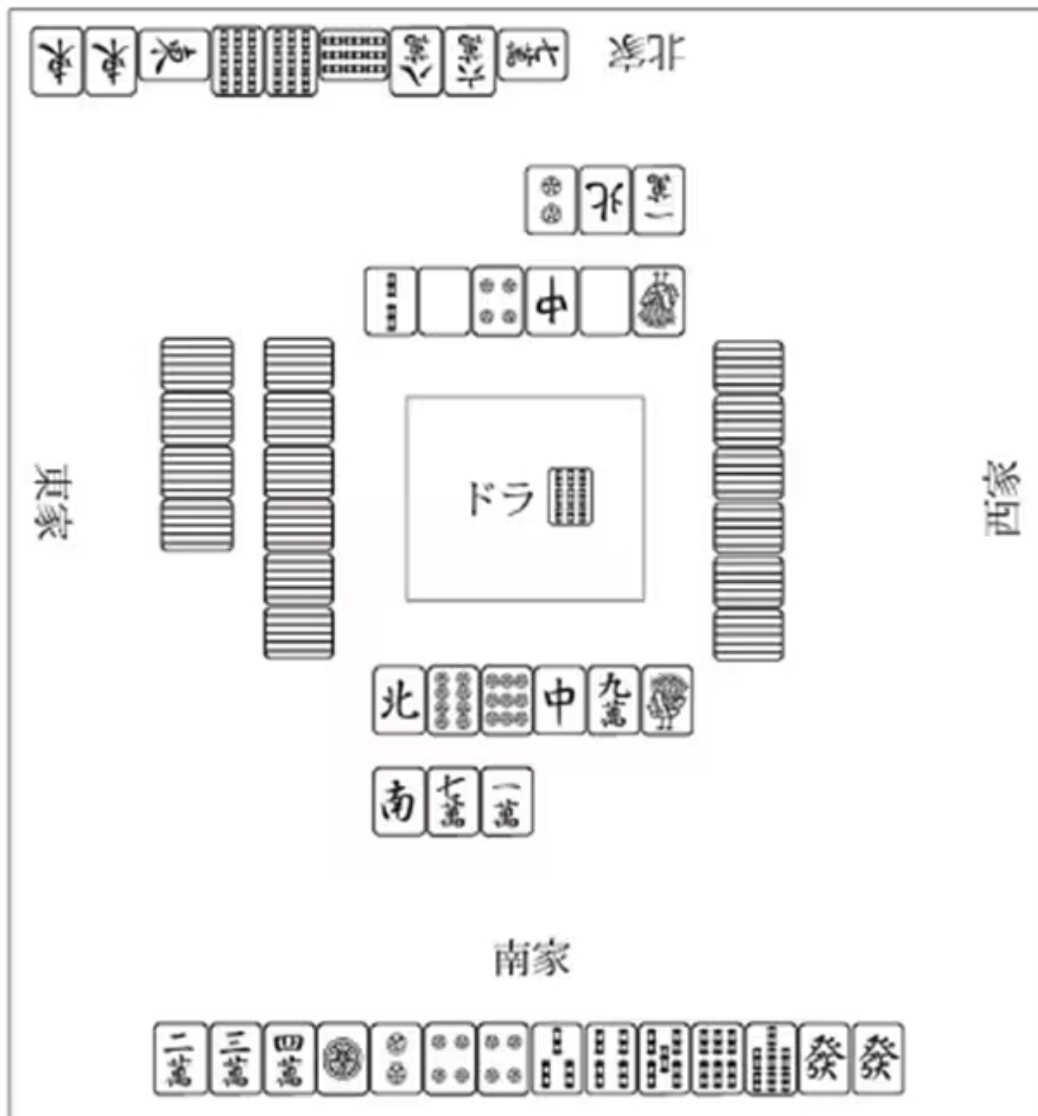
Let's try to think about the opponent's possible hand. All the honor tiles have been discarded one or more times. Only the three-color hand (Sanshoku) remains, although there's a slight possibility of concealed triplets with Red Dragon or White Dragon.

The opponent has melded three sets and has four tiles left in their hand. If it's a three-color hand with 678, it could be either a single wait with  or a fool wait with , waiting for one of the tiles from 678p.

So, although 7p is a middle tile, it's the main tile among the few possible wait patterns. Conversely, 2m would likely be discarded to aim for a single wait on 2m.

Therefore, instead of thinking "Let's discard a middle tile," it's better to discard 7p. Discarding 2m is the correct move. Even if you can't see your hand, you can still extract a lot of information.

Exercise 20:



Dora Tile: 9s

The opponent has eaten 7m and discarded 2p. If the opponent is waiting to win, which tile is particularly dangerous?

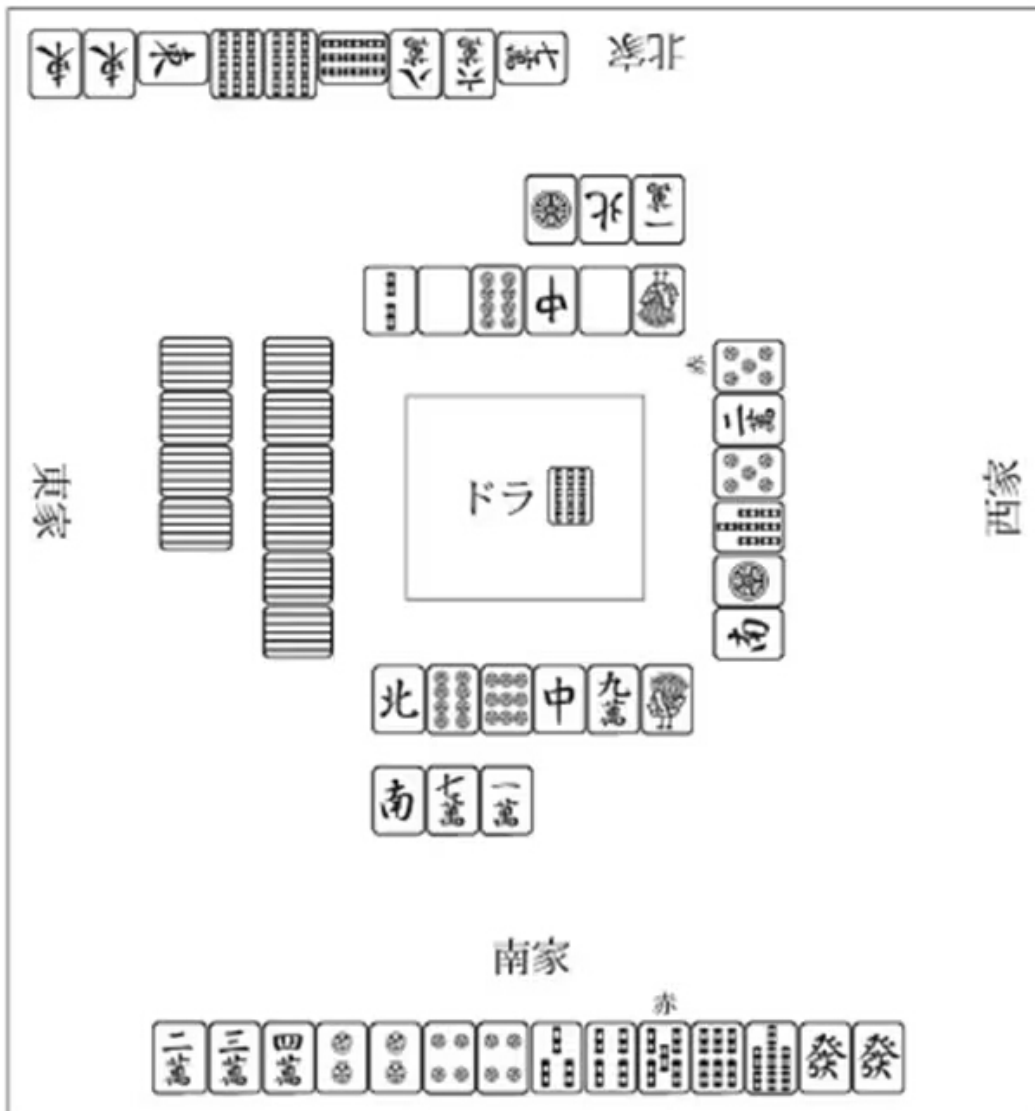
Solution:

This question follows the pattern where tiles adjacent to the discarded tile after an opponent's meld are dangerous. In this case, the main tile is around 2p. The opponent has already discarded 4p, leaving only 13p. Among them, 1p is particularly dangerous.

Considering the reason for discarding 4p and keeping 2p, we can think of shapes like 112p or 222p, 122p. If it's 122p, most of the time, a double pung will be chosen, so the most likely pattern is 112p. It's important to note that when tiles are played in the order of 4p \rightarrow other tiles \rightarrow 2p, even though 1p is an outside tile, its danger level is similar to that of middle tiles.

In this hand, prioritize maximizing the potential of your own 1p tile, while also being able to meld sets and prepare for a winning hand. However, since your hand lacks the necessary tiles to win outright, refrain from discarding the 1p tile that could be advantageous to opponents who have melded with the 'dora'. Start by discarding the tangible 4p tile, and reassess whether it's advantageous to play defensively or aggressively if you achieve a position where winning is feasible..

Exercise 21:



Dora Tile: 9s

The opponent has eaten 7m and discarded 1p. If the opponent is waiting to win, which tile is particularly dangerous?

Solution:

This question follows the pattern where tiles adjacent to the discarded tile after an opponent's meld are dangerous. In this case, the discarded tile is 1p, and there are no two-sided waits.

In situations like this, it's common for tiles like 2p or 3p to be dangerous (double pung, single wait, edge wait), or for 1p to be discarded from 135p. Normally, 5p would be discarded from 135p, but if it's red, 1p would be discarded instead, so you need to be cautious.

In this question, one red 5p is visible, so there's no need to worry too much. It can be said that 4p is relatively safe, while 23p is quite dangerous.

When discarding an edge tile while waiting to win, as mentioned above, situations where it's not a two-sided wait are more common, making a dangerous tile like 3p even riskier. Considering all this, it's best to discard 4p in this hand.

1.6 Column 1

The Charm of Three-Player Mahjong

Thank you, everyone, for the smooth progress in writing the tactical book and the live streaming activities on YouTube. However, a new challenge has emerged, which is the decrease in time for playing mahjong as a player.

Although there is live streaming of playing Mahjong Soul, the opportunity to seriously play real mahjong has clearly diminished. Even though I also want to return to the stage of wins and losses as a player, I feel that for now, it is more important to prioritize my work as a content creator.

During this period, the only time I can squeeze out to enjoy myself and play mahjong is through “three-player mahjong.”

I’m not sure if writing about this in the tactical book for four-player mahjong is a good idea, but as a player, I also enjoy three-player mahjong!

Of course, it’s not about which one is better or worse; both styles of play are very interesting. Even if you only play one style, you can still improve your mahjong skills in that style.

I really want everyone to understand the charm of three-player mahjong, so I’m dedicating this article to introduce it.

By the way, the type of three-player mahjong I usually play is called “Kansai three-player mahjong,” and the general rules are as follows:

- No 2-8 of characters
- Flower tiles are used as dora tiles, with North fixed as the dora
- The eight 5 of characters and 5 of bamboo tiles are all red dora tiles
- No open tanyao, no payment after the round ends
- Keep drawing until the dora tile is drawn (no ura-dora)
- Starting points: 35,000; target points for winning: 40,000
- Change in seating order depending on the number of players who exceed 40,000 points

With no 2-8 of characters, the total number of tiles is fewer than in four-player mahjong, but the biggest feature is having a total of 20 dora tiles, including dora tiles, ura-dora tiles, flower tiles, and red dora tiles. It’s common to have four or five dora tiles in your hand, and multiple baiman hands are also often seen.

I believe many people seeing this inflation-like rule set would think it’s a “game of luck” or “doesn’t require much thinking.” However, some may also be surprised as to why the author of this slightly challenging tactical book enjoys this kind of rule set.

So, I want to declare loudly that three-player mahjong is a game that heavily relies on individual skill and requires a lot of thinking.

As a characteristic of three-player mahjong, “reading tiles” is extremely important, and I really like this aspect. The reason is that the need to read public information is reduced (there is one less opponent, and fewer types of tiles), making it easier to accurately read the game. The concept mentioned in this book, of reading tile shapes, becomes even more accurate when not all the tiles are visible.



Dora tile 2s.

Moreover, the “value of using tile reading” increases. For example, imagine holding a hand like the one above, and being the one who gets the tiles discarded by the opponent. With a 7p and 8s as isolated tiles, and a 34s as a live tile.

If you can read from the opponent’s discards that “the danger level of the 7p is high, and the 8s is relatively safe,” then choosing to play the 8s as a detour is the correct choice. This situation is more likely to occur in three-player mahjong than in four-player mahjong. After all, in four-player mahjong, using tile reading to dig into the tiles is not very profitable.

Because it’s rare to accurately read whether the 7p will actually be a winning tile. Furthermore, even if the 7p does turn out to be a winning tile, simply discarding the 34s to avoid dealing into it would suffice. Deliberately risking dealing into a winning hand by playing the 8s, without being able to draw tiles around the 7p to potentially change your hand, ultimately yields the same outcome as discarding it.

In other words, the ability to accurately assess the danger of the 7p and the 8s only affects the outcome when “the 7p is indeed a winning tile” and “you draw tiles around the 7p to potentially change your hand”.

Moreover, as mentioned earlier, in three-player mahjong, the accuracy of tile reading is higher. With fewer potential winning tile sequences to consider, situations where the 7p is dangerous are more perilous in three-player mahjong than in four-player mahjong.

Additionally, the probability of drawing tiles around the 7p to potentially change your hand is also higher in three-player mahjong. Because there are no 28p, for example, the probability of drawing the 8p is simply calculated to increase from $1/34$ to $1/27$.

Furthermore, the probability of opponents self-drawing tiles is higher in three-player mahjong, resulting in lower expectations for drawing the round. Therefore, from a results perspective, the skill of “making an effort to read the opponent’s winning hand and adjust accordingly” becomes even more crucial in three-player mahjong.

While this book has repeatedly mentioned the “danger of overly relying on tile reading,” it’s easy to witness scenarios in three-player mahjong where players accurately read the opponent’s hand and respond accordingly. As an author who has written several books on tile reading, I believe three-player mahjong is definitely worth a try.

2 Chapter 2: Application of Tile Reading

2.1 Chapter 2-1

Considering the opponent's tile discarding sequence

Key Point 1: Reading the Composition of Tile Joints



This is one of the most important aspects of this book. In simple terms, it refers to the technique of “reading where the opponent's tiles are roughly distributed.” These distributions could be in the upper section of the characters, or the 49p, and so on.

As for how to read them, in short, it's about “there are no tiles around the tiles discarded in the early game.”

For example, consider the opponent's discarded tiles. Of course, it's ideal to remember which tiles were hand discarded and which were drawn, but even if you don't remember, it only slightly affects accuracy, so don't worry about it at the beginning.

Firstly, as a common theory of tile reading, there are no tiles around the tiles discarded in the early game. For example, if they discard the 8m in the second turn, it's unlikely they would have 788m this early, so there's a low chance they had 7-8m, meaning the 9m can potentially be discarded. This is the theory.

On the other hand, if they have the 5-8m, then discarding the 8m in the second turn is very natural. Subsequently drawing the 6m and listening for the 4-7m is a common occurrence, so the 1-7m are all dangerous.

Similarly, it seems they also need tile joints in the 3-7p and 4-9s. This is reading the composition of tile joints.

When developing a hand, discarding the 8m from the 788m joint will reduce the number of potential draws and the chance of early discards, thus increasing the reliability of reading the composition of tile joints.

This technique, when combined with other tile reading methods, can reveal a lot about opponents' hands, so it's essential to master it.

Key Point 2: Pay Attention to Breaking Joints

When it comes to reading tiles while breaking pairs or sequences, consider the example of discarding the 68p. If you discard the 6p followed by other tiles and then the 8p, the likelihood of the 8p being useful for your hand increases.

Therefore, the tiles around the one discarded later become dangerous.

In practical play, achieving perfect use of this reading technique requires remembering whether tiles were drawn or hand discarded. The problems in this book are designed with the assumption that “the second tile is discarded after a meld.” This allows readers to solve problems by only considering the tiles discarded when declaring a meld.

Start by understanding this theory through these problems and gradually pay attention to tiles discarded outside of meld declarations.

Key Point 3: Identify the Flaws in Tile Discards

Mahjong is a game of discarding useless tiles and keeping necessary ones. Therefore, any tiles discarded from the hand after the middle of the game are potentially useful for the opponent's hand.

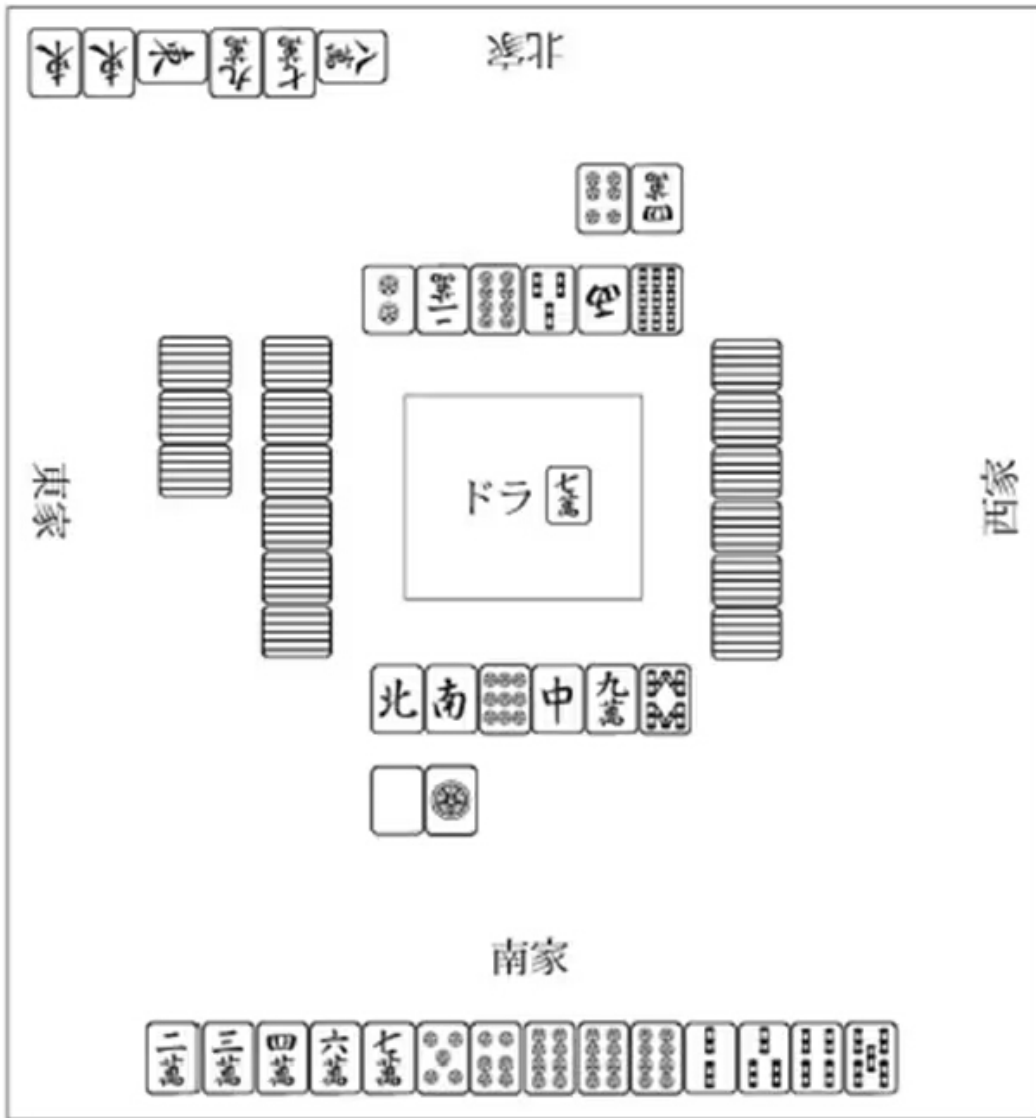
Using this approach, you can often deduce the opponent's winning hand.

For example, if you think the opponent is discarding terminals but keeps the 9s... it's possible they have a hand with more than just terminals. Sometimes, the 9s is kept as a safe tile, but what if this opponent has previously discarded two visible north tiles? Then it's highly likely that the 9s is related to their hand beyond just terminals.

In this way, you can read the opponent's hand by observing what tiles they choose to discard.

2.2 Chapter 2-2

Exercise 22



Dora: 7 of bamboo

Opponent declares a chi with the 8m and discards the 6p. Consider dangerous tiles in the opponent's hand composition based on this, and decide what you should discard.


Solution:

Consider the opponent's tile joint composition. While reading the composition of tile joints is difficult, there are basic principles:

Danger lies between two tiles of the same suit discarded in the early game. Danger lies around hand-discarded tiles after the middle game. Remembering these two principles can be useful. The second principle requires observing hand-drawn or hand-discarded tiles, so let's focus on the tiles discarded after a meld declaration initially, while the first principle is independent of hand-drawn or hand-discarded tiles.

Regarding the opponent's discards, the tiles between the 39s, such as the 47s or the 58s, are potentially dangerous. Conversely, the 12s, outside of the 3s, are relatively safe. Of course, there can be exceptions, but considering the value of your own hand, it's not unreasonable to discard the 2s from the 32s.

Solution:

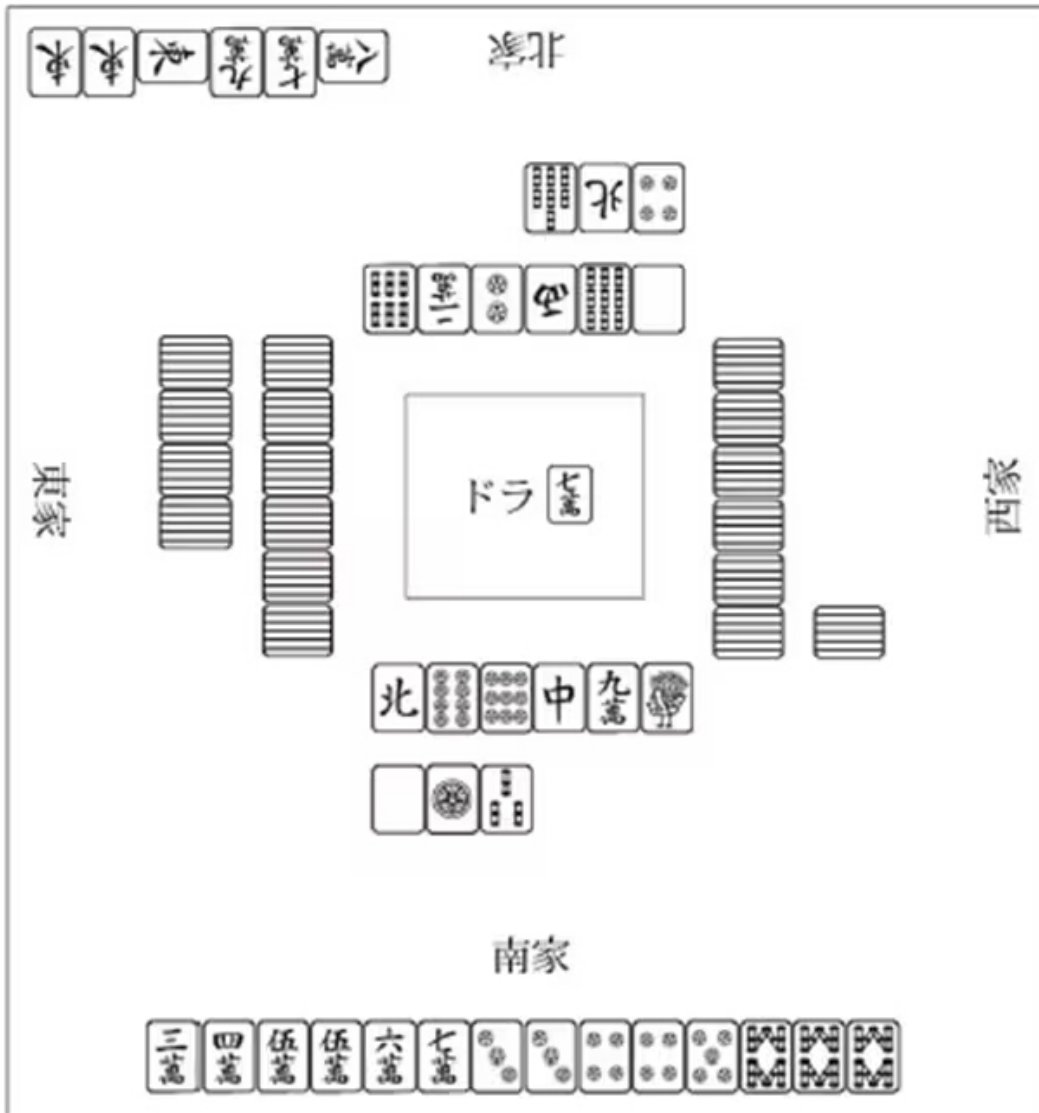
The 7s just passed, which is safe for the opponent, but they would lose three effective draws for 1p7s. With two Dora tiles in your hand (Note: there's only one...), it's a completely winning hand. For beginners, this could be considered as the basic hand for maximizing points while discarding .

However, as mentioned in the previous question, the 47s discarded by the opponent is very dangerous. The probability of them waiting on the second-to-last discard with two exposed melds is roughly at the level of "likely waiting". In other words, they haven't waited yet, so the 7s can pass, but they might wait on the 47s later.

Therefore, it's better to discard the dangerous 47s and 58s based on the opponent's discards while it's still safe, enduring some loss of potential points, and compare it with keeping the 7s.

Always consider the opponent's tile composition, and you'll realize the danger of "the middle of the bamboo tiles". Only in such situations can you instantly respond.

Exercise 24



Dora: 7m

The opponent has called 8m and discarded 7s. Based on their discards, what is the highly valuable tile?

Solution:

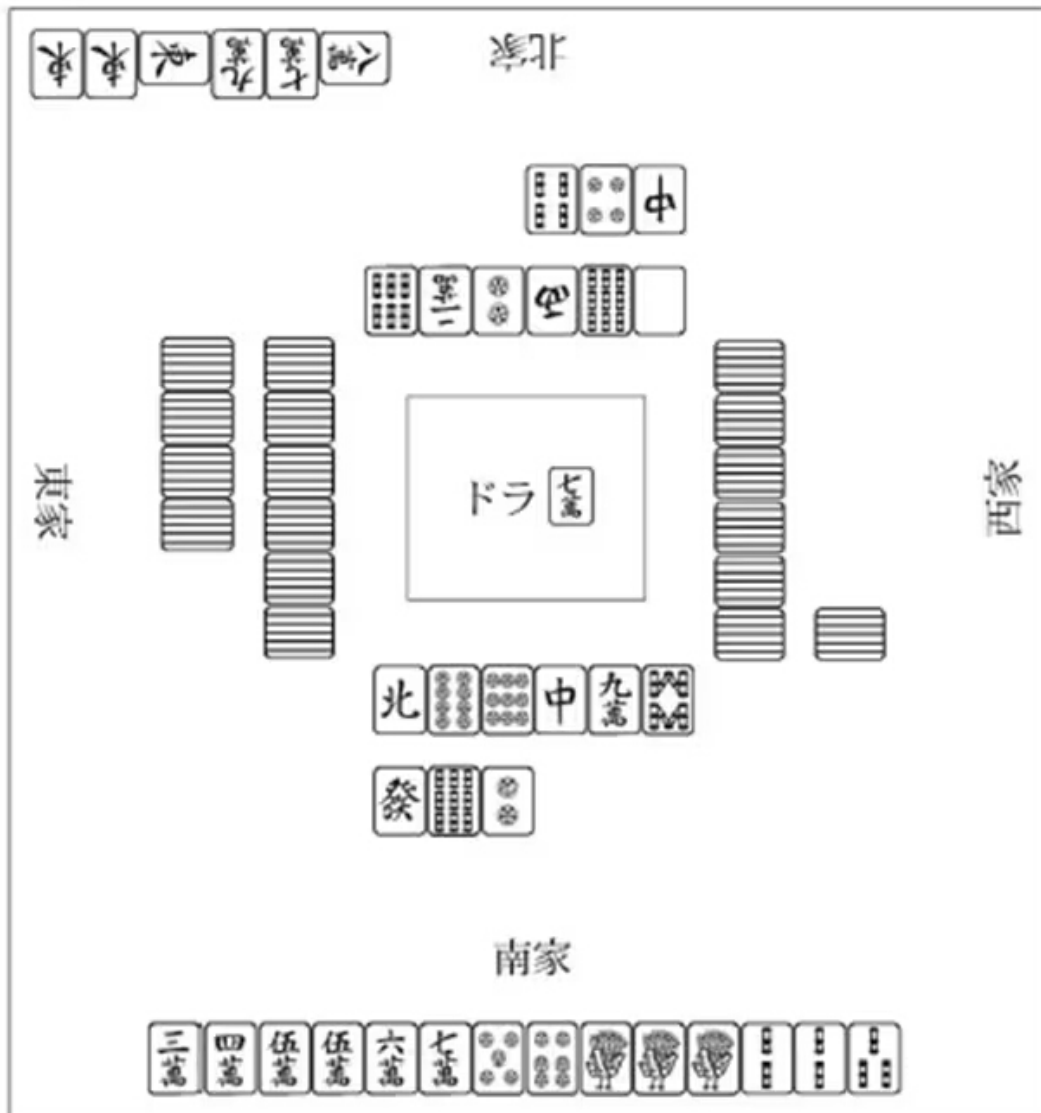
It's important to note that the opponent has broken the two-sided wait for 67s. Even if you haven't carefully observed the opponent's draws and discards, knowing that they discarded 7s after calling, it's evident that they might have broken the two-sided wait for 67s.

Additionally, there have been other discards between 67s, indicating that 7s might still be useful after discarding 6s.

Most likely, they have discarded 6s from a sequence like 6677s. They have held onto the 7s to wait for a pair. If they are already waiting, then 58s is the valuable tile.

