

The Art of War

by Sun Tzu

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Written in ancient China more than two thousand years ago, Sun Tzu's thirteen short chapters teach that the supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting. Its lessons on preparation, deception, and knowing yourself have traveled far beyond the battlefield into boardrooms and playing fields. The Art of War is brief enough to read in an afternoon and deep enough to reread for a lifetime.

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Dedication

To my brother
Captain Valentine Giles, R.G.
in the hope that
a work 2,400 years old
may yet contain lessons worth consideration
by the soldier of today
this translation
is affectionately dedicated.

Preface by Lionel Giles

The seventh volume of *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les arts, les mœurs, les usages, etc., des Chinois*¹ is devoted to the Art of War, and contains, amongst other treatises, *Les Treize Articles de Sun-tse*, translated from the Chinese by a Jesuit Father, Joseph Amiot. Père Amiot appears to have enjoyed no small reputation as a sinologue in his day, and the field of his labours was certainly extensive. But his so-called translation of the Sun Tz, if placed side by side with the original, is seen at once to be little better than an imposture. It contains a great deal that Sun Tz did not write, and very little indeed of what he did. Here is a fair specimen, taken from the opening sentences of chapter 5:

De l'habileté dans le gouvernement des Troupes. Sun-tse dit: Ayez les noms de tous les Officiers tant généraux que subalternes; inscrivez-les dans un catalogue à part, avec la note des talents & de la capacité de chacun d'eux, afin de pouvoir les employer avec avantage lorsque l'occasion en sera venue. Faites en sorte que tous ceux que vous devez commander soient persuadés que votre principale attention est de les préserver de tout dommage. Les troupes que vous ferez avancer contre l'ennemi doivent être comme des pierres que vous lanceriez contre des ufs. De vous à l'ennemi il ne doit y avoir d'autre différence que celle du fort au faible, du vide au plein. Attaquez à découvert, mais soyez vainqueur en secret. Voilà en peu de mots en quoi consiste l'habileté & toute la perfection même du gouvernement des troupes.

Throughout the nineteenth century, which saw a wonderful development in the study of Chinese literature, no translator ventured to tackle Sun Tz, although his work was known to be highly valued in China as by far the oldest and best compendium of military science. It was not until the year 1905 that the first English translation, by Capt. E. F. Calthrop, R.F.A., appeared at Tokyo under the title *Sonshi* (the Japanese form of Sun Tz).² Unfortunately, it was evident that the translator's knowledge of Chinese was far too scanty to fit him to grapple with the manifold difficulties of Sun Tz. He himself plainly acknowledges that without the aid of two Japanese gentlemen "the accompanying translation would have been impossible." We can only wonder, then, that with their help it should have been so excessively bad. It is not merely a question of downright blunders, from which none can hope to be wholly exempt. Omissions were frequent; hard passages were wilfully distorted or slurred over. Such offences are less pardonable. They would not be tolerated in any edition of a Greek or Latin classic, and a similar standard of honesty ought to be insisted upon in translations from Chinese.

From blemishes of this nature, at least, I believe that the present translation is free. It was not undertaken out of any inflated estimate of my own powers; but I could not help feeling that Sun Tz deserved a better fate than had befallen him, and I knew that, at any rate, I could hardly fail to improve on the work of my predecessors. Towards the end of 1908, a new and revised edition of Capt. Calthrop's translation was published in London, this time, however, without any allusion to his Japanese collaborators. My first three chapters were then already in the printer's hands, so that the criticisms of Capt. Calthrop therein contained must be understood as referring to his earlier edition. This is on the whole an improvement on the other, though there still remains much that cannot pass muster. Some of the grosser blunders have been rectified and lacunae filled up, but on the other hand a certain number of new mistakes appear. The very first sentence of the introduction is startlingly inaccurate; and later on, while mention is made of "an army of Japanese commentators" on Sun Tz (who are these, by the way?), not a word is vouchsafed about the Chinese commentators, who nevertheless, I venture to assert, form a much more numerous and infinitely more important "army."

A few special features of the present volume may now be noticed. In the first place, the text has been cut up into paragraphs, both in order to facilitate cross-reference and for the convenience of students

generally. The division follows broadly that of Sun Hsing-yen's edition; but I have sometimes found it desirable to join two or more of his paragraphs into one. In quoting from other works, Chinese writers seldom give more than the bare title by way of reference, and the task of research is apt to be seriously hampered in consequence. From the mass of native commentary my aim has been to extract the cream only, adding the Chinese text here and there when it seemed to present points of literary interest. Though constituting in itself an important branch of Chinese literature, very little commentary of this kind has hitherto been made directly accessible by translation.³

I may say in conclusion that, owing to the printing off of my sheets as they were completed, the work has not had the benefit of a final revision. On a review of the whole, without modifying the substance of my criticisms, I might have been inclined in a few instances to temper their asperity. Having chosen to wield a bludgeon, however, I shall not cry out if in return I am visited with more than a rap over the knuckles. Indeed, I have been at some pains to put a sword into the hands of future opponents by scrupulously giving either text or reference for every passage translated. A scathing review, even from the pen of the Shanghai critic who despises "mere translations," would not, I must confess, be altogether unwelcome. For, after all, the worst fate I shall have to dread is that which befell the ingenious paradoxes of George in *The Vicar of Wakefield*.

Sun Wu and His Book

Ss-ma Chien gives the following biography of Sun Tz:4

Sun Tz Wu was a native of the Chi State. His Art of War brought him to the notice of Ho Lu,5 King of Wu. Ho Lu said to him:

"I have carefully perused your 13 chapters. May I submit your theory of managing soldiers to a slight test?"

Sun Tz replied: "You may."

Ho Lu asked: "May the test be applied to women?"

The answer was again in the affirmative, so arrangements were made to bring 180 ladies out of the Palace. Sun Tz divided them into two companies, and placed one of the King's favorite concubines at the head of each. He then bade them all take spears in their hands, and addressed them thus: "I presume you know the difference between front and back, right hand and left hand?"

The girls replied: "Yes."

Sun Tz went on: "When I say 'Eyes front,' you must look straight ahead. When I say 'Left turn,' you must face towards your left hand. When I say 'Right turn,' you must face towards your right hand. When I say 'About turn,' you must face right round towards your back."

Again the girls assented. The words of command having been thus explained, he set up the halberds and battle-axes in order to begin the drill. Then, to the sound of drums, he gave the order "Right turn." But the girls only burst out laughing. Sun Tz said: "If words of command are not clear and distinct, if orders are not thoroughly understood, then the general is to blame."

So he started drilling them again, and this time gave the order "Left turn," whereupon the girls once more burst into fits of laughter. Sun Tz: "If words of command are not clear and distinct, if orders are not thoroughly understood, the general is to blame. But if his orders are clear, and the soldiers nevertheless disobey, then it is the fault of their officers."

So saying, he ordered the leaders of the two companies to be beheaded. Now the king of Wu was watching the scene from the top of a raised pavilion; and when he saw that his favorite concubines were about to be executed, he was greatly alarmed and hurriedly sent down the following message: "We are now quite satisfied as to our general's ability to handle troops. If we are bereft of these two concubines, our meat and drink will lose their savor. It is our wish that they shall not be beheaded."

Sun Tz replied: "Having once received His Majesty's commission to be the general of his forces, there are certain commands of His Majesty which, acting in that capacity, I am unable to accept."

Accordingly, he had the two leaders beheaded, and straightway installed the pair next in order as leaders in their place. When this had been done, the drum was sounded for the drill once more; and the girls went through all the evolutions, turning to the right or to the left, marching ahead or wheeling back, kneeling or standing, with perfect accuracy and precision, not venturing to utter a sound. Then Sun Tz sent a messenger to the King saying: "Your soldiers, Sire, are now properly drilled and disciplined, and ready for your majesty's inspection. They can be put to any use that their sovereign may desire; bid them go through fire and water, and they will not disobey."

But the King replied: "Let our general cease drilling and return to camp. As for us, We have no wish to come down and inspect the troops."

Thereupon Sun Tz said: "The King is only fond of words, and cannot translate them into deeds."

After that, Ho Lu saw that Sun Tz was one who knew how to handle an army, and finally appointed him general. In the west, he defeated the Chu State and forced his way into Ying, the capital; to the north he put fear into the States of Chi and Chin, and spread his fame abroad amongst the feudal princes. And Sun Tz shared in the might of the King.

About Sun Tz himself this is all that Ss-ma Chien has to tell us in this chapter. But he proceeds to give a biography of his descendant, Sun Pin, born about a hundred years after his famous ancestor's death, and also the outstanding military genius of his time. The historian speaks of him too as Sun Tz, and in his preface we read: "Sun Tz had his feet cut off and yet continued to discuss the art of war."⁶ It seems likely, then, that "Pin" was a nickname bestowed on him after his mutilation, unless the story was invented in order to account for the name. The crowning incident of his career, the crushing defeat of his treacherous rival Pang Chuan, will be found briefly related in note 292.

To return to the elder Sun Tz. He is mentioned in two other passages of the Shih Chi:

In the third year of his reign [512 BC] Ho Lu, king of Wu, took the field with Tz-hsü [i.e. Wu Yüan] and Po Pei, and attacked Chu. He captured the town of Shu and slew the two prince's sons who had formerly been generals of Wu. He was then meditating a descent on Ying [the capital]; but the general Sun Wu said: "The army is exhausted.⁷ It is not yet possible. We must wait."⁸ [After further successful fighting,] in the ninth year [506 BC], King Ho Lu addressed Wu Tz-hsü and Sun Wu, saying: "Formerly, you declared that it was not yet possible for us to enter Ying. Is the time ripe now?" The two men replied: "Chu's general Tz-chang,⁹ is grasping and covetous, and the princes of Tang and Tsai both have a grudge against him. If Your Majesty has resolved to make a grand attack, you must win over Tang and Tsai, and then you may succeed." Ho Lu followed this advice, [beat Chu in five pitched battles and marched into Ying.]¹⁰

This is the latest date at which anything is recorded of Sun Wu. He does not appear to have survived his patron, who died from the effects of a wound in 496.

In the chapter entitled (the earlier portion of which M. Chavannes believes to be a fragment of a treatise on Military Weapons), there occurs this passage:¹¹

From this time onward, a number of famous soldiers arose, one after the other: Kao-fan,¹² who was employed by the Chin State; Wang-tz,¹³ in the service of Chi; and Sun Wu, in the service of Wu. These men developed and threw light upon the principles of war. ().

It is obvious enough that Ss-ma Chien at least had no doubt about the reality of Sun Wu as an historical personage; and with one exception, to be noticed presently, he is by far the most important authority on the period in question. It will not be necessary, therefore, to say much of such a work as the Wu Yüeh Chun Chiu, which is supposed to have been written by Chao Yeh of the 1st century AD. The attribution is somewhat doubtful; but even if it were otherwise, his account would be of little value, based as it is on the Shih Chi and expanded with romantic details. The story of Sun Tz will be found, for what it is worth, in chapter 2. The only new points in it worth noting are: (1) Sun Tz was first recommended to Ho Lu by Wu Tz-hsü. (2) He is called a native of Wu.¹⁴ (3) He had previously lived a retired life, and his contemporaries were unaware of his ability.¹⁵

The following passage occurs in the Huai-nan Tz: "When sovereign and ministers show perversity of mind, it is impossible even for a Sun Tz to encounter the foe."¹⁶ Assuming that this work is genuine (and hitherto no doubt has been cast upon it), we have here the earliest direct reference for Sun Tz, for Huai-nan Tz died in 122 BC, many years before the Shih Chi was given to the world.

Liu Hsiang (80-9 BC) in his says: "The reason why Sun Tz at the head of 30,000 men beat Chu with 200,000 is that the latter were undisciplined."¹⁷

Têng Ming-shih in his (completed in 1134) informs us that the surname was bestowed on Sun Wu's grandfather by Duke Ching of Chi (547-490 BC). Sun Wu's father Sun Ping, rose to be a Minister of State in Chi, and Sun Wu himself, whose style was Chang-ching, fled to Wu on account of the rebellion which was being fomented by the kindred of Tien Pao. He had three sons, of whom the second, named Ming, was the father of Sun Pin. According to this account then, Pin was the grandson of Wu,¹⁸ which, considering that Sun Pin's victory over Wei was gained in 341 BC, may be dismissed as chronologically impossible. Whence these data were obtained by Têng Ming-shih I do not know, but of course no reliance whatever can be placed in them.

