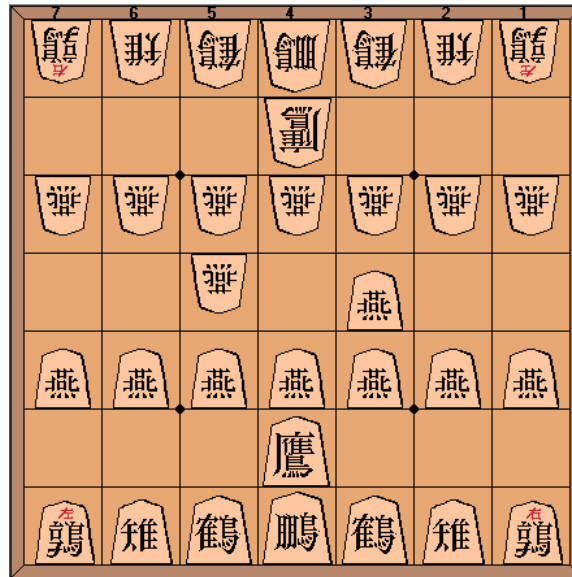


# The Way of Tori Shogi

2nd Edition

By Dave Brandl and Bill Croke



This comprehensive volume describes the history, strategies, and openings for one of the most exciting and challenging Japanese variants of chess; featuring a unique, parallel analysis for learning the game through the eyes and approach of Miyamoto Musashi, the legendary 17th century Japanese strategist, swordsman, artist, and author of *The Book of Five Rings*.

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Game board diagrams were generated using Steve Evans' "Shogi Variants"  
software program.

The Tori Shogi piece diagrams were created by Chris Jackson.

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# 1 foreword

I was very flattered to be asked by Bill and Dave to write a short foreword to this fascinating book, and I'm extremely happy to oblige them!

I first became interested in Shogi in about 1966, when my judo instructor returned from a trip to Japan with a Shogi set, and an address in the UK where sets could be bought (from George Hodges, who did so much to popularize Shogi in Europe).

Over the next 25 years or so, my interest waxed and waned according to the other things I was doing. In about 1992, I managed to exert myself to the extent of creating an experimental Shogi web page (the Internet and the World Wide Web were both pretty new at that time). While doing this, I became aware of the existence of the Shogi variants, including Tori Shogi, and surprise, surprise, George Hodges had a set and a descriptive brochure for sale. I bought them both.

Now, having a board and pieces, and a set of rules isn't much help in learning about a completely unfamiliar board game which is played by only a few people, so the equipment languished on a shelf for 20 years until suddenly Dave and Bill produced this wonderful little book, at a time when I had both the time and the inclination to look at the game in more detail.

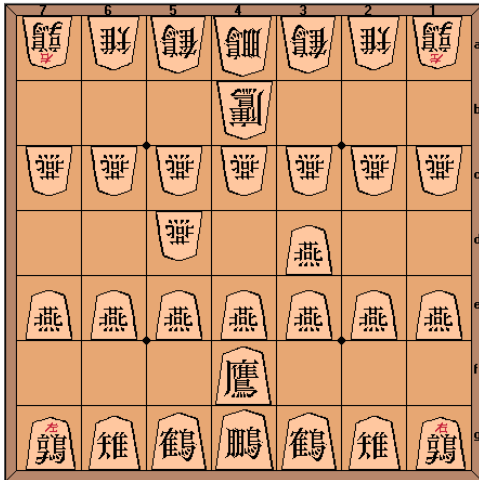
Here, in the space of just about 100 pages is a complete description of the game of Tori Shogi, an introduction to the strategy of playing the game and a selection of complete games for the new player to study. Not only that, we also gain insights into the history of Chess (Japanese and European), learn about the history of the Silk Road, and are enlightened about the philosophy of the way of life of the Samurai warrior via the text of *The Book of Five Rings*. Wonderful!

This is the first comprehensive description of Tori Shogi published in English and may well be the first serious book in any language (I believe I'm correct in saying that the Japanese don't really play the game).

This is a fascinating and invaluable book, and has already found a place in my library of Shogi books. It should be of interest to any Shogi enthusiast and to all players of strategic board games.

Roger Hare  
March 2013

## 2 Introduction



If you're reading this book, you are probably familiar with Chess or Shogi, or both. So with those classic and timeless games available, why would you be interested in Tori Shogi? What's the story behind this unusual board setup? What makes it so different that you would be interested in learning about it?

Tori Shogi has several unique aspects to it; different from Chess and different from Shogi, too. We will explain it in a unique manner, borrowing the approach and framework of Miyamoto Musashi's *The Book of Five Rings*.