Although discarding 8s from your hand would result in a Pinfu hand, for the opponent, a concealed set of 8s is one of the most valuable tiles in all the questions in this book. It's better to reluctantly discard 4p.

Exercise 25



Dora: 7m

The opponent has called 8m and discarded 4s. Which tile should you discard when both 2s and 3s could give you a winning hand?

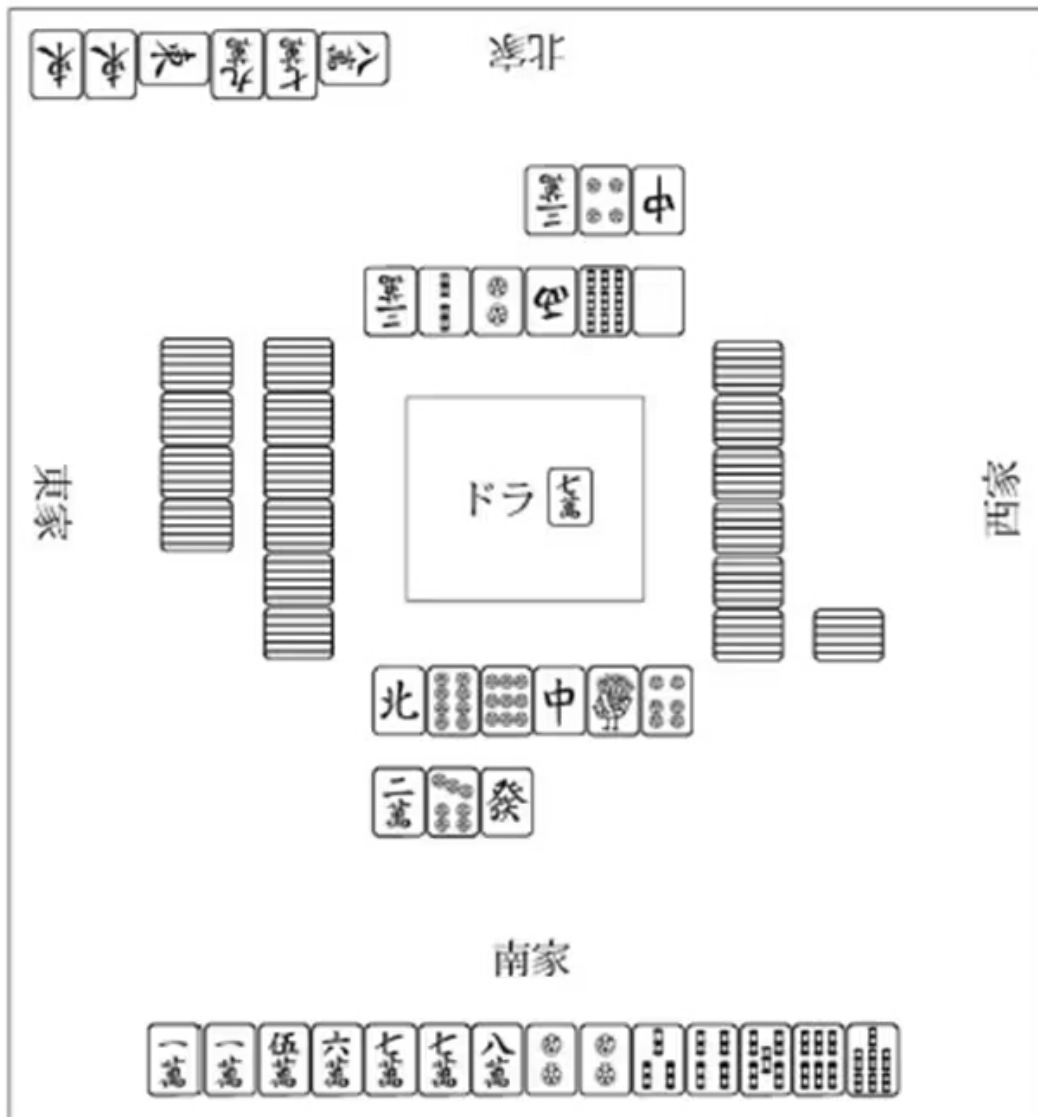
Solution:

In this case, the opponent has discarded 4s after breaking a triplet sequence starting with 6s. The basic strategy is similar to the previous question.

After discarding 6s, 4s still has potential value. The most likely scenario is from a sequence like 3446s, where 46s is discarded after 6s, leaving 34s for waiting on 25s.

Looking solely at your hand, discarding 2s would lead to a more complete hand, but the difference in danger between 2s and 3s is significant. It's safer to straightforwardly discard 3s and aim for a Riichi.

Exercise 26



Dora: 7m

The opponent has called 8m and discarded 3m. Following the logic from the previous questions, which tile is particularly dangerous here?

Solution:

In this question, the opponent discarded 3m after discarding other tiles. In situations where a pair is broken, it's rare to have a two-sided wait across that tile. If the opponent is holding 34m or 23m now, then they already have a concealed set of 3m.

What kind of shape would that be? It would be a pair of tiles near this tile.

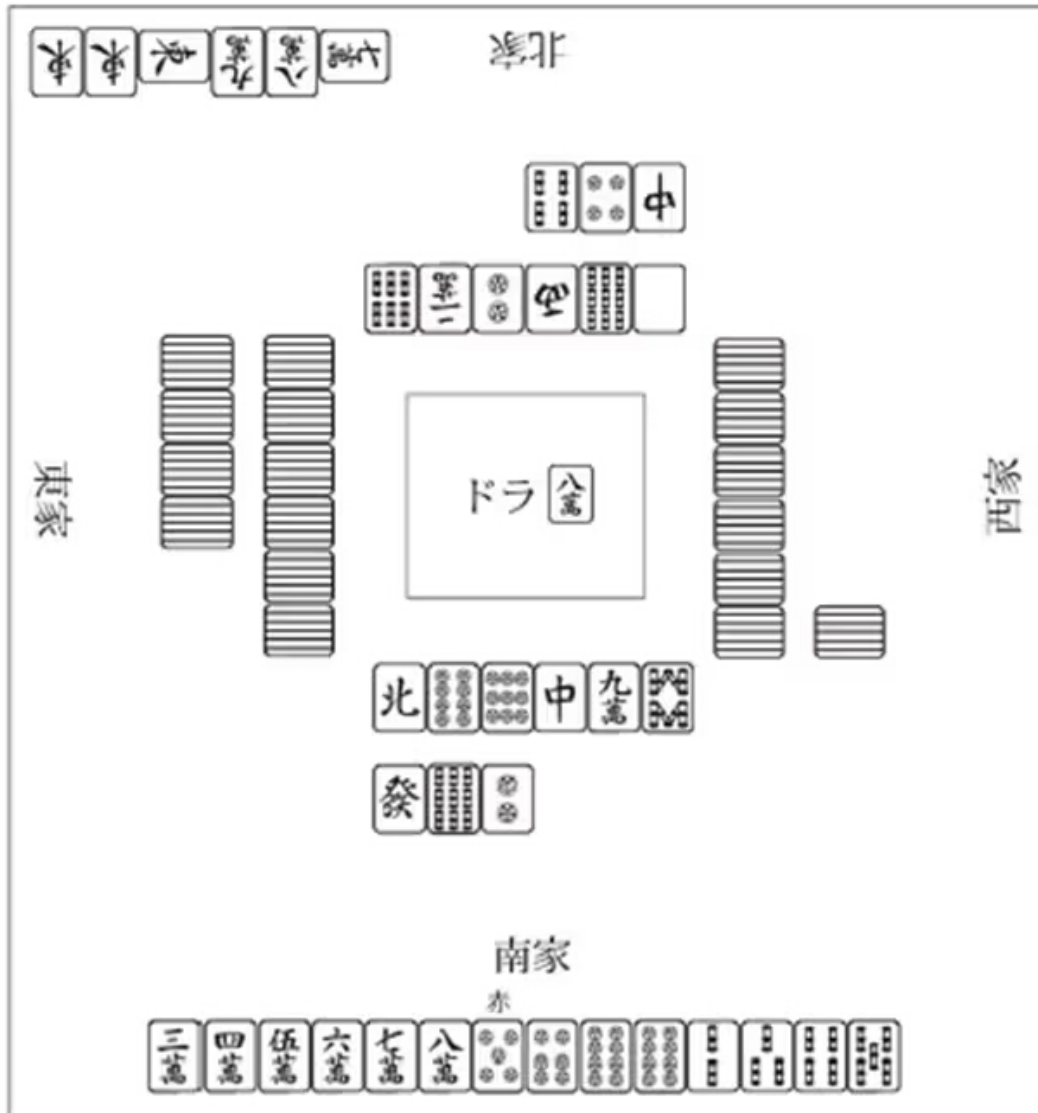
Shapes like 1133m or 3355m, where one 3m is discarded while the other is kept, are quite common.

Therefore, 1m is quite dangerous here, despite the loss of the all simples. It's still better to discard 2p.

By the way, if there are no other tiles involved and you're discarding a pair of 3m directly, because it's just breaking up a pair, the danger of 1m would be lower than in this case.

2.3 Chapter 2-3

Exercise 27



Dora: 8m

The opponent called 7m and discarded 4s. Which tile should you discard when either 2s or 3s could give you a winning hand?

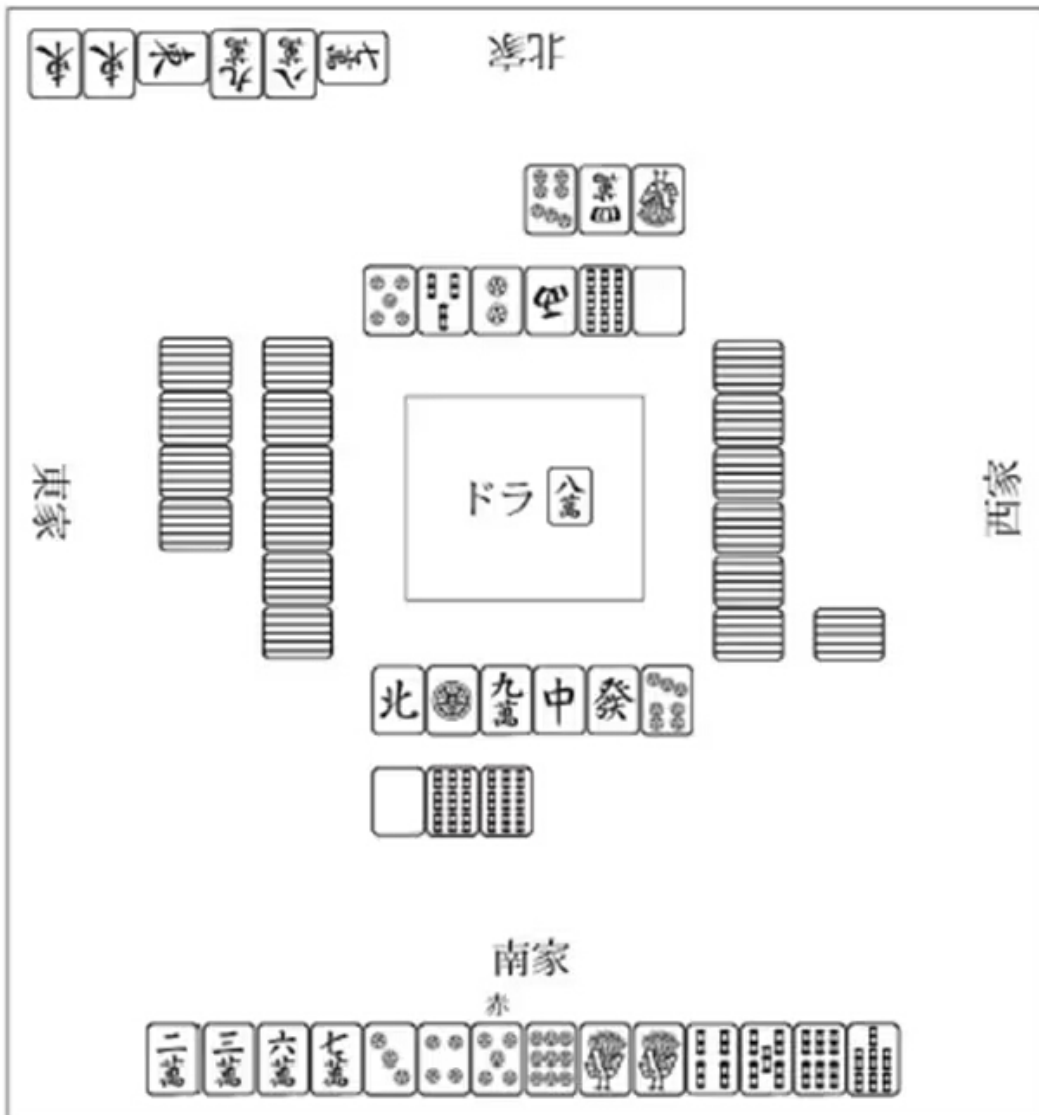
Solution:

The discarded tiles from across are the same as Exercise 25. As mentioned earlier, all 25s are quite dangerous tiles. However, the main point of this question is that giving up the closed hand of a pair of precious tiles can only be described as a case of overreading the tiles.

While 25s is indeed dangerous, the opponent might also be waiting on other tiles, or they might not have waited yet at all. Your hand is fully capable of attacking them; there's nothing to fear.

On top of this, you need to consider which side of the 25s is more dangerous. As mentioned earlier, looking at the sequence from 6s to 4s, it's common to see shapes like 3446s, and the same applies to shapes like 2246s. On the contrary, when you have 4667s, you should prioritize discarding 4s before 6s. You can infer that it's likely a pair of 2s with another tile, rather than being ready to win on both sides with 58s. Therefore, you shouldn't discard 2s in this hand, and the likelihood of winning on 5s would be slightly lower.

Exercise 28



Dora: 8m

A decision on offense and defense. The opponent called 7m and discarded 7p. Based on the logic from previous questions, which tile should you discard?

Solution:

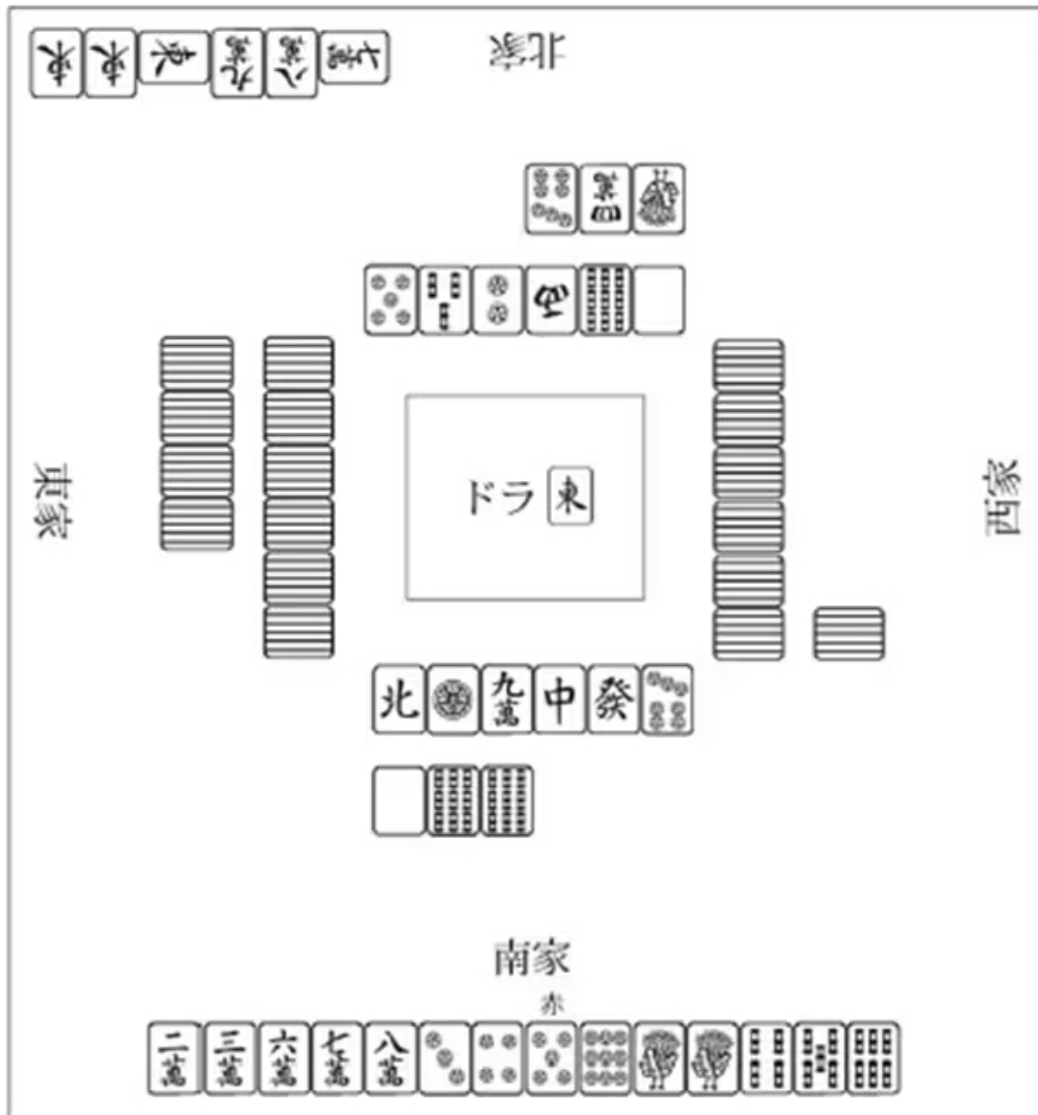
In this case, it's the same sequence as 5p → other tiles → 7p, so 9p is very dangerous. Additionally, the opponent discarded 39s early in the game, so 47s is also a dangerous tile.

In the previous questions, there were still options to maintain the shape apart from 9p, so the question was essentially "Is it better to discard something else rather than 9p?" However, in this question, if you don't discard 9p or 7s, your hand will be deadlocked. The key here is to understand the knowledge that 9p is a dangerous tile, but in actual games, what kind of tiles should you hold onto instead of discarding?

This topic is very much based on intuition. I think discarding 9p or 7s here can be seen as the danger of "discarding a middle tile that could be beneficial to a player in riichi." Generally, it's easier to determine what tiles the opponent is waiting for with melds compared to riichi, but on the other hand, there's a possibility that they haven't waited yet. So it's like "discarding a middle tile against riichi."

Your hand in the question is a Pinfu hand with a double sided wait. Assuming the opponent goes for riichi, you would have to risk dealing into two middle tiles. It feels like a hand where you might as well just discard and avoid dealing into it... So let's discard 1s as a detour.

Exercise 29



Dora: East

A decision on offense and defense. The discards and melds are the same as in the previous question, but the dora and your hand have changed. What should you discard here?

Solution:

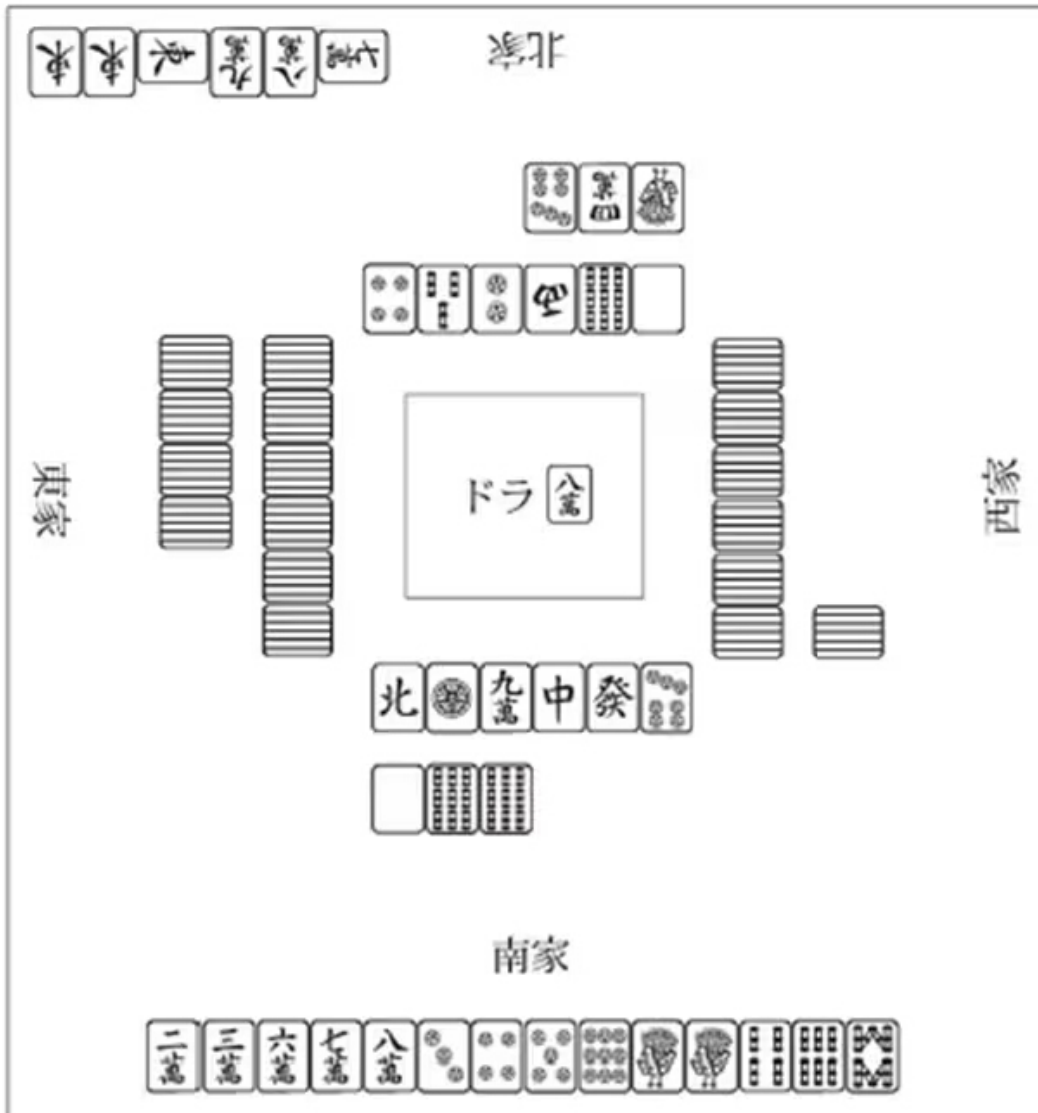
In this question, the dora has changed to East. The winning rate for 9p itself hasn't changed much, but the opponent's points are higher, indicating that it would be more difficult to attack. So discarding 9p here is probably similar to "discarding a middle tile that could be beneficial to a player in riichi" (although it's just a feeling).

Your hand is a Pinfu hand with a double sided wait. Following the general standards of offense and defense, you should discard 9p and go for riichi.

However, this judgment is quite marginal, even in cases where the same hand and same discards occur.

Under the rule of prioritizing avoiding dangerous tiles, when you're in a situation where reaching maximum score in the South round would result in all players being liable to deal into a mangan, I believe not discarding 9p also makes sense. It's difficult to find a clear criterion for offense and defense judgment. In this question, "9p" can probably be seen as a "borderline."

Exercise 30



Dora: 8m

The opponent called 7m and discarded 7p. What kind of shape can be inferred from this 7p?

Solution:

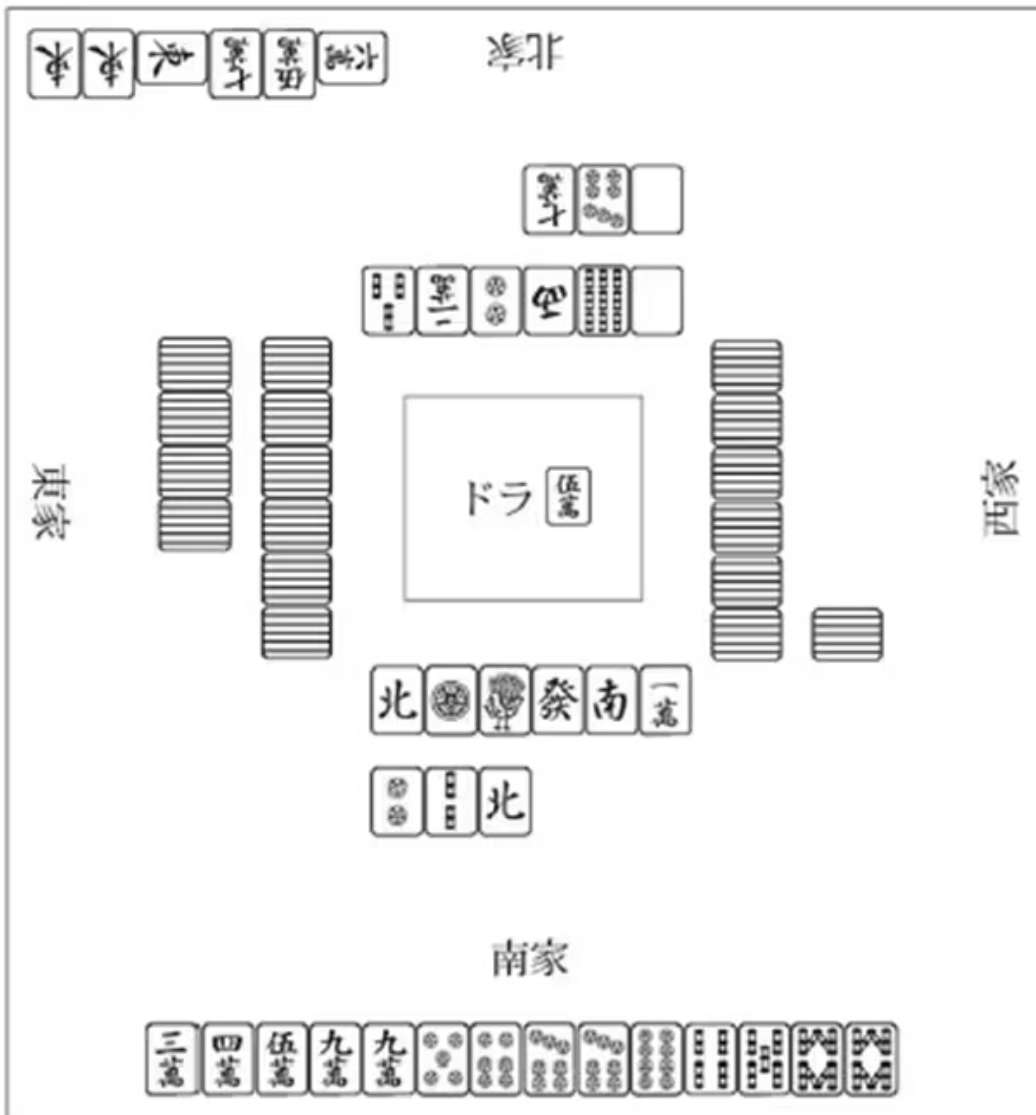
In this question, the 7p is neither part of a meld nor a pair, but it's still considered dangerous in its surroundings. The surroundings after a call and discard are usually unsafe, and with 4p already discarded, the danger around 7p increases further.

The fact that 4p was discarded in the early rounds indicates that there are no tiles around 4p, or the meld is likely completed. Since mahjong requires forming five groups of tiles to win, tiles with relatively "no information" around them have a higher chance of being part of a waiting hand.

In simpler terms, it means "when several tiles of the same suit have been discarded, the last one to be discarded is the most dangerous."

For the opponent's discard, 9p is as dangerous as in previous questions. It's too risky to keep the 1 away hand as a possible draw for a one-sided wait after discarding 9p. It's recommended to discard 1s and wait for other opportunities.

Exercise 31



Dora: 5m

The opponent called 6m and discarded 7m. Predict the particularly dangerous tiles and decide which tile to discard.

Solution:

The opponent just discarded 7m, so 9m seems dangerous, but it's actually not very high in danger. Simply discarding 9m is fine.

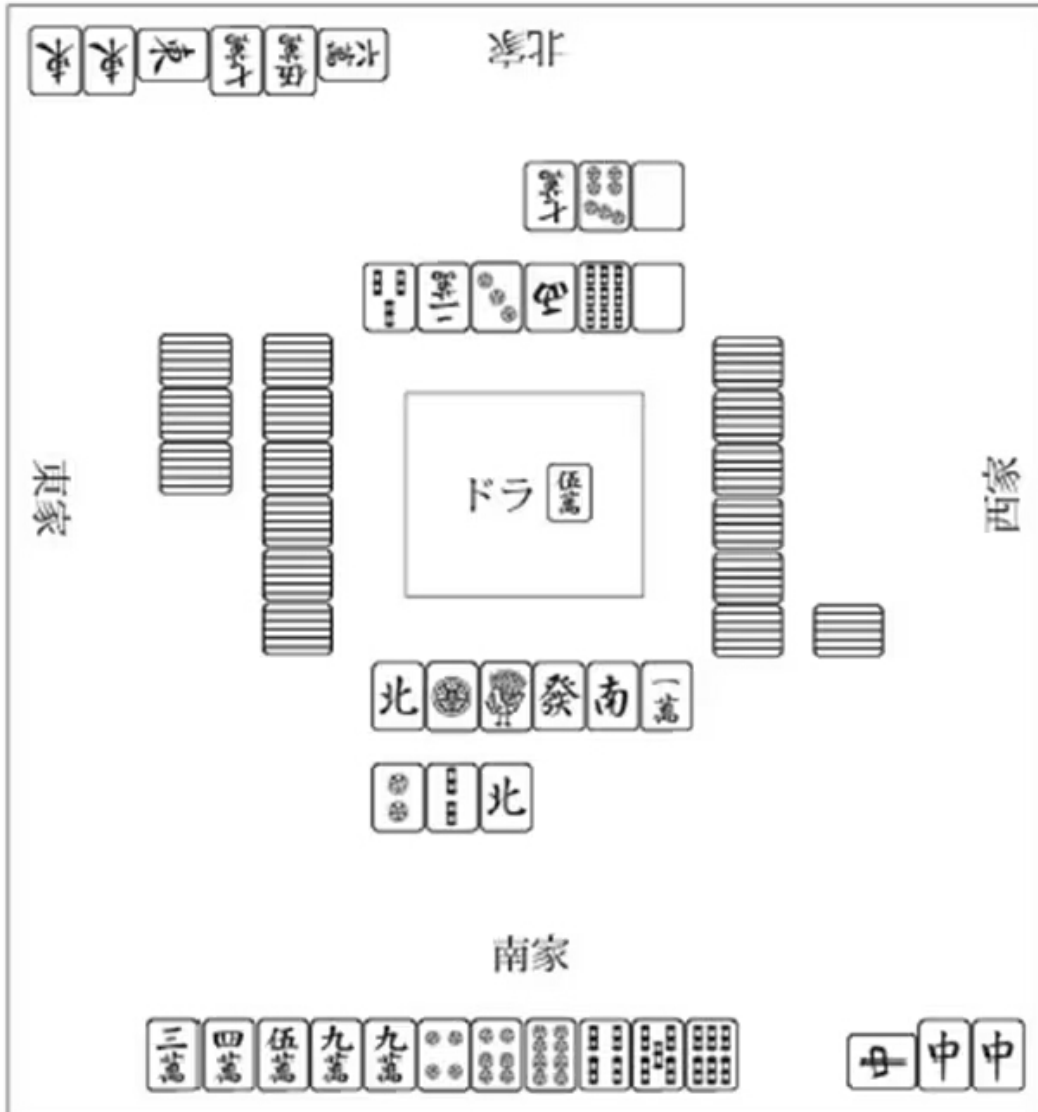
Usually, the surroundings after a call and discard are dangerous. However, in this case, the 7m that was discarded originally formed a 577m shape, and the meld is already complete.