An interesting document which has survived from the close of the Han period is the short preface written by the Great Tsao Tsao, or Wu Wei Ti, for his edition of Sun Tz. I shall give it in full:

I have heard that the ancients used bows and arrows to their advantage.¹⁹ The Lun Yu says: "There must be a sufficiency of military strength."²⁰ The Shu Ching mentions "the army" among the "eight objects of government."²¹ The I Ching says: "'army' indicates firmness and justice; the experienced leader will have good fortune."²² The Shih Ching says: "The King rose majestic in his wrath, and he marshaled his troops."²³ The Yellow Emperor, Tang the Completer and Wang all used spears and battle-axes in order to succor their generation. The Ss-ma Fa says: "If one man slay another of set purpose, he himself may rightfully be slain."²⁴ He who relies solely on warlike measures shall be exterminated; he who relies solely on peaceful measures shall perish. Instances of this are Fu Chai²⁵ on the one hand and Yen Wang on the other.²⁶ In military matters, the Sage's rule is normally to keep the peace, and to move his forces only when occasion requires. He will not use armed force unless driven to it by necessity.²⁷

Many books have I read on the subject of war and fighting; but the work composed by Sun Wu is the profoundest of them all. [Sun Tz was a native of the Chi state, his personal name was Wu. He wrote the Art of War in 13 chapters for Ho Lu, King of Wu. Its principles were tested on women, and he was subsequently made a general. He led an army westwards, crushed the Chu state and entered Ying the capital. In the north, he kept Chi and Chin in awe. A hundred years and more after his time, Sun Pin lived. He was a descendant of Wu].²⁸ In his treatment of deliberation and planning, the importance of rapidity in taking the field,²⁹ clearness of conception, and depth of design, Sun Tz stands beyond the reach of carping criticism. My contemporaries, however, have failed to grasp the full meaning of his instructions, and while putting into practice the smaller details in which his work abounds, they have overlooked its essential purport. That is the motive which has led me to outline a rough explanation of the whole.³⁰

One thing to be noticed in the above is the explicit statement that the 13 chapters were specially composed for King Ho Lu. This is supported by the internal evidence of chapter I ("The general that hearkens to my counsel..."), in which it seems clear that some ruler is addressed.

In the bibliographic section of the Han Shu,³¹ there is an entry which has given rise to much discussion: "The works of Sun Tz of Wu in 82 pien (or chapters), with diagrams in 9 chüan." It is evident that this cannot be merely the 13 chapters known to Ss-ma Chien, or those we possess today. Chang Shou-chieh in his refers to an edition of Sun Tz's of which the "13 chapters" formed the first chüan, adding that there were two other chüan besides.³² This has brought forth a theory, that the bulk of these 82 chapters consisted of other writings of Sun Tz, we should call them apocryphal, similar to the Wen Ta, of which a specimen dealing with the Nine Situations³³ is preserved in the Tung Tien, and another in Ho Shih's commentary. It is suggested that before his interview with Ho Lu, Sun Tz had only written the 13 chapters, but afterwards composed a sort of exegesis in the form of question and answer between himself and the King. Pi I-hsün, the author of the Sun Tz Hsü Lu, backs this up with a quotation from the

Wu Yüeh Chun Chiu: "The King of Wu summoned Sun Tz, and asked him questions about the art of war. Each time he set forth a chapter of his work, the King could not find words enough to praise him."³⁴ As he points out, if the whole work was expounded on the same scale as in the above-mentioned fragments, the total number of chapters could not fail to be considerable.³⁵ Then the numerous other treatises attributed to Sun Tz³⁶ might also be included. The fact that the Han Chih mentions no work of Sun Tz except the 82 pien, whereas the Sui and Tang bibliographies give the titles of others in addition to the "13 chapters," is good proof, Pi I-hsün thinks, that all of these were contained in the 82 pien. Without pinning our faith to the accuracy of details supplied by the Wu Yüeh Chun Chiu, or admitting the genuineness of any of the treatises cited by Pi I-hsün, we may see in this theory a probable solution of the mystery. Between Ss-ma Chien and Pan Ku there was plenty of time for a luxuriant crop of forgeries to have grown up under the magic name of Sun Tz, and the 82 pien may very well represent a collected edition of these lumped together with the original work. It is also possible, though less likely, that some of them existed in the time of the earlier historian and were purposely ignored by him.³⁷

Tu Mu, after Tsao Kung the most important commentator on Sun Tz, composed the preface to his edition³⁸ about the middle of the ninth century. After a somewhat lengthy defence of the military art,³⁹ he comes at last to Sun Tz himself, and makes one or two very startling assertions: "The writings of Sun Wu," he says, "originally comprised several hundred thousand words, but Tsao Tsao, the Emperor Wei, pruned away all redundancies and wrote out the essence of the whole, so as to form a single book in 13 chapters."⁴⁰ He goes on to remark that Tsao Tsao's commentary on Sun Tz leaves a certain proportion of difficulties unexplained.⁴¹ This, in Tu Mu's opinion, does not necessarily imply that he was unable to furnish a complete commentary. According to the Wei Chih, Tsao himself wrote a book on war in something over 100,000 words, known as the . It appears to have been of such exceptional merit that he suspects Tsao to have used for it the surplus material which he had found in Sun Tz. He concludes, however, by saying: "The Hsin Shu is now lost, so that the truth cannot be known for certain."⁴²

Tu Mu's conjecture seems to be based on a passage in the "Wei Wu Ti strung together Sun Wu's Art of War,"⁴³ which in turn may have resulted from a misunderstanding of the final words of Tsao Kung's preface: . This, as Sun Hsing-yen points out,⁴⁴ is only a modest way of saying that he made an explanatory paraphrase,⁴⁵ or in other words, wrote a commentary on it. On the whole, this theory has met with very little acceptance. Thus, he says:⁴⁶ "The mention of the 13 chapters in the Shih Chi shows that they were in existence before the Han Chih, and that latter accretions are not to be considered part of the original work. Tu Mu's assertion can certainly not be taken as proof."⁴⁷

There is every reason to suppose, then, that the 13 chapters existed in the time of Ss-ma Chien practically as we have them now. That the work was then well known he tells us in so many words: "Sun Tz's 13 Chapters and Chi's Art of War are the two books that people commonly refer to on the subject of military matters. Both of them are widely distributed, so I will not discuss them here."⁴⁸ But as we go further back, serious difficulties begin to arise. The salient fact which has to be faced is that the Tso Chuan, the greatest contemporary record, makes no mention whatsoever of Sun Wu, either as a general or as a writer. It is natural, in view of this awkward circumstance, that many scholars should not only cast doubt on the story of Sun Wu as given in the Shih Chi, but even show themselves frankly skeptical as to the existence of the man at all. The most powerful presentment of this side of the case is to be found in the following disposition by Yeh Shui-hsin:⁴⁹

It is stated in Ss-ma Chien's history that Sun Wu was a native of the Chi State, and employed by Wu; and that in the reign of Ho Lu he crushed Chu, entered Ying, and was a great general. But in Tso's Commentary no Sun Wu appears at all. It is true that Tso's Commentary need not contain absolutely everything that other histories contain. But Tso has not omitted to mention vulgar plebeians and hireling

ruffians such as Ying Kao-shu,⁵⁰ Tsao Kuei,⁵¹ Chu Chih-wu⁵² and Chuan She-chu.⁵³ In the case of Sun Wu, whose fame and achievements were so brilliant, the omission is much more glaring. Again, details are given, in their due order, about his contemporaries Wu Yüan and the Minister Pei.⁵⁴ Is it credible that Sun Wu alone should have been passed over?⁵⁵

In point of literary style, Sun Tz's work belongs to the same school as Kuan Tz,⁵⁶ Liu Tao,⁵⁷ and the Yüeh Yü,⁵⁸ and may have been the production of some private scholar living towards the end of the "Spring and Autumn" or the beginning of the "Warring States" period.⁵⁹ The story that his precepts were actually applied by the Wu State, is merely the outcome of big talk on the part of his followers.⁶⁰

From the flourishing period of the Chou dynasty⁶¹ down to the time of the "Spring and Autumn," all military commanders were statesmen as well, and the class of professional generals, for conducting external campaigns, did not then exist. It was not until the period of the "Six States"⁶² that this custom changed. Now although Wu was an uncivilized State, is it conceivable that Tso should have left unrecorded the fact that Sun Wu was a great general and yet held no civil office? What we are told, therefore, about Jang-chu⁶³ and Sun Wu, is not authentic matter, but the reckless fabrication of theorizing pundits. The story of Ho Lü's experiment on the women, in particular, is utterly preposterous and incredible.⁶⁴

Yeh Shui-hsin represents Ss-ma Chien as having said that Sun Wu crushed Chu and entered Ying. This is not quite correct. No doubt the impression left on the reader's mind is that he at least shared in these exploits; but the subject of the verbs , , and is certainly , as shown by the next words: .⁶⁵ The fact may or may not be significant; but it is nowhere explicitly stated in the Shih Chi either that Sun Tz was general on the occasion of the taking of Ying, or that he even went there at all. Moreover, as we know that Yüan and Po Pei both took part in the expedition, and also that its success was largely due to the dash and enterprise of Fu Kai, Ho Lu's younger brother, it is not easy to see how yet another general could have played a very prominent part in the same campaign.

Chên Chên-sun of the Sung dynasty has the note:, ⁶⁶

Military writers look upon Sun Wu as the father of their art. But the fact that he does not appear in the Tso Chuan, although he is said to have served under Ho Lü King of Wu, makes it uncertain what period he really belonged to.⁶⁷

He also says:,

The works of Sun Wu and Chi may be of genuine antiquity.⁶⁸

It is noticeable that both Yeh Shui-hsin and Chên Chên-sun, while rejecting the personality of Sun Wu as he figures in Ss-ma Chien's history, are inclined to accept the date traditionally assigned to the work which passes under his name. The author of the Hsü Lu fails to appreciate this distinction, and consequently his bitter attack on Chên Chên-sun really misses its mark. He makes one of two points, however, which certainly tell in favor of the high antiquity of our "13 chapters." "Sun Tz," he says, "must have lived in the age of Ching Wang [519-476], because he is frequently plagiarized in subsequent works of the Chou, Chin and Han dynasties."⁶⁹ The two most shameless offenders in this respect are Wu Chi and Huai-nan Tz, both of them important historical personages in their day. The former lived only a century after the alleged date of Sun Tz, and his death is known to have taken place in 381 BC. It was to him, according to Liu Hsiang, that Tsêng Shên delivered the Tso Chuan, which had been entrusted to him by its author.⁷⁰ Now the fact that quotations from the Art of War, acknowledged or otherwise, are to be found in so many authors of different epochs, establishes a very strong anterior to them all, in other words, that Sun Tz's treatise was already in existence towards the end of the 5th century BC. Further proof of Sun Tz's antiquity is furnished by the archaic or wholly obsolete meanings attaching to a number

of the words he uses. A list of these, which might perhaps be extended, is given in the Hsü Lu; and though some of the interpretations are doubtful, the main argument is hardly affected thereby.⁷¹ Again, it must not be forgotten that Yeh Shui-hsin, a scholar and critic of the first rank, deliberately pronounces the style of the 13 chapters to belong to the early part of the fifth century. Seeing that he is actually engaged in an attempt to disprove the existence of Sun Wu himself, we may be sure that he would not have hesitated to assign the work to a later date had he not honestly believed the contrary. And it is precisely on such a point that the judgment of an educated Chinaman will carry most weight. Other internal evidence is not far to seek. Thus in chapter XIII ("Raising a host of a hundred thousand men..."), there is an unmistakable allusion to the ancient system of land-tenure which had already passed away by the time of Mencius, who was anxious to see it revived in a modified form.⁷² The only warfare Sun Tz knows is that carried on between the various feudal princes (), in which armored chariots play a large part. Their use seems to have entirely died out before the end of the Chou dynasty. He speaks as a man of Wu, a state which ceased to exist as early as 473 BC. On this I shall touch presently.