When speaking of any chess variant in this book, the word 'chess' (in lower case) will be used. When speaking of specifically Western-style chess (or International chess), 'Chess' (with a capital C) will be used. Other variants will use their own terms, such as Xiangqi (Chinese chess), Changgi (Korean chess), and Makruk (Thai chess).

Shogi is a family of Japanese chess games. Nearly two dozen variants have been identified over the past few hundred years. For the purposes of this book, however, Shogi (with a capital S and no other words added), will refer to the modern variant, played on a 9x9 board, with 20 pieces per side.

Tori Shogi will always be called Tori Shogi. *Tori* is Japanese for bird. All the pieces are named after birds, such as the Eagle, Falcon, and Swallow. Tori Shogi is played on a 7x7 board, with 16 pieces per side.

NOTE: In the previous paragraph, *Tori* was displayed in italics, as will all Japanese words and phrases used in this book.

## Miyamoto Musashi

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Miyamoto Musashi (1584-1645) is considered one of Japan's "sword saints" (*kensei*) and perhaps its greatest swordsman and strategist. From a young age he fought in battles and won many duels. His new style led him to create a separate school of swordsmanship, and he wrote almost as much on personal conduct as on strategy. He laid down his principles of strategy in *The Book of Five Rings* while living out the last months of his life as a hermit in a cave.



Musashi embodies the Japanese ideal that strategy is an aesthetic judgment. He was a craftsman, artisan, and painter. The picture to the right is a self-portrait. He was an excellent example of the Samurai concept of *Bun bu ryo do* ("The pen and the sword in accord"). His works have become important guides to modern business in Japan.

Because of their positions and elite status, educated Samurai of this period would have likely been familiar with some variant of Shogi. Since strategy lies at the heart of all chess, we have turned to Musashi as our guide to this uniquely Japanese game. All quotations are attributed to Miyamoto Musashi, unless otherwise indicated.

## For the Chess Player

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*"Take from others everything they have and use it to your advantage."*



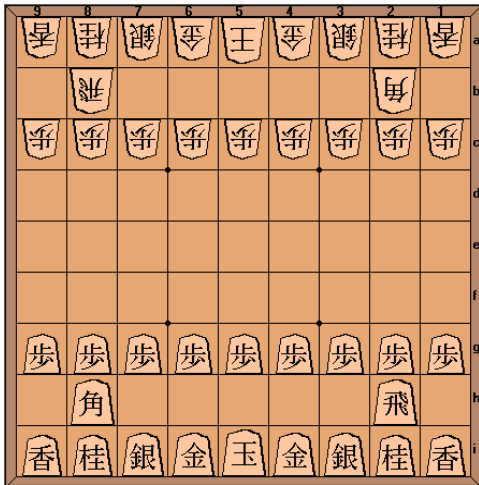
In Chess, when you capture a piece, it is removed from the game. Here is a major attraction for Chess players: in Tori Shogi, as in Shogi, when you capture an opponent's piece, it is not out of the game; rather, it becomes a piece "in hand" that you can drop (*utsu*) almost anywhere on the board during your turn, instead of moving a piece on the board.

Over the centuries, the Japanese have developed many variants of Shogi. Most have captured pieces removed from the board for the rest of the game, as with Chess. The use of drops (*uchi*) in Tori Shogi and Shogi is unique for the medium and large-sized board variants.

## For the Shogi Player

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"Fixation is the way to death; fluidity is the way to life."



Shogi generally requires 10 to 12 moves before either side is in a position to capture an opponent's piece.

With the exception of certain openings, Chess may require at least five or six.

Shogi students carefully study and memorize standard opening sequences (*joseki*). Chess players likewise study and memorize fixed, standard openings. Volumes have been written on the opening sequences of both Chess and Shogi.

By contrast, Tori Shogi begins with an immediate capture-or-be-captured situation, where either side can capture an opponent's piece on the first move.

Fluidity, mentioned in Musashi's quote above, is adaptation, a core element of Tori Shogi. Fixation on any standard openings in Tori Shogi simply does not exist. There is conflict from the beginning and each player must adapt immediately.

## Approach to *The Book of Five Rings*

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Musashi's *The Book of Five Rings* contains five books, which we employed as a framework for this book. Musashi defined five key elements of his Way using the five Shinto elements of earth, water, fire, wind, and the void.

One of our unexpected delights in writing this book was the adventure into the aesthetics and cultural aspects of the Japanese, particularly during the time of the game's creation. We hope we reflected those faithfully.

### ***The Earth Book***

This is Musashi's general discussion of strategy, his universal concept of strategy in all things, and his introduction to the rest of the books. In *The Earth Book*, Musashi presents definitions of strategy and the importance he places on the use of strategy in everyday life, from warrior to merchant to housewife. We will similarly include strategy in general and the strategy of Tori Shogi specifically, along with a brief history of the game's development.



