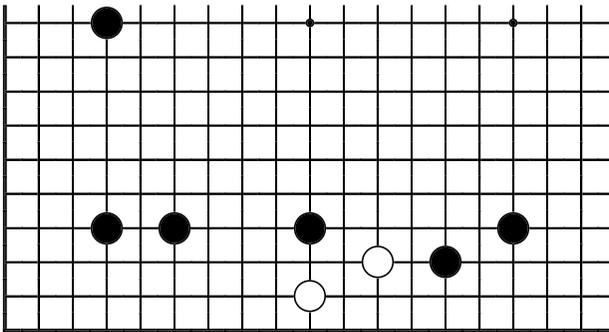


Chapter Six

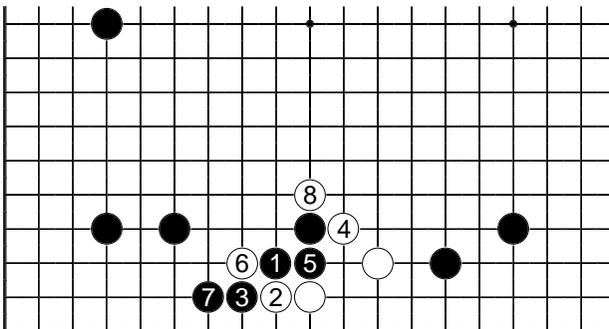
Blocking Off

6.1 Open skirts and crawling plays

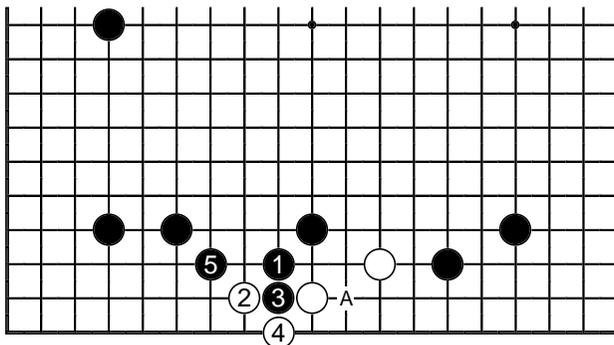
Plays on the fourth line are much used in modern go, despite the *open skirt* they leave on the second line. They emphasise influence over territory. Proper shape to block off is essential, since attacking play alone isn't enough.



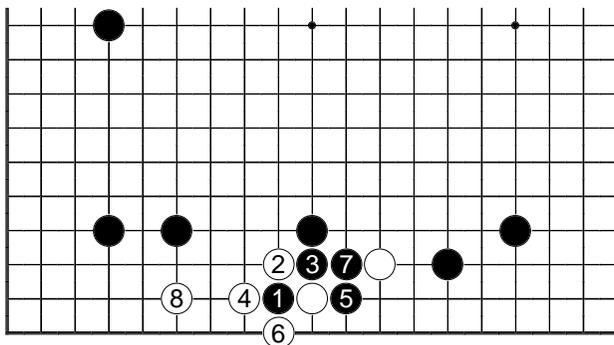
White has slid under a fourth line play. How should the game continue?



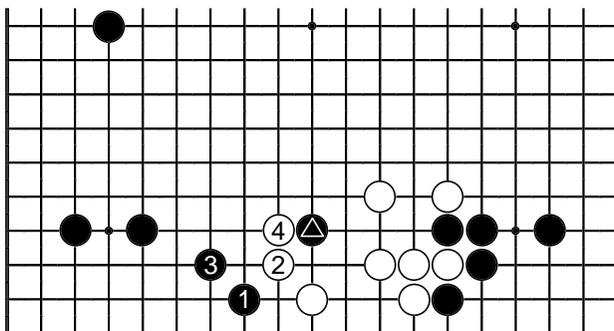
Black normally plays back with a diagonal at 1. Then the onus is on White to make good shape. The 'odd diagonal' at 4 is appropriate, once Black has answered 2 with 3. It looks to make good eye shape at 5. If Black denies White the chance as shown, White 6 and 8 ensure White reasonable shape.



It is a novice's mistake to jump in at 2 in this sort of position. The territory on the edge is less important than eye shape, until the endgame. Black 5 is strong, and White is left with a weakness at A.

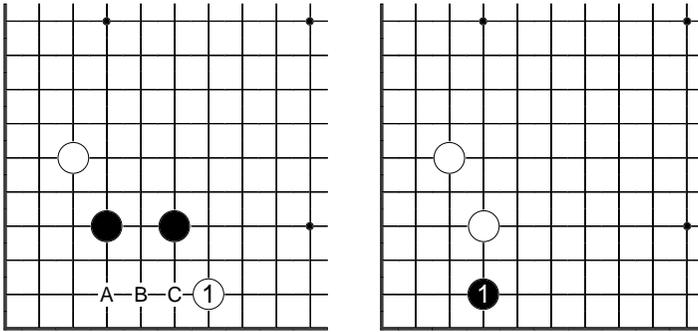


Another mistake is to take violent action with Black 1, to shut off the edge. White will normally be quite happy to sacrifice on the right, to gain a *ponnuki* and safety for a group on the left inside Black's former framework.