But once refer the work to the 5th century or earlier, and the chances of its being other than a bona fide production are sensibly diminished. The great age of forgeries did not come until long after. That it should have been forged in the period immediately following 473 is particularly unlikely, for no one, as a rule, hastens to identify himself with a lost cause. As for Yeh Shui-hsin's theory, that the author was a literary recluse,⁷³ that seems to me quite untenable. If one thing is more apparent than another after reading the maxims of Sun Tz, it is that their essence has been distilled from a large store of personal observation and experience. They reflect the mind not only of a born strategist, gifted with a rare faculty of generalization, but also of a practical soldier closely acquainted with the military conditions of his time. To say nothing of the fact that these sayings have been accepted and endorsed by all the greatest captains of Chinese history, they offer a combination of freshness and sincerity, acuteness and common sense, which quite excludes the idea that they were artificially concocted in the study. If we admit, then, that the 13 chapters were the genuine production of a military man living towards the end of the "Chun Chiu" period, are we not bound, in spite of the silence of the Tso Chuan, to accept Ss-ma Chien's account in its entirety? In view of his high reputation as a sober historian, must we not hesitate to assume that the records he drew upon for Sun Wu's biography were false and untrustworthy? The answer, I fear, must be in the negative. There is still one grave, if not fatal, objection to the chronology involved in the story as told in the Shih Chi, which, so far as I am aware, nobody has yet pointed out. There are two passages in Sun Tz in which he alludes to contemporary affairs. The first is in VI:

Though according to my estimate the soldiers of Yüeh exceed our own in number, that shall advantage them nothing in the matter of victory. I say then that victory can be achieved.

The other is in XI:

Asked if an army can be made to imitate the shuai-jan, I should answer, Yes. For the men of Wu and the men of Yüeh are enemies; yet if they are crossing a river in the same boat and are caught by a storm, they will come to each other's assistance just as the left hand helps the right.

These two paragraphs are extremely valuable as evidence of the date of composition. They assign the work to the period of the struggle between Wu and Yüeh. So much has been observed by Pi I-hsün. But what has hitherto escaped notice is that they also seriously impair the credibility of Ss-ma Chien's narrative. As we have seen above, the first positive date given in connection with Sun Wu is 512 BC. He is then spoken of as a general, acting as confidential adviser to Ho Lu, so that his alleged introduction to that monarch had already taken place, and of course the 13 chapters must have been written earlier still. But at that time, and for several years after, down to the capture of Ying in 506, Chu and not Yüeh, was the great hereditary enemy of Wu. The two states, Chu and Wu, had been constantly at war for over half

a century,⁷⁴ whereas the first war between Wu and Yüeh was waged only in 510,⁷⁵ and even then was no more than a short interlude sandwiched in the midst of the fierce struggle with Chu. Now Chu is not mentioned in the 13 chapters at all. The natural inference is that they were written at a time when Yüeh had become the prime antagonist of Wu, that is, after Chu had suffered the great humiliation of 506. At this point, a table of dates may be found useful.

BC

514 Accession of Ho Lu.

512 Ho Lu attacks Chu, but is dissuaded from entering Ying, the capital. Shih Chi mentions Sun Wu as general.

511 Another attack on Chu.

510 Wu makes a successful attack on Yüeh. This is the first war between the two states.

509

or

508 Chu invades Wu, but is signally defeated at Yü-chang.

506 Ho Lu attacks Chu with the aid of Tang and Tsai. Decisive battle of Po-chü, and capture of Ying. Last mention of Sun Wu in Shih Chi.

505 Yüeh makes a raid on Wu in the absence of its army. Wu is beaten by Chin and evacuates Ying.

504 Ho Lu sends Fu Chai to attack Chu.

497 Kou Chien becomes King of Yüeh.

496 Wu attacks Yüeh, but is defeated by Kou Chien at Tsui-li. Ho Lu is killed.

494 Fu Chai defeats Kou Chien in the great battle of Fu-chiao, and enters the capital of Yüeh.

485

or

484 Kou Chien renders homage to Wu. Death of Wu Tz-hsü.

482 Kou Chien invades Wu in the absence of Fu Chai.

478

to

476 Further attacks by Yüeh on Wu.

475 Kou Chien lays siege to the capital of Wu.

473 Final defeat and extinction of Wu.

The sentence quoted above from chapter VI hardly strikes me as one that could have been written in the full flush of victory. It seems rather to imply that, for the moment at least, the tide had turned against Wu, and that she was getting the worst of the struggle. Hence we may conclude that our treatise was not in existence in 505, before which date Yüeh does not appear to have scored any notable success against Wu. Ho Lu died in 496, so that if the book was written for him, it must have been during the period 505-496, when there was a lull in the hostilities, Wu having presumably exhausted by its supreme effort against Chu. On the other hand, if we choose to disregard the tradition connecting Sun Wu's name with Ho Lu, it might equally well have seen the light between 496 and 494, or possibly in the period 482-473, when Yüeh was once again becoming a very serious menace.⁷⁶ We may feel fairly certain that the author, whoever he may have been, was not a man of any great eminence in his own day. On this point

the negative testimony of the Tso Chuan far outweighs any shred of authority still attaching to the Shih Chi, if once its other facts are discredited. Sun Hsing-yen, however, makes a feeble attempt to explain the omission of his name from the great commentary. It was Wu Tz-hsü, he says, who got all the credit of Sun Wu's exploits, because the latter (being an alien) was not rewarded with an office in the State.⁷⁷

How then did the Sun Tz legend originate? It may be that the growing celebrity of the book imparted by degrees a kind of factitious renown to its author. It was felt to be only right and proper that one so well versed in the science of war should have solid achievements to his credit as well. Now the capture of Ying was undoubtedly the greatest feat of arms in Ho Lu's reign; it made a deep and lasting impression on all the surrounding states, and raised Wu to the short-lived zenith of her power. Hence, what more natural, as time went on, than that the acknowledged master of strategy, Sun Wu, should be popularly identified with that campaign, at first perhaps only in the sense that his brain conceived and planned it; afterwards, that it was actually carried out by him in conjunction with Wu Yüan,⁷⁸ Po Pei and Fu Kai?

It is obvious that any attempt to reconstruct even the outline of Sun Tz's life must be based almost wholly on conjecture. With this necessary proviso, I should say that he probably entered the service of Wu about the time of Ho Lu's accession, and gathered experience, though only in the capacity of a subordinate officer, during the intense military activity which marked the first half of the prince's reign.⁷⁹ If he rose to be a general at all, he certainly was never on an equal footing with the three above mentioned. He was doubtless present at the investment and occupation of Ying, and witnessed Wu's sudden collapse in the following year. Yüeh's attack at this critical juncture, when her rival was embarrassed on every side, seems to have convinced him that this upstart kingdom was the great enemy against whom every effort would henceforth have to be directed. Sun Wu was thus a well-seasoned warrior when he sat down to write his famous book, which according to my reckoning must have appeared towards the end, rather than the beginning of Ho Lu's reign. The story of the women may possibly have grown out of some real incident occurring about the same time. As we hear no more of Sun Wu after this from any source, he is hardly likely to have survived his patron or to have taken part in the death-struggle with Yüeh, which began with the disaster at Tsui-li.

If these inferences are approximately correct, there is a certain irony in the fate which decreed that China's most illustrious man of peace should be contemporary with her greatest writer on war.

The Text of Sun Tz

I have found it difficult to glean much about the history of Sun Tz's text. The quotations that occur in early authors go to show that the "13 chapters" of which Ss-ma Chien speaks were essentially the same as those now extant. We have his word for it that they were widely circulated in his day, and can only regret that he refrained from discussing them on that account.⁸⁰ Sun Hsing-yen says in his preface:

During the Chin and Han dynasties Sun Tz's Art of War was in general use amongst military commanders, but they seem to have treated it as a work of mysterious import, and were unwilling to expound it for the benefit of posterity. Thus it came about that Wei Wu was the first to write a commentary on it.⁸¹

As we have already seen, there is no reasonable ground to suppose that Tsao Kung tampered with the text. But the text itself is often so obscure, and the number of editions which appeared from that time onward so great, especially during the Tang and Sung dynasties, that it would be surprising if numerous corruptions had not managed to creep in. Towards the middle of the Sung period, by which time all the chief commentaries on Sun Tz were in existence, a certain Chi Tien-pao published a work in 15 chüan entitled Sun Tz with the collected commentaries of ten writers.⁸² There was another text, with variant readings put forward by Chu Fu of Ta-hsing,⁸³ which also had supporters among the scholars of that period; but in the Ming editions, Sun Hsing-yen tells us, these readings were for some reason or other no longer put into circulation.⁸⁴ Thus, until the end of the 18th century, the text in sole possession of the field was one derived from Chi Tien-pao's edition, although no actual copy of that important work was known to have survived. That, therefore, is the text of Sun Tz which appears in the War section of the great Imperial encyclopedia printed in 1726, the Ku Chin Tu Shu Chi Chêng. Another copy at my disposal of what is practically the same text, with slight variations, is that contained in the Eleven philosophers of the Chou and Chin dynasties (1758). And the Chinese printed in Capt. Calthrop's first edition is evidently a similar version which has filtered through Japanese channels. So things remained until Sun Hsing-yen (1752-1818), a distinguished antiquarian and classical scholar,⁸⁵ who claimed to be an actual descendant of Sun Wu,⁸⁶ accidentally discovered a copy of Chi Tien-pao's long-lost work, when on a visit to the library of the Hua-yin temple.⁸⁷ Appended to it was the I Shuo of Chêng Yu-hsien, mentioned in the Tung Chih, and also believed to have perished.⁸⁸ This is what Sun Hsing-yen designates as the or "original edition (or text)", a rather misleading name, for it cannot by any means claim to set before us the text of Sun Tz in its pristine purity. Chi Tien-pao was a careless compiler,⁸⁹ and appears to have been content to reproduce the somewhat debased version current in his day, without troubling to collate it with the earliest editions then available. Fortunately, two versions of Sun Tz, even older than the newly discovered work, were still extant, one buried in the Tung Tien, Tu Yu's great treatise on the Constitution, the other similarly enshrined in the Tai Ping Yü Lan encyclopedia. In both the complete text is to be found, though split up into fragments, intermixed with other matter, and scattered piecemeal over a number of different sections. Considering that the Yü Lan takes us back to the year 983, and the Tung Tien about 200 years further still, to the middle of the Tang dynasty, the value of these early transcripts of Sun Tz can hardly be overestimated. Yet the idea of utilizing them does not seem to have occurred to anyone until Sun Hsing-yen, acting under Government instructions, undertook a thorough recension of the text. This is his own account:

Because of the numerous mistakes in the text of Sun Tz which his editors had handed down, the Government ordered that the ancient edition [of Chi Tien-pao] should be used, and that the text should be revised and corrected throughout. It happened that Wu Nien-hu, the Governor Pi Kua, and Hsi, a graduate of the second degree, had all devoted themselves to this study, probably surpassing me

therein. Accordingly, I have had the whole work cut on blocks as a textbook for military men.⁹⁰

The three individuals here referred to had evidently been occupied on the text of Sun Tz prior to Sun Hsing-yen's commission, but we are left in doubt as to the work they really accomplished. At any rate, the new edition, when ultimately produced, appeared in the names of Sun Hsing-yen and only one co-editor Wu Jên-shi. They took the "original edition" as their basis, and by careful comparison with older versions, as well as the extant commentaries and other sources of information such as the I Shuo, succeeded in restoring a very large number of doubtful passages, and turned out, on the whole, what must be accepted as the closest approximation we are ever likely to get to Sun Tz's original work. This is what will hereafter be denominated the "standard text."

The copy which I have used belongs to a reissue dated 1877. It is in 6 pên, forming part of a well-printed set of 23 early philosophical works in 83 pên.⁹¹ It opens with a preface by Sun Hsing-yen (largely quoted in this introduction), vindicating the traditional view of Sun Tz's life and performances, and summing up in remarkably concise fashion the evidence in its favor. This is followed by Tsao Kung's preface to his edition, and the biography of Sun Tz from the Shih Chi, both translated above. Then come, firstly, Chêng Yu-hsien's I Shuo,⁹² with author's preface, and next, a short miscellany of historical and bibliographical information entitled Sun Tz Hsü Lu, compiled by Pi I-hsün. As regards the body of the work, each separate sentence is followed by a note on the text, if required, and then by the various commentaries appertaining to it, arranged in chronological order. These we shall now proceed to discuss briefly, one by one.