Of course, forming a meld with 57799m means there's still a possibility of waiting on 9m paired with another tile, but from the composition of the tiles, it seems there's still a middle section of the suit. So, the danger of 47s or 58s might be higher.

While it's a fundamental theory that the surroundings after a call and discard are dangerous, if the discarded tile is part of a meld, it can be considered part of the tiles held in the hand from the composition of the tiles.

2.4 Chapter 2-5

Exercise 32



Dora: 5m

The opponent called 6m and discarded 7m. You can go out on either 4p or 8p. Which one should you discard?

Solution:

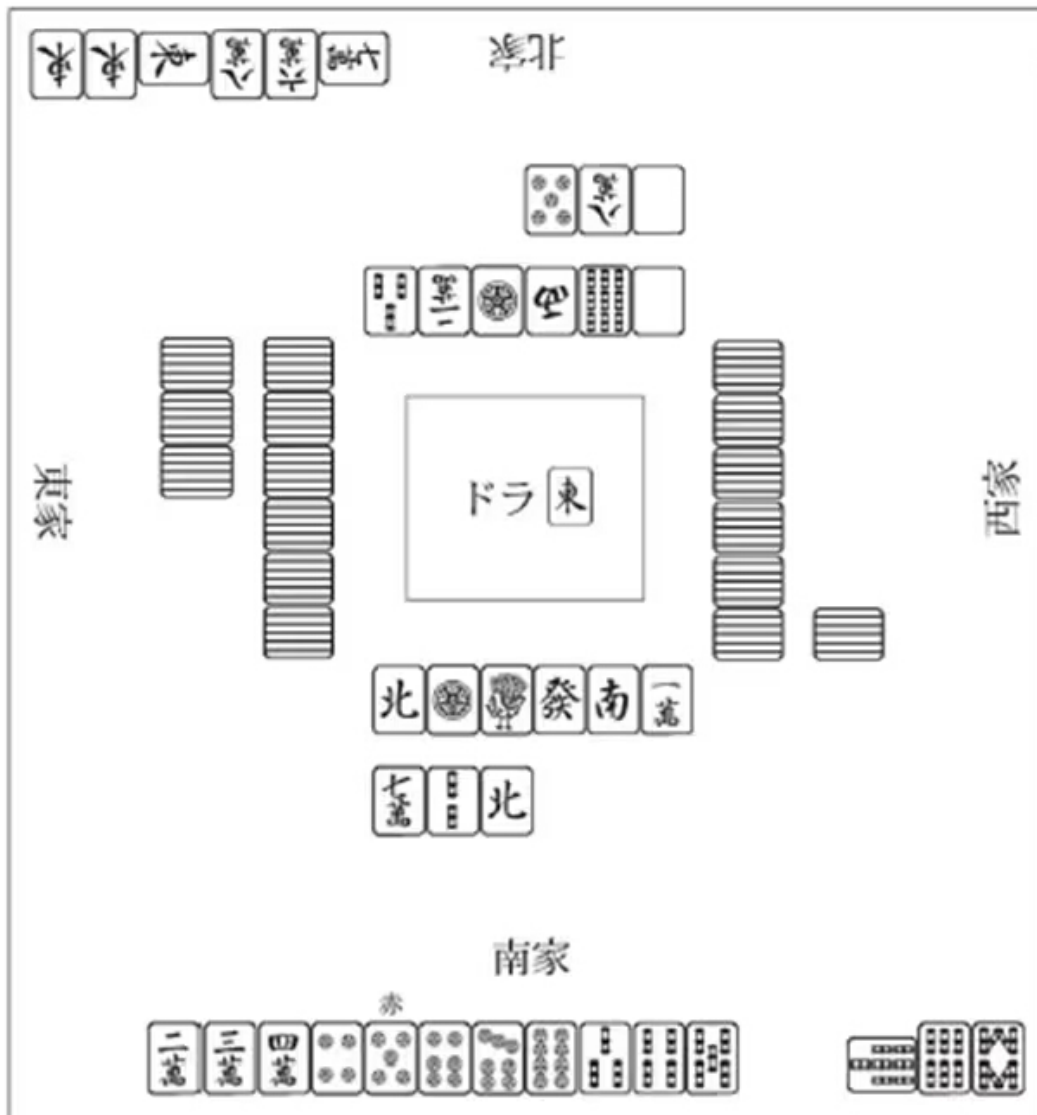
As mentioned in the previous question, 7m's surroundings aren't particularly dangerous. In this situation, what's particularly risky is the "part of the tile composition" and the "surroundings of the just-discarded tile."

If 7p in this question is a tile discarded from the hand, it's very natural to first discard 7p in a sequence like 677p577m and then eat 6m and discard 7m. Just like the danger around the tile discarded after a call and discard, the surroundings of 7p are also dangerous.

Although this question doesn't specify whether the tile was drawn or discarded from the hand, for those who "don't have the luxury to check the drawn tile!", let's remember the principle of "the danger of the tile just discarded across the sequence."

Therefore, 8p is dangerous here, while 4p is relatively safe. Since 3p was discarded in the fourth turn, it's unlikely to form a sequence like 357p. Of course, if it's a situation where you absolutely can't afford to deal into a hand, there are other options. However, considering reaching tenpai as a priority, despite 7p being one tile short, discarding 4p is still more advantageous.

Exercise 33



Dora: East

The opponent called 7m and discarded 5p. You can go out on one of the characters to reach tenpai. Which tile should you discard?

Solution:

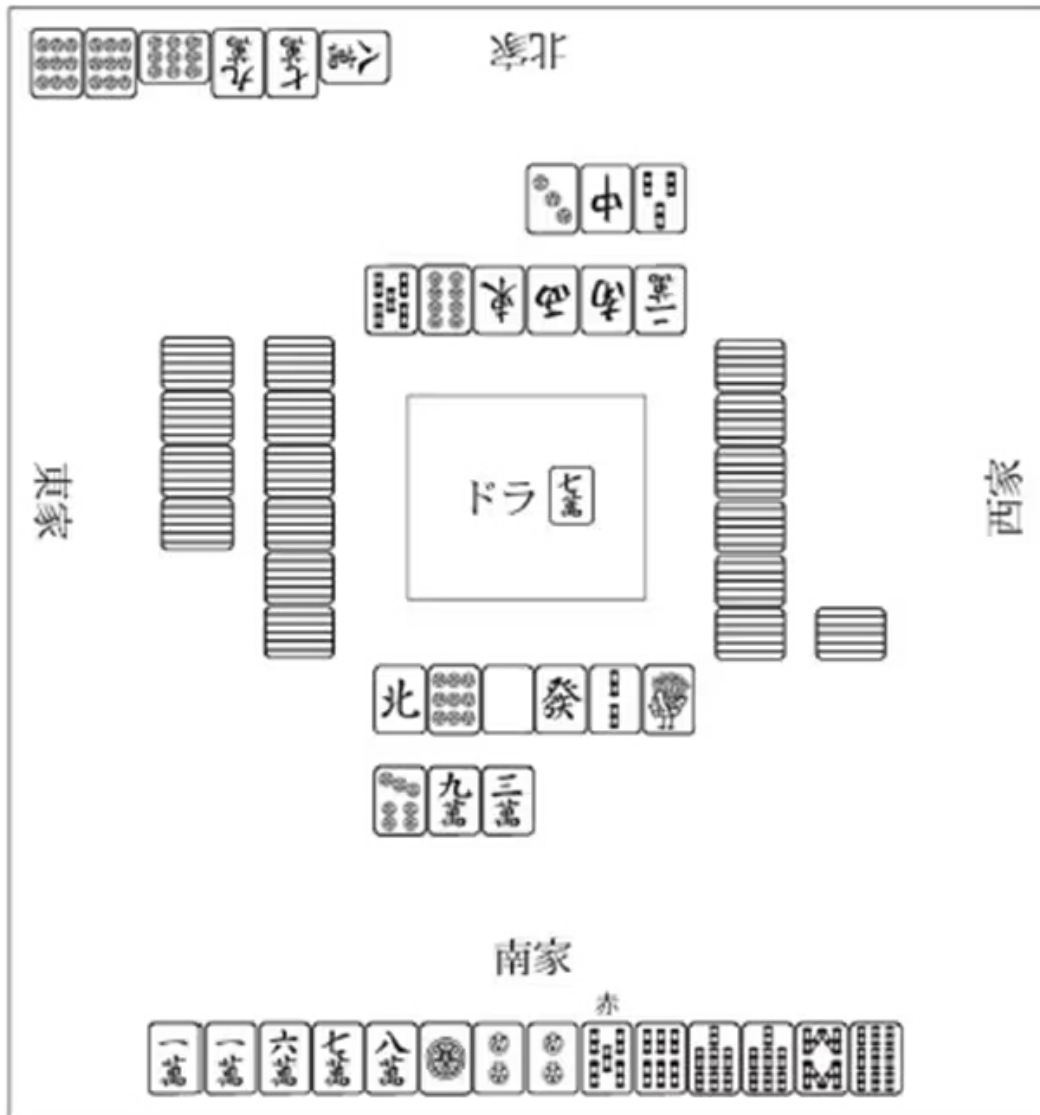
In this question, pay attention to the 8m discarded by the opponent in the previous turn. It's irrelevant to whether it was drawn or discarded from the hand; it indicates that "at least at that moment, they had 688m in their hand, and they discarded 8m from it." In a situation where tiles like 688m are discarded first from the hand, it's basically impossible to wait for tiles discarded later that can form a pair across the sequence.

If it were a shape like 556p688m + a pair of 5m, they wouldn't have discarded 8m, but 5p instead. Deliberately discarding 8m to solidify the manzu suit suggests that there's likely a joint around 5p as well.

In other words, it's more reasonable to change from waiting on a sequence like 556p to waiting on a pair of 8p.

Since the opponent also discarded 1p, it's impossible to wait for 14p. Comparing the risky tile 8p to the safer tile 4p, despite the difference in count, it's still better to discard 4p here.

Exercise 34



Dora: 7m

The opponent called 8m and discarded 3p. You can go out on one of the character tiles to reach tenpai. Which tile should you discard?

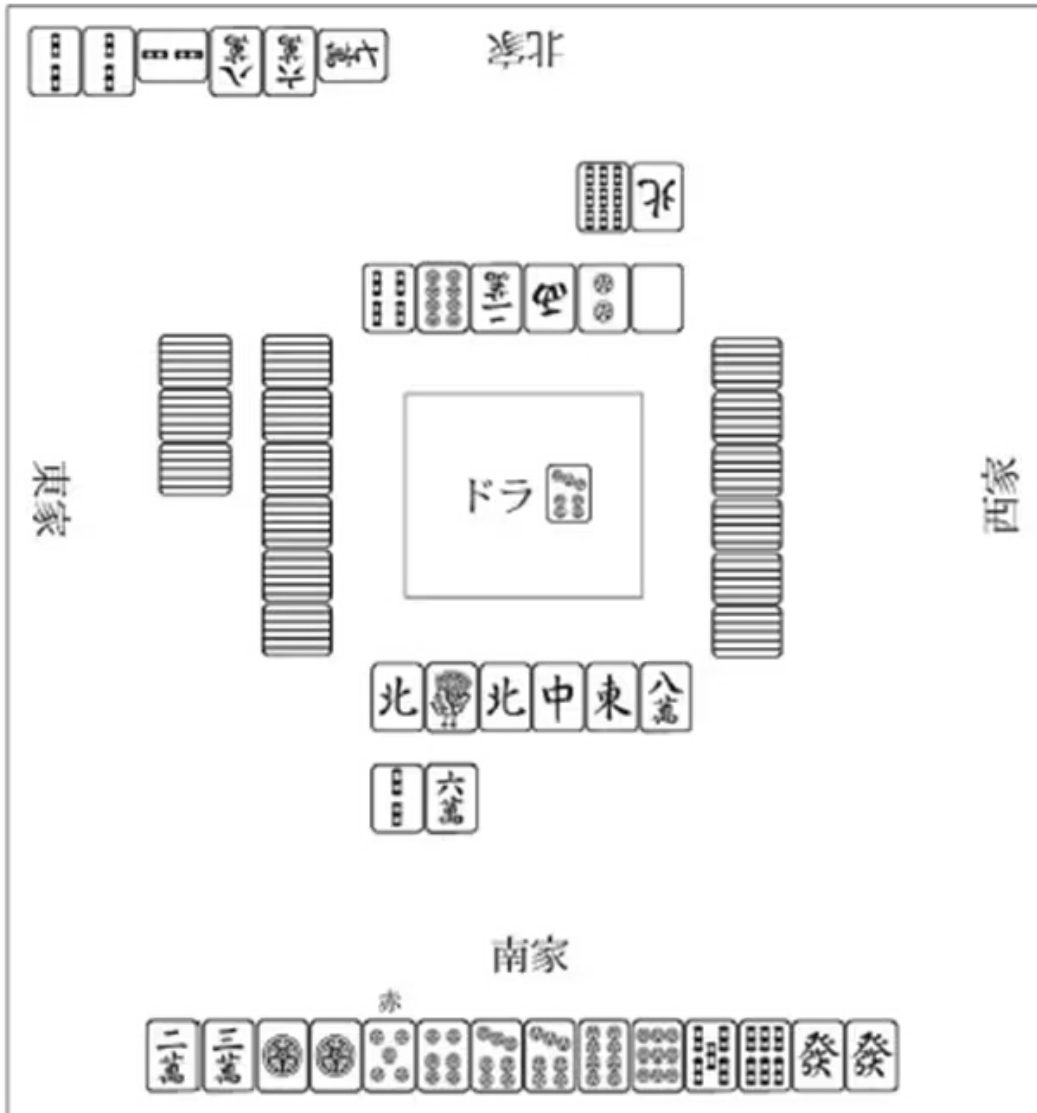
Solution:

Although the surroundings of the tile discarded after a call, like 3p in this question, may be dangerous, without yaku, it's impossible to win. Since all possible yakuhai tiles are visible in this question, the only possible yaku is going out with full outside hand.

In this case, waiting for 25p from a shape like 334p is impossible, and discarding 3p from a shape like 113p seems natural because the question presents the dilemma, "What's the point of keeping 3p if it's not scoring?" On the other hand, discarding 3p from a shape like 113p is very straightforward, indicating that 1p is more dangerous than 2p.

To be honest, weighing the strength and risk of waiting for a tile or not is quite delicate. Please focus on combining the "danger surrounding discards after calling a tile" with "considering the opponent's potential hands" to master the technique of identifying dangerous tiles.

Exercise 35



Dora: 7p

The opponent called 7m and discarded North. Consider the opponent's hand and respond accordingly.

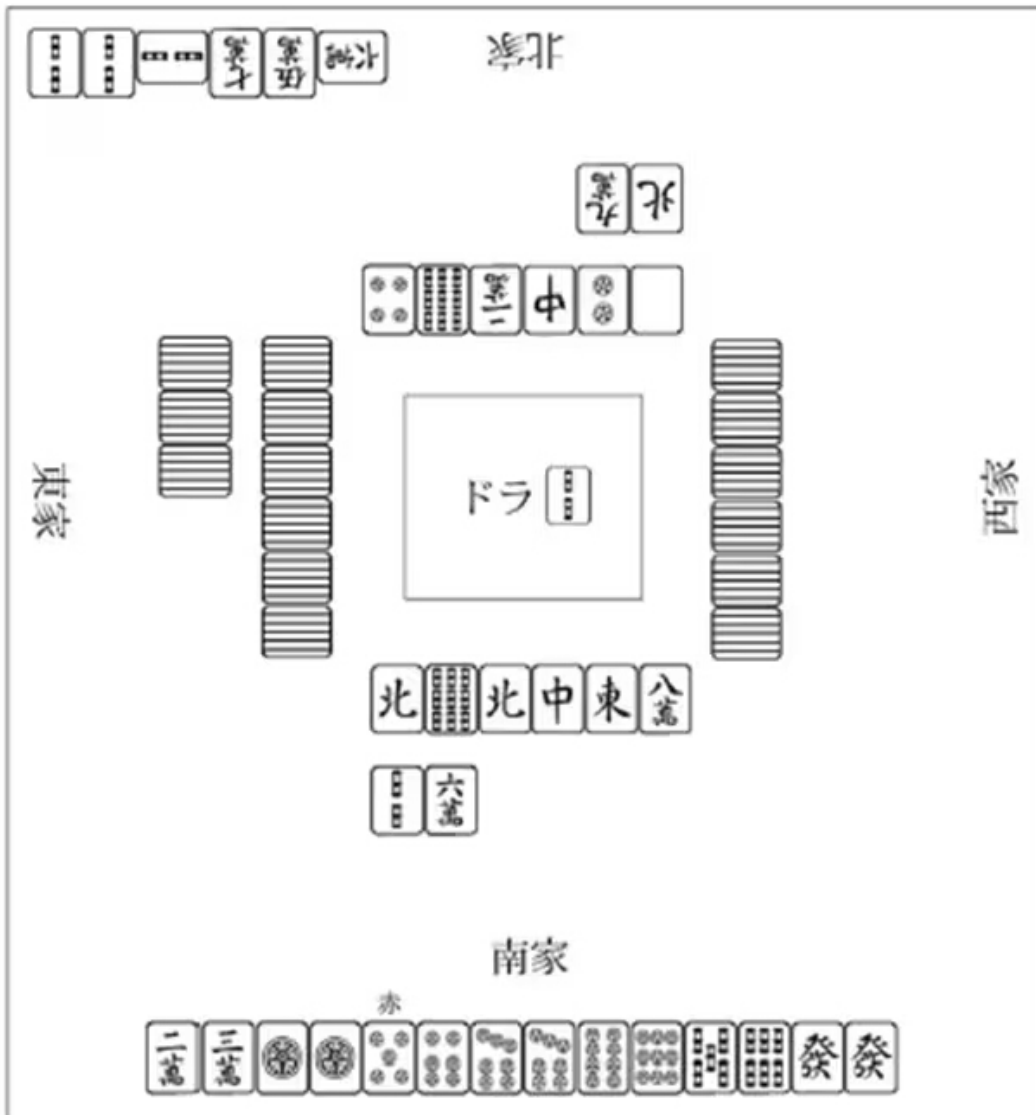
Solution:

Typically, when you encounter an opponent who calls 7m after a Pon of 2s, you can assume they are treating it as a terminal tile, but in this case, the opponent discarded 9s. Since North was discarded in the previous turn, it indicates that 9s wasn't kept as a safe tile but rather as a useful one. In other words, even when calling 7m after Pon of 2s, there are still chances to win with yaku (scoring combinations) involving 9s.

With this in mind, the unseen yakuhai tiles on the board are the primary candidates. Although it's not certain whether North will be used for a winning hand, even if it is, it's probably only worth 1000 points, which isn't a significant threat. However, having North called or used in a winning hand would "disrupt your hand with the valuable 3p Dora tile," so it's better to discard 1p here to pursue the "Dora 3 for Riichi."

By the way, for those who can see the opponent's drawn and discarded tiles, when you see them discard a terminal tile besides calling, you can make the same inference.

Exercise 36



Dora: 2s

The opponent called 6m and discarded 9m. How to read the opponent's hand, and what should you discard?

Solution:

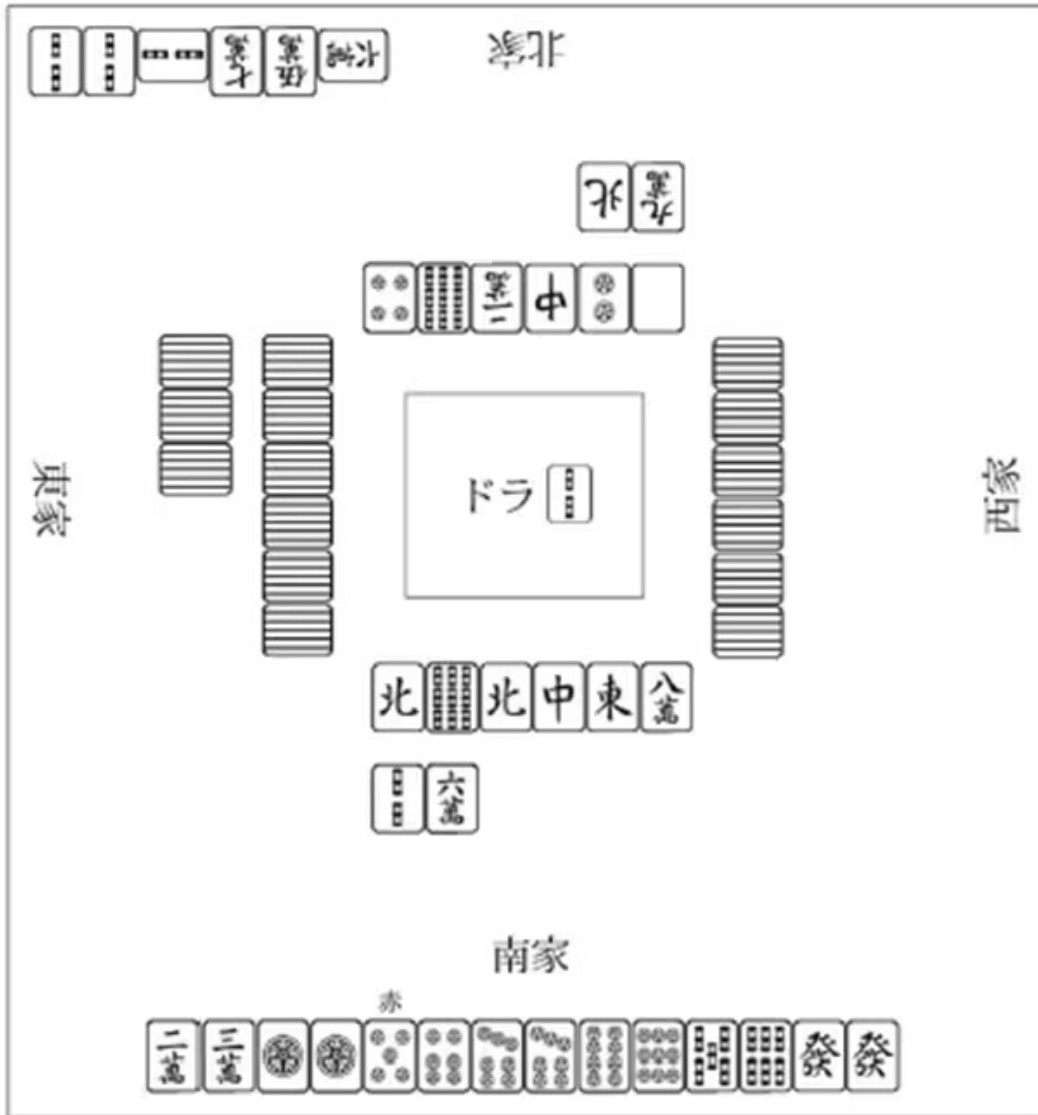
With the opponent discarding 9m after calling 6m for 567m, it's apparent they had 579m originally. Maintaining this shape is quite natural, and usually, you'd think that "since they only called two times, 9m's surroundings wouldn't be particularly dangerous, without any notable indicators from their melds." However, this changes in a situation hinting at a terminal tile discard.

The fact that the opponent discarded North in the previous turn indicates that they're likely to keep 579m to form a sequence like 789m. Moreover, since 2s has already been called for a Pon, the Dora tile is also quite dangerous in this scenario.

Here, discarding 1p is also recommended. If the first meld was 579m, because of the possibility of a scenario where "with a closed hand, they may use 789m even if they draw 6m, making it a terminal discard," the previous logic of reading tiles wouldn't hold true.

2.5 Chapter 2-5

Exercise 37



Dora: 2s

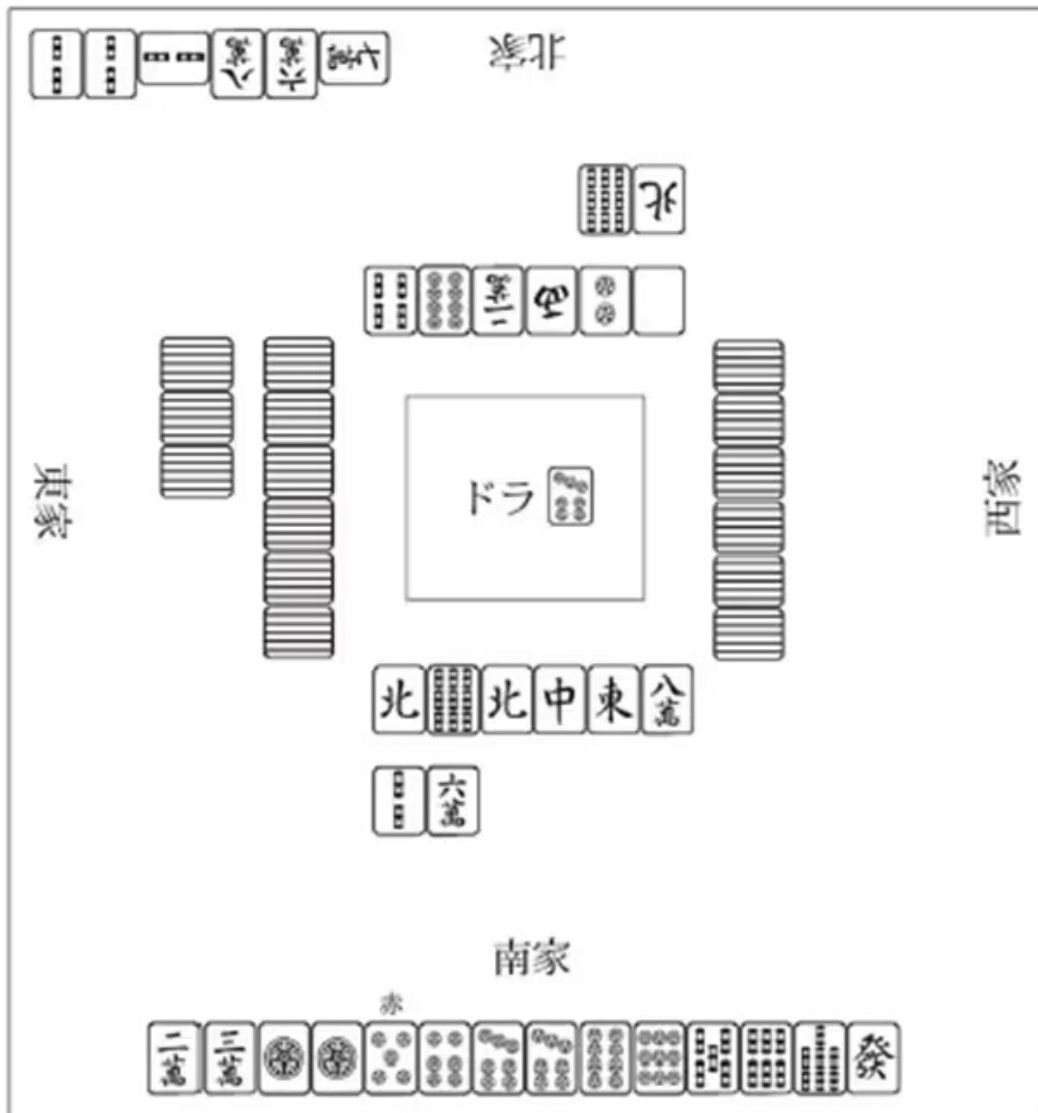
The opponent called 6m and discarded North. Besides this change, will there be any differences in reading the tiles compared to the previous question?

Solution:

In contrast to the previous question, this time, 579m was discarded before 9. It can be inferred that it's highly likely a shape that doesn't require 789m even if 8m is drawn, indicating a terminal discard.

Of course, in situations where you absolutely don't want to deal into an opponent's winning hand, holding onto 1p is even safer (the only significant hand you may deal into with 1p is a concealed triplet of East), but discarding the 1p adds peace of mind to your hand, and having discarded one of the East tiles can also serve as a safety measure. Simply discarding East is not inappropriate.

Exercise 38





Dora: 7p

The opponent called 7m and discarded 9s. As for reading the tiles, it has already been discussed. Is it worthwhile to discard 1p from your own hand?


Solution:



Regarding reading the opponent's discards, it's similar to Exercise 35, where the North tile discarded after calling 7m is still a candidate yaku tile for the opponent. However, since you're already in tenpai with Dora 3, it's definitely advantageous.




In the explanation for Exercise 35, it was mentioned to avoid letting the opponent call or win with  to avoid disrupting your potential high-value hand. However, in this case, since you're already in tenpai, it's a different story. Rather than discarding 1p here, it's better to hope that  can safely pass through (only getting Pon or being discarded, then you win, or betting on the possibility of opponent having a sequence with 9s and North?, etc.). In practical gameplay, the balance between offense and defense judgments is far more important than reading tiles.