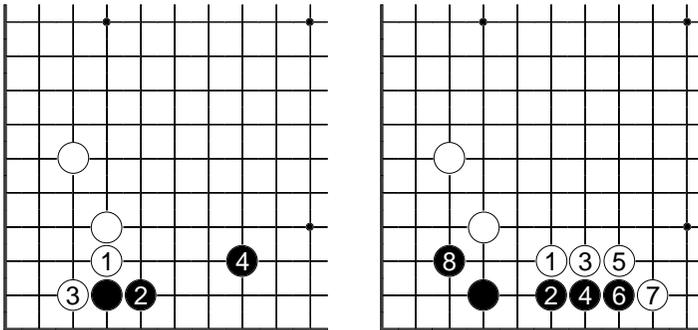


If the situation demands it, Black can block White's progress on the second line. As shown here, Black has little chance of attacking White's group, which has strengthened itself by plays on the right. It therefore makes sense to treat the marked stone lightly with 1 and 3. Black is content with securing the left-hand corner, in *sente*.

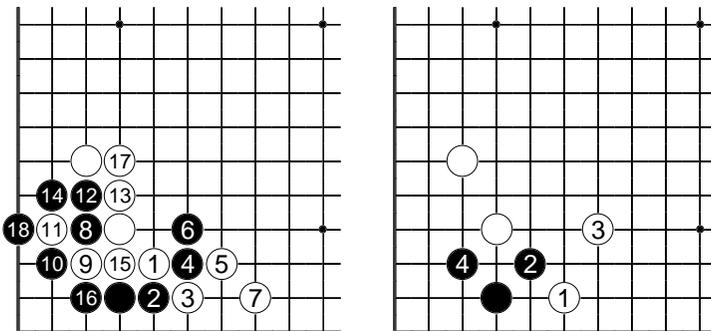
6.2 Moles and submarines



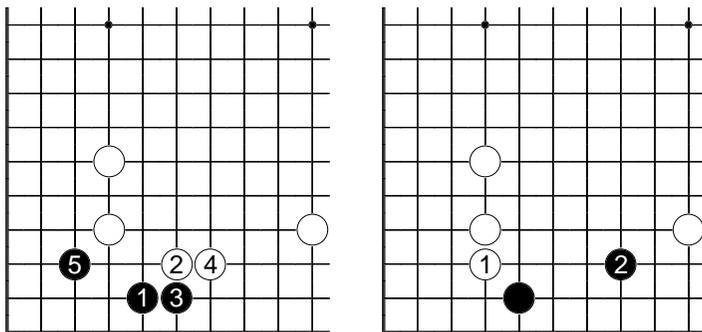
Unsupported plays on the second line, such as White 1, A, B or C in the left-hand diagram, have been called ‘submarine plays’ in English. They range from trick plays to proper invasion techniques. The Japanese say ‘mole’ or ‘hem’ plays, the latter for plays like Black 1 on the edge of the skirt (**right**).



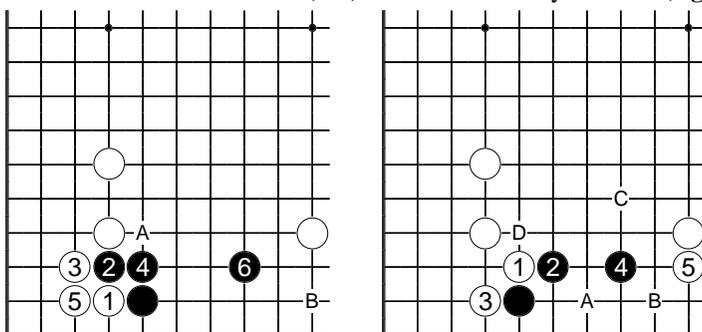
(**Left**) Playing from above builds strong shape, and keeps Black low. (**Right**) Running back with a knight’s move constructs influence, but costs territory.



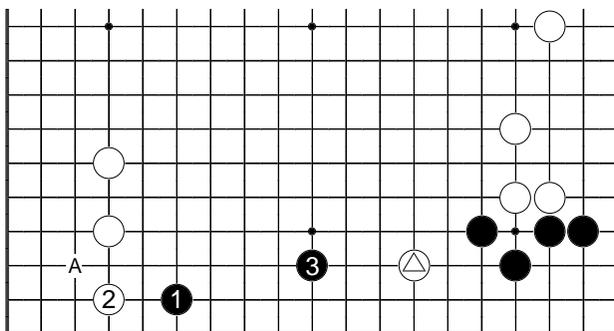
The diagonal play (**left**) can lead to sharp tactics. Black could escape with 10 at 15, having only a false eye from capturing White 1; Black 10 here is a novel idea. Note the play 7, reaching further than a solid connection would. (**Right**) Confrontation with White 1 relies on 2 being a failure. When White 3 is a good idea Black presumably plays 2 at 4 immediately. (Cf. 4.9.)