### ***The Water Book***

In *The Water Book*, Musashi describes various weapons. He speaks of their strengths and weaknesses, and how each tool or weapon may be used to its best advantage. We describe the Tori Shogi pieces, their meanings, how they move, and their strengths and weaknesses.

### ***The Fire Book***

In Musashi's book, he defines his strategies for fighting. We will similarly look at openings and strategies for Tori Shogi. This section also includes three annotated and diagrammed games, discussions about building castles, and other ways to approach the game, along with references to Musashi's 25 strategies for fighting.

### ***The Wind Book***

Musashi uses this book to speak of other schools and disciplines that existed during his lifetime. He looked at their strengths and weaknesses and compared them to his own disciplines. We will address chess variants found around the world, and how familiarity with them may be applied to playing Tori Shogi.

### ***The Void Book***

This is Musashi's most enigmatic book. It is the shortest and speaks in esoteric terms. It is also the longest book, in terms of becoming a doorway to a lifetime study of strategy, and from our perspective, a study of Tori Shogi.

## **Appendixes**

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This includes supplemental and more detailed materials on additional aspects that apply to Tori Shogi.

### **A. From Marco Polo to Tori Shogi**

A brief history of the global movements of variations of chess.

### **B. Japanese Phrases**

A glossary of the phrases used in this book.

### **C. Our Acknowledgements**

So much of Tori Shogi, Shogi, and other Asian chess variants has been popularized in the Western world as a result of the hard work of some key people. We want to thank those folks who came before us and helped fuel our passion and interest in this game, and also who supplied many of the materials we used for reference. Our sincerest thanks go out to George and Angela Hodges, Roger Hare, John Fairbairn, Steve Evans, Phil Holland, Sam Sloan, Roland Marounek, and David C. Courtney. There is more about each of these fine folks in this Appendix section.

### **D. Game Board and Pieces**

There is a do-it-yourself set at the end of this book that you can print on full-page label paper, apply to cardboard, and cut out the pieces and board. There are also instructions for building a Tori Shogi set of pieces from pocket change ... literally.

# 3 The Earth Book

*"Strategy is the art of the warrior. Commanders must utilize this art, and fighters must be familiar with it."*

## **The Principle of Strategy**

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The above quote by Musashi contains the first lines from *The Book of Five Rings*. Musashi believed that the elements of strategy are present in any occupation: swordsman, merchant, carpenter, or housewife. He also believed that strategy could be applied to any area with hope for a better success, and that such an approach was warranted by every individual, regardless of their profession.

Strategy is also the single concept most often applied to the variants of chess that are recognized throughout the world. The quest for the perfect strategy is what draws people to play chess. The preparation, the plans, the mental sparring with an opponent, and ultimately, the creation of a combination of moves that brings about victory, are all at the core of the love of chess.

Musashi was not the only person to take analytical thinking to such an intense level. In 1905, Cho-Yo, in his book titled, *Japanese Chess - The Science and Art of War or Struggle*, states that the purpose of chess is "to aim at reaching the highest *training* of Mind for the settlement of struggles, whatsoever conceivable by man, making them welcome and pleasure to himself."

Cho-Yo described the study of chess, which he termed Chessology, as "pure intellect and knowledge rendered into visible symbols of all human struggle-elements."

He further defined Chessology as "the most abstract of all the sciences, and is played, or rather practiced, as an intellectual pastime, the most purely intellectual of all the games of skill."

In describing the learning of Shogi, Cho-Yo further states that anyone already knowledgeable about Chess "would be able fairly to play the Japanese within half an hour or less and soon to make himself pare his former self." In his mind, the fundamentals of chess are so universal that anyone comfortably familiar with any world variant of the game would be able to learn another variant quite rapidly.

## The Strategy of Tori Shogi

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*"The wisdom of strategy is unique."*

Why was Tori Shogi invented at all? With the complexity and challenges of Shogi as it is, what was it lacking? What elements of strategy were missing so that Tori Shogi came into being, from a Shogi master? Listed below are some of the attributes of Tori Shogi that make it unique among chess variants.

- There is the immediate conflict. Pieces are able to capture each other from the first move.
- All the pieces are named after birds, instead of the usual symbols of military figures and weapons.
- There are radically different movements of the pieces, even compared to other shogi variants.
- There are asymmetrical pieces that move differently depending on which side of the board they begin.
- Up to two Swallows (the Tori Shogi equivalent of Pawns) are allowed on each file, beginning at the initial setup.

As for shogi games in general, Cho-Yo said, "This Japanese Chess, thus improved, is the most highly developed, most interesting and most scientific and philosophical of all the games ever invented and known. It plainly illustrates the secret intricacies and combinations and permutations of causes and effects of every human affair as a factor of nature. Playing this game cultivates business tact, keeps up strategy and tactics, improves diplomacy and strengthens the mental faculties."