Solution:

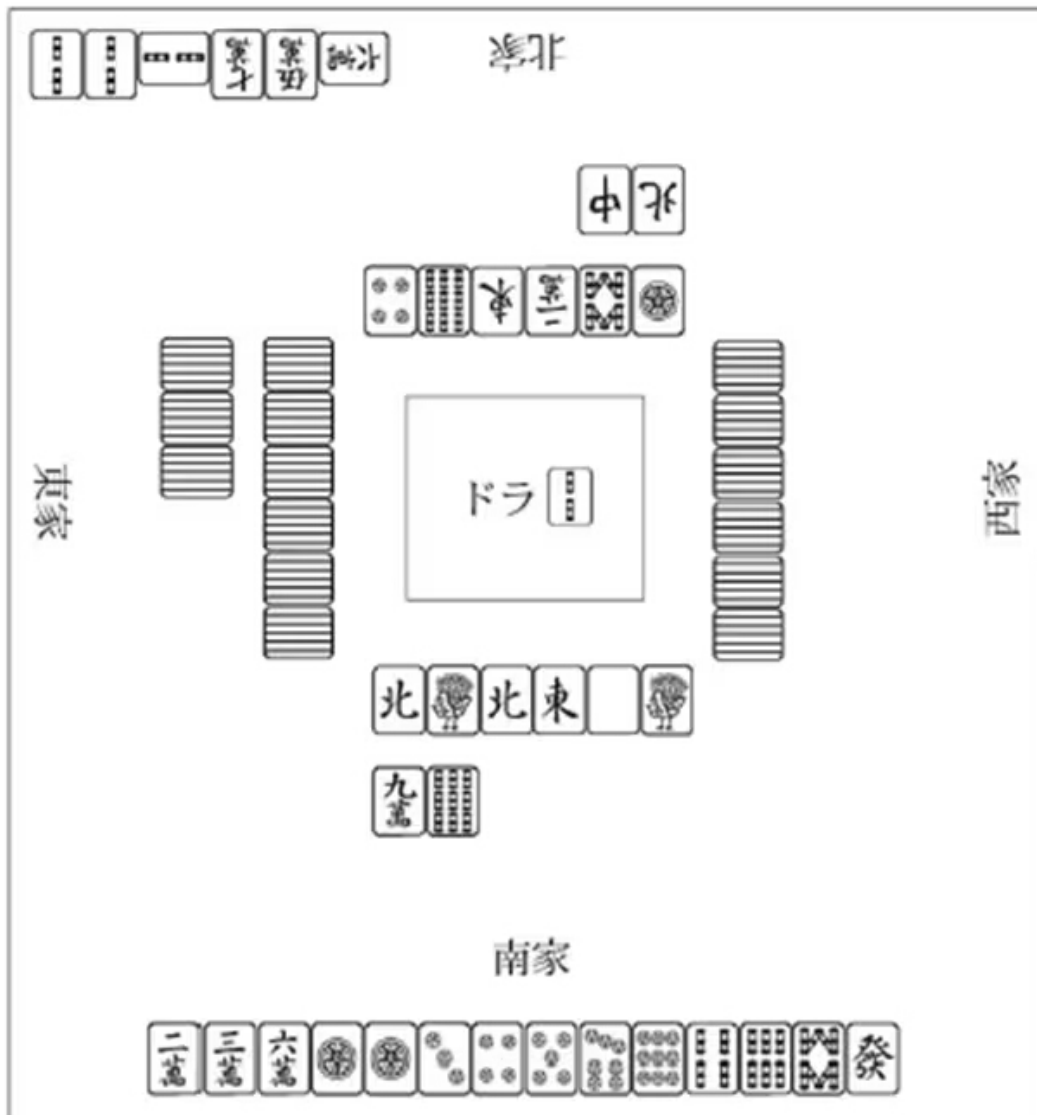
As mentioned earlier, it's crucial to understand the question of when to keep `\mahjong{6z}` and when to discard `\mahjo` based on the fact that the opponent is maintaining the 579m shape.

In mahjong, reading tiles ultimately involves uncertainty; there's almost never a scenario where discarding  will absolutely result in dealing into someone's hand. To the extreme, it's even possible that the opponent hasn't fully grasped the advantages and disadvantages of keeping tiles like North and 9m.


Building on this premise (the question of which sequence to prioritize varies from person to person and significantly affects the likelihood of dealing into someone's hand; the more correctly the opponent plays, the more you should keep ) , this hand falls on the side where  should be kept rather than discarded. I think this shape here can be considered one of the judgment benchmarks.

For instance, if there's a high added value to the red tiles, if the point situation demands it, or if the opponent hasn't claimed the valuable tiles, you might discard . Conditions that lean towards attacking should result in discarding . However, solely based on this picture, it seems better to keep , giving off such a feeling.



Exercise 40






Dora: 2s

The opponent called 6m and discarded North. Besides, is there a change in reading the opponent's hand, and why should the  tile be retained?

Solution:

The focus of this question is on the order of discarding the North and  tiles. Since North has been discarded twice, it's safer, indicating that the opponent would prefer to draw a pair with the .

For example, consider a situation where drawing a pair with the  tile would be desirable. Even if a pair is made, it will most likely have to be discarded eventually, so it's better to keep the safer North tile. Conversely, if there were another pair of  tiles, it could be split to form a sequence like 57m or 7p, creating a stable shape. Therefore, it's better for you to refrain from discarding the lone  tile.

Remember that in situations where there's already a pair of yakuhai tiles, forcibly holding onto other yakuhai tiles (especially live tiles) increases the risk. In this question, since North has already been discarded twice, it's easy to see through, but in other situations, if you carefully observe the order of discarding honor tiles and yakuhai tiles, you can also detect the difference.

Solution:

First, note that all the white and red tiles are live tiles. Generally, in this situation, making a Pon of 79 with 8 is considered an attachment to a yaku.

But the opponent's discard of 6p in the previous turn is very peculiar. Discarding 6p from the sequence 679p indicates that they don't need sequences like 567 and 678, but rather 789 is essential for their hand. Therefore, the opponent is likely aiming for a yaku like Pure Straight or Three Colors. Moreover, in a situation where you can see their hand as Menzen (fully closed), they're unlikely to stick to a fixed hand shape, and there's a high possibility of a Yakuhai being necessary for a meld... In this way, it can be deduced that Full Outside is the most probable scenario.

Without knowing if the opponent is in tenpai or not, and even if they are, it's impossible to estimate the point value of their hand. In any case, you should retain tenpai and declare Riichi. Even if the chance of the 1s tile causing a loss is only 10%, losing points for an Full Outside hand declaration is not pleasant. Therefore, it's better to retain tenpai and declare Riichi, and if you do, it's better to discard 4s.

2.6 Column 2

What is Skill Disparity?

“Nevertheless, some people still think that sanma (three-player mahjong) is a game of luck!” I believe there are still some who hold this view. Since the opportunity is rare, let’s take this chance to discuss my thoughts on “games of luck and games of skill”.

Games of luck refer to those where skill doesn’t play a significant role, whereas games of skill are the opposite.

Mahjong inherently involves various elements where skill comes into play. Tile drawing, precision in discarding and calling tiles, judgment of offense and defense, reading opponents’ tiles, and so on.

Indeed, in rules like Kansai sanma where there are piles of dora (bonus tiles), the difference in skill might not be apparent in tile drawing. However, on the other hand, when it comes to winning or losing a hand or making a winning discard, the importance of “precision in discarding and calling tiles” and “judgment of offense and defense” becomes more significant.

If asked, “Which is easier to demonstrate skill in, four-player mahjong or sanma?” I cannot say for sure (what exactly skill disparity refers to needs to be clarified first), but it can be imagined that, as mentioned earlier, the importance of various elements where skill comes into play may differ.

Of course, for those who believe that “mahjong is a competition of tile efficiency!” might find sanma, as mentioned above, boring. It’s a matter of personal preference, and there’s nothing we can do about it.

On the other hand, for those who think, “Sanshoku (Three-color straight) is a rare hand! Mahjong skill should be determined by the ability to judge offense and defense!” and play four-player mahjong, they would certainly be absorbed in the gameplay of sanma.

In the mahjong community, there is often debate about “which rule better demonstrates skill, Rule A or Rule B”. Whether to use red fives, whether to have a ura-dora or not, whether to use red tiles, and so on.

“Some people say having red fives relies too much on luck.”

“No, without red fives, it’s even more reliant on luck.”

Similar debates can be seen everywhere. Regarding this, perhaps on the basis of rigorous definition, a method to mathematically verify “which better demonstrates skill” can be found. However, personally, I think most debates are just “purely a matter of preference”.

For example, with and without red fives, similar to what was said before about sanma and four-player mahjong, under rules with more dora, the value of hands relatively decreases, while the importance of judgment of offense and defense increases.

People who believe “the enjoyment of mahjong lies in forming winning hands!” would naturally find no red fives more interesting. This kind of personal preference cannot be judged as good or bad.

However, in many cases, this subjective feeling is replaced by the objective expression “skill disparity”, in my opinion.

Furthermore, rather than worrying about “skill disparity”, a concept that is even vaguely defined, why not think about “what aspects of mahjong you find charming” and play rules that suit your interests?

For example, if one truly emphasizes demonstrating skill disparity, what about the following rules:

1. After winning a hand, you are given a Tokyo University entrance exam question. If you can’t answer correctly, you don’t get points.

2. At the start of the half round, all four players run a 100-meter race, starting with player 1, with starting points of 35,000, 30,000, 25,000, and 20,000 respectively.

In this case, under rule 1, those with strong academic skills are clearly more likely to win; under rule 2, those who run fast are more likely to win. Compared to traditional mahjong, one could say these rules more accurately “reflect skill”, couldn’t they?

I guess someone would definitely say, “This isn’t mahjong at all, stop kidding around.” Indeed, I think the same.

However, there are people in the world who believe “sanma with 20 dora tiles isn’t mahjong”, and there are also those who believe “mahjong without a ura-dora is not mahjong”. Compared to these rules, it’s just a matter of degree. Where the line between what is mahjong and what is not lies varies from person to person.

I am very fond of the element of “reading tiles” in mahjong, so much so that I have published three books specifically on reading tiles. Therefore, I also enjoy sanma, where the importance of reading tiles can be easily emphasized. In the end, it can only be said that I “enjoy” it, not that I am “skilled” at it.

Like me, by understanding exactly what aspects of mahjong you enjoy, it becomes easier to find rules and environments that make you happy. Through finding the mahjong environment that suits you, many people can make mahjong their lifelong interest, and that would be wonderful.

3 Chapter 3 :Reading Tiles in Practical Situations

3.1 Chapter 3-1

Exceptions to the Previous Theory

Key Point 1: Consideration of the Opponent's Winning Tiles

As mentioned earlier, the following discards from opponents should be approached with caution:

1. Revealing two or more dora tiles.
2. Discarding both East and South tiles.
3. Forming a half-suited hand (mixed straight or pure straight).

Here, let's delve deeper and try to consider the opponent's winning tiles.

Reading the winning tiles of an opponent with terminals and honors is particularly easy because it simply depends on how many dora tiles are visible. This means that when dora tiles are terminal tiles or when many of them are visible to you, opponents discarding terminal tiles and honors should not be of great concern (although the position of red dora tiles should be noted).

On the other hand, when an opponent's winning hand includes yakuhai, not only dora tiles should be considered but also whether it conforms to yaku like three colors, all triplets, or full flush.

Key Point 2: Consideration of the Opponent's Speed

Although an opponent with two exposed sets in the middle of the game may already be tenpai (ready), their speed of play is one of the benchmarks for considering their readiness. Of course, the probability of being tenpai varies depending on the different discards made by opponents.

For example, the presence of obvious discards such as splitting joints or discarding dora tiles can be considered as a high probability of tenpai. However, whether a pair has been split or not needs to be determined based on the situation of draws and discards. Start by organizing the information available within your visible range.

Although it's impossible to perfectly read the opponent's speed, when combined with reading their winning tiles, strategies such as "start guarding against opponents with high winning tiles slightly earlier" or "largely ignore opponents with low winning tiles" can be appropriately used in offense and defense judgments.

Key Point 3: Pay Attention to Tiles That Haven't Been Called

In reading tile discards, there's a technique that can elevate your skill level if you're aware of it, which is "considering what tiles haven't been called".

For example, reading from the composition of the hand, when numbers 3 and above of characters seem dangerous, what does it mean if the player's immediate predecessor discarded a 5m? If they had a 67m, they would have called the 5 of characters, indicating they don't have the pair of 67 of characters, thereby increasing the danger of 47m and 69m accordingly.

Of course, if the opponent has made a discard after their immediate predecessor's discard, it's possible that they just formed a new joint, so if you don't consider their draw and discard, you can only ensure the safety of the tile just discarded. However, generally considering "tiles that haven't been called in the last three turns are safe" should suffice.

Key Point 4: Judgment Based on Point Situation

Compared to a player who hasn't called any tiles, it's somewhat easier to read the discards of a player who has called tiles (in a winning hand) (it's practically impossible to read the discards of a player in riichi).

In other words, the approach can change more easily based on the point situation. For example, as the dealer facing a low-scoring discard from the player across, even if the worst-case scenario results in losing a hand, it also places them below you in the rotation, advancing the game, which can be beneficial. This makes it easy to lean towards ignoring such opponents.

Conversely, in a situation where you are in the all last stage and cannot afford to lose a hand that won't reach mangan, if you can read that "this tile, even if discarded, won't reach mangan", perhaps you can increase the range of tiles that can be safely discarded.

Judgments like this that are close to all last often cause tens of thousands of points including draft points to change every time, so it is necessary to master this skill.

Solution:

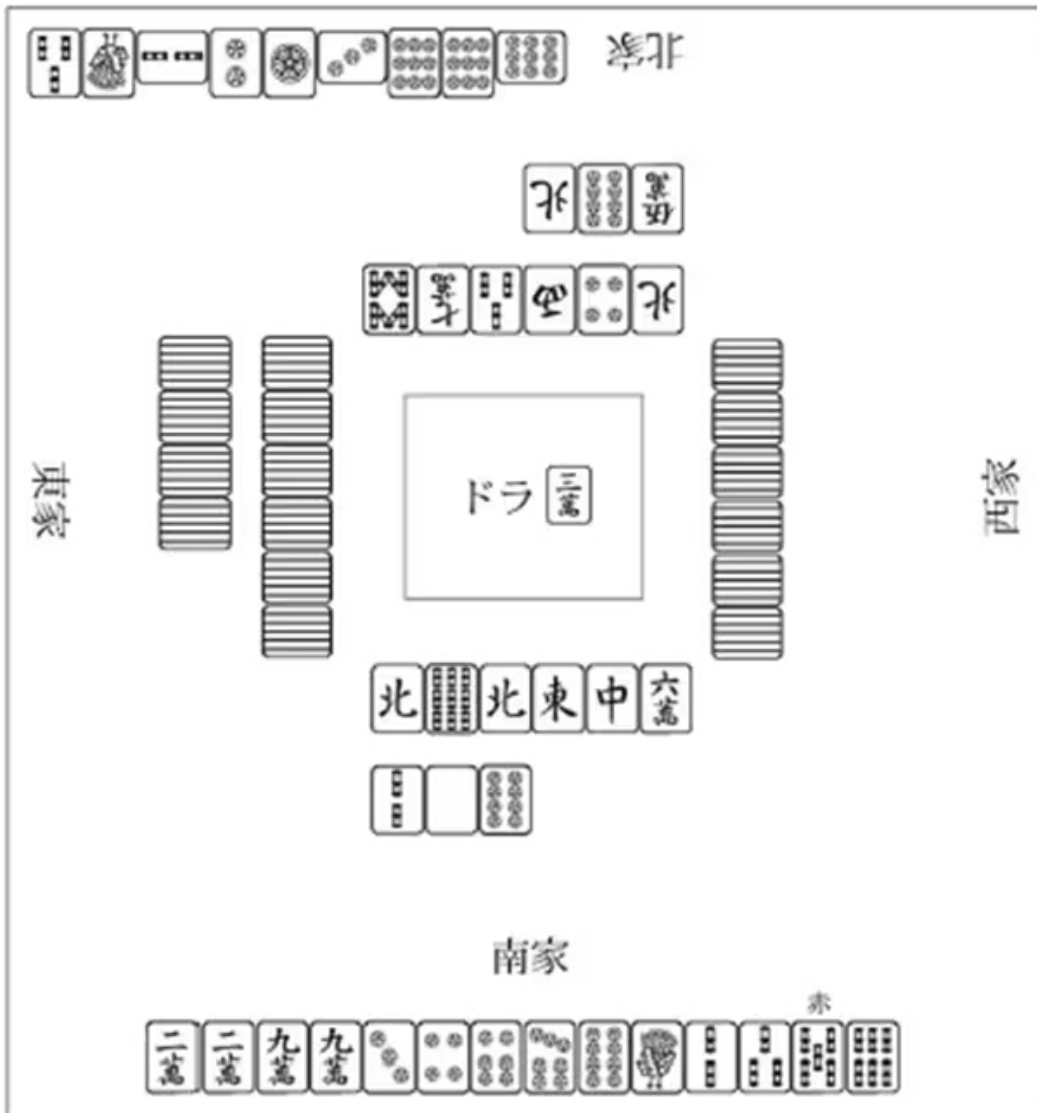
Based on the opponent's discard, the danger lies in the vicinity of the 4m after their chi, as well as the possibility of them holding 7s or lower in the bamboo suit.

Your hand requires you to discard both 2m and 4s, which are both in the dangerous zone, making it quite a painful situation.

However, the attack here is to discard 2m. The key lies in understanding the opponent's winning tiles. The opponent is highly likely to have a terminal or honor discard, making it difficult for them to form common yaku like pinfu, tanyao, menzenchin tsumo, etc. (excluding yakus that can be clearly identified from their calls such as chinitsu and toitoi). Their winning tiles largely depend on how many doras they have.

In this problem, the opponent has discarded a dora, and you have two red doras, so the opponent at most has only one red 5p. Even if they win, it will only be worth 2000 points. Conversely, your hand is in a good shape with a possible mangan hand. Therefore, you don't need to worry about losing points. The value of attacking is high. The discards of opponents who have called tiles are often quite predictable. Don't just focus on reading their waits, also try to read their discard patterns.

Exercise 43



Dora: 3m

Opponent called 9p and discarded North. What can you read from this and which tile should you discard?

Solution:

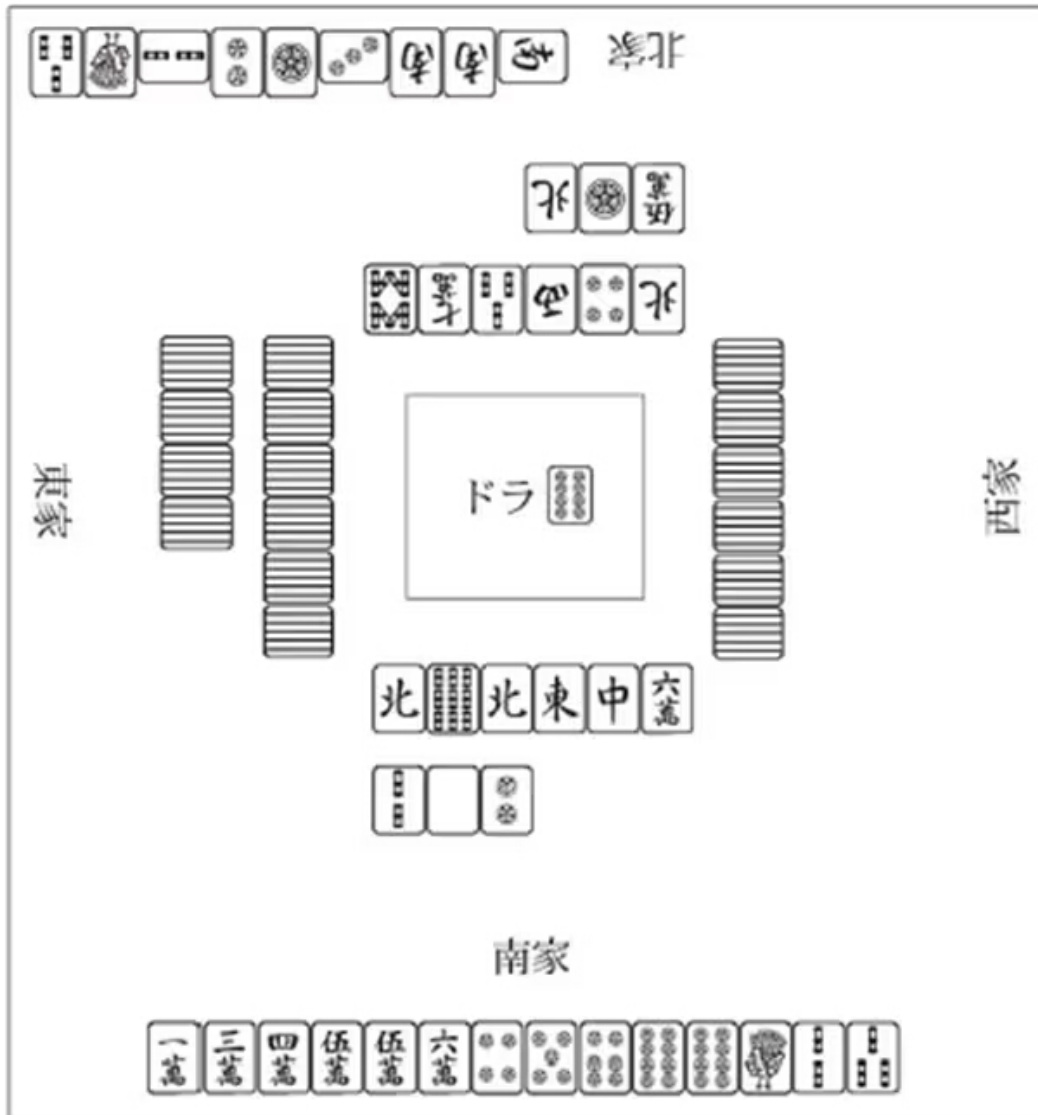
Looking at the opponent's melds, it seems like they are going for an all outside hand. So, you might think that discarding 9m is dangerous, but that's actually the correct move.

If the opponent's points are based on Full Outside, the highest-scoring pattern for 9m is Three Colors. The only high-scoring possibility for 1239m is a single-wait, but since 7m was discarded early, this possibility is unlikely (holding onto 7m would be a complete hand with a pair for 9p).

On the other hand, 2m could lead to a mangan with 1399m (Three Colors and Full Outside with dora).

The scoring possibilities of a tile discarded by the opponent depend on the number of doras, while those of a tile called in a meld depend on factors like "pure triplets", "honors", "three colors", etc. Therefore, it's important to consider which shape has a high score and discard tiles accordingly.

Exercise 44



Dora: 8p

Opponent called South and discarded North. What can you read from this and which tile should you discard?

Solution:

Similar to the previous exercise, discarding 1m, which would complete the triplets in all three suits, is not the correct move.

In this case, the opponent's meld changed from calling 9p to calling South, eliminating the possibility of All Outside. Moreover, the dora has changed to 8p. With three melds already called and only four tiles left in their hand, it's impossible for them to have both a set using the doras 789p and a set in three suits with 123m.

In other words, even if 1m scores in three suits, it will only be "all outside and three suits" worth 2000 points or "three suits dora 2" worth 3900 points.

Of course, 5m can definitely be discarded. Since you have two dora, if the situation suggests that 2m is safe, you can consider going for riichi with 5m, but I think the basic strategy is to ignore the opponent's 2000-point tiles and stick to your hand. Therefore, riichi with 1m is the correct move.

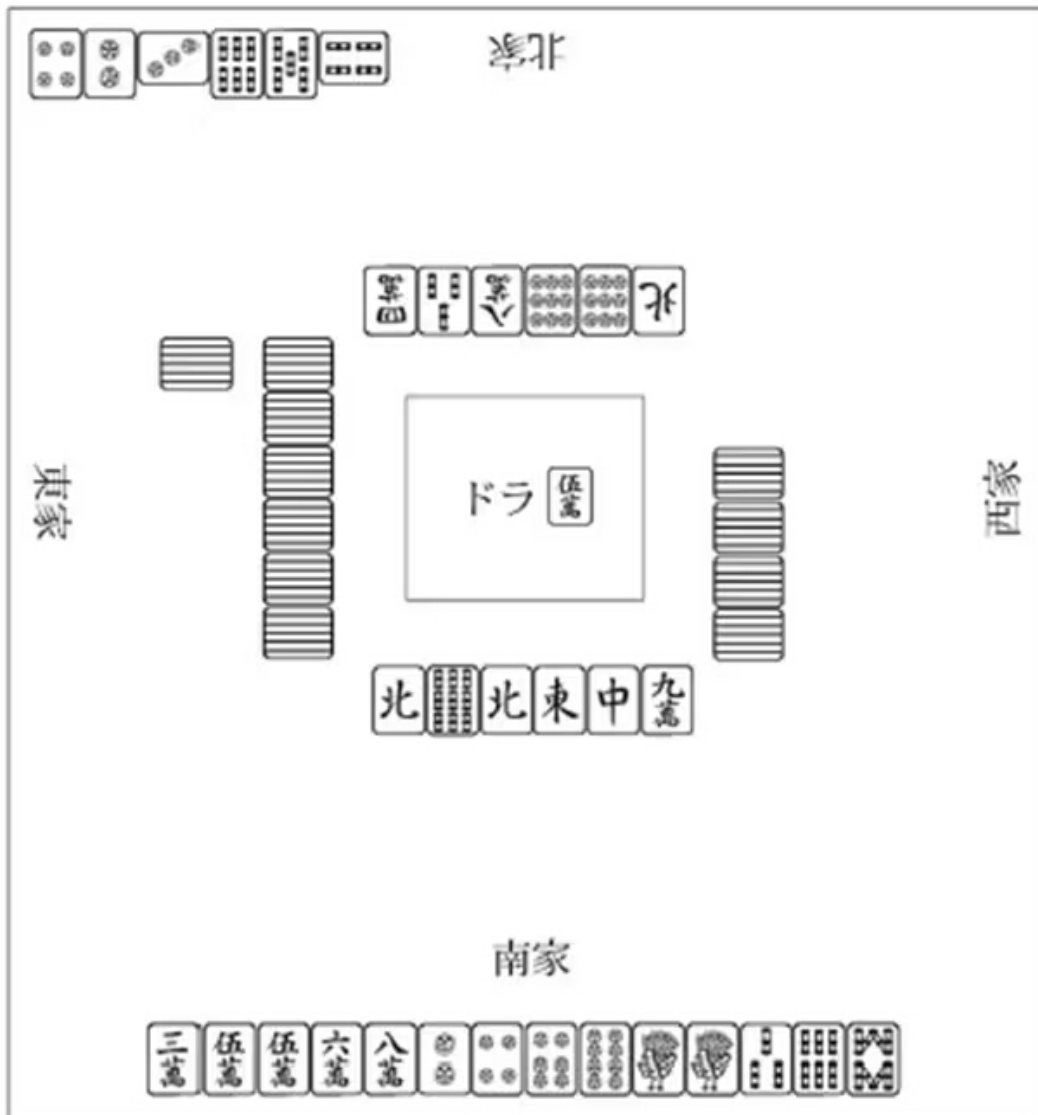
Solution:

Although you might want to declare riichi with 4m, considering the composition of the opponent's hand, 47m is quite dangerous. So, what should you do? The opponent's hand is likely to be terminals and honors, with few doras seen, making their winning tiles unclear.

However, since the opponent discarded 5s after completing a chi, it's less likely that they are holding 44s (if they originally had 44455s, they wouldn't have called 6s) or 45s (if they originally had 44555s, they would already be in tenpai). Although the latter is possible, it's rare. Therefore, the probability of the opponent not having bamboo tiles (doras) in their hand has increased. Thus, with you holding red 5m and red 5p, the opponent is likely only worth 2000 points for having a terminal or honor tile.

Indeed, discarding 8m, a safe tile, would have good scoring potential. However, the hand's waiting shape is too weak. Therefore, don't be afraid, and discard 4m instead.

Exercise 46



Dora: 5m

Opponent called 4s and discarded 4m. What can you infer and which tile should you discard?

Solution:

As mentioned before, the criterion for suspecting the opponent is in tenpai is when they have two melds in the second row of their discards. Strictly speaking, the probability of tenpai varies depending on the discards. To learn how to judge the opponent's waiting range and scoring potential, we haven't talked much about the opponent's tenpai probability in the previous exercises. So, let's try to consider it in this problem.