The Commentators

Sun Tz can boast an exceptionally long distinguished roll of commentators, which would do honor to any classic. Ou-yang Hsiu remarks on this fact, though he wrote before the tale was complete, and rather ingeniously explains it by saying that the artifices of war, being inexhaustible, must therefore be susceptible of treatment in a great variety of ways.⁹³

Tsao Tsao or Tsao Kung, afterwards known as Wei Wu Ti (AD 155-220). There is hardly any room for doubt that the earliest commentary on Sun Tz actually came from the pen of this extraordinary man, whose biography in the *San Kuo Chih*⁹⁴ reads like a romance. One of the greatest military geniuses that the world has seen, and Napoleonic in the scale of his operations, he was especially famed for the marvelous rapidity of his marches, which has found expression in the line "Talk of Tsao Tsao, and Tsao Tsao will appear." Ou-yang Hsiu says of him that he was a great captain who "measured his strength against Tung Cho, Lü Pu and the two Yüan, father and son, and vanquished them all; whereupon he divided the Empire of Han with Wu and Shu, and made himself king. It is recorded that whenever a council of war was held by Wei on the eve of a far-reaching campaign, he had all his calculations ready; those generals who made use of them did not lose one battle in ten; those who ran counter to them in any particular saw their armies incontinently beaten and put to flight."⁹⁵ Tsao Kung's notes on Sun Tz, models of austere brevity, are so thoroughly characteristic of the stern commander known to history, that it is hard indeed to conceive of them as the work of a mere *littérateur*. Sometimes, indeed, owing to extreme compression, they are scarcely intelligible and stand no less in need of a commentary than the text itself.⁹⁶ As we have seen, Tsao Kung is the reputed author of the , a book of war in 100,000 odd words, now lost, but mentioned in the .⁹⁷

Mêng Shih. The commentary which has come down to us under this name is comparatively meager, and nothing about the author is known. Even his personal name has not been recorded. Chi Tien-pao's edition places him after Chia Lin, and Chao Kung-wu also assigns him to the Tang dynasty,⁹⁸ but this is a mistake, as his work is mentioned in the . In Sun Hsing-yen's preface, he appears as Mêng Shih of the Liang dynasty (502-557). Others would identify him with Mêng Kang of the 3rd century. In the ,⁹⁹ he is named in one work as the last of the "Five Commentators," the others being Wei Wu Ti, Tu Mu, Chên Hao and Chia Lin.

Li Chüan of the 8th century was a well-known writer on military tactics. His has been in constant use down to the present day. The mentions (lives of famous generals from the Chou to the Tang dynasty) as written by him.¹⁰⁰ He is also generally supposed to be the real author of the popular Taoist tract, the . According to Chao Kung-wu and the *Tien-i-ko* catalogue,¹⁰¹ he followed the text of Sun Tz which differs considerably from those now extant. His notes are mostly short and to the point, and he frequently illustrates his remarks by anecdotes from Chinese history.

Tu Yu (died 812) did not publish a separate commentary on Sun Tz, his notes being taken from the *Tung Tien*, the encyclopedic treatise on the Constitution which was his lifework. They are largely repetitions of Tsao Kung and Mêng Shih, besides which it is believed that he drew on the ancient commentaries of Wang Ling and others. Owing to the peculiar arrangement of *Tung Tien*, he has to explain each passage on its merits, apart from the context, and sometimes his own explanation does not agree with that of Tsao Kung, whom he always quotes first. Though not strictly to be reckoned as one of the "Ten Commentators," he was added to their number by Chi Tien-pao, being wrongly placed after his grandson Tu Mu.

Tu Mu (803-852) is perhaps the best known as a poet, a bright star even in the glorious galaxy of the Tang period. We learn from Chao Kung-wu that although he had no practical experience of war, he was

extremely fond of discussing the subject, and was moreover well read in the military history of the Chun Chiu and Chan Kuo eras.¹⁰² His notes, therefore, are well worth attention. They are very copious, and replete with historical parallels. The gist of Sun Tz's work is thus summarized by him: "Practice benevolence and justice, but on the other hand make full use of artifice and measures of expediency."¹⁰³ He further declared that all the military triumphs and disasters of the thousand years which had elapsed since Sun Wu's death would, upon examination, be found to uphold and corroborate, in every particular, the maxims contained in his book.¹⁰⁴ Tu Mu's somewhat spiteful charge against Tsao Kung has already been considered elsewhere.

Chên Hao appears to have been a contemporary of Tu Mu. Chao Kung-wu says that he was impelled to write a new commentary on Sun Tz because Tsao Kung's on the one hand was too obscure and subtle, and that of Tu Mu on the other too long-winded and diffuse.¹⁰⁵ Ou-yang Hsiu, writing in the middle of the 11th century, calls Tsao Kung, Tu Mu and Chên Hao the three chief commentators on Sun Tz (), and observes that Chên Hao is continually attacking Tu Mu's shortcomings. His commentary, though not lacking in merit, must rank below those of his predecessors.

Chia Lin is known to have lived under the Tang dynasty, for his commentary on Sun Tz is mentioned in the and was afterwards republished by Chi Hsieh of the same dynasty together with those of Mêng Shih and Tu Yu.¹⁰⁶ It is of somewhat scanty texture, and in point of quality, too, perhaps the least valuable of the eleven.

Mei Yao-chên (1002-1060), commonly known by his "style" as Mei Shêng-yü, was, like Tu Mu, a poet of distinction. His commentary was published with a laudatory preface by the great Ou-yang Hsiu, from which we may cull the following:

Later scholars have misread Sun Tz, distorting his words and trying to make them square with their own one-sided views. Thus, though commentators have not been lacking, only a few have proved equal to the task. My friend Shêng-yü has not fallen into this mistake. In attempting to provide a critical commentary for Sun Tz's work, he does not lose sight of the fact that these sayings were intended for states engaged in internecine warfare; that the author is not concerned with the military conditions prevailing under the sovereigns of the three ancient dynasties,¹⁰⁷ nor with the nine punitive measures prescribed to the Minister of War.¹⁰⁸ Again, Sun Wu loved brevity of diction, but his meaning is always deep. Whether the subject be marching an army, or handling soldiers, or estimating the enemy, or controlling the forces of victory, it is always systematically treated; the sayings are bound together in strict logical sequence, though this has been obscured by commentators who have probably failed to grasp their meaning. In his own commentary, Mei Shêng-yü has brushed aside all the obstinate prejudices of these critics, and has tried to bring out the true meaning of Sun Tz himself. In this way, the clouds of confusion have been dispersed and the sayings made clear. I am convinced that the present work deserves to be handed down side by side with the three great commentaries; and for a great deal that they find in the sayings, coming generations will have constant reason to thank my friend Shêng-yü.¹⁰⁹

Making some allowance for the exuberance of friendship, I am inclined to endorse this favourable judgment, and would certainly place him above Chên Hao in order of merit.

Wang Hsi, also of the Sung dynasty, is decidedly original in some of his interpretations, but much less judicious than Mei Yao-chên, and on the whole not a very trustworthy guide. He is fond of comparing his own commentary with that of Tsao Kung, but the comparison is not often flattering to him. We learn from Chao Kung-wu that Wang Hsi revised the ancient text of Sun Tz, filling up lacunae and correcting mistakes.¹¹⁰

Ho Yen-hsi of the Sung dynasty. The personal name of this commentator is given as above by Chêng Chiao in the Tung Chih, written about the middle of the twelfth century, but he appears simply as Ho Shih in the Yu Hai, and Ma Tuan-lin quotes Chao Kung-wu as saying that his personal name is unknown. There seems to be no reason to doubt Chêng Chiao's statement, otherwise I should have been inclined to hazard a guess and identify him with one Ho Chü-fei, the author of a short treatise on war entitled , who lived in the latter part of the 11th century.¹¹¹ Ho Shih's commentary, in the words of the Tien-i-ko catalogue, "contains helpful additions" here and there, but is chiefly remarkable for the copious extracts taken, in adapted form, from the dynastic histories and other sources.

Chang Yü. The list closes with a commentator of no great originality perhaps, but gifted with admirable powers of lucid exposition. His commentary is based on that of Tsao Kung, whose terse sentences he contrives to expand and develop in masterly fashion. Without Chang Yü, it is safe to say that much of Tsao Kung's commentary would have remained cloaked in its pristine obscurity and therefore valueless. His work is not mentioned in the Sung history, the Tung Kao, or the Yu Hai, but it finds a niche in the Tung Chih, which also names him as the author of the Lives of Famous Generals.¹¹²

It is rather remarkable that the last-named four should all have flourished within so short a space of time. Chao Kung-wu accounts for it by saying: "During the early years of the Sung dynasty the Empire enjoyed a long spell of peace, and men ceased to practice the art of war. But when [Chao] Yüan-hao's rebellion came [1038-42] and the frontier generals were defeated time after time, the Court made strenuous inquiry for men skilled in war, and military topics became the vogue amongst all the high officials. Hence it is that the commentators of Sun Tz in our dynasty belong mainly to that period."¹¹³

Besides these eleven commentators, there are several others whose work has not come down to us. The Sui Shu mentions four, namely Wang Ling (often quoted by Tu Yu as); Chang Tz-shang; Chia Hsü of Wei;¹¹⁴ and Shên Yu of Wu. The Tang Shu adds Sun Hao, and the Tung Chih Hsiao Chi, while the Tu Shu mentions a Ming commentator, Huang Jun-yü. It is possible that some of these may have been merely collectors and editors of other commentaries, like Chi Tien-pao and Chi Hsieh, mentioned above. Certainly in the case of the latter, the entry in the Tung Kao, without the following note, would give one to understand that he had written an independent commentary of his own.

There are two works, described in the Ssu Ku Chüan Shu¹¹⁵ and no doubt extremely rare, which I should much like to have seen. One is entitled , in 5 chüan. It gives selections from four new commentators, probably of the Ming dynasty, as well as from the eleven known to us. The names of the four are Hsieh Yüan; Chang Ao; Li Tsai; and Huang Chih-chêng. The other work is in 4 chüan, compiled by Chêng Tuan of the present dynasty. It is a compendium of information on ancient warfare, with special reference to Sun Tz's 13 chapters.

Appreciations of Sun Tz

Sun Tz has exercised a potent fascination over the minds of some of China's greatest men. Among the famous generals who are known to have studied his pages with enthusiasm may be mentioned Han Hsin (d. 196 BC),¹¹⁶ Fêng I (d. 34 AD),¹¹⁷ Lü Mêng (d. 219),¹¹⁸ and Yo Fei (1103-1141).¹¹⁹ The opinion of Tsao Kung, who disputes with Han Hsin the highest place in Chinese military annals, has already been recorded.¹²⁰ Still more remarkable, in one way, is the testimony of purely literary men, such as Su Hsün (the father of Su Tung-po), who wrote several essays on military topics, all of which owe their chief inspiration to Sun Tz. The following short passage by him is preserved in the Yu Hai:¹²¹

Sun Wu's saying, that in war one cannot make certain of conquering,¹²² is very different indeed from what other books tell us.¹²³ Wu Chi was a man of the same stamp as Sun Wu: they both wrote books on war, and they are linked together in popular speech as "Sun and Wu." But Wu Chi's remarks on war are less weighty, his rules are rougher and more crudely stated, and there is not the same unity of plan as in Sun Tz's work, where the style is terse, but the meaning fully brought out.¹²⁴

The , ch. 17, contains the following extract from the Impartial Judgments in the Garden of Literature by Chêng Hou:,

Sun Tz's 13 chapters are not only the staple and base of all military men's training, but also compel the most careful attention of scholars and men of letters. His sayings are terse yet elegant, simple yet profound, perspicuous and eminently practical. Such works as the Lun Yü, the I Ching and the great Commentary,¹²⁵ as well as the writings of Mencius, Hsün Kuang and Yang Chu, all fall below the level of Sun Tz.¹²⁶

Chu Hsi, commenting on this, fully admits the first part of the criticism, although he dislikes the audacious comparison with the venerated classical works. Language of this sort, he says, "encourages a ruler's bent towards unrelenting warfare and reckless militarism."¹²⁷

Apologies for War

Accustomed as we are to think of China as the greatest peace-loving nation on earth, we are in some danger of forgetting that her experience of war in all its phases has also been such as no modern State can parallel. Her long military annals stretch back to a point at which they are lost in the mists of time. She had built the Great Wall and was maintaining a huge standing army along her frontier centuries before the first Roman legionary was seen on the Danube. What with the perpetual collisions of the ancient feudal States, the grim conflicts with Huns, Turks and other invaders after the centralization of government, the terrific upheavals which accompanied the overthrow of so many dynasties, besides the countless rebellions and minor disturbances that have flamed up and flickered out again one by one, it is hardly too much to say that the clash of arms has never ceased to resound in one portion or another of the Empire.