With this other play aiming at the open skirt of a 4-4 point, Black has room for a comfortable life in the corner (**left**). White will usually defend it (**right**).

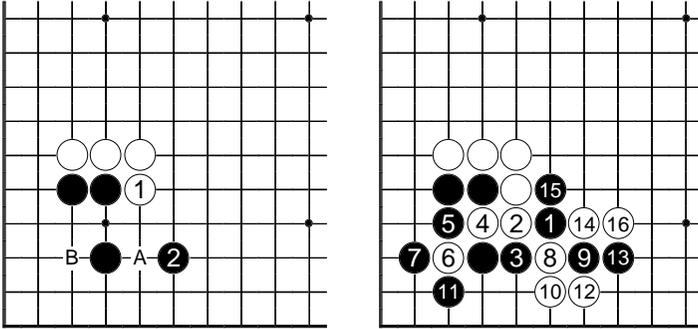


White can also play in contact. (**Left**) Black is close to life, next playing A or B. White has an option to play 3 at 4 in this line (cf.15.1). (**Right**) White tries to make Black heavy with the diagonal attachment at 1. Black's proper move here is to play 2 at 3; taking the outside risks a heavy group. After 5 Black chooses between A, B and C. *Atari* at D is to be avoided, for the sake of possibilities in the corner.

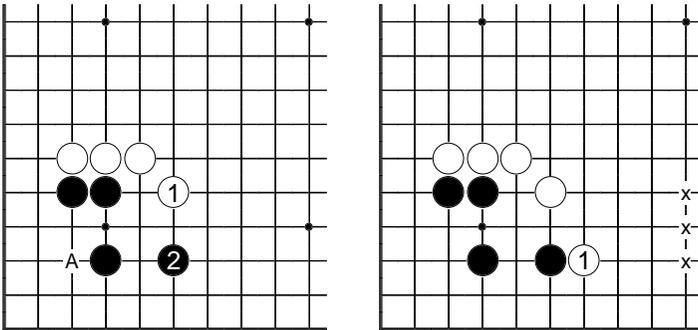


It is rare for the approach 1 in this diagram to be good; but in this context it seems to be right. After Black 1, Black at A in the corner would be efficient, so White 2 blocks the way. But then Black 3 combines attack and defence perfectly, putting the marked White stone's safety in question.

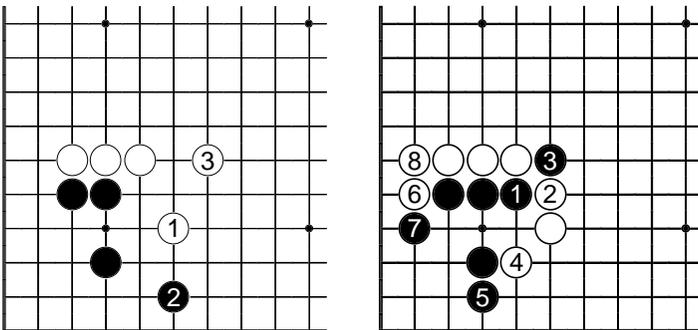
6.3 Half-blocking plays



Threats to block off are an important class of practical plays. They often count as *almost sente*: having a major follow-up. In the position shown on the left, White 1 aims firstly at A, and then when Black responds at 2, leaves some residual possibilities at B. **(Right)** This Black 1 is a mistake.

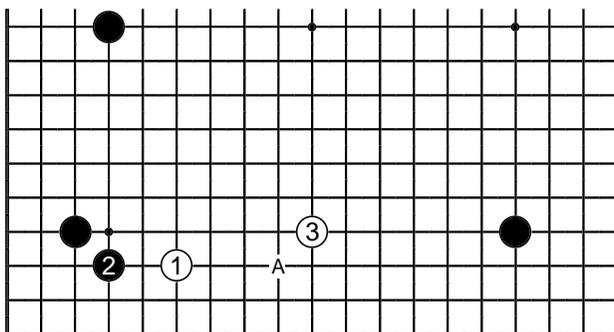


Sometimes the diagonal White 1 (**left**) gains more influence than the simple bend, one point to the left. But in this case White gives up most of the chances of a later play at A. The follow-up at 1 (**right**) would have to combine with other stones near the 'x' points, to justify this choice.