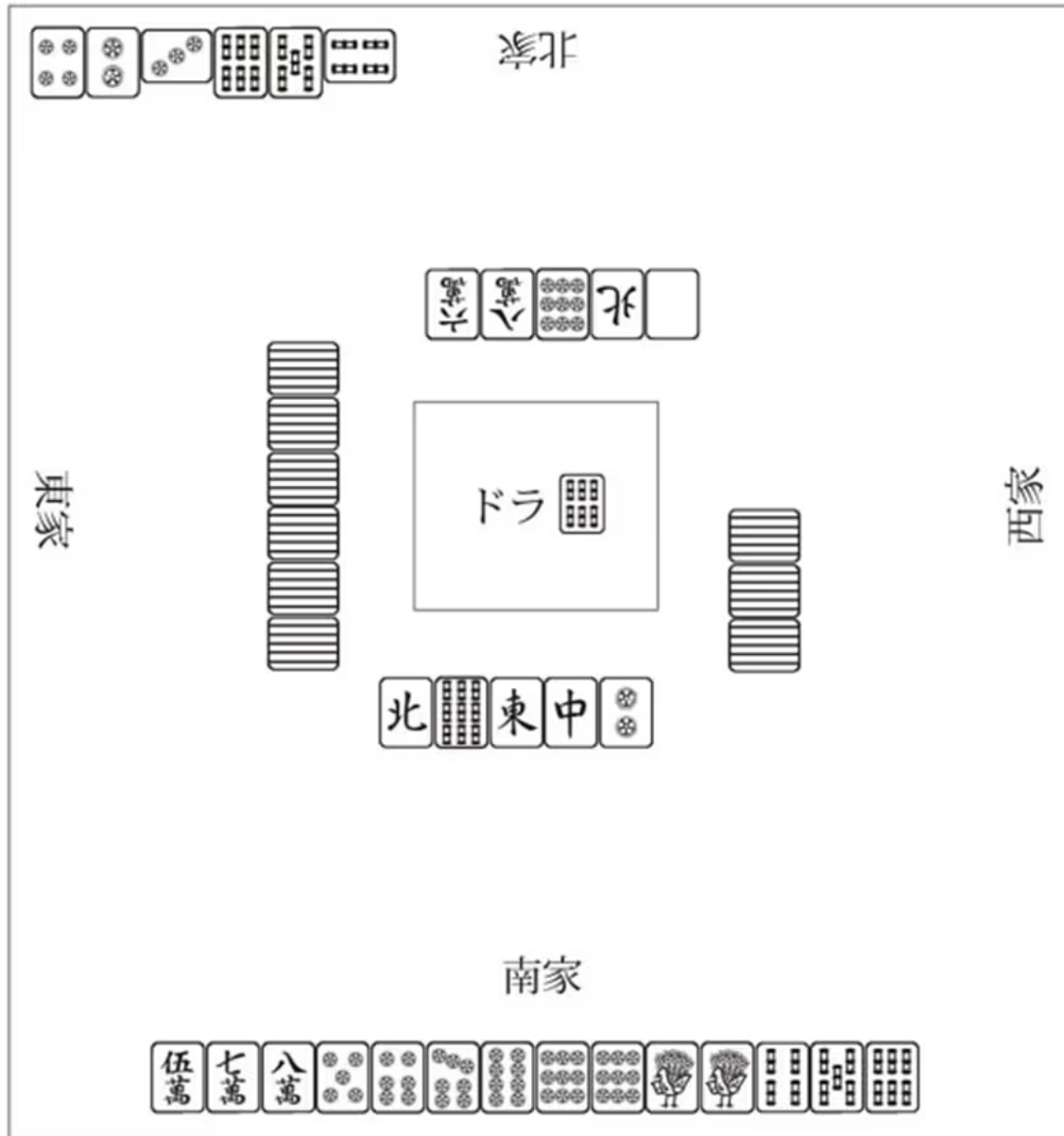
The basic principle is the same as "if a player making a chinitzu discards a tile from the other suit, they are likely in tenpai". When the opponent discards a tile necessary for completing a yaku, it's likely they are in tenpai.

In this problem, the opponent seems to be going for all simples. For an all inside hand, the necessary tiles are "3-7 in each suit" and "tiles around the middle dora". Both of these have been discarded, indicating a strong possibility of tenpai.

In any case, the opponent's discards are all from the first row and they seem ready to win, while you have a scattered hand. So, consider discarding 8m or 1s and see how it goes.

3.3 Chapter 3-3

Exercise 47



Dora: 6s

Opponent called 4s and discarded 6m. How should you perceive the opponent, and which tile should you discard?

Solution:

The key point of this problem lies in reading the speed of the opponent's terminal or honor discard. For a terminal or honor hand, both having a "tile group" (melds, pairs) and the necessary tiles are equally important. Naturally, you need a tile group to win.

Disassembling the tile group is akin to declaring "I already have another set of five tiles," which can be considered as already being in tenpai.

Therefore, the opponent is likely already in tenpai here, and looking at the composition of their tile groups, the lower section of bamboo tiles seems dangerous. Therefore, discard 9p to avoid giving them the opportunity to complete a set.

Nevertheless, the opponent's scoring potential is unclear. If they are indeed in tenpai later on, simply declaring riichi with 5m will be fine.

Answer:

This question is even more concise than the previous one. You can consider **discarding the middle dora tile** indicates Even though there are still 10 tiles in the hand when aiming for a all inside, if you can confirm that you won't use Dora 5m, it means you are either in a one-sided wait or already tenpai. This information is not related to whether you discard from the hand or draw, which is also crucial for beginners and intermediate players.


Furthermore, in terms of tile composition, the danger lies in the upper segment of bamboo, the middle and lower segments of characters, and the middle and lower segments of circles. If your hand is progressing linearly, you will inevitably have to discard several tiles from the aforementioned range. It's better to play it safe and discard 8s or 8m. Anyway, you will likely end up discarding the tile, so it's better to keep tiles like the ones you draw next, especially when the players before and after you are in riichi.


Solution:

The opponent called two groups in different suits containing terminals and honors, which suggests they are likely aiming for All Triplets.

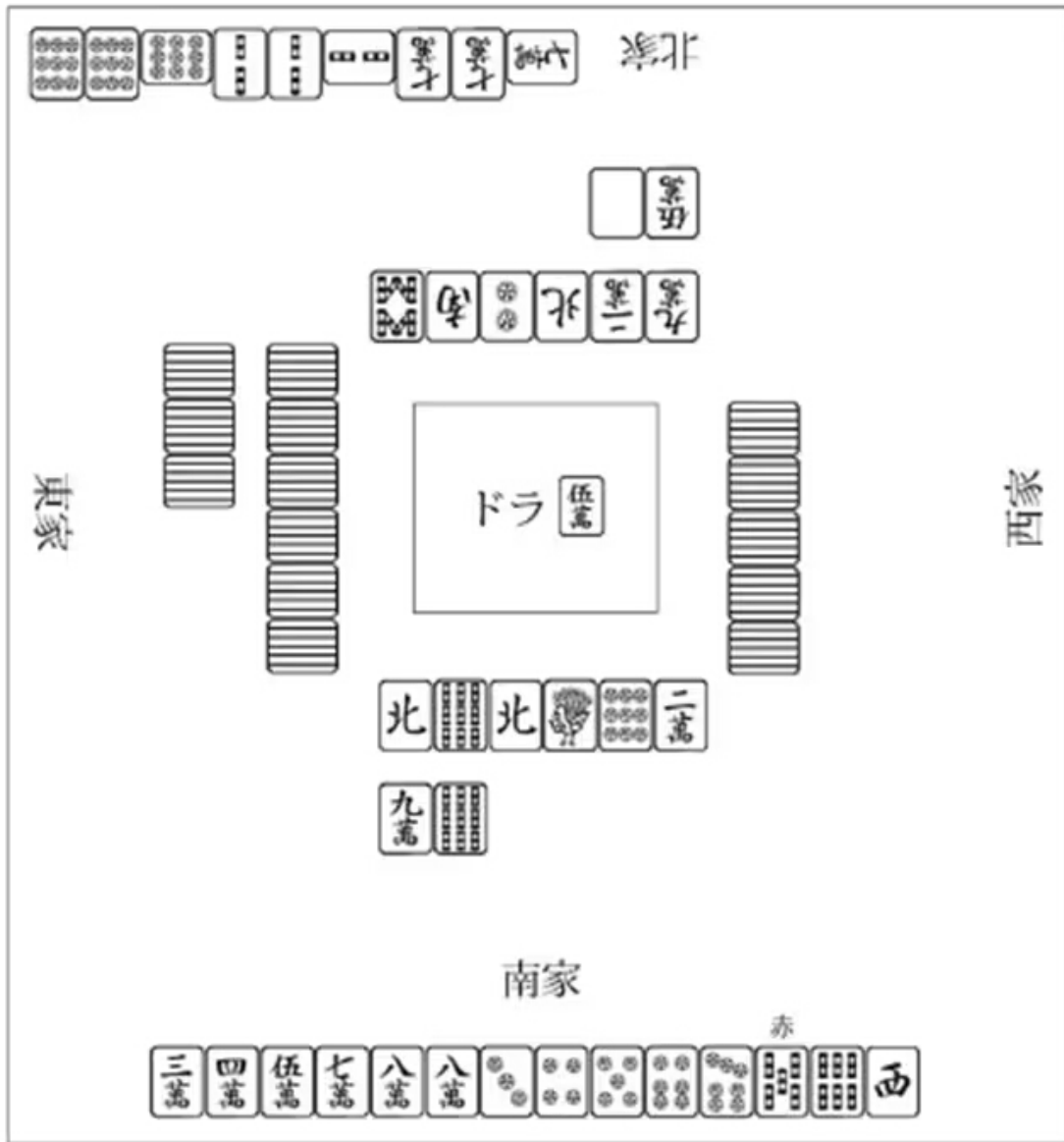


In the case of All Triplets, discarding the dora (5m) doesn't necessarily indicate the opponent's speed, unlike in the case of reaching. Even with an incomplete tile group, it's still quite possible to discard tiles like 5m from this hand shape. Therefore, although the dora is potentially dangerous, there's no need to be overly cautious.

If the opponent is indeed aiming for All Triplets, then the  is one of the dangerous tiles. However, as discussed earlier, it's impossible to determine the opponent's speed, and all the tiles discarded here are live. Therefore, it's better to take the opportunity now to discard this tile before it becomes a potential winning tile.

Of course, this judgment is based on the assumption that your hand is of high value. If you have a poor hand, you can also choose to hold onto the  in preparation for discarding it later.

Exercise 50




Dora: 5m

Opponent called 7m and discarded 5m. The situation is as shown. What can you infer and which tile should you discard?

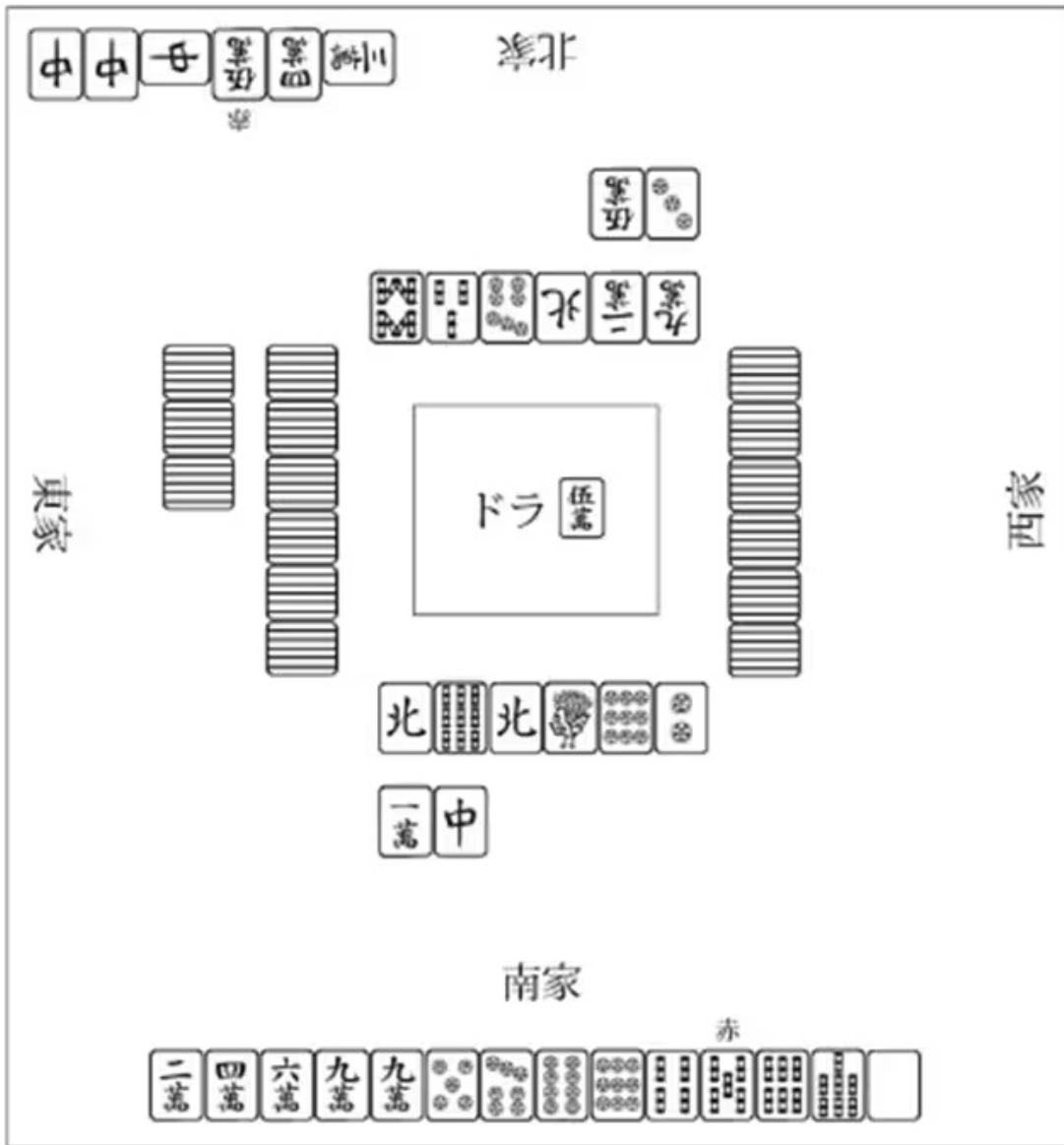
Solution:

Although it's difficult to gauge the speed of a All Triplets hand, with three sets already called, the opponent is most likely in tenpai, and you must respond accordingly.

In this case, live honor tiles are quite dangerous... This is true, but you also need to consider the scoring potential. Currently, the three sets called do not affect the scoring potential. Additionally, the opponent has discarded the dora. The only remaining possibility for a high-scoring hand (worth 3 han or more) is if they have yakuhai tiles.

For pairs of winds, such as  or , only the tanki west tile wait has scoring potential (worth 5,200 points), but these shapes are not very common. Your hand is in tenpai, and both the shape and scoring potential are sufficient, so discard West.

Exercise 51



Dora: 5m

Opponent called 3m and discarded 5m. What can you infer and which tile should you discard?

Solution:

For opponents who call yakuhai tiles, like in the case of calling terminals and honors, you can gauge their speed similarly to judging Tanyao hands, by whether they discard easily usable middle tiles or doras.

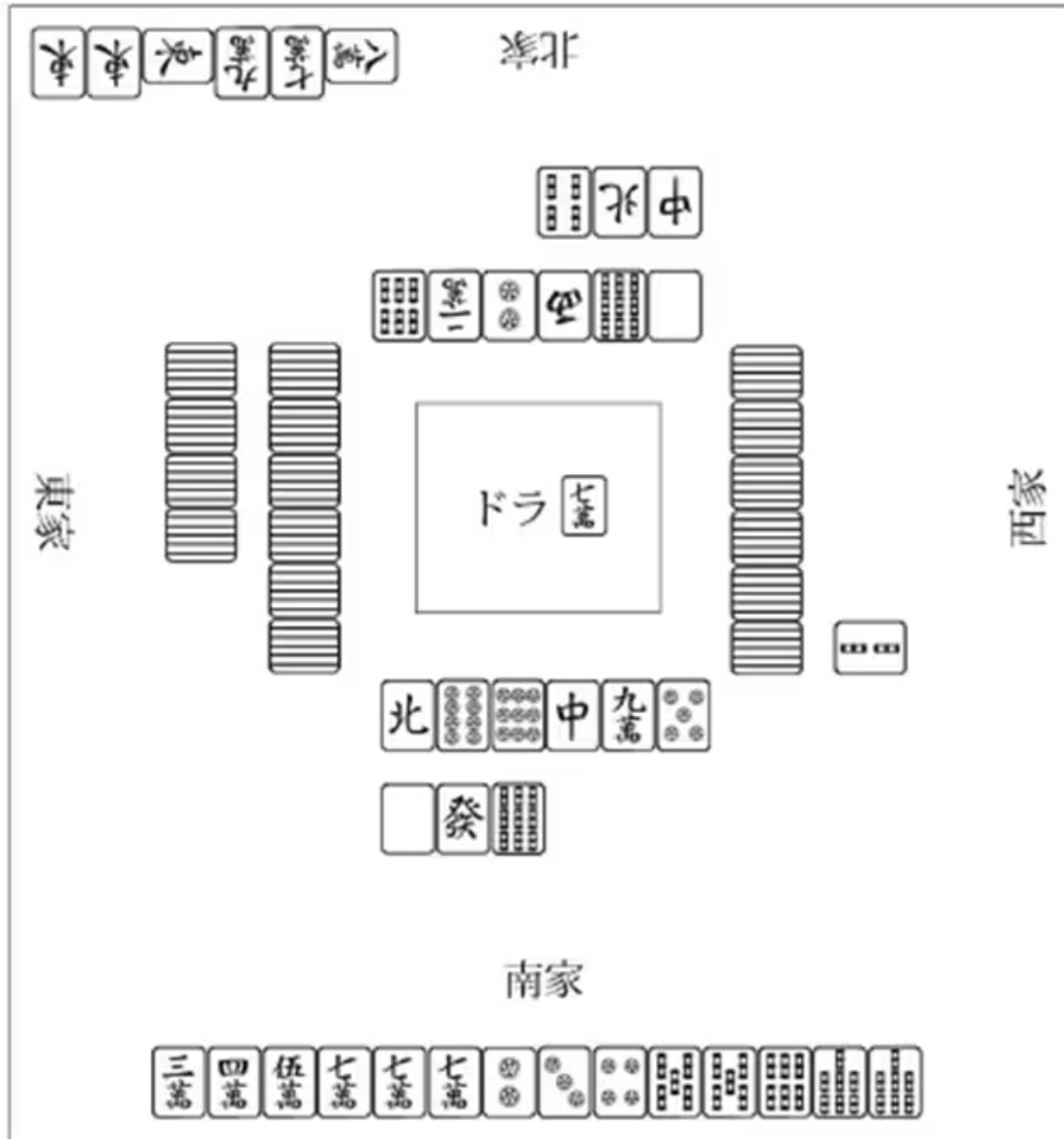
Especially in this problem, the opponent discarded 29m in the early game and has now called the middle tiles of the characters, followed by discarding the dora. It's likely they no longer have any character tiles. The bamboo tiles in the first row have been discarded as 38s, suggesting they probably only have one joint in the middle. The dots were started with 7p, so there should be a joint in the lower segment. You can infer this information. If the river provides enough information to read the distribution of five joints specifically, it's very likely they are in tenpai.

In addition, since there is limited space for making joints with number tiles, you can infer "maybe there is a pair of honor tiles," so the danger of the white dragon tile has increased (simply put, the more middle number tiles are discarded in the river, the more dangerous live honor tiles become).

In this situation (2 tiles away) with a hand containing 5p, 47s, white, and other dangerous tiles, it's better to discard tiles like 9m to play it safe.

3.4 Chapter 3-4

Exercise 52



Dora: 7m

Opponent called a sequence (chii) with 8m and discarded 4s. How should you interpret this and which tile should you discard? Note the tile discarded by the player to your right.

Solution:

In reading discards, besides noting what tiles are called and discarded, it's also important to consider what tiles are not called.

Assuming the opponent is in tenpai, the sequence of discards, from 6s to other tiles to 4s, indicates that 25s is highly likely to be their main waiting shape. However, looking at the discard from the player to your right, who discarded 2s just the previous turn, it's unlikely they have 34s.

So how did they come to discard 4s? It's likely they had a shape like 468s. Since 7s is one of the main tiles, discarding 5s from your hand to wait for 47s is preferable.

Additionally, after discarding 2s, the opponent drew 3s, possibly forming a shape like 344s. To determine this with certainty, you need to remember all of the opponent's discards. However, in cases like this where the discarded tile is a useless honor tile (North), it's more likely to be a drawn tile. Knowing this can help compensate for the ability to remember discards.

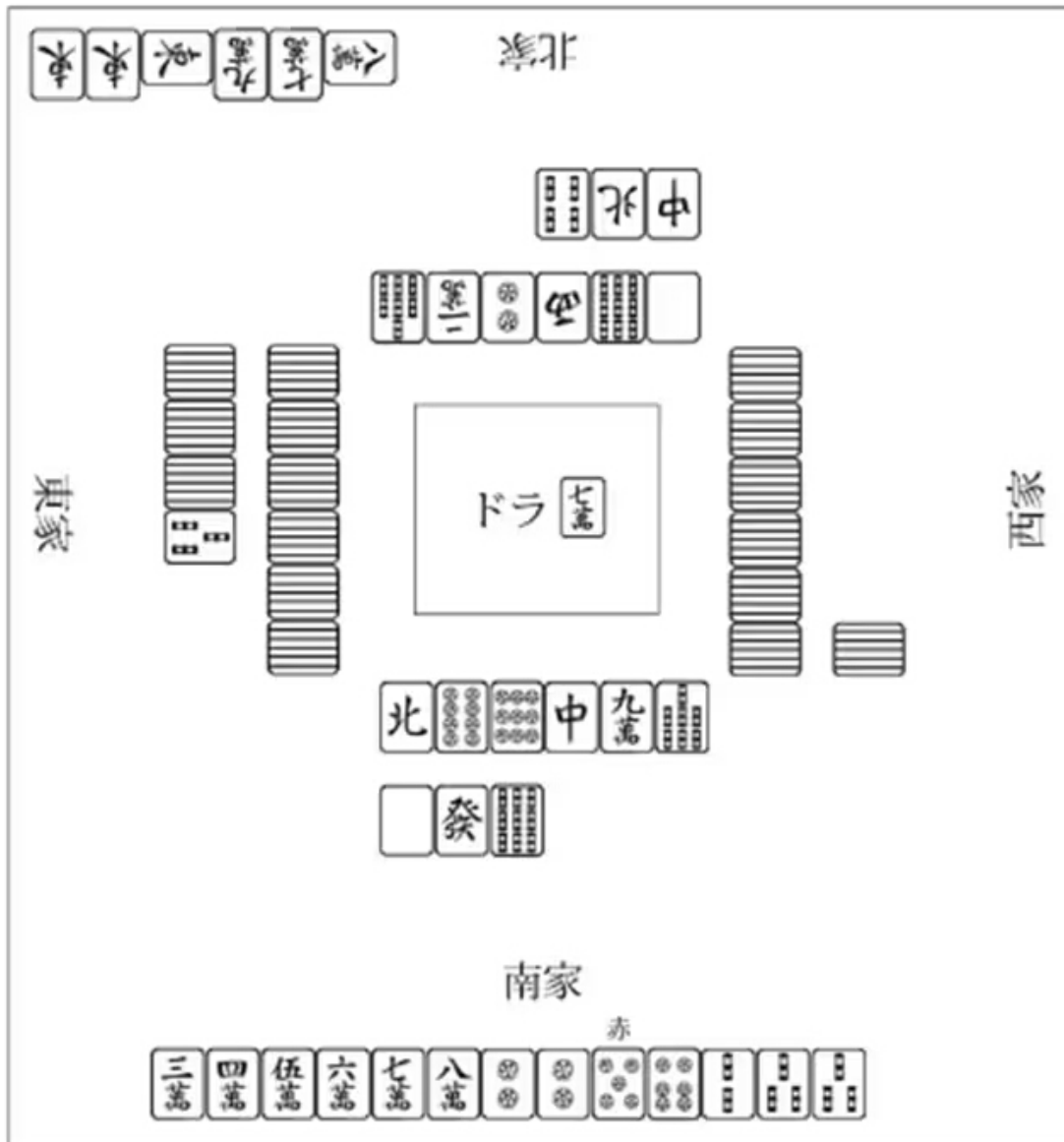
Solution:

This problem is similar to the previous one, but now the player to your right discarded 5s instead of 2s. You might think they still haven't called 5s, indicating they don't have 34s, right? However, there's the possibility of waiting for 2s and other tiles by calling 224s.

Also, not calling 5s denies the possibility of the 468s sequence from the previous problem. With such a shape, they should have called 46s to wait for 8m.

Therefore, 2s fits into a natural shape, while 7s does not. The difference in danger levels is significant. So, in this case, you should discard 7s. Whether the player to your right discarded 2s or 5s can lead to completely different conclusions, which is the joy of reading tiles.

Exercise 54



Dora: 7m

Opponent called a sequence (chii) with 8m and discarded 4s. Should you call to complete a set with the 3s discarded by the player to your left? You can answer this by reading the opponent's hand.

Solution:

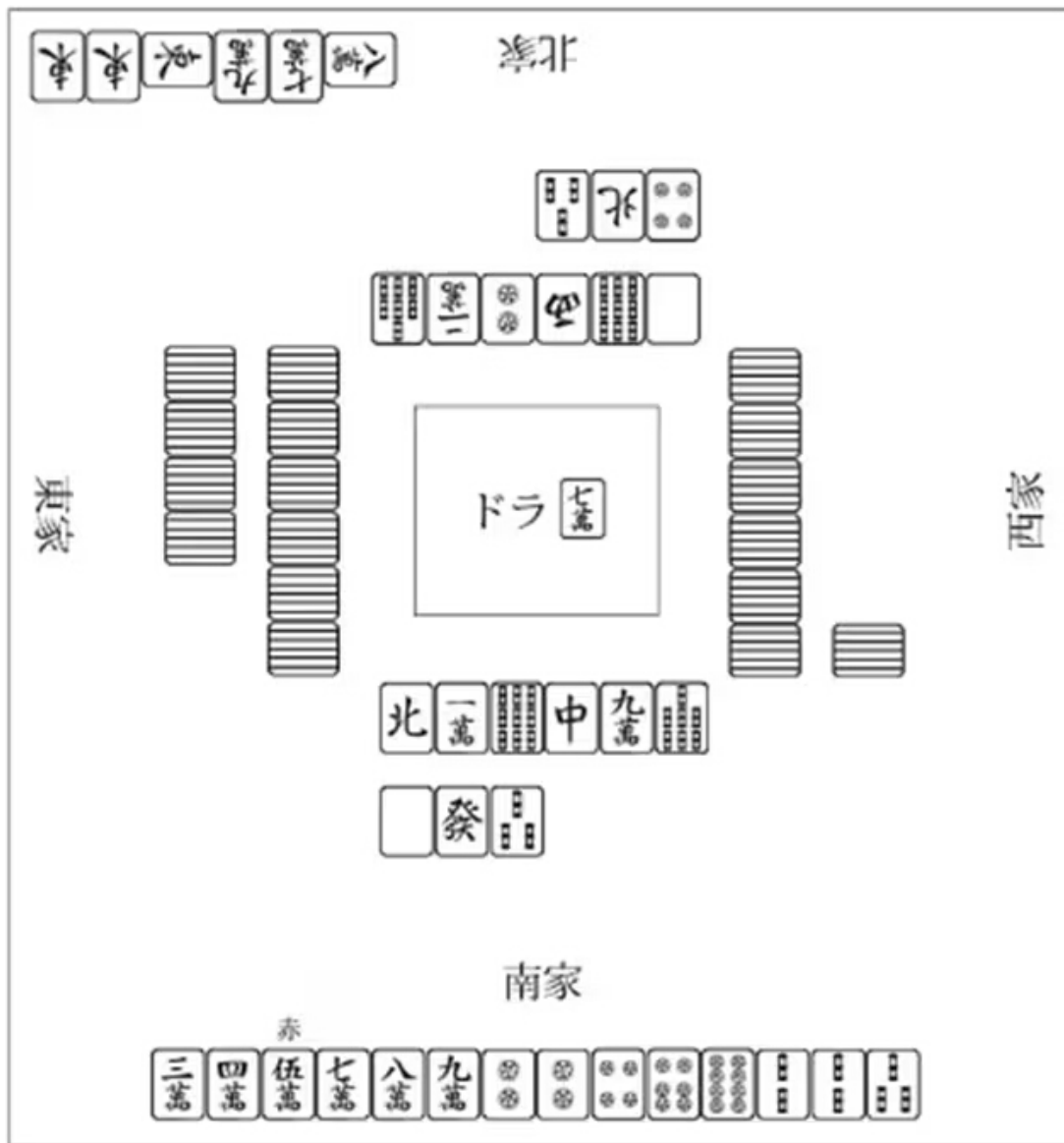
Firstly, completing a set with 3s would make your hand tenpai worth 3900 points. Generally, when you're almost tenpai, it's common to maintain a closed hand for a few more turns.

However, completing a set worth 3900 points after a call has certain value. In a situation like this where the opponent is likely already in tenpai, it's more common to try to catch up to their speed by calling or completing a set.

Looking at the opponent's discards of 7s → other tiles → 4s, it can be inferred that their main waiting shapes are 25s and 36s. With 3s already discarded, 4s becomes an associated tile for their waiting shape, so it's almost certain that 2s would be a ron if it were to be discarded. Calling 3s with the intention of discarding 2s would be a risky move.

Therefore, you should think "how lucky that 3s passed" and continue to aim for a closed hand, while also keeping in mind that you can call if the player to your right discards 4s later (because 3s was discarded as a safe tile).

Exercise 55



Dora: 7m

Opponent called a sequence (chii) with 8m and discarded 3s. What can you infer from this, and which tile should you discard?

Solution:

You were about to discard 23s from your 2233s shape, but after the opponent called, 2s became a dangerous tile.