No less remarkable is the succession of illustrious captains to whom China can point with pride. As in all countries, the greatest are fond of emerging at the most fateful crises of her history. Thus, Po Chi stands out conspicuous in the period when Chin was entering upon her final struggle with the remaining independent states. The stormy years which followed the breakup of the Chin dynasty are illuminated by the transcendent genius of Han Hsin. When the House of Han in turn is tottering to its fall, the great and baleful figure of Tsao Tsao dominates the scene. And in the establishment of the Tang dynasty, one of the mightiest tasks achieved by man, the superhuman energy of Li Shih-min (afterwards the Emperor Tai Tsung) was seconded by the brilliant strategy of Li Ching. None of these generals need fear comparison with the greatest names in the military history of Europe.

In spite of all this, the great body of Chinese sentiment, from Lao Tz downwards, and especially as reflected in the standard literature of Confucianism, has been consistently pacific and intensely opposed to militarism in any form. It is such an uncommon thing to find any of the literati defending warfare on principle, that I have thought it worth while to collect and translate a few passages in which the unorthodox view is upheld. The following, by Ss-ma Chien, shows that for all his ardent admiration of Confucius, he was yet no advocate of peace at any price:

Military weapons are the means used by the Sage to punish violence and cruelty, to give peace to troublous times, to remove difficulties and dangers, and to succor those who are in peril. Every animal with blood in its veins and horns on its head will fight when it is attacked. How much more so will man, who carries in his breast the faculties of love and hatred, joy and anger! When he is pleased, a feeling of affection springs up within him; when angry, his poisoned sting is brought into play. That is the natural law which governs his being.... What then shall be said of those scholars of our time, blind to all great issues, and without any appreciation of relative values, who can only bark out their stale formulas about "virtue" and "civilization," condemning the use of military weapons? They will surely bring our country to impotence and dishonor and the loss of her rightful heritage; or, at the very least, they will bring about invasion and rebellion, sacrifice of territory and general enfeeblement. Yet they obstinately refuse to modify the position they have taken up. The truth is that, just as in the family the teacher must not spare the rod, and punishments cannot be dispensed with in the State, so military chastisement can never be allowed to fall into abeyance in the Empire. All one can say is that this power will be exercised wisely by some, foolishly by others, and that among those who bear arms some will be loyal and others rebellious.¹²⁸

The next piece is taken from Tu Mu's preface to his commentary on Sun Tz:

War may be defined as punishment, which is one of the functions of government. It was the profession of Chung Yu and Jan Chiu, both disciples of Confucius. Nowadays, the holding of trials and hearing of

litigation, the imprisonment of offenders and their execution by flogging in the marketplace, are all done by officials. But the wielding of huge armies, the throwing down of fortified cities, the hauling of women and children into captivity, and the beheading of traitors, this is also work which is done by officials. The objects of the rack¹²⁹ and of military weapons are essentially the same. There is no intrinsic difference between the punishment of flogging and cutting off heads in war. For the lesser infractions of law, which are easily dealt with, only a small amount of force need be employed: hence the use of military weapons and wholesale decapitation. In both cases, however, the end in view is to get rid of wicked people, and to give comfort and relief to the good¹³⁰...

Chi-sun asked Jan Yu, saying: "Have you, Sir, acquired your military aptitude by study, or is it innate?" Jan Yu replied: "It has been acquired by study."¹³¹ "How can that be so," said Chi-sun, "seeing that you are a disciple of Confucius?" "It is a fact," replied Jan Yu; "I was taught by Confucius. It is fitting that the great Sage should exercise both civil and military functions, though to be sure my instruction in the art of fighting has not yet gone very far."

Now, who the author was of this rigid distinction between the "civil" and the "military," and the limitation of each to a separate sphere of action, or in what year of which dynasty it was first introduced, is more than I can say. But, at any rate, it has come about that the members of the governing class are quite afraid of enlarging on military topics, or do so only in a shamefaced manner. If any are bold enough to discuss the subject, they are at once set down as eccentric individuals of coarse and brutal propensities. This is an extraordinary instance in which, through sheer lack of reasoning, men unhappily lose sight of fundamental principles.¹³²

When the Duke of Chou was minister under Chêng Wang, he regulated ceremonies and made music, and venerated the arts of scholarship and learning; yet when the barbarians of the River Huai revolted,¹³³ he sallied forth and chastised them. When Confucius held office under the Duke of Lu, and a meeting was convened at Chia-ku,¹³⁴ he said: "If pacific negotiations are in progress, warlike preparations should have been made beforehand." He rebuked and shamed the Marquis of Chi, who cowered under him and dared not proceed to violence. How can it be said that these two great Sages had no knowledge of military matters?¹³⁵

We have seen that the great Chu Hsi held Sun Tz in high esteem. He also appeals to the authority of the Classics:

Our Master Confucius, answering Duke Ling of Wei, said: "I have never studied matters connected with armies and battalions."¹³⁶ Replying to Kung Wên-tz, he said: "I have not been instructed about buff-coats and weapons."¹³⁷ But if we turn to the meeting at Chia-ku,¹³⁸ we find that he used armed force against the men of Lai,¹³⁹ so that the marquis of Chi was overawed. Again, when the inhabitants of Pi revolted; he ordered his officers to attack them, whereupon they were defeated and fled in confusion.¹⁴⁰ He once uttered the words: "If I fight, I conquer."¹⁴¹ And Jan Yu also said: "The Sage exercises both civil and military functions."¹⁴² Can it be a fact that Confucius never studied or received instruction in the art of war? We can only say that he did not specially choose matters connected with armies and fighting to be the subject of his teaching.¹⁴³

Sun Hsing-yen, the editor of Sun Tz, writes in similar strain:

Confucius said: "I am unversed in military matters."¹⁴⁴ He also said: "If I fight, I conquer."¹⁴⁴ Confucius ordered ceremonies and regulated music. Now war constitutes one of the five classes of State ceremonial,¹⁴⁵ and must not be treated as an independent branch of study. Hence, the words "I am unversed in" must be taken to mean that there are things which even an inspired Teacher does not know. Those who have to lead an army and devise stratagems, must learn the art of war. But if one can

command the services of a good general like Sun Tz, who was employed by Wu Tz-hsü, there is no need to learn it oneself. Hence the remark added by Confucius: "If I fight, I conquer."¹⁴⁶

The men of the present day, however, willfully interpret these words of Confucius in their narrowest sense, as though he meant that books on the art of war were not worth reading. With blind persistency, they adduce the example of Chao Kua, who pored over his father's books to no purpose,¹⁴⁷ as a proof that all military theory is useless. Again, seeing that books on war have to do with such things as opportunism in designing plans, and the conversion of spies, they hold that the art is immoral and unworthy of a sage. These people ignore the fact that the studies of our scholars and the civil administration of our officials also require steady application and practice before efficiency is reached. The ancients were particularly chary of allowing mere novices to botch their work.¹⁴⁸ Weapons are baneful¹⁴⁹ and fighting perilous; and unless a general is in constant practice, he ought not to hazard other men's lives in battle.¹⁵⁰ Hence it is essential that Sun Tz's 13 chapters should be studied.¹⁵¹

Hsiang Liang used to instruct his nephew Chi¹⁵² in the art of war. Chi got a rough idea of the art in its general bearings, but would not pursue his studies to their proper outcome, the consequence being that he was finally defeated and overthrown. He did not realize that the tricks and artifices of war are beyond verbal computation. Duke Hsiang of Sung¹⁵³ and King Yen of Hsü¹⁵⁴ were brought to destruction by their misplaced humanity. The treacherous and underhand nature of war necessitates the use of guile and stratagem suited to the occasion. There is a case on record of Confucius himself having violated an extorted oath,¹⁵⁵ and also of his having left the Sung State in disguise.¹⁵⁶ Can we then recklessly arraign Sun Tz for disregarding truth and honesty?¹⁵⁷

Bibliography

The following are the oldest Chinese treatises on war, after Sun Tz. The notes on each have been drawn principally from the *Ss ku chüan shu chien ming mu lu*, ch. 9, fol. 22 sqq.

Wu Tz, in 1 chüan or 6 chapters. By Wu Chi (d. 381 BC). A genuine work. See *Shih Chi*, ch. 65.

Ss-ma Fa, in 1 chüan or 5 chapters. Wrongly attributed to Ss-ma Jang-chü of the 6th century BC. Its date, however, must be early, as the customs of the three ancient dynasties are constantly to be met within its pages.¹⁵⁸ See *Shih Chi*, ch. 64.

The *Ss Ku Chüan Shu* (ch. 99, f. 1) remarks that the oldest three treatises on war, Sun Tz, Wu Tz and Ss-ma Fa, are, generally speaking, only concerned with things strictly military, the art of producing, collecting, training and drilling troops, and the correct theory with regard to measures of expediency, laying plans, transport of goods and the handling of soldiers¹⁵⁹, in strong contrast to later works, in which the science of war is usually blended with metaphysics, divination and magical arts in general.

Liu Tao, in 6 chüan, or 60 chapters. Attributed to Lü Wang (or Lü Shang, also known as Tai Kung) of the 12th century BC.¹⁶⁰ But its style does not belong to the era of the Three Dynasties.¹⁶¹ Lu Tê-ming (550-625 AD) mentions the work, and enumerates the headings of the six sections, , , , , and , so that the forgery cannot have been later than Sui dynasty.

Wei Liao Tz, in 5 chüan. Attributed to Wei Liao (4th cent. BC), who studied under the famous Kuei-ku Tz. The , under , mentions a book of Wei Liao in 31 chapters, whereas the text we possess contains only 24. Its matter is sound enough in the main, though the strategical devices differ considerably from those of the Warring States period.¹⁶² It is been furnished with a commentary by the well-known Sung philosopher Chang Tsai.

San Lüeh in 3 chüan. Attributed to Huang-shih Kung, a legendary personage who is said to have bestowed it on Chang Liang (d. 187 BC) in an interview on a bridge.¹⁶³ But here again, the style is not that of works dating from the Chin or Han period. The Han Emperor Kuang Wu (25-57 AD) apparently quotes from it in one of his proclamations; but the passage in question may have been inserted later on, in order to prove the genuineness of the work. We shall not be far out if we refer it to the Northern Sung period (420-478 AD), or somewhat earlier.¹⁶⁴

Li Wei Kung Wên Tui, in 3 sections. Written in the form of a dialogue between Tai Tsung and his great general Li Ching, it is usually ascribed to the latter. Competent authorities consider it a forgery, though the author was evidently well versed in the art of war.¹⁶⁵

Li Ching Ping Fa (not to be confounded with the foregoing) is a short treatise in 8 chapters, preserved in the *Tung Tien*, but not published separately. This fact explains its omission from the *Ss Ku Chüan Shu*.

Wu Chi Ching,¹⁶⁶ in 1 chüan. Attributed to the legendary minister Fêng Hou, with exegetical notes by Kung-sun Hung of the Han dynasty (d. 121 BC), and said to have been eulogized by the celebrated general Ma Lung (d. 300 AD). Yet the earliest mention of it is in the . Although a forgery, the work is well put together.¹⁶⁷

Considering the high popular estimation in which Chu-ko Liang has always been held, it is not surprising to find more than one work on war ascribed to his pen. Such are (1) the *Shih Liu Tsê* (1 chüan), preserved in the *Yung Lo Ta Tien*; (2) *Chiang Yüan* (1 chüan); and (3) *Hsin Shu* (1 chüan), which steals wholesale from Sun Tz. None of these has the slightest claim to be considered genuine.

Most of the large Chinese encyclopedias contain extensive sections devoted to the literature of war. The following references may be found useful:

Tung Tien (circa 800 AD), ch. 148-162

Tai Ping Yu Lan (983), ch. 270-35.

Wen Hsien Tung Kao (13th cent.), ch. 221.