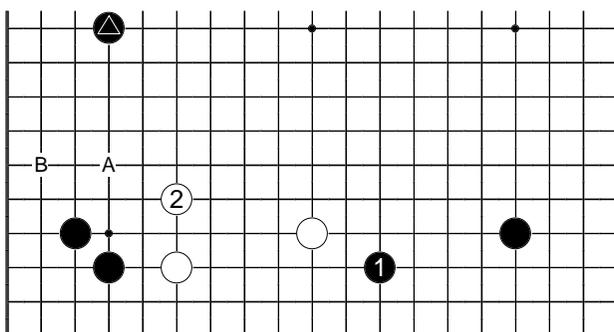


The knight's move White 1 here can be thought of as a central strategy. Black probably slides to 2 (**left**). Cutting (**right**) should turn out to be an overlay, since after 4, 6 and 8 Black has to take good care of the corner.

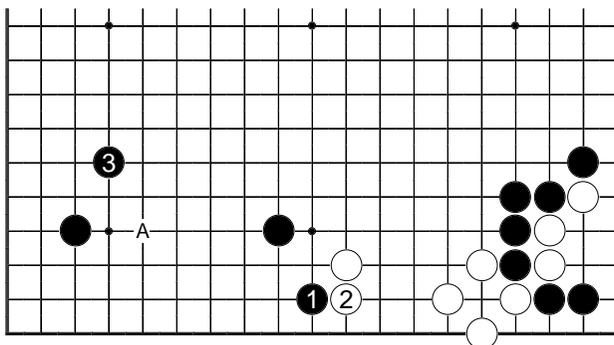
6.4 Using the fourth line



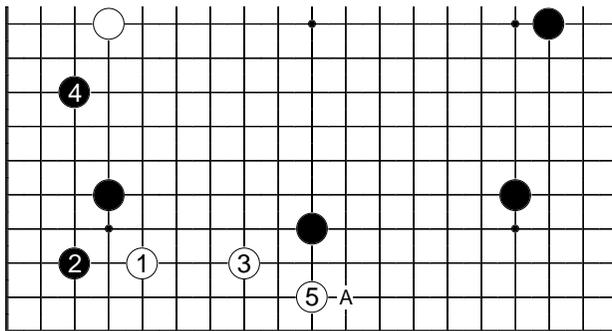
This sequence has occurred often in professional play. What is the meaning of White 3? The normal idea here is to play at A, to secure a definite base for the White group; and this is also common.



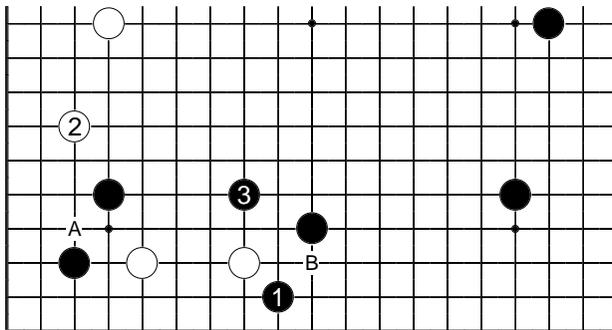
The idea is to jump at 2 in answer to Black 1. Then White at A is a half-blocking play, which Black will almost certainly answer at B. That exchange would do much to neutralise the influence of the marked Black stone. Black normally defends the left side, and White takes the initiative. In any case, White isn't here so concerned about points on the lower edge.



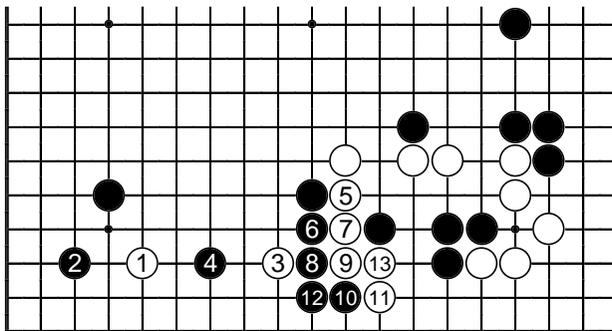
The logic of playing on the fourth line includes the use of the footsweep of 5.4, like Black 1 here, to seal the edge, before playing for a framework with 3. As soon as White invades at A, the difference will be noticeable.



White plays 1 to live inside Black's framework. After White 3 Black extends to 4 for good shape, but this loses an opportunity. White 5 calmly devalues Black's position, though a chance for Black to play at A remains.



Black could have played the footsweep 1 here. If White resists with 2, Black 3 puts White in trouble. There are tactical chances for White at A and B; but White can't expect a good result with such weak stones appearing at an early stage of the game.



A story about the previous position, from the 1997 match Macfadyen-Matthews. Matthews had seen White 1 in a game Macfadyen-Janssen, commended by Miyamoto Naoki 9 *dan*. This variation is given by him as good for White (so Black's immediate invasion 4 isn't sensible). Noting novel shape ideas is one way to prepare against strong players.