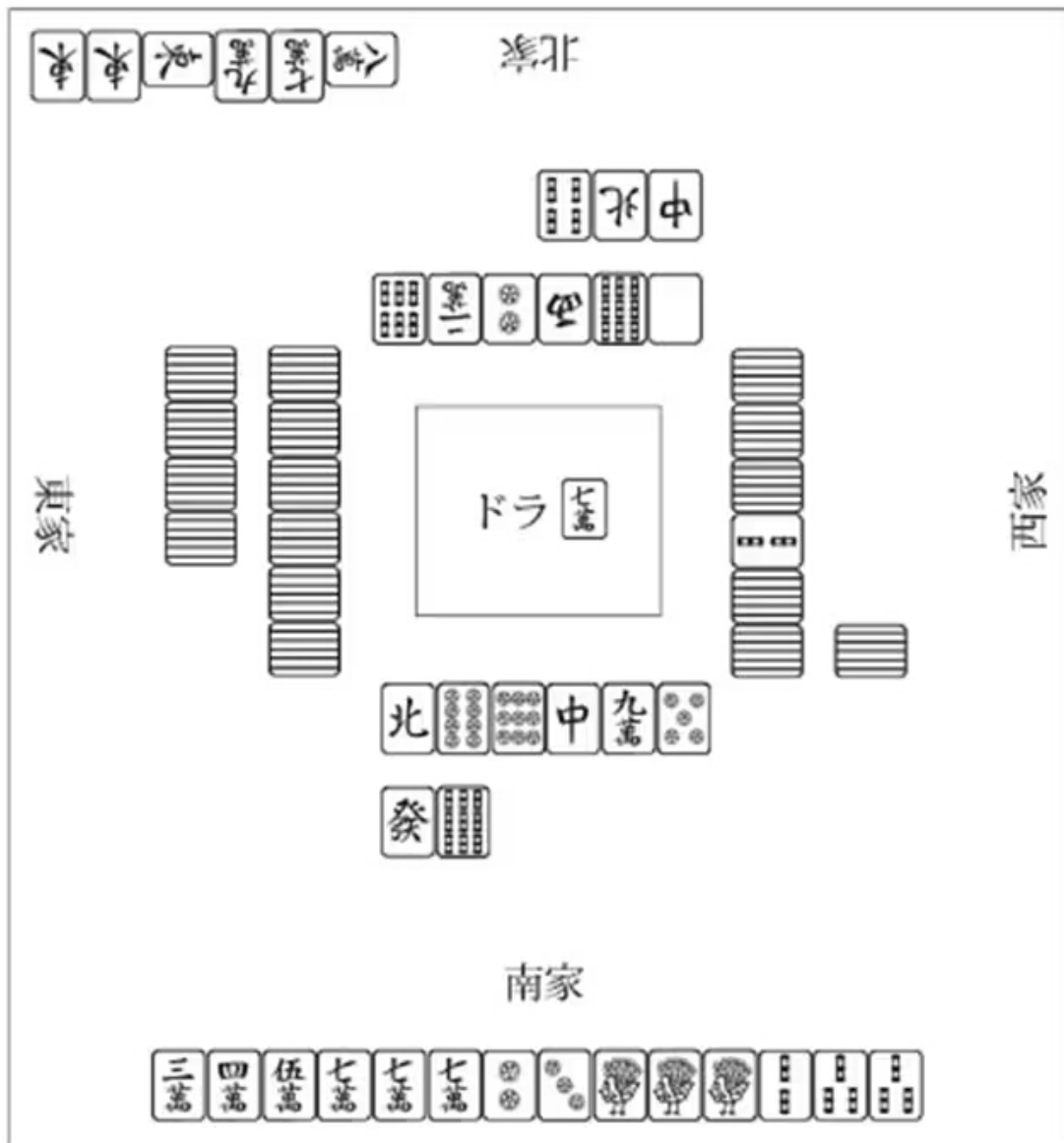
However, there's evidence that suggests 2s is likely to be safe since you just discarded 3s. If the opponent's shape was like this, discarding 3s would likely result in them calling 3s to complete the set and waiting for 8m.



There's a theoretical framework for situations like this: "If a tile was just discarded by you, it's unlikely that the opponent has a consecutive two-sided wait involving that tile."

In this problem, for ease of understanding, it's presented as if you just discarded 3s. For those who can remember discards, you can trace back to the last hand discard, and all tiles drawn in between can be subject to this framework, greatly expanding the range of tile reading.

Exercise 56



Dora: 7m

Opponent called a sequence (chii) with 8m and discarded 4s. You can go tenpai with either 2s or 3s. Which tile should you discard?

Solution:

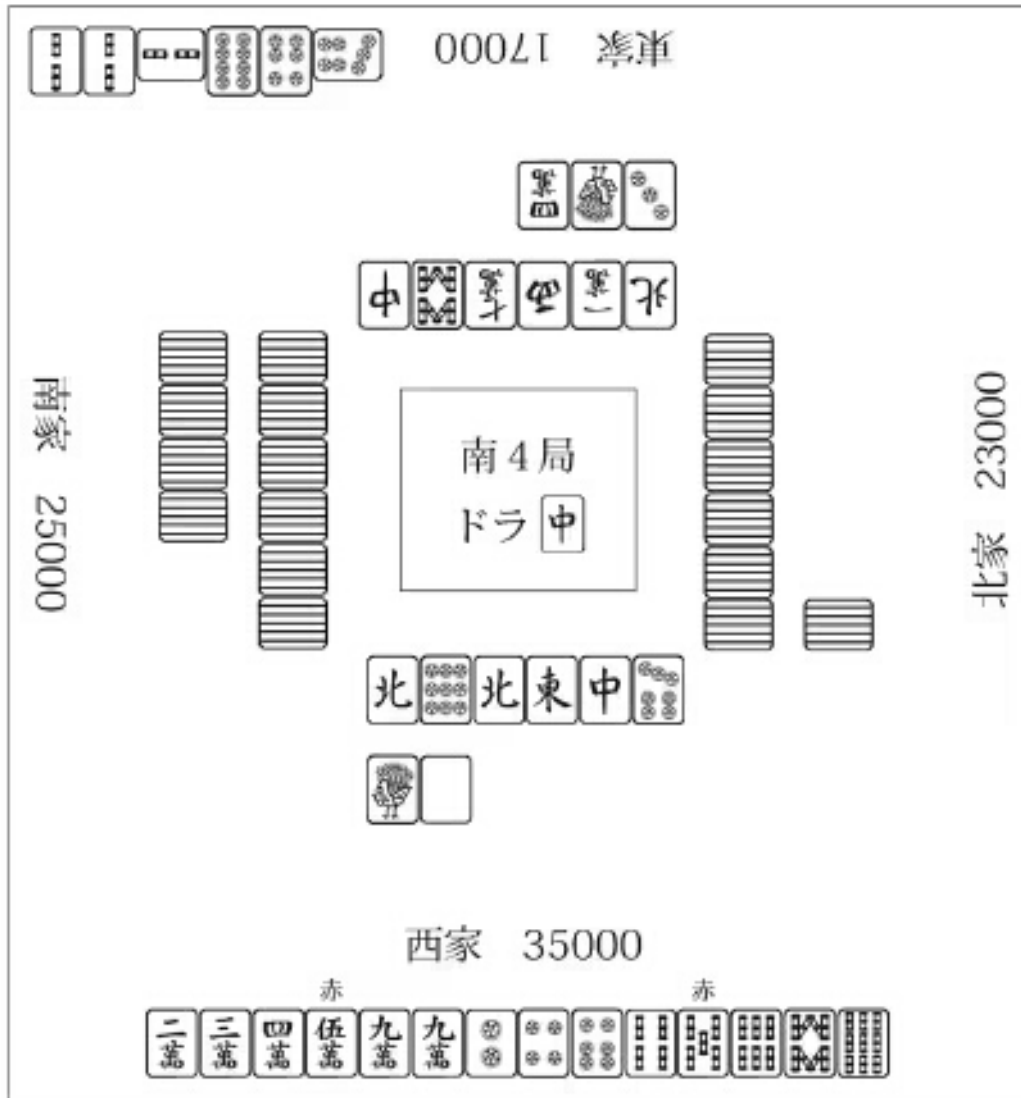
The issue lies in whether the 2s discarded by the player to your left on the third turn should be considered as a basis for judgment. As mentioned before, it's possible the opponent drew the 34s joint after the player to your left discarded 2s, but it would be too hasty to base your decision solely on this. It's better to play it safe and discard the tile with fewer potential combinations, which is 3s.

If you're wondering how many turns of discards are reliable as a basis, it's a complex question. Without seeing the hand discards clearly, it's hard to answer. In extreme cases, if all discards between West and North are drawn, and there's been no hand change, then "the fact that 2s wasn't called means it's safe to discard 2s."

For those who can't see clearly, as a rough rule, only the tiles discarded in the last 1-2 turns are considered reliable.

3.5 Chapter 3-5

Exercise 57



Dora: red dragon.

Opponent calls a Chow with 7p and discards 4m. How should we assess the opponent and what tile should we discard?

Answer:

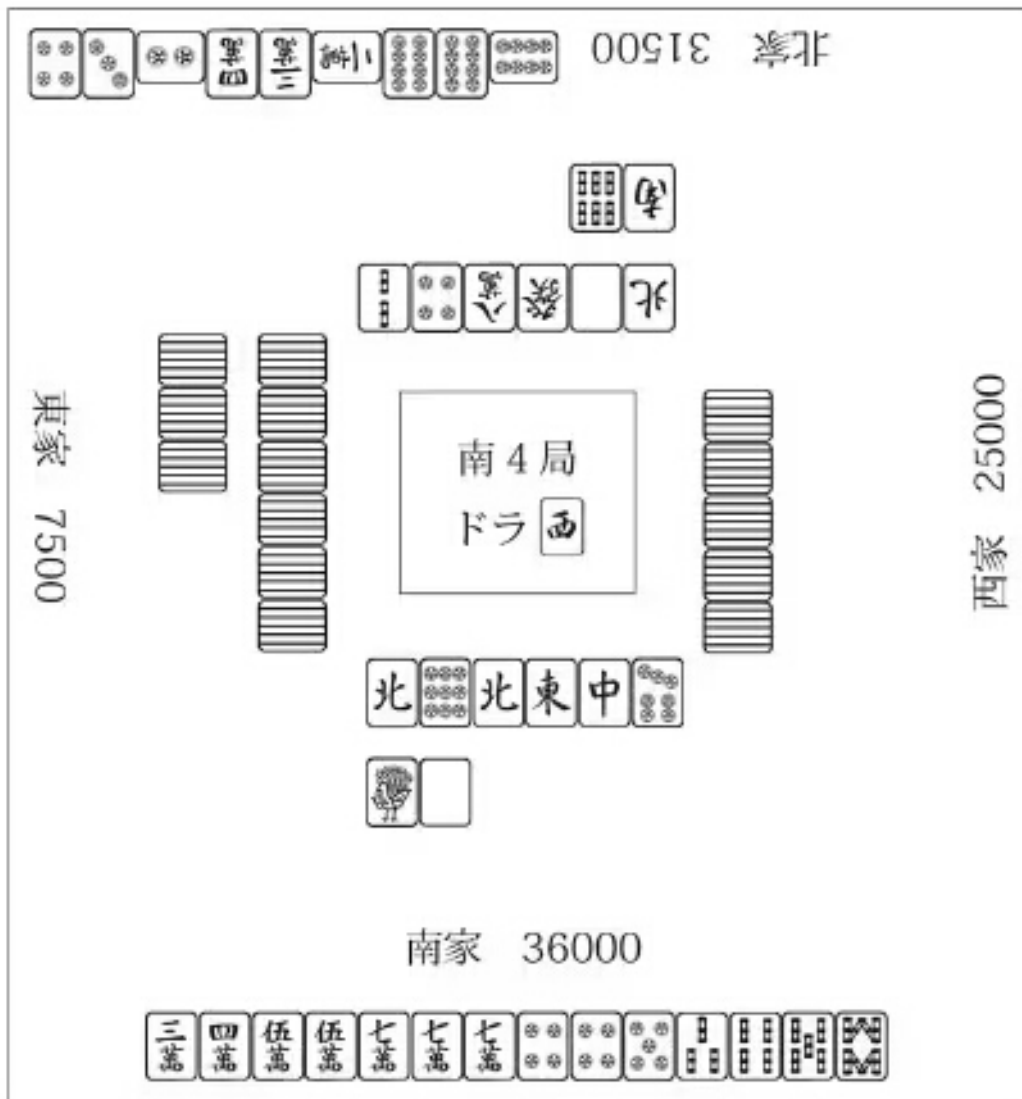
The opponent's calls and discards are the same as in Exercise 42. It was mentioned then that the dora is the red 5 in the middle, plus there are visible two red fives, so there's no need to worry too much.

This aspect hasn't changed in this exercise, but it has turned into an all-last situation. Mahjong is a game about competing for favorable positions, so the point situation is very important. When you can read the opponent's scoring potential, it's necessary to consider the point situation.

Although the opponent here is likely discarding small tiles, giving a win to the dealer will continue the dealer's streak, even if it's just 1500 points, it will also reduce the chances for the other players to reverse the game.

One's own hand still holds the potential for a 'one-way wait' with foolish shapes, so it's advisable to withhold the dangerous 2m and opt for a roundabout approach by discarding 89s.



Exercise 58




Dora: West

Opponent calls a Pong with 8p and discards 6s. Based on the point situation and reading the opponent's discards, what tile should we discard, and what strategy should we adopt?

Answer:

Organizing the point situation reveals that we cannot allow the opponent to score a Yakuman or be Tsumo'd. So, what tiles does the opponent need to get a Mangan? Firstly, with the dora being West, it can only be a three-color Mangan. In such a case, the tile the opponent needs to win is one of the 234s . In a closed hand situation, two red fives are required for the all inside mangan, but since the red 5  can't be used, it means they must have two red dora. With only four tiles in hand and needing two red dora, the wait must be around the red dora's surroundings, between 3-7.

In other words, except for 34567m, 34567s, 234567s , if the opponent discards even if it's one of these tiles, it won't meet the conditions for a Mangan. It's perfectly fine to discard the extra 8s in your hand right now, even if you discard it, you can still confirm your position. Instead, it's better if the opponent wins quickly, so discard 8s to maximize your hand's potential.

In an all-last situation, it's not important to consider which tiles might be winning hands, but rather to consider "which tile, if won, would meet the opponent's conditions."

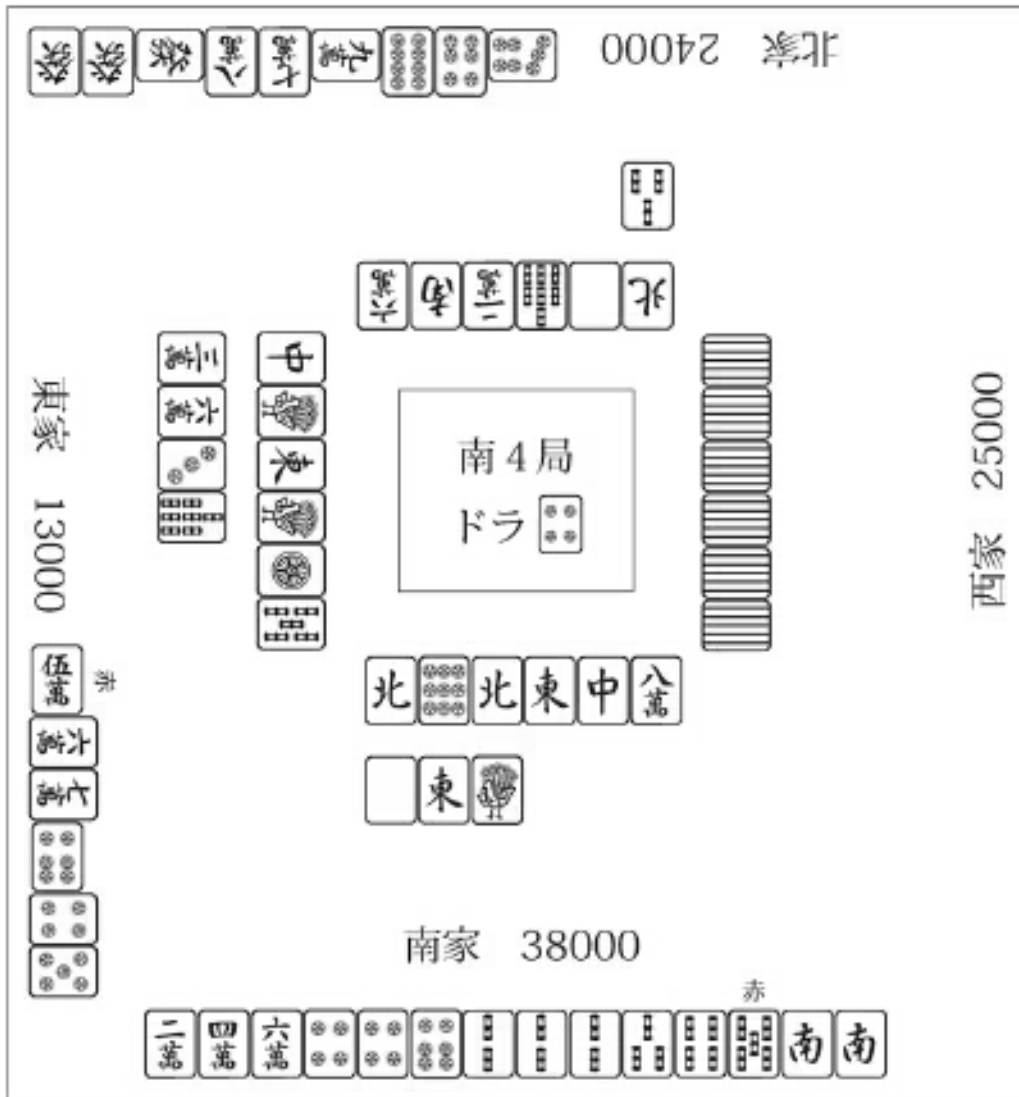
Answer:

The opponent is likely competing for second place, probably having only 2000 points, so it wouldn't be a big issue if we discard a tile and the opponent wins. However, if they manage to get a Mangan, it could result in a reversal.

In other words, we should discard a tile that doesn't lead to a Mangan. The answer is 5p.

The opponent's hand is likely to be all simples. To achieve a Mangan, they would need two more dora in their hand, and the only remaining unseen dora are red 5p and 5m. Therefore, we should avoid discarding a tile that would enable the opponent to form a combination with these two tiles. If the opponent had both red 5p and 5m, the only shape that would discard 5p would be either 0p055m or 05p05m. The likelihood of a pair is higher, but would the opponent have discarded 6m the turn before in such a case? Usually, they would listen to both sides. On the other hand, 6p or 7p would naturally form the head for 05m.

Exercise 60



Dora: 4p

Opponent calls a Chow with 7p and discards 3s. Subsequently, the red 5m discarded by the player before is taken by the player across who discards 7s. Considering the discards of these two players, what tile should we discard to maximize our winning chances?

Answer:

The point situation is the same as in the previous exercise. Not allowing the opponent to achieve a Mangan is the priority. Conversely, what we can't accept the most is dealing into the hand of the player with two open sets, so in the current situation, we should aim to discard a tile that doesn't lead to a Mangan but is also able to win off the dealer's discard, actively sending a message to the opponent.

In this context, the primary concern is the opponent's potential Mangan hand with three dora. With the red 5m and 5s visible, the only potential waits are around the 4406p.

On the other hand, from the perspective across the table, it's more practical to aim for a self-drawn win of 1000 points or a dealer win of 2000 points rather than forcefully pursuing a grand slam. Therefore, under normal circumstances of playing tiles, the most dangerous situation still lies around the last 3s tile discarded after eating.

Here, you can pretty much determine that the opponent has a sequence (likely not a double pung, nor a single tile waiting), and you hold a concealed triplet of 2s. I think if the opponent is indeed waiting for the 25s, and because you didn't break apart your concealed triplet, allowing the dealer to continue their winning streak, it can only be termed as "your own mistake," rather than a matter of outcome.

3.6 Column 3

Is Watching Three-player Mahjong Suitable?

I have uploaded most of the major mahjong tactical discussions to YouTube so far. I am very grateful that the number of subscribers to my channel was about sixty thousand when I wrote the original manuscript of this book, which can be considered as reaching the level of being able to say “I make a living from mahjong.”

The next content I plan to add is match videos. Starting from Mondo TV and Abema TV, broadcasts of mahjong matches have gradually become well-known, but there are hardly any channels on YouTube dedicated to such content. “That’s my target!” I think so.

Continuing to think about it, the question arises, “Is three-player mahjong suitable for broadcasting matches?”

Firstly, three-player mahjong has high-scoring hands, and big hands are everywhere. Not only are there many doras, but also fewer types of tiles, making hands like All Honors or All Terminals and Little Four Winds, which are rare in four-player mahjong, much more common.

The videos with the highest number of views on YouTube are mostly Yakuman videos. It’s understandable that, compared to people who say “I want to learn tactical theory!”, there are more people who get excited when they see Yakuman and think “That’s amazing!”

For these casual players, the gameplay of three-player mahjong, where big hands are exchanged frequently, is more suitable.

Moreover, as mentioned earlier, the gameplay where “reading the opponent becomes more important” is also very suitable for video content. For example, in three-player mahjong, !



With a hand like this, based on reading the opponent’s discards, a scene where discarding 6p leads to a potential wait on a pair is likely to occur (the theories of three-player mahjong are not as clear-cut as those of four-player mahjong, this is just my opinion...).

YouTube videos are typically edited and reposted afterwards. Why choose a pair wait with fewer tiles? It can be based on reading the opponent’s discards, combined with commentary from actual players during gameplay. With such in-depth tile reading commentary, I believe even hardcore mahjong enthusiasts would be very interested.

Furthermore, videos themselves are easier to watch. Programs like the M League have very high-quality footage, but some beginners may feel overwhelmed by the constant discarding of tiles from all four players.

To address this dissatisfaction, some programs display the tiles of all four players, but each player’s tiles are shown in a small size, making it difficult to see.

This is where three-player mahjong comes in. With one less player, there is less information to process. Not only is it easier for beginners to understand, but the layout of the screen is also more straightforward. Additionally, a wide-angle camera can be placed in the empty seat, allowing viewers to see the facial expressions of all three players, a feature that four-player mahjong cannot achieve.

Lastly, there’s the issue of game length. YouTube videos typically revolve around entertainment, with lengths averaging around ten minutes. Almost nobody would watch an hour-long match video.

Ultimately, the trend in modern content is towards shorter durations. YouTube videos are typically around ten minutes long, and even TikTok videos are only a minute long.

With such a wealth of content available on the internet, there's no shortage of ways to spend one's time. Content creators are competing for users' time, leading to a preference for shorter content that can be consumed more quickly. For the younger generation raised on online games where a single game lasts only ten minutes, there may be some resistance to mahjong games lasting over thirty minutes.

For three skilled players, a han-chan game of three-player mahjong typically ends in about twenty minutes. From the perspective of creating videos, it's not difficult to compress the game and editing down to fifteen minutes or less.

In summary, I believe that match videos of three-player mahjong may become popular in the future. To make an exaggerated statement, "I cannot assert that the number of competitive players in three-player mahjong will not exceed that of four-player mahjong in ten years." This is my evaluation of the game of three-player mahjong.

I think it would be fantastic if this column could pique your interest in three-player mahjong.

4 Chapter 4: Complex Tile Reading and Comprehensive Problems

4.1 Chapter 4-1

Key Point 1: Remember the Pair Wait Shapes

The method of forming two tile groups by calling a tile to complete the sequence, like using 4567p to call 6p for two tile groups, is called “joint wait”. There are several basic shapes of joint waits, so those who are good at memorizing should remember them all. Those who are not good at it need more practice to be able to spot them in real games.

Especially after the second set of tiles is exposed, when the called tiles and the discarded tiles are of the same suit, or when an unnatural tile is discarded, you should be alert to the possibility of a pair wait.

Unnatural tiles, such as calling 45p to complete a sequence with 6p and then discarding 2p, are rare after the middle game. Therefore, you should think, “There’s still one set of tiles missing in the suits,” and use this as the basis for reasoning.

Specific shapes will be explained in later questions.

Key Point 2: Recognizing the Change of Wait

After noticing the opponent’s speed, sometimes you may encounter a situation where a player who seems to be already waiting suddenly calls a tile again.

Of course, it could be a mistake in reading the opponent’s speed, but in cases where the opponent’s call is very unnatural, it may also be a “call to change the wait while waiting.”

Pair waits are also a common form of this type of change in wait.

Understanding the opponent’s possible “calling while waiting” behavior and being able to read out their waiting tiles is indeed a highly effective skill.

Key Point 3: Reading Shifts

Although the main focus of this book is to set important discards as “tiles discarded just after a call,” suppressing the amount of information available and making it easier to learn tile reading theory, there is also a theory that cannot be used without looking at tiles discarded after a call. That theory is reading shifts.

A shift refers to the act of drawing a tile, such as drawing 4p and then discarding 1p. Being able to read shifts can tell you that the opponent holds a sequence of 234p, which is quite useful.

However, shifts only occur when “drawing into 4p.” Tiles discarded just after a call are unlikely to be part of a shift.

Therefore, being able to clearly see the tiles drawn is a prerequisite for this theory. To better encourage yourself to remember the tiles drawn, please remember “you can read tiles this way”.

Key Point 4: Overly Specific Tile Reading

In this chapter, tile reading involving specific conditions such as “reading out the opponent’s foolish wait” or “reading out the opponent’s concealed triplet of yakuhai tiles” is also discussed.

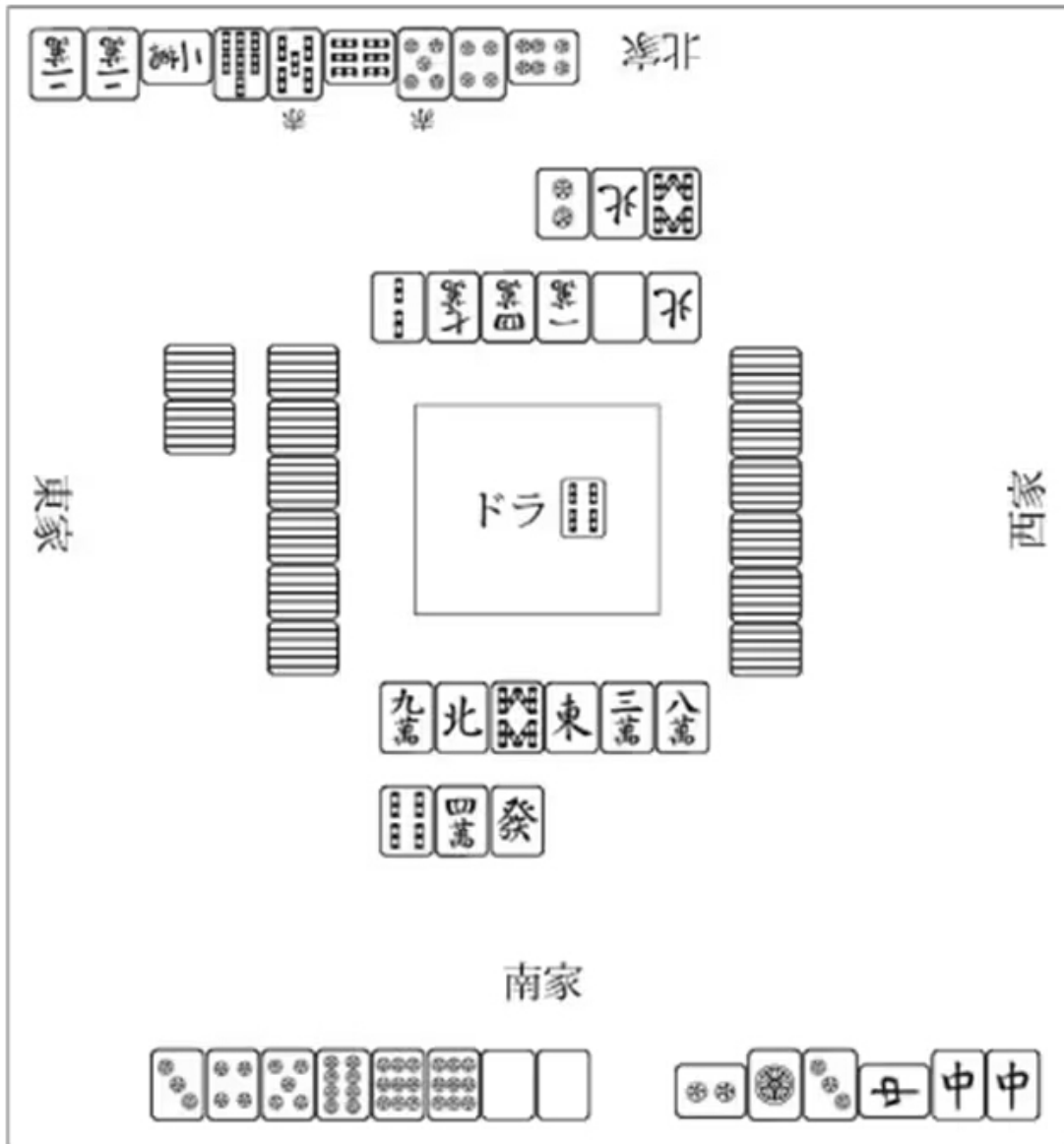
These readings require specific discards and exposures to be read out, and are not encountered frequently in actual gameplay.

However, as a fundamental theory of tile reading, the idea is to “retract the exposed and discarded tiles back

into the hand (backtrack), and find inconsistencies'. As a practice, you can ask yourself "why can this tile reading be established" and strive to explain it in your own words, truly understanding the reasons behind it. I believe that this approach can definitely improve your ability to read discards comprehensively

4.2 Chapter 4-2

Exercise 61



Dora: 4s

Opponent calls chii with 6p and discards 2p. What can this call indicate, and what tile should you discard?

Answer:

Calling 6p with 40p and discarding 2p indicates that the opponent holds 240p. While this may be acceptable in the early game, it's unlikely to hold onto the 240p shape in the mid-game when the hand is more developed. This feels unusual, so you should consider the possibility of a pair wait.

Considering shapes that can extend from 240p, there cannot be a pair on the 2p side (can we say the left side?). So, it must be on the outer side (right side) of 0p, forming the shapes 24067p. Calling 40p and holding 67p in hand, 58p becomes dangerous.

Your hand is waiting on the pair wait of 9p and white dragon, with a chance of a mangan. However, the opponent has three exposed sets, indicating they are likely waiting. Furthermore, 8p is their main tile, so it's better to discard 9p.