Yu Hai (13th cent.), ch. 140, 141.

San Tsai Tu Hui (16th cent), ch. 7, 8.

Kuang Po Wu Chih (1607), ch. 31, 32.

Chien Chüeh Lei Shu (1632), ch. 75.

Yüan Chien Lei Han (1710), ch. 206-229

Ku Chin Tu Shu Chi Cheng (1726), section XXX, esp. ch. 81-90

Hsu Wen Hsien Tung Kao (1784), ch. 121-134

Huang Chao Ching Shih Wen Pien (1826), ch. 76, 77.

The bibliographical sections of certain historical works also deserve mention:

Chien Han Shu, ch. 30.

Sui Shu, ch. 32-35

Chiu Tang Shu, ch. 46, 47.

Hsin Tang Shu, ch. 57,60.

Sung Shih, ch. 202-209

Tung Chih (circa 1150), ch. 68.

To these of course must be added the great Catalogue of the Imperial Library:

Ss Ku Chüan Shu Tsung Mu Ti Yao (1790), ch. 99, 100.

Chapter I: Laying Plans

I

Laying Plans¹⁶⁸

Sun Tz said: The art of war is of vital importance to the State.

It is a matter of life and death, a road either to safety or to ruin. Hence it is a subject of inquiry which can on no account be neglected.

The art of war, then, is governed by five constant factors, to be taken into account in one's deliberations, when seeking to determine the conditions obtaining in the field.¹⁶⁹

These are: (1) The Moral Law; (2) Heaven; (3) Earth; (4) The Commander; (5) Method and discipline.¹⁷⁰

The Moral Law causes the people to be in complete accord with their ruler, so that they will follow him regardless of their lives, undismayed by any danger.¹⁷¹

Heaven signifies night and day, cold and heat, times and seasons.¹⁷²

Earth comprises distances, great and small; danger and security; open ground and narrow passes; the chances of life and death.¹⁷³

The Commander stands for the virtues of wisdom, sincerity, benevolence, courage and strictness.¹⁷⁴

By Method and discipline are to be understood the marshaling of the army in its proper subdivisions, the graduations of rank among the officers, the maintenance of roads by which supplies may reach the army, and the control of military expenditure.¹⁷⁵

These five heads should be familiar to every general: he who knows them will be victorious; he who knows them not will fail.

Therefore, in your deliberations, when seeking to determine the military conditions, let them be made the basis of a comparison, in this wise:, ¹⁷⁶

Which of the two sovereigns is imbued with the Moral law?¹⁷⁷

Which of the two generals has most ability?

With whom lie the advantages derived from Heaven and Earth?¹⁷⁸

On which side is discipline most rigorously enforced?¹⁷⁹

Which army is stronger?¹⁸⁰

On which side are officers and men more highly trained?¹⁸¹

In which army is there the greater constancy both in reward and punishment?¹⁸²

By means of these seven considerations I can forecast victory or defeat.

The general that hearkens to my counsel and acts upon it, will conquer: let such a one be retained in command! The general that hearkens not to my counsel nor acts upon it, will suffer defeat: let such a one be dismissed!¹⁸³

While heeding the profit of my counsel, avail yourself also of any helpful circumstances over and beyond the ordinary rules.¹⁸⁴

According as circumstances are favourable, one should modify one's plans.¹⁸⁵

All warfare is based on deception.¹⁸⁶

Hence, when able to attack, we must seem unable; when using our forces, we must seem inactive; when

we are near, we must make the enemy believe we are far away; when far away, we must make him believe we are near.

Hold out baits to entice the enemy. Feign disorder, and crush him.187

If he is secure at all points, be prepared for him. If he is in superior strength, evade him.188

If your opponent is of choleric temper, seek to irritate him. Pretend to be weak, that he may grow arrogant.189

If he is taking his ease, give him no rest.190 If his forces are united, separate them.191

Attack him where he is unprepared, appear where you are not expected.

These military devices, leading to victory, must not be divulged beforehand.192

Now the general who wins a battle makes many calculations in his temple ere the battle is fought.193 The general who loses a battle makes but few calculations beforehand. Thus do many calculations lead to victory, and few calculations to defeat: how much more no calculation at all! It is by attention to this point that I can foresee who is likely to win or lose.

Chapter II: Waging War

II

Waging War¹⁹⁴

Sun Tz said: In the operations of war, where there are in the field a thousand swift chariots, as many heavy chariots, and a hundred thousand mail-clad soldiers,¹⁹⁵ with provisions enough to carry them a thousand li,¹⁹⁶ the expenditure at home and at the front, including entertainment of guests, small items such as glue and paint, and sums spent on chariots and armor, will reach the total of a thousand ounces of silver per day.¹⁹⁷ Such is the cost of raising an army of 100,000 men.¹⁹⁸

When you engage in actual fighting, if victory is long in coming, then men's weapons will grow dull and their ardor will be damped.¹⁹⁹ If you lay siege to a town, you will exhaust your strength.²⁰⁰

Again, if the campaign is protracted, the resources of the State will not be equal to the strain.²⁰¹

Now, when your weapons are dulled, your ardor damped, your strength exhausted and your treasure spent, other chieftains will spring up to take advantage of your extremity. Then no man, however wise, will be able to avert the consequences that must ensue.²⁰²

Thus, though we have heard of stupid haste in war, cleverness has never been seen associated with long delays.²⁰³

There is no instance of a country having benefited from prolonged warfare.²⁰⁴

It is only one who is thoroughly acquainted with the evils of war that can thoroughly understand the profitable way of carrying it on.²⁰⁵

The skilful soldier does not raise a second levy, neither are his supply-wagons loaded more than twice.²⁰⁶

Bring war material with you from home, but forage on the enemy. Thus the army will have food enough for its needs.²⁰⁷

Poverty of the State exchequer causes an army to be maintained by contributions from a distance. Contributing to maintain an army at a distance causes the people to be impoverished.²⁰⁸

On the other hand, the proximity of an army causes prices to go up; and high prices cause the people's substance to be drained away.²⁰⁹

When their substance is drained away, the peasantry will be afflicted by heavy exactions.²¹⁰

With this loss of substance and exhaustion of strength, the homes of the people will be stripped bare, and three-tenths of their income will be dissipated;²¹¹ while government expenses for broken chariots, worn-out horses, breastplates and helmets, bows and arrows, spears and shields, protective mantles, draught-oxen and heavy wagons, will amount to four-tenths of its total revenue.²¹²

Hence a wise general makes a point of foraging on the enemy. One cartload of the enemy's provisions is equivalent to twenty of one's own, and likewise a single picul of his provender is equivalent to twenty from one's own store.²¹³

Now in order to kill the enemy, our men must be roused to anger; that there may be advantage from defeating the enemy, they must have their rewards.²¹⁴

Therefore in chariot fighting, when ten or more chariots have been taken, those should be rewarded who took the first.²¹⁵ Our own flags should be substituted for those of the enemy, and the chariots mingled and used in conjunction with ours. The captured soldiers should be kindly treated and kept.

This is called, using the conquered foe to augment one's own strength.

In war, then, let your great object be victory, not lengthy campaigns.²¹⁶

Thus it may be known that the leader of armies is the arbiter of the people's fate, the man on whom it depends whether the nation shall be in peace or in peril.²¹⁷

Chapter III: Attack by Stratagem

III

Attack by Stratagem

Sun Tz said: In the practical art of war, the best thing of all is to take the enemy's country whole and intact; to shatter and destroy it is not so good. So, too, it is better to capture an army entire than to destroy it, to capture a regiment, a detachment or a company entire than to destroy them.²¹⁸

Hence to fight and conquer in all your battles is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting.²¹⁹

Thus the highest form of generalship is to baulk the enemy's plans;²²⁰ the next best is to prevent the junction of the enemy's forces;²²¹ the next in order is to attack the enemy's army in the field;²²² and the worst policy of all is to besiege walled cities.²²³

The rule is, not to besiege walled cities if it can possibly be avoided.²²⁴ The preparation of mantlets, movable shelters, and various implements of war, will take up three whole months;²²⁵ and the piling up of mounds over against the walls will take three months more.²²⁶

The general, unable to control his irritation, will launch his men to the assault like swarming ants,²²⁷ with the result that one-third of his men are slain, while the town still remains untaken. Such are the disastrous effects of a siege.²²⁸

Therefore the skilful leader subdues the enemy's troops without any fighting; he captures their cities without laying siege to them; he overthrows their kingdom without lengthy operations in the field.²²⁹

With his forces intact he will dispute the mastery of the Empire, and thus, without losing a man, his triumph will be complete.²³⁰ This is the method of attacking by stratagem.

It is the rule in war, if our forces are ten to the enemy's one, to surround him; if five to one, to attack him;²³¹ if twice as numerous, to divide our army into two.²³²

If equally matched, we can offer battle;²³³ if slightly inferior in numbers, we can avoid the enemy;²³⁴ if quite unequal in every way, we can flee from him.

Hence, though an obstinate fight may be made by a small force, in the end it must be captured by the larger force.²³⁵

Now the general is the bulwark of the State; if the bulwark is complete at all points; the State will be strong; if the bulwark is defective, the State will be weak.²³⁶

There are three ways in which a ruler can bring misfortune upon his army:.

By commanding the army to advance or to retreat, being ignorant of the fact that it cannot obey. This is called hobbling the army.²³⁷

By attempting to govern an army in the same way as he administers a kingdom, being ignorant of the conditions which obtain in an army. This causes restlessness in the soldier's minds.²³⁸

By employing the officers of his army without discrimination,²³⁹ through ignorance of the military principle of adaptation to circumstances. This shakes the confidence of the soldiers.²⁴⁰

But when the army is restless and distrustful, trouble is sure to come from the other feudal princes. This is simply bringing anarchy into the army, and flinging victory away.²⁴¹

Thus we may know that there are five essentials for victory:

He will win who knows when to fight and when not to fight.242

He will win who knows how to handle both superior and inferior forces.243

He will win whose army is animated by the same spirit throughout all its ranks.244

He will win who, prepared himself, waits to take the enemy unprepared.

He will win who has military capacity and is not interfered with by the sovereign.245

Victory lies in the knowledge of these five points.246

Hence the saying: If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat.247

If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.248

Chapter IV: Tactical Dispositions

IV

Tactical Dispositions²⁴⁹

Sun Tz said: The good fighters of old first put themselves beyond the possibility of defeat, and then waited for an opportunity of defeating the enemy.

To secure ourselves against defeat lies in our own hands, but the opportunity of defeating the enemy is provided by the enemy himself.²⁵⁰

Thus the good fighter is able to secure himself against defeat,²⁵¹ but cannot make certain of defeating the enemy.²⁵²

Hence the saying: One may know how to conquer without being able to do it.²⁵³

Security against defeat implies defensive tactics; ability to defeat the enemy means taking the offensive.²⁵⁴

Standing on the defensive indicates insufficient strength; attacking, a superabundance of strength.

The general who is skilled in defence hides in the most secret recesses of the earth;²⁵⁵ he who is skilled in attack flashes forth from the topmost heights of heaven.²⁵⁶ Thus on the one hand we have ability to protect ourselves; on the other, a victory that is complete.²⁵⁷

To see victory only when it is within the ken of the common herd is not the acme of excellence.²⁵⁸

Neither is it the acme of excellence if you fight and conquer and the whole Empire says, "Well done!"²⁵⁹

To lift an autumn hair is no sign of great strength;²⁶⁰ to see the sun and moon is no sign of sharp sight; to hear the noise of thunder is no sign of a quick ear.²⁶¹

What the ancients called a clever fighter is one who not only wins, but excels in winning with ease.²⁶²

Hence his victories bring him neither reputation for wisdom nor credit for courage.²⁶³

He wins his battles by making no mistakes.²⁶⁴ Making no mistakes is what establishes the certainty of victory, for it means conquering an enemy that is already defeated.²⁶⁵

Hence the skilful fighter puts himself into a position which makes defeat impossible, and does not miss the moment for defeating the enemy.²⁶⁶

Thus it is that in war the victorious strategist only seeks battle after the victory has been won, whereas he who is destined to defeat first fights and afterwards looks for victory.²⁶⁷

The consummate leader cultivates the moral law, and strictly adheres to method and discipline;²⁶⁸ thus it is in his power to control success.