## Timing in Strategy

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*"In all skills and abilities there is timing."*

In all chess play there is timing. It is often said that the player who moves first in any chess variant has a slight edge in timing, also known as initiative. As play progresses, a player may gain an edge where they can make a move and the opponent may need two moves to catch up.

For this book, we will use the following timing terms.

- Initiative - There are two classic definitions of initiative.
  - Having the first move. In Chess, that means playing White (*Gote*). In the Shogi family of games, it is the Black pieces (*Sente*) that move first. Historically, having the first move doesn't statistically work out to winning significantly more games. Some studies have shown only about a 2% higher winning margin for the player moving first - 51% to 49% ... but ... it can have

a psychological advantage, as will be discussed with Musashi's 25 Strategies in *The Fire Book*.

- Another definition of initiative is being able to make threats that cannot be ignored - thus forcing the opponent into making a responding move to a threat rather than making an attacking or developing move.
- Tempo - Gaining a tempo, in both Chess and Shogi, is defined as getting a move ahead; achieving a position in fewer moves, or causing the opponent to take more moves to achieve a position.
- Timing - The sequence of events as played out by the players. The order of certain moves can be a powerful influence in the timing of play. If the moves are not played in the correct order, an attack may fail, even with enough pieces and power.
- Momentum - This is building tempos, where each move a player makes adds another tempo and removes advantages the opponent may have.

### **Timing in the History of Shogi and Tori Shogi**

There is timing in the development of the game. Following is a timeline of the known history of the shogi game family, according to our best research. This timeline identifies the years involved and other events and historic periods that may have played important parts in the development of the games of Shogi and Tori Shogi.

794 - 1185:	Heian period of Japanese history.
ca. 1126 - 1130:	<b>Heian Dai Shogi</b> and <b>Heian Sho Shogi</b> mentioned in <i>Nichureki</i> . (NOTE: Some sources list the date as 1230.)
1185 - 1333:	Kamakura period of Japanese history.
1271 - 1292:	Marco Polo's travels to the Orient.
ca. 1300:	<b>Sho Shogi</b> and <b>Dai Shogi</b> mentioned in <i>Futsu Shodoshu</i> .
1336 - 1573:	Muromachi period of Japanese history.
ca. 1350:	<b>Chu Shogi</b> (Middle Shogi) mentioned in <i>Yugaku orai</i> .
ca. 1443:	<b>Dai Dai Shogi</b> , <b>Maka Dai Dai Shogi</b> , and <b>Tai Shogi</b> mentioned in <i>Shogi rokushu no zushiki</i> . (NOTE: While some sources date the <i>Shogi rokushu no zushiki</i> from the 15th century, the formal publication date is recorded as 1811.)
ca. 1480:	Modern <b>Chess</b> established (Queen and Bishop added).
ca. 1557:	Modern <b>Shogi</b> established (Bishop, Rook, and Drops added; Drunken Elephant removed).
1568 - 1603:	Azuchi-Momoyama period of Japanese history.
1584 - 1645:	Lifetime of Miyamoto Musashi.

1603 - 1860:	Edo period of Japanese history.
Late 1600s:	<b>Wa Shogi</b> developed.
1684:	First professional Sumo bout.
1756 - 1809:	Lifetime of Ohashi Soei.
1799:	<b>Tori Shogi</b> first published.
1830:	<b>Tori Shogi</b> republished, accompanied by a tournament among notable Shogi players playing Tori Shogi.
1853:	Commodore Matthew Perry arrives in Japan, begins trade relations between Japan and the United States, ending Japan's 200-year ban against foreign traders.
1867 -1869:	Boshin War involving the last true Samurai battles.
1873:	Emperor Meiji abolishes the Samurai's right to be the only armed force in Japan. Three years later, the Samurai lost the right to wear their swords in public.
1970s:	George Hodges brings Shogi to the Western world (England, Europe, and the United States), publishing SHOGI magazine in 1976, introducing Shogi, Tori Shogi, and Chu Shogi to his readers, and providing sets of these games to interested players.

The person, or persons, who invented Tori Shogi are generally accepted to be Ohashi Soei (listed above), the 9th Lifetime Grandmaster (*Meijin*) of Shogi, and/or Toyota Genryu, his student. Different schools of thought attribute the game's creation to one or the other.

They both likely had considerable input into the initial version. Ohashi Soei passed away 10 years after the game was published. It seems likely that Toyota was involved with republishing. He may have been present - and a competitor - at the accompanying tournament. This is discussed in more detail in the Appendix.

In this book, when we refer to the developer(s), inventor(s), and/or mind(s) behind Tori Shogi, we shall use the designation of OS/TG in honor of both men.