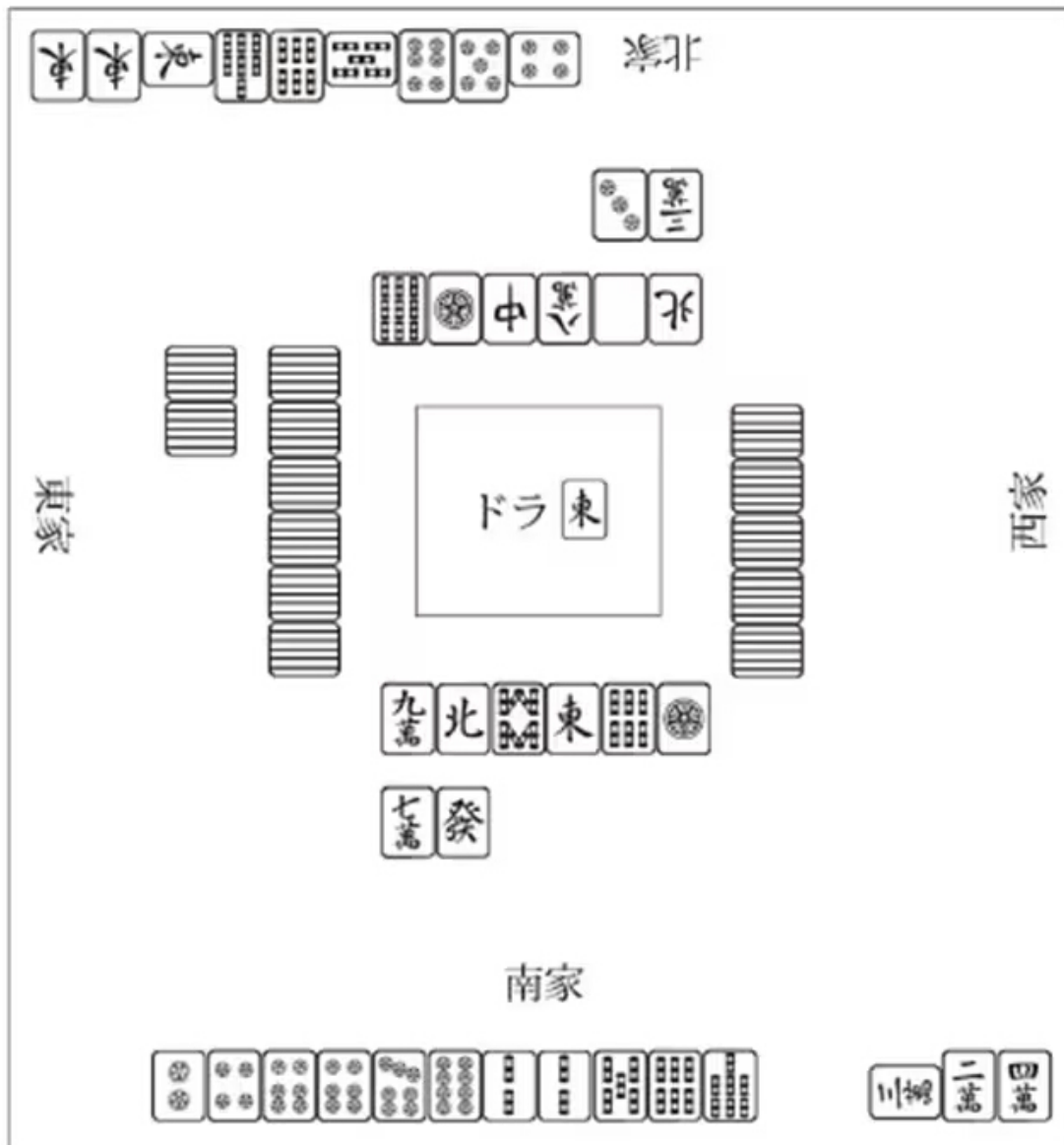
Answer:

In this question, calling 7p with 06p and discarding 3p means the opponent holds 306p. Similar to the previous question, it could be a shape with 30678p on the outer side (right side) of 6p. So, the opponent is likely holding 78p. While 6p seems dangerous...think again. The opponent's hand is likely composed of mostly tiles without ones and nines. Would they intentionally switch their wait from a foolish wait of 4p to a single wait of 69p?

Therefore, this shape is unlikely. What could it be then? A situation where 3p forms a pair wait is when they call 7p with 33406. Holding 34p in hand, they are waiting on 25p. It's quite natural for them to switch their wait using a shift.

Therefore, discarding 6p is quite safe, while 25p is extremely dangerous and should not be discarded.

Exercise 63



Dora: East

Opponent calls chi with 4p and discards 3p. You are waiting on 2p or 6p. Based on the opponent's call, which tile should you discard?

Answer:

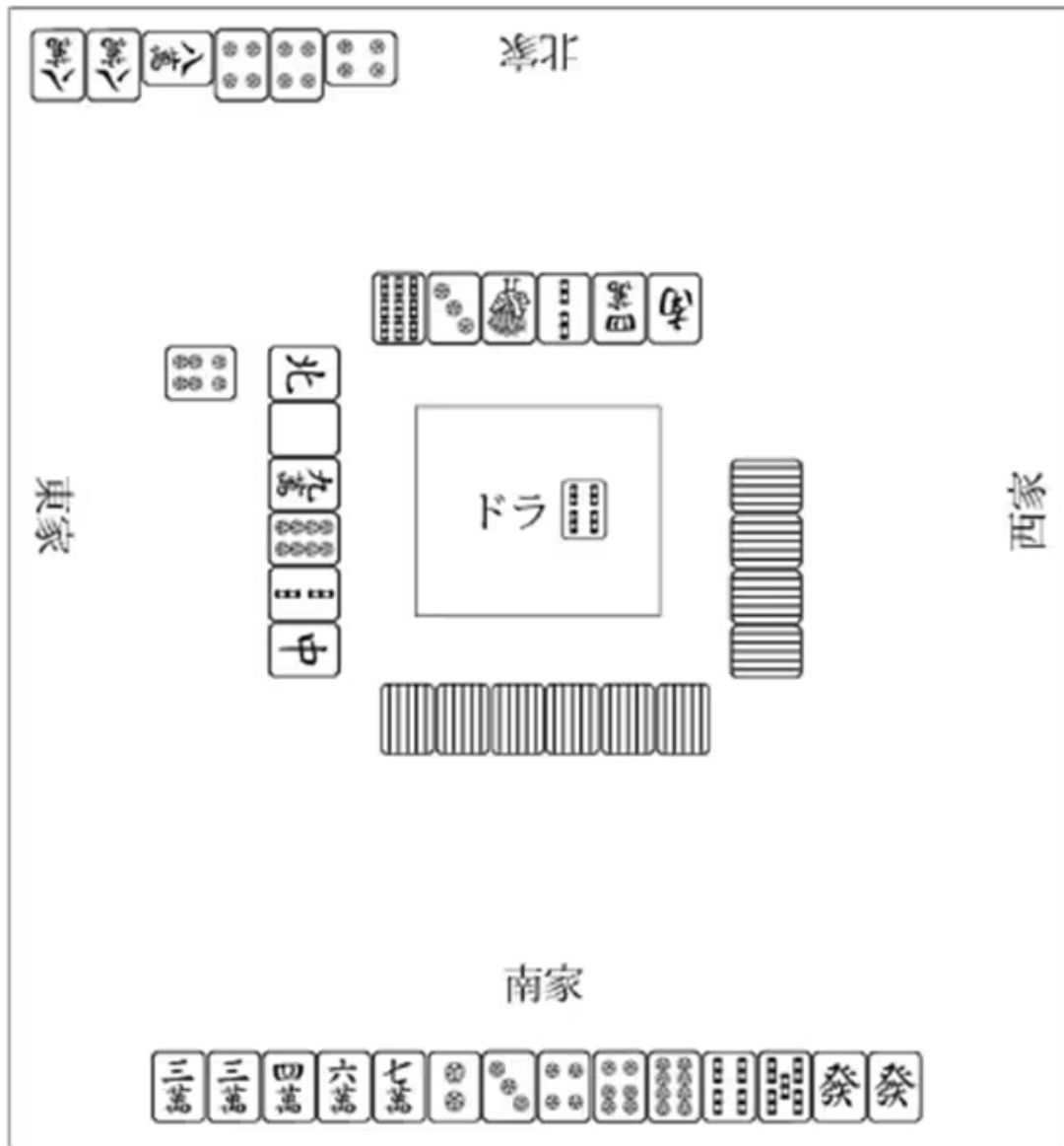
The opponent calls chi with 5p and discards 3p. If they form a sequence on the outer side with 6p, it would be the shape 35678p. After the call, they would hold 78p in hand. Since East is the prevailing wind, 6p becomes a dangerous tile... although one might think so, the shape with 4p has already won, or they might call 35 to form a sequence.

So, the potential shape that might change to a wait is the same as the previous scenario, which is also 33456p. Using 56 to eat 4, waiting for 25p.

Of course, there may be other possibilities besides this shape, but compared to 2p and 6p, 2p is clearly more dangerous. Discard 6p.

There's no apparent difference between 33456 and 35678p just by looking at the exposed and discarded tiles, so you must carefully think through each situation like this every time.

Exercise 64



Dora: 4s

Opponent calls pon with 4p and discards 9s. What aspect should you pay attention to in discarding, and how should you decide on your own hand?

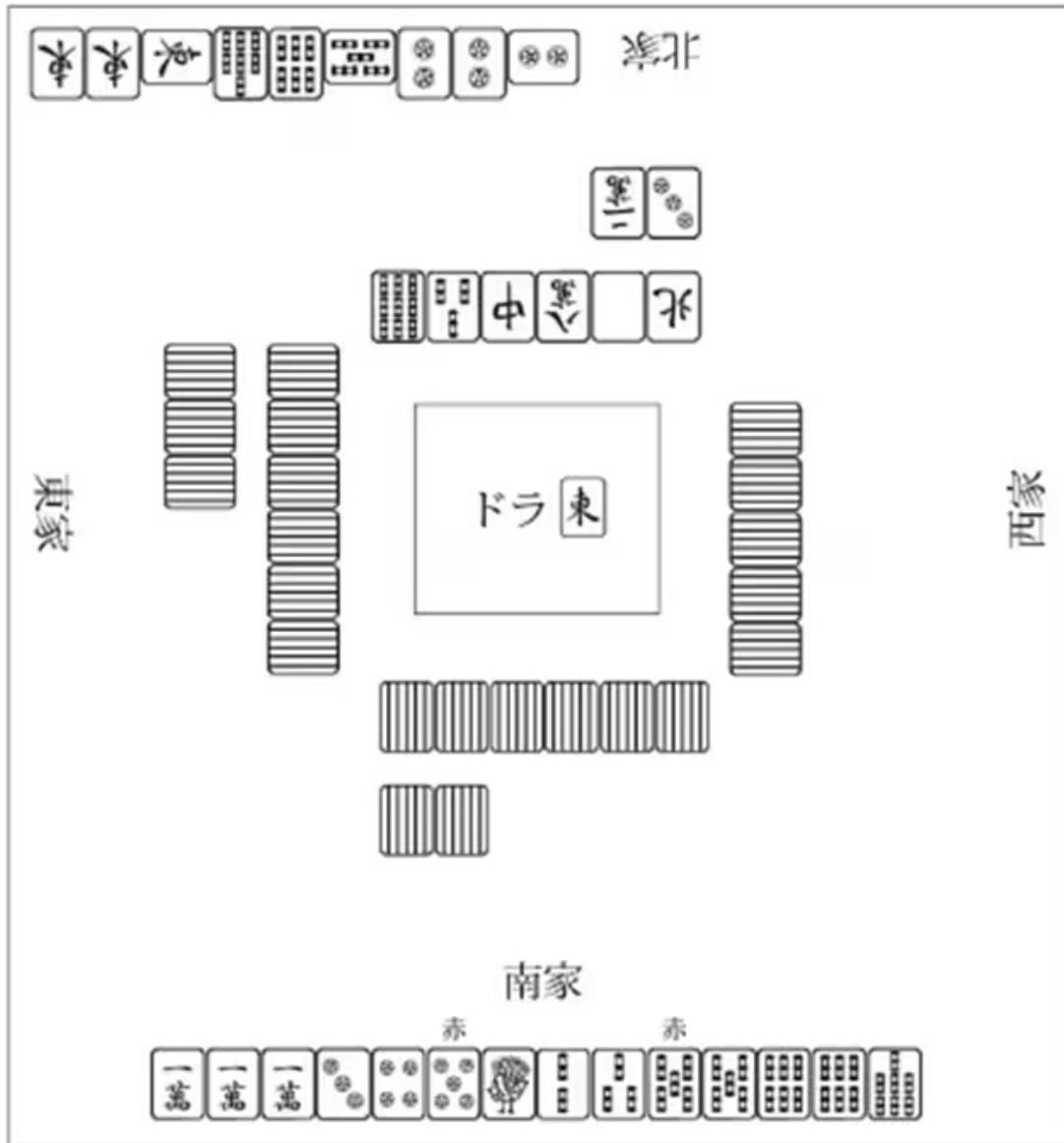
Answer:

Your hand is close to forming a all inside, with a potential discard route involving breaking away from isolated honors. However, pay attention to the opponent's discard of 3p. You have 344p in your hand, but they discarded 3p before calling pon with 4p. This indicates that 344p cannot form a sequence. In other words, from this discard of 3p, it's highly likely that the opponent is committed to a pair wait.

Considering this, letting them call while potentially committing to a dead tile (worst-case scenario, it leads to a direct loss) is unfavorable. On the other hand, the previous player discarded one each of 6p and 8p, and the opponent did not call them. Therefore, these could be considered relatively safe tiles to discard.

Thus, it's better to discard 86p first, aiming for a riichi with a pair wait on honors, making your hand more versatile both offensively and defensively.

Exercise 65



Dora: East

Opponent calls pon with 2p and discards 2m. What aspect should you pay attention to in discarding, and how should you decide on your own hand?

Answer:

In this question, it's also important to note the unnatural aspect of the opponent's discard of 3p before calling pon with 2p.

However, unlike the previous question, the opponent has previously called chi with 5s, clearly ruling out the possibility of a pair wait. Instead of a pair wait, discarding 3p from 223p indicates a potential shift, commonly seen during tile switches.

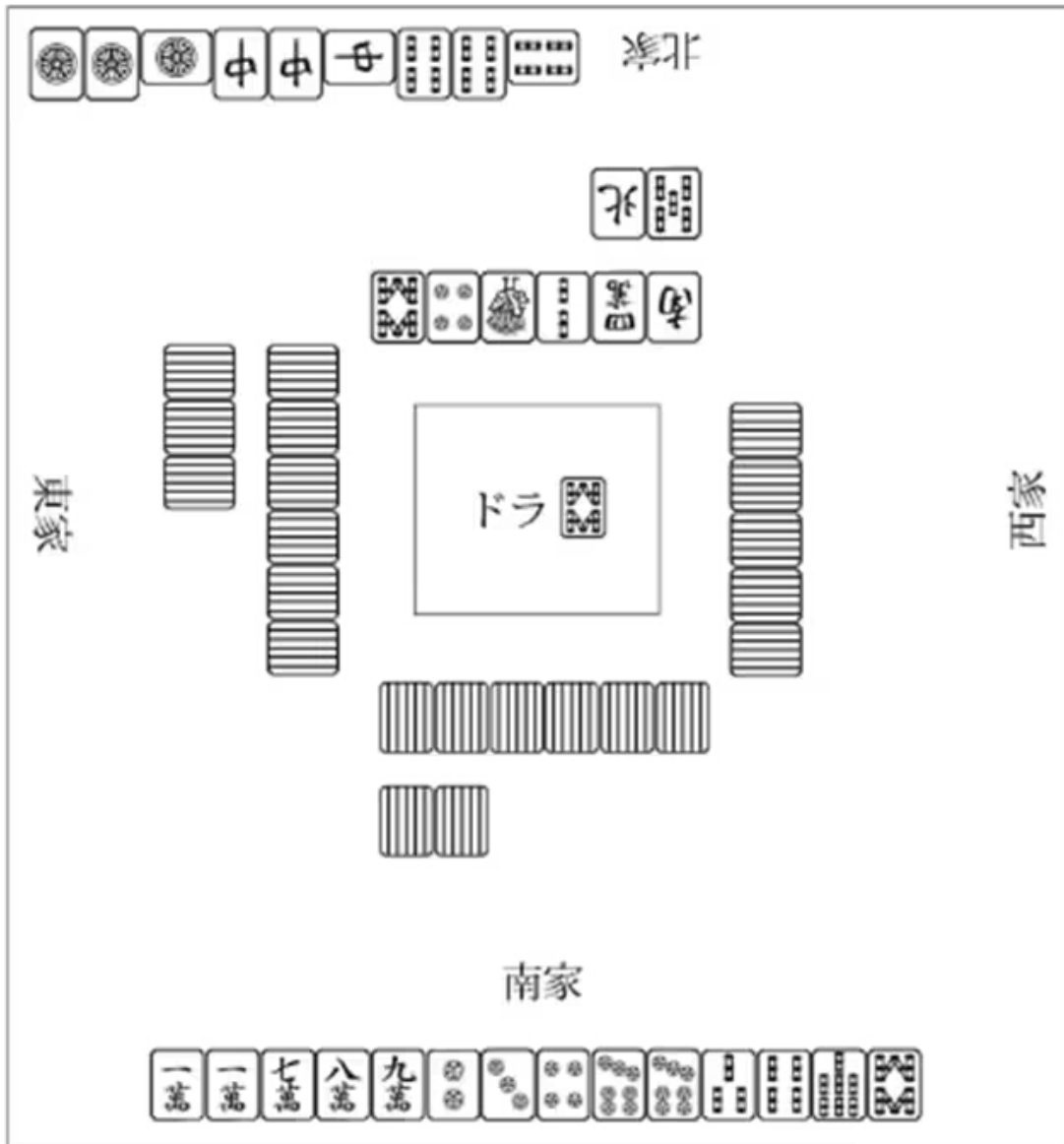


For example, in this shape, discarding 3p indicates a potential switch to wait on 2p later by calling pon with 2p. At this point, if the characters are in a good shape like 23m, there's no need to switch waits, so you should consider shapes like 12m or 24m. In other words, it's highly likely that the opponent is waiting on either 1m or 4m.

If you assume that the opponent couldn't be waiting on 14m because they hadn't called pon with 2m before, you might be mistaken and deal into the shape mentioned above. Therefore, it's better to discard 1m and consider a riichi with a potential wait on 6s.

4.3 Chapter 4-3

Exercise 66



Dora: 8s

Opponent calls pon with 1p and discards 4m, then calls pon with red dragon and discards 2s, and finally calls pon with 4s and discards North. What aspect should you pay attention to in discarding, and how should you decide on your own hand?

Answer:

The opponent called three sets, and before calling pon with 4s, they discarded 5s. It's highly likely they are aiming for a double pong.

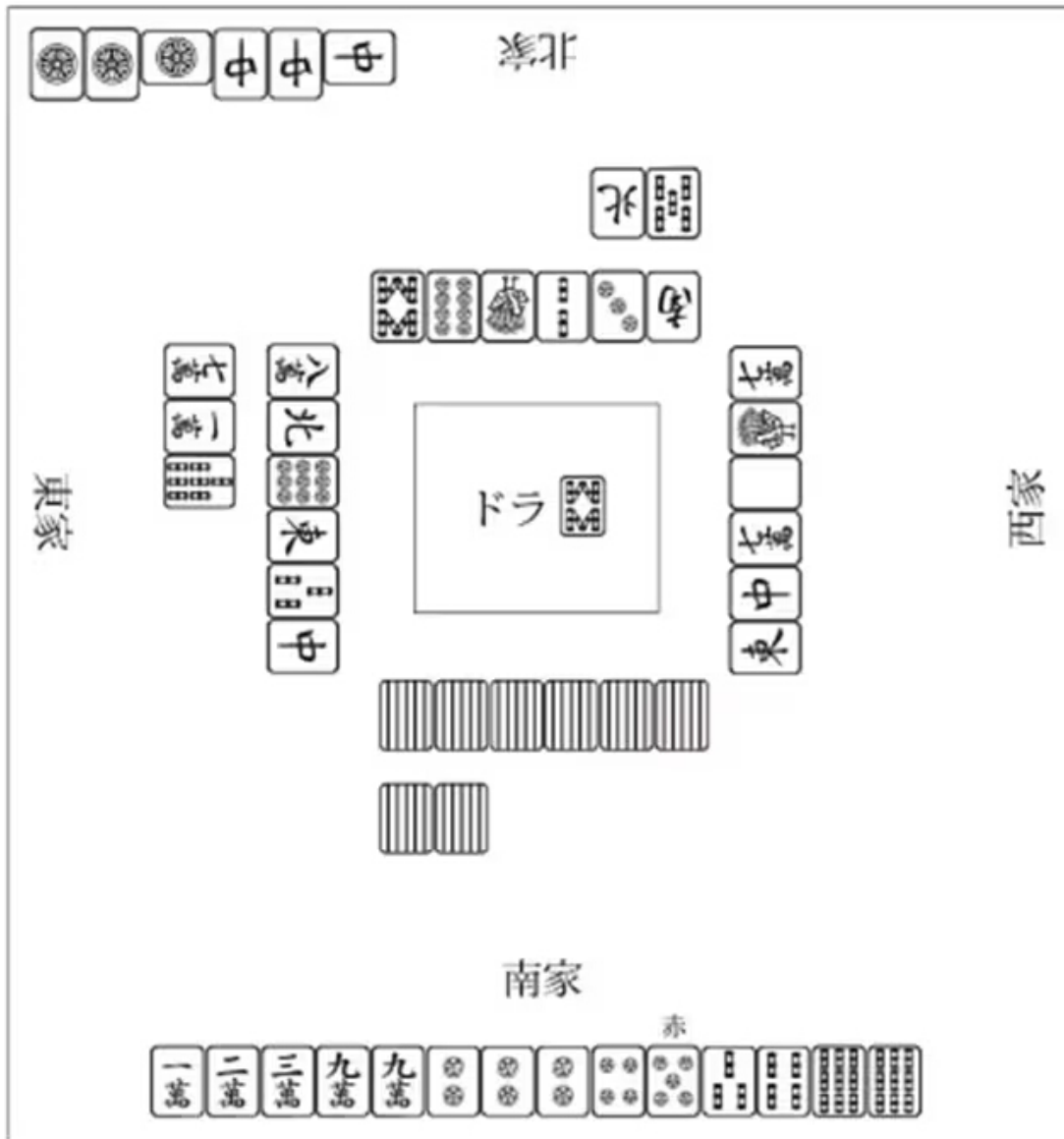
If you decide not to fold and need to consider which one is safer between 1m and 7p. Both are waiting tiles, and there's no difference in tile efficiency. The key point here is that the opponent likely decided to aim for a all triplets quite early on. So, consider, "What kind of hand would make someone choose a pair wait?"



If you look at only the pair part of the hand, which hand would you choose to aim for a pair wait? Presumably, the lower hand with more terminals would lean towards aiming for a pair wait.

Of course, this reading isn't entirely reliable, and we can't confidently say "7p is safe!" based on this alone. However, if you had to choose one, 7p would be slightly better.

Exercise 67



Dora: 8s

It seems the opponent is aiming for a pair wait. Considering the game situation and the safety of the discard, choose which tile to discard.

Answer:

Both 9m and 9s are waiting tiles. Think about the “likelihood of the tile being held by the player to your left or right.” If the tile is more likely held by your neighbors, then the opponent’s likelihood of having a pair decreases, making it safer for you (as the player aiming for a pair).

Looking at the game situation, the upper and lower players have discarded the upper part of the characters early on, and 7m is visible three times, making it unlikely that 9m will be used. The likelihood of them holding 9m is low.

On the other hand, 9s, the upper segment of the bamboo suit, is not only scarce on the board but is also near the dora, making it more likely that your neighbors are holding onto them.

Therefore, it’s safer to discard 9s.

The warning “danger near the dora!” is directed towards players with sequences. However, the tiles considered safe based on game situation are even riskier when facing opponents aiming for a pair wait.

Answer:

In this question, the key point is that the opponent called pon with 233s. If 4s would lead to a pair wait, then the opponent likely had 2334s at that time.

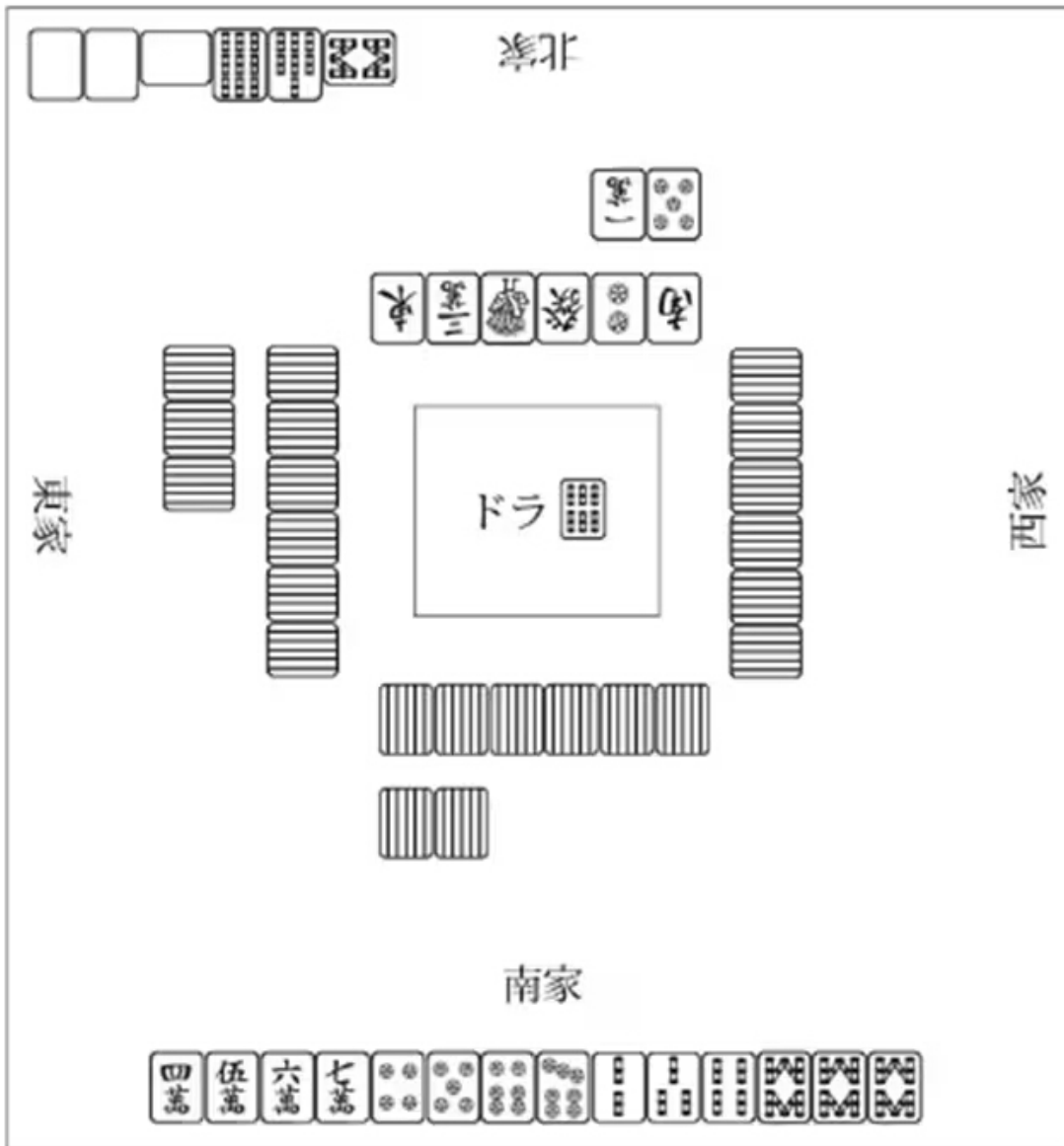


Of course, it's not entirely impossible, but between these two tile shapes, it's clear that the lower one would be more inclined to call pon with 3s.

Since 6s is the dora and cannot be discarded, it's obvious that discarding 4s for the safest wait while waiting on 3s is the best option.

Just like the above, considering "what would the shape of the hand be if a certain tile would result in a win", and combining it with the opponent's discards, whether there are any unnatural aspects, this line of thinking is very important.

Exercise 69



Dora: 6s

The opponent eats 8s and discards 5p, then discards 1m from their hand. What can we deduce from this discarded 1m?

Answer:

Previously, this book has tried to introduce the theory of “reading tiles based only on the tiles immediately discarded after a call”. However, if we can also remember the tiles discarded after a draw, we can naturally achieve a higher precision in tile reading.

Furthermore, there is information that cannot be obtained without remembering the tiles discarded after a draw, and this exercise is such a case. In conclusion, 47m is relatively safe, while 47p is relatively dangerous, so it's appropriate to discard 4m for a riichi.

The reason lies in the discarded 1m from the hand. It's unnatural to discard 1m after having discarded 3m. In this situation, it's common to have originally held 123m, then drawn 4m and discarded the previously held 1m, which is called a “shift”. With this shape, having 234m in hand, drawing 56m would lead to a ready hand. Additionally, the last discard was 5p after an eat, making the surroundings dangerous.

Answer:

The difference between discarding 1m after a call and the previous exercise lies in the fact that it's impossible for it to be a shift where 4m is drawn and discarded.

Having discarded 3m but keeping 1m suggests it's not a shift, but more likely an unseen set of 1m.



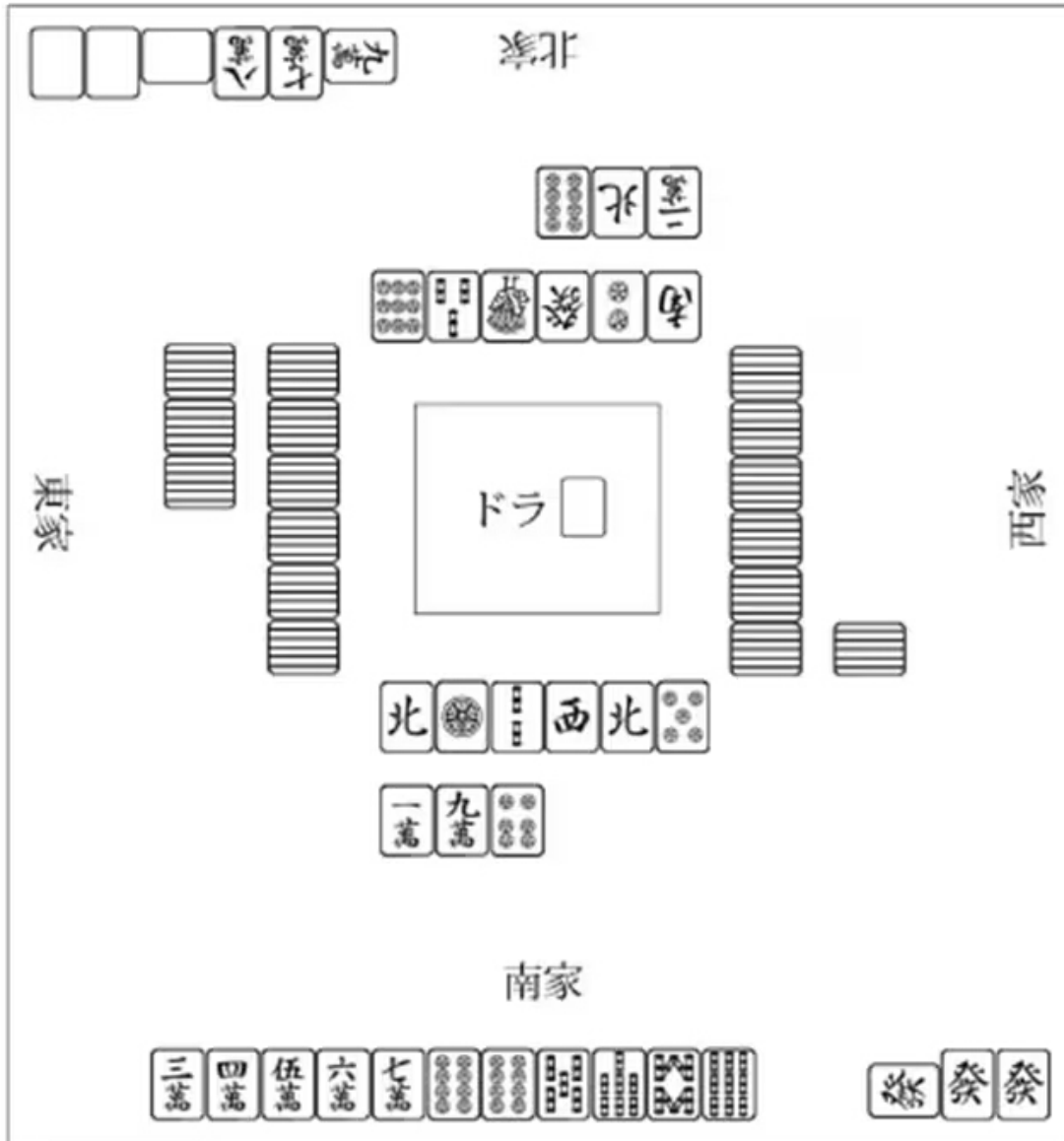
Eating 8s and discarding 1m leads to the shape of waiting for 47m. Although it's unclear what the waiting part looks like, 47m seems to be a dangerous shape based on the composition of the tiles.