In respect of military method, we have, firstly, Measurement; secondly, Estimation of quantity; thirdly, Calculation; fourthly, Balancing of chances; fifthly, Victory.

Measurement owes its existence to Earth; Estimation of quantity to Measurement; Calculation to Estimation of quantity; Balancing of chances to Calculation; and Victory to Balancing of chances.²⁶⁹

A victorious army opposed to a routed one, is as a pound's weight placed in the scale against a single grain.²⁷⁰

The onrush of a conquering force is like the bursting of pent-up waters into a chasm a thousand fathoms deep.²⁷¹

Chapter V: Energy

V

Energy²⁷²

Sun Tz said: The control of a large force is the same principle as the control of a few men: it is merely a question of dividing up their numbers.²⁷³

Fighting with a large army under your command is nowise different from fighting with a small one: it is merely a question of instituting signs and signals.²⁷⁴

To ensure that your whole host may withstand the brunt of the enemy's attack and remain unshaken, this is effected by manoeuvres direct and indirect.²⁷⁵

That the impact of your army may be like a grindstone dashed against an egg, this is effected by the science of weak points and strong.²⁷⁶

In all fighting, the direct method may be used for joining battle, but indirect methods will be needed in order to secure victory.²⁷⁷

Indirect tactics, efficiently applied, are inexhaustible as Heaven and Earth, unending as the flow of rivers and streams;²⁷⁸ like the sun and moon, they end but to begin anew; like the four seasons, they pass away to return once more.²⁷⁹

There are not more than five musical notes,²⁸⁰ yet the combinations of these five give rise to more melodies than can ever be heard.

There are not more than five primary colors,²⁸¹ yet in combination they produce more hues than can ever been seen.

There are not more than five cardinal tastes,²⁸² yet combinations of them yield more flavors than can ever be tasted.

In battle, there are not more than two methods of attack, the direct and the indirect; yet these two in combination give rise to an endless series of manoeuvres.

The direct and the indirect lead on to each other in turn. It is like moving in a circle, you never come to an end. Who can exhaust the possibilities of their combination?²⁸³

The onset of troops is like the rush of a torrent which will even roll stones along in its course.

The quality of decision is like the well-timed swoop of a falcon which enables it to strike and destroy its victim.²⁸⁴

Therefore the good fighter will be terrible in his onset, and prompt in his decision.²⁸⁵

Energy may be likened to the bending of a crossbow; decision, to the releasing of a trigger.²⁸⁶

Amid the turmoil and tumult of battle, there may be seeming disorder and yet no real disorder at all; amid confusion and chaos, your array may be without head or tail, yet it will be proof against defeat.²⁸⁷

Simulated disorder postulates perfect discipline, simulated fear postulates courage; simulated weakness postulates strength.²⁸⁸

Hiding order beneath the cloak of disorder is simply a question of subdivision;²⁸⁹ concealing courage under a show of timidity presupposes a fund of latent energy;²⁹⁰ masking strength with weakness is to be effected by tactical dispositions.²⁹¹

Thus one who is skilful at keeping the enemy on the move maintains deceitful appearances, according to

which the enemy will act.²⁹² He sacrifices something, that the enemy may snatch at it.²⁹³

By holding out baits, he keeps him on the march; then with a body of picked men he lies in wait for him.²⁹⁴

The clever combatant looks to the effect of combined energy, and does not require too much from individuals.²⁹⁵ Hence his ability to pick out the right men and utilize combined energy.²⁹⁶

When he utilizes combined energy, his fighting men become as it were like unto rolling logs or stones. For it is the nature of a log or stone to remain motionless on level ground, and to move when on a slope; if four-cornered, to come to a standstill, but if round-shaped, to go rolling down.²⁹⁷

Thus the energy developed by good fighting men is as the momentum of a round stone rolled down a mountain thousands of feet in height. So much on the subject of energy.²⁹⁸

Chapter VI: Weak Points and Strong

VI

Weak Points and Strong²⁹⁹

Sun Tz said: Whoever is first in the field and awaits the coming of the enemy, will be fresh for the fight; whoever is second in the field and has to hasten to battle will arrive exhausted.³⁰⁰

Therefore the clever combatant imposes his will on the enemy, but does not allow the enemy's will to be imposed on him.³⁰¹

By holding out advantages to him, he can cause the enemy to approach of his own accord; or, by inflicting damage, he can make it impossible for the enemy to draw near.³⁰²

If the enemy is taking his ease, he can harass him;³⁰³ if well supplied with food, he can starve him out;³⁰⁴ if quietly encamped, he can force him to move.³⁰⁵

Appear at points which the enemy must hasten to defend; march swiftly to places where you are not expected.³⁰⁶

An army may march great distances without distress, if it marches through country where the enemy is not.³⁰⁷

You can be sure of succeeding in your attacks if you only attack places which are undefended.³⁰⁸ You can ensure the safety of your defence if you only hold positions that cannot be attacked.³⁰⁹

Hence that general is skilful in attack whose opponent does not know what to defend; and he is skilful in defence whose opponent does not know what to attack.³¹⁰

O divine art of subtlety and secrecy! Through you we learn to be invisible, through you inaudible;³¹¹ and hence we can hold the enemy's fate in our hands.³¹²

You may advance and be absolutely irresistible, if you make for the enemy's weak points; you may retire and be safe from pursuit if your movements are more rapid than those of the enemy.³¹³

If we wish to fight, the enemy can be forced to an engagement even though he be sheltered behind a high rampart and a deep ditch. All we need do is attack some other place that he will be obliged to relieve.³¹⁴

If we do not wish to fight, we can prevent the enemy from engaging us even though the lines of our encampment be merely traced out on the ground. All we need do is to throw something odd and unaccountable in his way.³¹⁵

By discovering the enemy's dispositions and remaining invisible ourselves, we can keep our forces concentrated, while the enemy's must be divided.³¹⁶

We can form a single united body, while the enemy must split up into fractions. Hence there will be a whole pitted against separate parts of a whole,³¹⁷ which means that we shall be many to the enemy's few.

And if we are able thus to attack an inferior force with a superior one, our opponents will be in dire straits.³¹⁸

The spot where we intend to fight must not be made known; for then the enemy will have to prepare against a possible attack at several different points;³¹⁹ and his forces being thus distributed in many directions, the numbers we shall have to face at any given point will be proportionately few.

For should the enemy strengthen his van, he will weaken his rear; should he strengthen his rear, he will

weaken his van; should he strengthen his left, he will weaken his right; should he strengthen his right, he will weaken his left. If he sends reinforcements everywhere, he will everywhere be weak.³²⁰

Numerical weakness comes from having to prepare against possible attacks; numerical strength, from compelling our adversary to make these preparations against us.³²¹

Knowing the place and the time of the coming battle, we may concentrate from the greatest distances in order to fight.³²²

But if neither time nor place be known, then the left wing will be impotent to succor the right, the right equally impotent to succor the left, the van unable to relieve the rear, or the rear to support the van. How much more so if the furthest portions of the army are anything under a hundred li apart, and even the nearest are separated by several li!³²³

Though according to my estimate the soldiers of Yüeh exceed our own in number, that shall advantage them nothing in the matter of victory.³²⁴ I say then that victory can be achieved.³²⁵

Though the enemy be stronger in numbers, we may prevent him from fighting.³²⁶ Scheme so as to discover his plans and the likelihood of their success.³²⁷

Rouse him, and learn the principle of his activity or inactivity.³²⁸ Force him to reveal himself, so as to find out his vulnerable spots.³²⁹

Carefully compare the opposing army with your own,³³⁰ so that you may know where strength is superabundant and where it is deficient.³³¹

In making tactical dispositions, the highest pitch you can attain is to conceal them;³³² conceal your dispositions, and you will be safe from the prying of the subtlest spies, from the machinations of the wisest brains.³³³

How victory may be produced for them out of the enemy's own tactics, that is what the multitude cannot comprehend.³³⁴

All men can see the tactics whereby I conquer, but what none can see is the strategy out of which victory is evolved.³³⁵

Do not repeat the tactics which have gained you one victory, but let your methods be regulated by the infinite variety of circumstances.³³⁶

Military tactics are like unto water; for water in its natural course runs away from high places and hastens downwards.³³⁷

So in war, the way is to avoid what is strong and to strike at what is weak.³³⁸

Water shapes its course according to the nature of the ground over which it flows;³³⁹ the soldier works out his victory in relation to the foe whom he is facing.

Therefore, just as water retains no constant shape, so in warfare there are no constant conditions.

He who can modify his tactics in relation to his opponent and thereby succeed in winning, may be called a heaven-born captain.

The five elements³⁴⁰ are not always equally predominant;³⁴¹ the four seasons make way for each other in turn.³⁴² There are short days and long; the moon has its periods of waning and waxing.³⁴³

Chapter VII: Manoeuvring

VII

Manoeuvring³⁴⁴

Sun Tz said: In war, the general receives his commands from the sovereign.³⁴⁵

Having collected an army and concentrated his forces, he must blend and harmonize the different elements thereof before pitching his camp.³⁴⁶

After that, comes tactical manoeuvring, than which there is nothing more difficult.³⁴⁷ The difficulty of tactical manoeuvring consists in turning the devious into the direct, and misfortune into gain.³⁴⁸

Thus, to take a long and circuitous route, after enticing the enemy out of the way, and though starting after him, to contrive to reach the goal before him, shows knowledge of the artifice of deviation.³⁴⁹

Manoeuvring with an army is advantageous; with an undisciplined multitude, most dangerous.³⁵⁰

If you set a fully equipped army in march in order to snatch an advantage, the chances are that you will be too late.³⁵¹ On the other hand, to detach a flying column for the purpose involves the sacrifice of its baggage and stores.³⁵²

Thus, if you order your men to roll up their buff-coats,³⁵³ and make forced marches without halting day or night, covering double the usual distance at a stretch,³⁵⁴ doing a hundred li in order to wrest an advantage, the leaders of all your three divisions will fall into the hands of the enemy.

The stronger men will be in front, the jaded ones will fall behind, and on this plan only one-tenth of your army will reach its destination.³⁵⁵

If you march fifty li in order to outmanoeuvre the enemy, you will lose the leader of your first division, and only half your force will reach the goal.³⁵⁶

If you march thirty li with the same object, two-thirds of your army will arrive.³⁵⁷

We may take it then that an army without its baggage-train is lost; without provisions it is lost; without bases of supply it is lost.³⁵⁸

We cannot enter into alliances until we are acquainted with the designs of our neighbors.³⁵⁹

We are not fit to lead an army on the march unless we are familiar with the face of the country, its mountains and forests, its pitfalls³⁶⁰ and precipices,³⁶¹ its marshes³⁶² and swamps.³⁶³

We shall be unable to turn natural advantage to account unless we make use of local guides.³⁶⁴

In war, practice dissimulation, and you will succeed.³⁶⁵ Move only if there is a real advantage to be gained.³⁶⁶

Whether to concentrate or to divide your troops, must be decided by circumstances.

Let your rapidity be that of the wind,³⁶⁷ your compactness that of the forest.³⁶⁸

In raiding and plundering be like fire,³⁶⁹ in immovability like a mountain.³⁷⁰

Let your plans be dark and impenetrable as night, and when you move, fall like a thunderbolt.³⁷¹

When you plunder a countryside, let the spoil be divided amongst your men;³⁷² when you capture new territory, cut it up into allotments for the benefit of the soldiery.³⁷³

Ponder and deliberate³⁷⁴ before you make a move.³⁷⁵

He will conquer who has learnt the artifice of deviation.³⁷⁶ Such is the art of manoeuvring.³⁷⁷

The Book of Army Management says:³⁷⁸ On the field of battle,³⁷⁹ the spoken word does not carry far enough: hence the institution of gongs and drums.³⁸⁰ Nor can ordinary objects be seen clearly enough: hence the institution of banners and flags.

Gongs and drums, banners and flags, are means whereby the ears and eyes of the host³⁸¹ may be focused on one particular point.³⁸²

The host thus forming a single united body, is it impossible either for the brave to advance alone, or for the cowardly to retreat alone.³⁸³ This is the art of handling large masses of men.