On the other hand, if you have 556p in hand, there's no need to break up the unseen set of 1m. Discarding 6p for the pair would be odd in terms of tile sequence.

Therefore, the safety level of 47m and 47p is reversed. It's better to discard 4p here (7p might be risky due to its potential to complete "Three Colors" or Full Outside).

4.4 Chapter 4-4

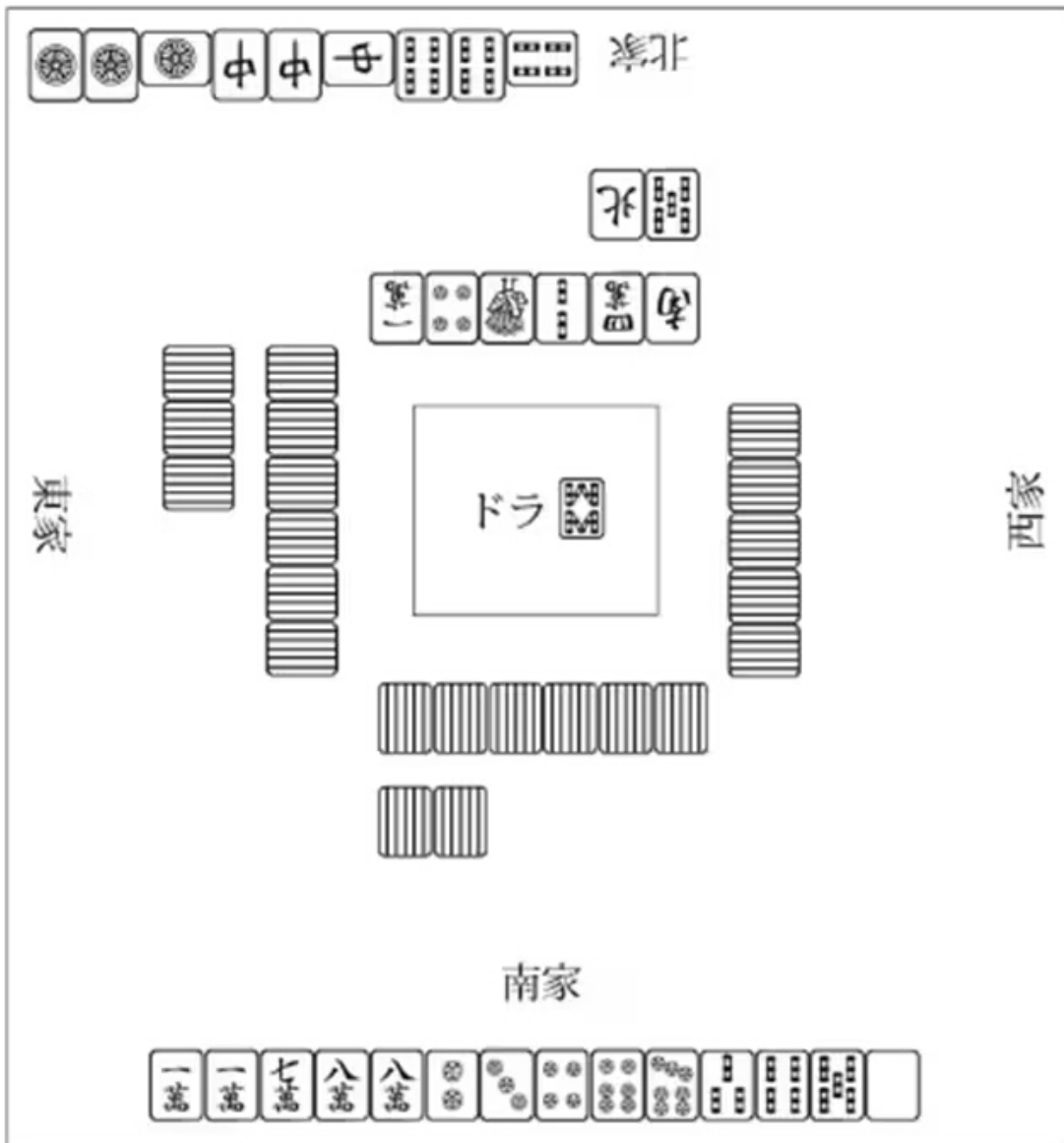
Exercise 71



Dora: White dragon

The opponent eats 9m and discards 8p. You are tenpai with a hand worth 1000 points. Should you push for this 5s?

Exercise 72



Dora: 8s

A question about offense and defense judgment. The opponent calls pon on 4s and discards north. Both 8m and white are live tiles, and the opponent seems to be waiting for a triplet. Should you push or play defensively?

Answer:

Let's compare the offensive and defensive aspects of going for a riichi. The average points for a riichi hand are around 5000-6000 points, so if white gets hit, it's confirmed to be worth mangan or higher. Conversely, unlike with riichi, the opponent may "seem like they haven't completed their hand yet," although it's difficult to expect that after three sets of calling tiles. Therefore, in simple terms, the opponent poses a threat level equivalent to or higher than a riichi (making it difficult to take an offensive stance).

Next, consider the danger level of white. For a riichi hand, even if honor tiles are live tiles, they won't be too dangerous, but for a hand waiting for a triplet, the danger level of honor tiles increases. Of course, the danger level of honor tiles waiting for a triplet will change depending on the number of other live tiles, but riichi feels like just playing a "non-specific, muscle-less" tile.

Your hand is completely one-away from tenpai with no dora. It's the 9th turn, and going for a riichi doesn't make sense with two non-specific tiles. Therefore, it's better to defensively play 1m and wait and see.

Answer:

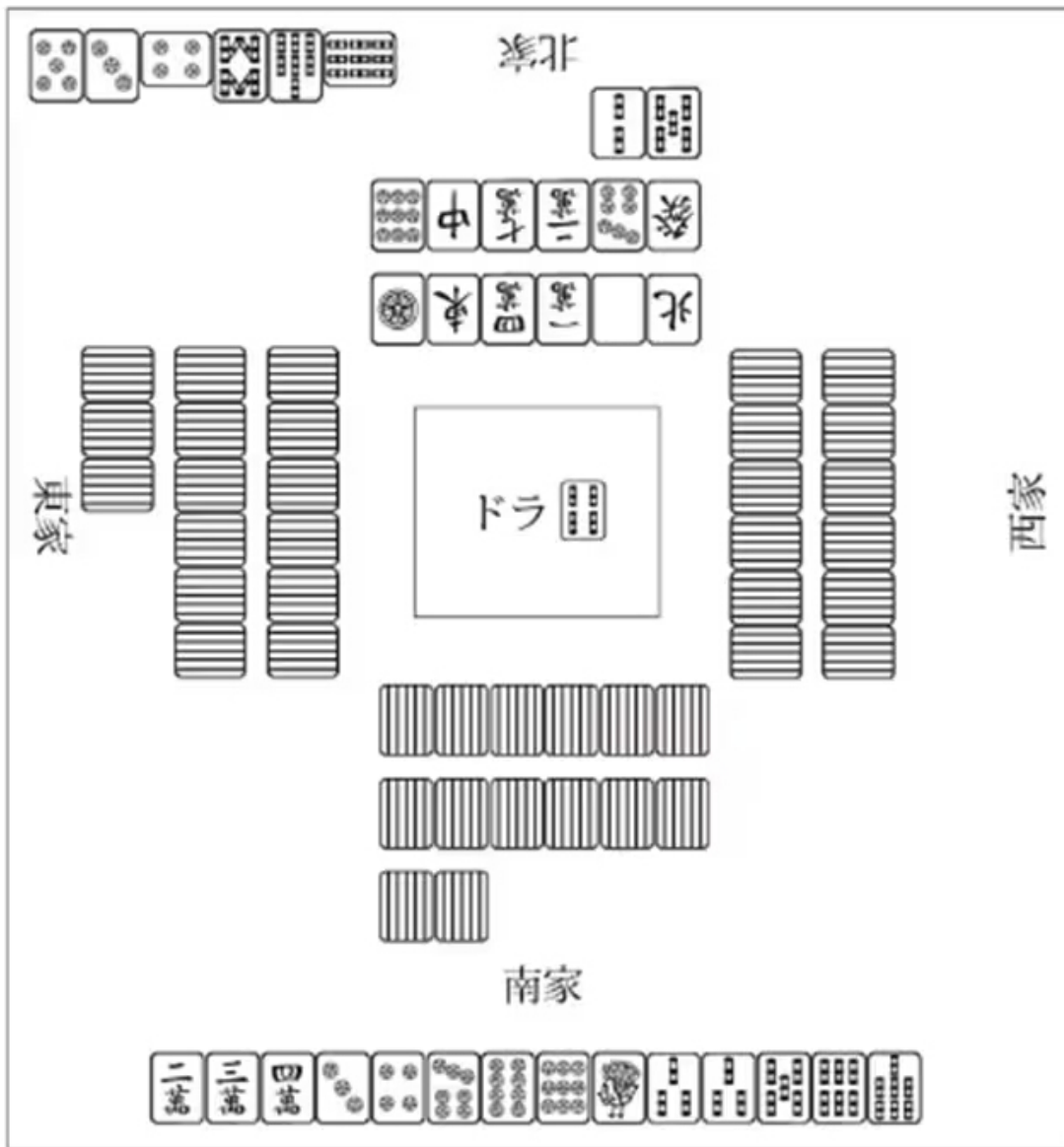
Similar to previous explanations, calling pon on 6p and discarding 2p likely indicates a continuation of the 24067 wait shape.

However, since this is mahjong, it could be a completely different shape. The important thing is to understand “on the basis of knowing that 8p is very dangerous, what kind of hand is worth taking a risk for.”

In cases like this exercise, “when you can accurately read the shape, don’t discard until you’re ready,” so you should be able to make high-precision offense and defense judgments in most situations.

Instead of immediately aiming for the 8p tile, let’s start with a 7m tile. If we draw the tile we need, then we can assess whether it’s better to aim for the 8p tile based on the current round and situation.

Exercise 74



Dora: 4s

The opponent eats 9s and discards 2s. You are tenpai with a hand waiting on 1s. Consider the opponent's potential yaku and waiting tiles, then decide whether to discard 1s or not.

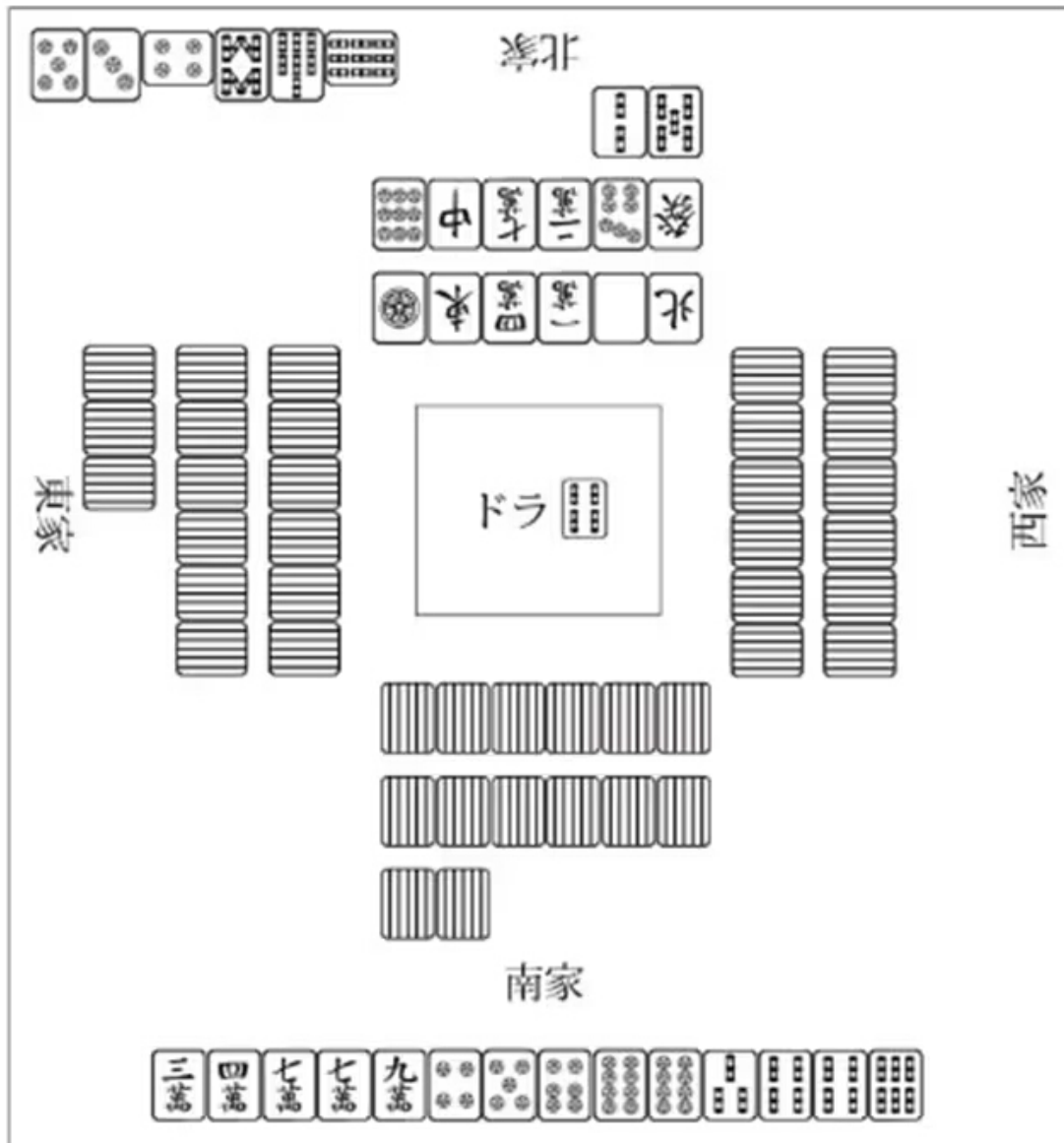
Answer:

From a standard reading perspective, when the opponent discards their third tile after calling, the probability of them being tenpai is high. Their hand doesn't seem to have the yaku of all simples, and all their yakuhai tiles are visible, suggesting they might be aiming for a three-color or a full straight wait.

In this context, 1s appears to be quite dangerous. However, consider the opponent's potential score... Generally, it's like this, but there's one more thing to consider after the opponent's third discard. That is, "the opponent might be in a form of tenpai." Basically, after the third discard, even if they don't have a yaku, they might declare a chi to improve their hand. Although it's unclear which situation the opponent is in, there's a reason to believe that "the possibility of being in a form of tenpai reduces the likelihood of discarding a winning tile," so it's worth pushing ahead.

In this exercise, definitely discard 1s. Based on the discards of the players around you, it's also worth considering "aggressively aiming for live yakuhai tiles" in similar situations.

Exercise 75



Dora: 4s

Similar to the previous exercise, the opponent has just eaten 9s and discarded 2s. Based on your read of the opponent's tiles, think about your strategy for this hand.

Answer:

The opponent's calls could indicate the possibility of them being in a form of tenpai or aiming for a three-color or a full straight wait. It's not a black-and-white situation; ultimately, it's a matter of probability.

In the previous exercise, you were already tenpai, so there was a clear reason for going on the offensive. However, in this case, you're still two tiles away from tenpai, so there's no need to discard tiles with a risk of dealing into the opponent's hand. Furthermore, in this particular turn, it's unlikely for you to win the hand, and the primary goal might be to reach tenpai and aim for a draw.

By not discarding the 9m which could complete a three-color wait or the honor tiles which could complete a half-suit wait, you maintain a shape that can still reach tenpai.



If you're lucky, the 25s could be seen as safe tiles by the players on your left, especially if the dealer hasn't declared tenpai. Although it relies on fortunate circumstances, it's better to aim for this shape, discarding the safe 47m and the relatively safe 3m.

Answer:

With only honor tiles left as yakuhai tiles, opponents generally prefer not to discard them.

However, if the opponent's hand shape is correct, in the current situation, it can be said that honor tiles are relatively easy to discard. Hopefully, you notice that the opponent discarded 5m first, indicating that they likely have a sequence. Assuming the opponent is waiting on an honor tile next, there's no reason to keep 3s in hand.



For example, in the shape like the one above, it doesn't make sense to keep 3s if you draw 2s, which wouldn't complete any yaku. Instead, it's better to discard 3s first to form a shape that allows for melding 5m or 1s, which can still complete the yaku. Discarding 5m first indicates the presence of a concealed triplet of honors. This way, even if the opponent advances around 3s, you can still win the hand.

In situations where yakuhai tiles are expected to follow, hand shapes tend to retain pairs. When it becomes clear that the opponent has broken a pair, try to think like in this exercise.

Answer:

The opponent's discards and the state of the game are the same as in the previous exercise. The question lies in the accuracy of tile reading and strategic judgment.

As mentioned earlier, there's a high possibility of a concealed triplet of honors, but it's essential to remember that tile reading in mahjong is uncertain. In this case, assuming that the opponent is already tenpai, discarding an honor tile would seem unnatural, but if the opponent starts calling tiles with a high number of remaining waits, they might still hold a pair of honor tiles. In such a case, discarding an honor tile would likely get melded.

Ultimately, the conclusion is to base decisions on your own hand. In this exercise, you are two tiles away, have two foolish-looking waits and no doras, making it not worth discarding the only live tile. Instead, discard recently acquired tiles like 3s and aim for a safe wait. You can reconsider discarding honor tiles when your hand is more developed.

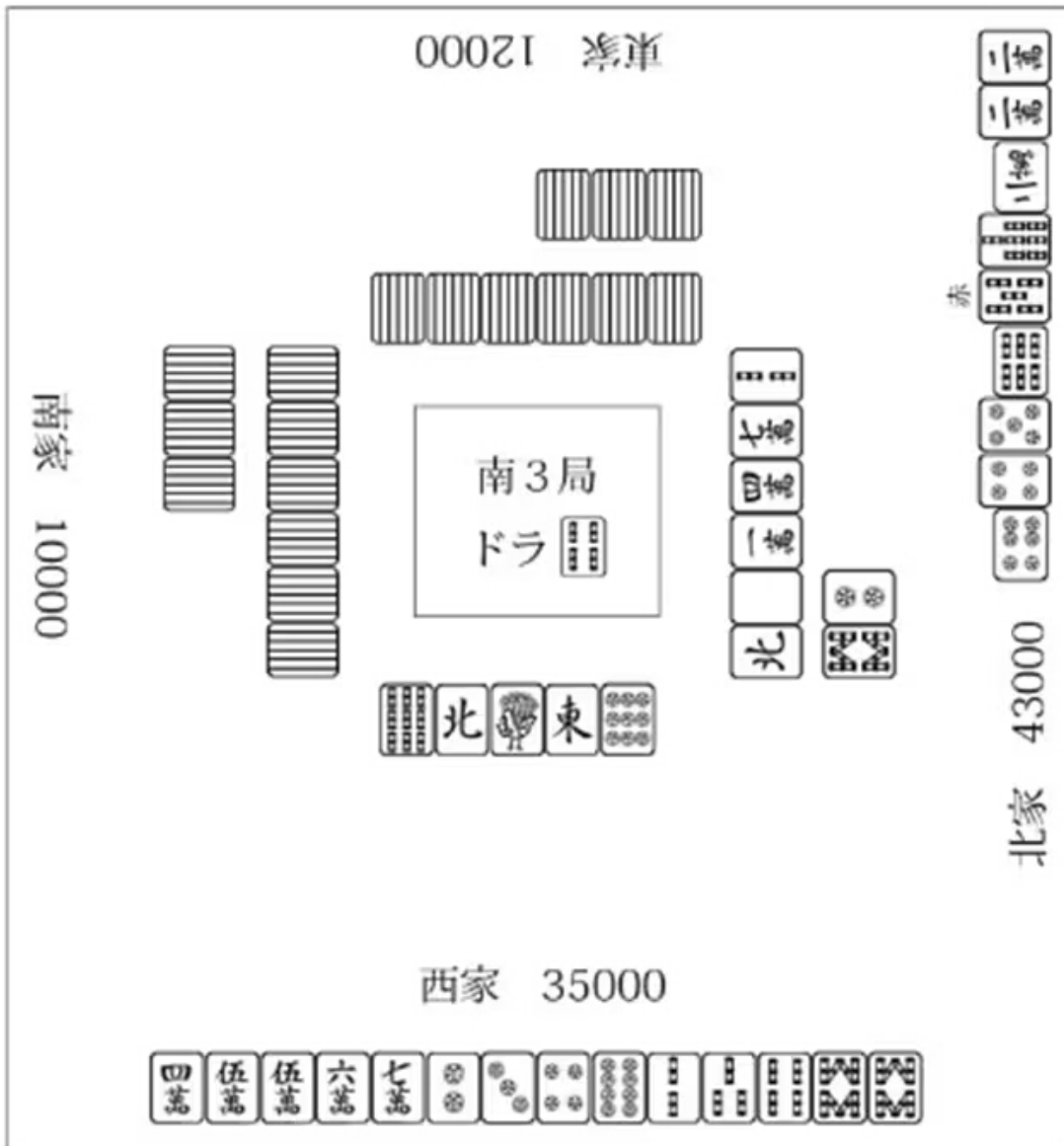
Answer:

Although the point situation has changed, there's no difference in the content of tile reading. Regardless of the opponent's needs, they will always need points... This may be considered a change in circumstances, but since the opponent is an ally, this reason doesn't apply. In other words, there's a high possibility of a concealed triplet of honor tiles.

In this exercise, you are in a favorable point position. Considering the big point difference, the only concern is not dealing into the opponent's hand. Realistically, the only possible reversal route is for the dealer to not continue winning and for you to win either by self-draw or by dealing into the other players. In other words, you cannot let the dealer win the hand.

With this in mind, if dealing into the dealer's hand is absolutely unacceptable, even if they declare a concealed triplet, you must avoid dealing into them. You should consider attacking the opponent with tiles that can potentially form sequences like 4m, while also thinking about supporting the players around you.

Exercise 79



Dora: 4s

The player sitting to your left eats 6p and discards 2p. Considering your hand and the current points situation, should you aim for the 8p discard?

Answer:

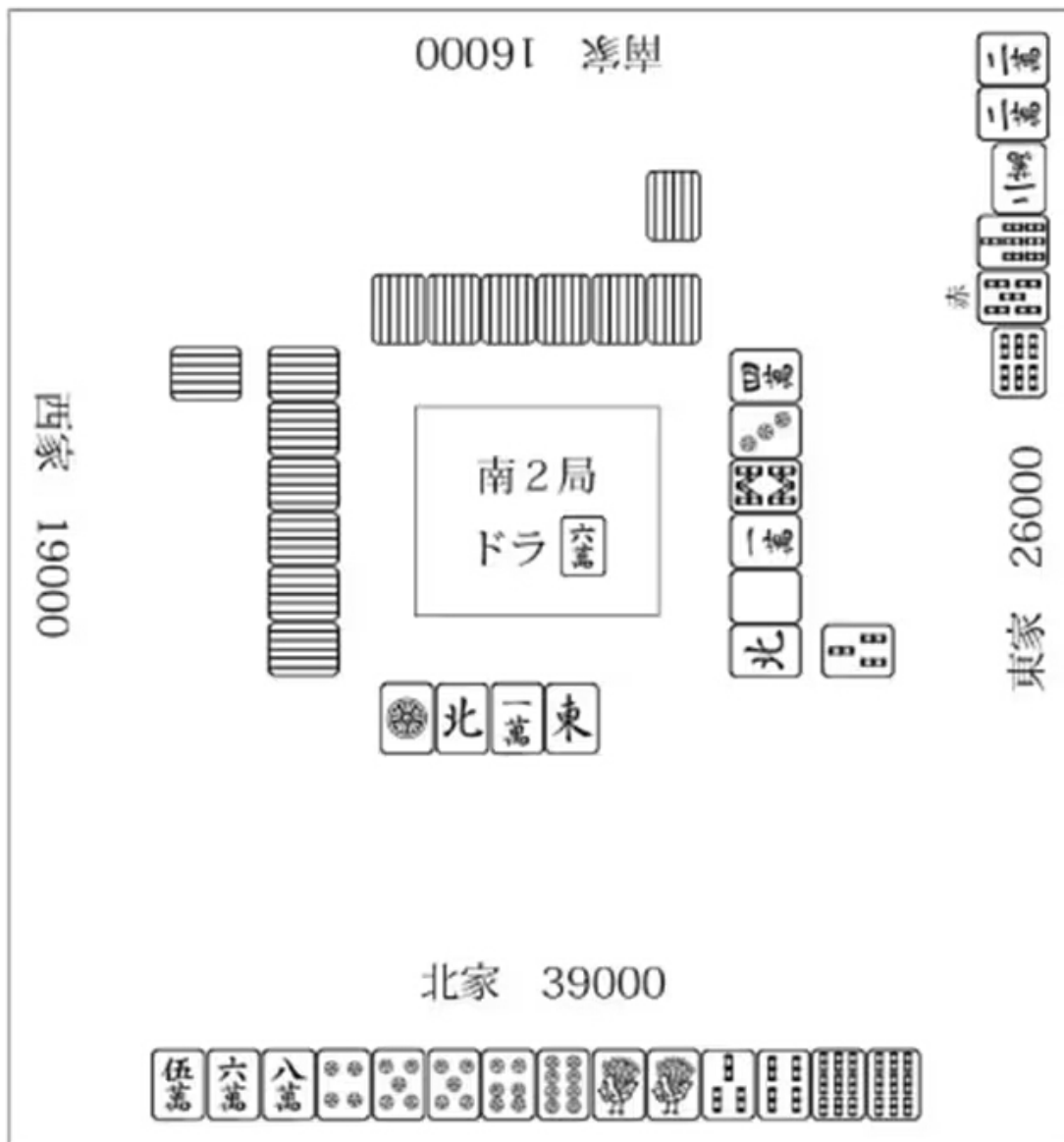
It has been mentioned many times before that 8p is dangerous, but here, you should aim for a riichi with 8p.

In terms of points, you are in a situation where you are competing with the player to your left. If you choose to fold and the player to your left wins, it will be challenging to reverse the point situation during the all last period.

Conversely, even if you win the hand, the situation with the other two players remains the same. Furthermore, if you fold, you allow the player to your right to become the dealer, which can also be advantageous.

Although the probability of dealing into 8p is high, there is a small risk of dealing into it based on your points situation. Therefore, it is favorable for you to attack. In situations like this exercise, where the difference in danger level is eliminated due to differences in the points situation, thinking “Isn’t it stupid to deal into a hand that I clearly read?” and aiming for 8p is a sign of overthinking. When it’s time to attack, even if you deal into a hand that you clearly read, it’s not a big problem.

Exercise 80



Dora: 6m

The player sitting to your left eats 6s and discards 3s. Considering the points situation, what should you discard?

Answer:

The player to your left has just made a chii with the 6s, and the situation hasn't reached the critical point yet. However, considering the points situation, if I can avoid dealing into their hand, my chances of winning a hand are quite high.

More importantly, consider the composition of the player to your right's hand. Judging from the tiles in the discard pile, they likely still have the upper section of their bamboo and characters. Even if the player to your right hasn't reached tenpai yet, if you discard tiles like 8m or 58p, there's a high chance they will call them. Therefore, you should aim to thwart the player to your left by discarding tiles like 1s or 9s that aren't necessary for your hand.

Additionally, if the player opposite or to your left is the dealer and the player to your right has a low score, you can intentionally discard 8m or 58p to assist the attack.

Similar reading of tile discards, especially considering the composition of the opponent's hand, can be used not only to avoid dealing into dangerous hands but also to control the opponent's actions. If you can master this, your chances of maintaining the dealer position after reaching the South round will increase significantly.

5 Afterword

Thank you all for reading this book. I am someone who enjoys abstracting things, so in the process of learning mahjong, I don't often delve into the specifics like "what to discard", but instead gradually strengthen my skills through theoretical study.

As a result, my writing in this book is much the same, with many articles having few specific tile formations and a high level of abstraction.

While I believe I am good at abstracting the theory of mahjong and describing it in words, on the other hand, there are many people who need to look at specific tile formations like "what to discard" in order to think and learn. It's just a matter of personality; I can't say which approach is better.

This time, I intentionally wrote 80 questions on specific "what to discard" scenarios, which is closer to dealing with concrete problems that I haven't dealt with much before. By combining this book with my previous works that have a higher level of abstraction, I hope it can help everyone learn mahjong better.

Hirasawa Genki