In night-fighting, then, make much use of signal-fires and drums, and in fighting by day, of flags and banners, as a means of influencing the ears and eyes of your army.³⁸⁴

A whole army may be robbed of its spirit;³⁸⁵ a commander-in-chief may be robbed of his presence of mind.³⁸⁶

Now a soldier's spirit is keenest in the morning;³⁸⁷ by noonday it has begun to flag; and in the evening, his mind is bent only on returning to camp.

A clever general, therefore,³⁸⁸ avoids an army when its spirit is keen, but attacks it when it is sluggish and inclined to return. This is the art of studying moods.³⁸⁹

Disciplined and calm, to await the appearance of disorder and hubbub amongst the enemy:, this is the art of retaining self-possession.

To be near the goal while the enemy is still far from it, to wait at ease³⁹⁰ while the enemy is toiling and struggling, to be well-fed while the enemy is famished:, this is the art of husbanding one's strength.

To refrain from intercepting³⁹¹ an enemy whose banners are in perfect order, to refrain from attacking an army drawn up in calm and confident array:³⁹² this is the art of studying circumstances.³⁹³

It is a military axiom not to advance uphill against the enemy, nor to oppose him when he comes downhill.³⁹⁴

Do not pursue an enemy who simulates flight; do not attack soldiers whose temper is keen.

Do not swallow bait offered by the enemy.³⁹⁵ Do not interfere with an army that is returning home.³⁹⁶

When you surround an army, leave an outlet free.³⁹⁷ Do not press a desperate foe too hard.³⁹⁸

Such is the art of warfare.³⁹⁹

Chapter VIII: Variation of Tactics

VIII

Variation of Tactics⁴⁰⁰

Sun Tz said: In war, the general receives his commands from the sovereign, collects his army and concentrates his forces.⁴⁰¹

When in difficult country, do not encamp.⁴⁰² In country where high roads intersect, join hands with your allies.⁴⁰³ Do not linger in dangerously isolated positions.⁴⁰⁴ In hemmed-in situations, you must resort to stratagem.⁴⁰⁵ In a desperate position, you must fight.⁴⁰⁶

There are roads which must not be followed,⁴⁰⁷ armies which must not be attacked,⁴⁰⁸ towns⁴⁰⁹ which must not be besieged,⁴¹⁰ positions which must not be contested, commands of the sovereign which must not be obeyed.⁴¹¹

The general who thoroughly understands the advantages that accompany variation of tactics knows how to handle his troops.⁴¹²

The general who does not understand these, may be well acquainted with the configuration of the country, yet he will not be able to turn his knowledge to practical account.⁴¹³

So, the student of war who is unversed in the art of varying his plans, even though he be acquainted with the Five Advantages, will fail to make the best use of his men.⁴¹⁴

Hence in the wise leader's plans, considerations of advantage and of disadvantage will be blended together.⁴¹⁵

If our expectation of advantage be tempered in this way, we may succeed in accomplishing the essential part of our schemes.⁴¹⁶

If, on the other hand, in the midst of difficulties we are always ready to seize an advantage, we may extricate ourselves from misfortune.⁴¹⁷

Reduce the hostile chiefs by inflicting damage on them;⁴¹⁸ and make trouble for them,⁴¹⁹ and keep them constantly engaged;⁴²⁰ hold out specious allurements, and make them rush to any given point.⁴²¹

The art of war teaches us to rely not on the likelihood of the enemy's not coming, but on our own readiness to receive him;⁴²² not on the chance of his not attacking, but rather on the fact that we have made our position unassailable.⁴²³

There are five dangerous faults which may affect a general:

Recklessness, which leads to destruction;⁴²⁴

cowardice, which leads to capture;⁴²⁵

a hasty temper, which can be provoked by insults;⁴²⁶

a delicacy of honor which is sensitive to shame;⁴²⁷

over-solicitude for his men, which exposes him to worry and trouble.⁴²⁸

These are the five besetting sins of a general, ruinous to the conduct of war.

When an army is overthrown and its leader slain, the cause will surely be found among these five dangerous faults. Let them be a subject of meditation.

Chapter IX: The Army on the March

IX

The Army on the March⁴²⁹

Sun Tz said: We come now to the question of encamping the army, and observing signs of the enemy.⁴³⁰ Pass quickly over mountains,⁴³¹ and keep in the neighborhood of valleys.⁴³²

Camp in high places,⁴³³ facing the sun.⁴³⁴ Do not climb heights in order to fight.⁴³⁵ So much for mountain warfare.⁴³⁶

After crossing a river, you should get far away from it.⁴³⁷

When an invading force crosses a river in its onward march, do not advance to meet it in midstream. It will be best to let half the army get across, and then deliver your attack.⁴³⁸

If you are anxious to fight, you should not go to meet the invader near a river which he has to cross.⁴³⁹

Moor your craft higher up than the enemy, and facing the sun.⁴⁴⁰ Do not move upstream to meet the enemy.⁴⁴¹ So much for river warfare.

In crossing salt-marshes, your sole concern should be to get over them quickly, without any delay.⁴⁴²

If forced to fight in a salt-marsh, you should have water and grass near you, and get your back to a clump of trees.⁴⁴³ So much for operations in salt-marshes.

In dry, level country, take up an easily accessible position⁴⁴⁴ with rising ground to your right and on your rear,⁴⁴⁵ so that the danger may be in front, and safety lie behind.⁴⁴⁶ So much for campaigning in flat country.

These are the four useful branches of military knowledge⁴⁴⁷ which enabled the Yellow Emperor to vanquish four several sovereigns.⁴⁴⁸

All armies prefer high ground to low,⁴⁴⁹ and sunny places to dark.

If you are careful of your men,⁴⁵⁰ and camp on hard ground,⁴⁵¹ the army will be free from disease of every kind,⁴⁵² and this will spell victory.

When you come to a hill or a bank, occupy the sunny side, with the slope on your right rear. Thus you will at once act for the benefit of your soldiers and utilize the natural advantages of the ground.

When, in consequence of heavy rains upcountry, a river which you wish to ford is swollen and flecked with foam, you must wait until it subsides.⁴⁵³

Country in which there are precipitous cliffs with torrents running between,⁴⁵⁴ deep natural hollows,⁴⁵⁵ confined places,⁴⁵⁶ tangled thickets,⁴⁵⁷ quagmires⁴⁵⁸ and crevasses,⁴⁵⁹ should be left with all possible speed and not approached.

While we keep away from such places, we should get the enemy to approach them; while we face them, we should let the enemy have them on his rear.

If in the neighborhood of your camp⁴⁶⁰ there should be any hilly country,⁴⁶¹ ponds surrounded by aquatic grass, hollow basins filled with reeds,⁴⁶² or woods with thick undergrowth,⁴⁶³ they must be carefully routed out and searched; for these are places where men in ambush or insidious spies are likely to be lurking.⁴⁶⁴

When the enemy is close at hand and remains quiet, he is relying on the natural strength of his position.⁴⁶⁵

When he keeps aloof and tries to provoke a battle, he is anxious for the other side to advance.⁴⁶⁶

If his place of encampment is easy of access, he is tendering a bait.⁴⁶⁷

Movement amongst the trees of a forest shows that the enemy is advancing.⁴⁶⁸ The appearance of a number of screens in the midst of thick grass means that the enemy wants to make us suspicious.⁴⁶⁹

The rising of birds in their flight is the sign of an ambushade.⁴⁷⁰ Startled beasts indicate that a sudden attack is coming.⁴⁷¹

When there is dust rising in a high column, it is the sign of chariots advancing; when the dust is low, but spread over a wide area, it betokens the approach of infantry.⁴⁷² When it branches out in different directions, it shows that parties have been sent to collect firewood.⁴⁷³ A few clouds of dust moving to and fro signify that the army is encamping.⁴⁷⁴

Humble words and increased preparations are signs that the enemy is about to advance.⁴⁷⁵ Violent language and driving forward as if to the attack are signs that he will retreat.⁴⁷⁶

When the light chariots⁴⁷⁷ come out first and take up a position on the wings, it is a sign that the enemy is forming for battle.⁴⁷⁸

Peace proposals unaccompanied by a sworn covenant indicate a plot.⁴⁷⁹

When there is much running about⁴⁸⁰ and the soldiers fall into rank,⁴⁸¹ it means that the critical moment has come.⁴⁸²

When some are seen advancing and some retreating, it is a lure.⁴⁸³

When the soldiers stand leaning on their spears, they are faint from want of food.⁴⁸⁴

If those who are sent to draw water begin by drinking themselves, the army is suffering from thirst.⁴⁸⁵

If the enemy sees an advantage to be gained⁴⁸⁶ and makes no effort to secure it, the soldiers are exhausted.

If birds gather on any spot, it is unoccupied.⁴⁸⁷ Clamor by night betokens nervousness.⁴⁸⁸

If there is disturbance in the camp, the general's authority is weak. If the banners and flags are shifted about, sedition is afoot.⁴⁸⁹ If the officers are angry, it means that the men are weary.⁴⁹⁰

When an army feeds its horses with grain and kills its cattle for food,⁴⁹¹ and when the men do not hang their cooking-pots⁴⁹² over the campfires,⁴⁹³ showing that they will not return to their tents, you may know that they are determined to fight to the death.⁴⁹⁴

The sight of men whispering together⁴⁹⁵ in small knots⁴⁹⁶ or speaking in subdued tones⁴⁹⁷ points to disaffection amongst the rank and file.⁴⁹⁸

Too frequent rewards signify that the enemy is at the end of his resources;⁴⁹⁹ too many punishments betray a condition of dire distress.⁵⁰⁰

To begin by bluster, but afterwards to take fright at the enemy's numbers, shows a supreme lack of intelligence.⁵⁰¹

When envoys are sent with compliments in their mouths, it is a sign that the enemy wishes for a truce.⁵⁰²

If the enemy's troops march up angrily and remain facing ours for a long time without either joining battle or taking themselves off again, the situation is one that demands great vigilance and circumspection.⁵⁰³

If our troops are no more in number than the enemy, that is amply sufficient;⁵⁰⁴ it only means that no direct attack can be made.⁵⁰⁵ What we can do is simply to concentrate all our available strength, keep a

close watch on the enemy, and obtain reinforcements.⁵⁰⁶

He who exercises no forethought but makes light of his opponents is sure to be captured by them.⁵⁰⁷

If soldiers are punished before they have grown attached to you, they will not prove submissive; and, unless submissive, then will be practically useless. If, when the soldiers have become attached to you, punishments are not enforced, they will still be useless.⁵⁰⁸

Therefore soldiers must be treated in the first instance with humanity, but kept under control by means of iron discipline.⁵⁰⁹ This is a certain road to victory.

If in training soldiers commands are habitually enforced, the army will be well-disciplined; if not, its discipline will be bad.⁵¹⁰

If a general shows confidence in his men but always insists on his orders being obeyed,⁵¹¹ the gain will be mutual.⁵¹²

Chapter X: Terrain

X

Terrain⁵¹³

Sun Tz said: We may distinguish six kinds of terrain, to wit: (1) Accessible ground;⁵¹⁴ (2) entangling ground;⁵¹⁵ (3) temporizing ground;⁵¹⁶ (4) narrow passes; (5) precipitous heights;⁵¹⁷ (6) positions at a great distance from the enemy.⁵¹⁸

Ground which can be freely traversed by both sides is called accessible.⁵¹⁹

With regard to ground of this nature,⁵²⁰ be before the enemy in occupying the raised and sunny spots,⁵²¹ and carefully guard your line of supplies.⁵²² Then you will be able to fight with advantage.⁵²³

Ground which can be abandoned but is hard to re-occupy is called entangling.⁵²⁴

From a position of this sort, if the enemy is unprepared, you may sally forth and defeat him. But if the enemy is prepared for your coming, and you fail to defeat him, then, return being impossible, disaster will ensue.⁵²⁵

When the position is such that neither side will gain by making the first move, it is called temporizing ground.⁵²⁶

In a position of this sort, even though the enemy should offer us an attractive bait,⁵²⁷ it will be advisable not to stir forth, but rather to retreat, thus enticing the enemy in his turn; then, when part of his army has come out, we may deliver our attack with advantage.⁵²⁸

With regard to narrow passes, if you can occupy them first,⁵²⁹ let them be strongly garrisoned and await the advent of the enemy.⁵³⁰

Should the army forestall you in occupying a pass, do not go after him if the pass is fully garrisoned, but only if it is weakly garrisoned.

With regard to precipitous heights, if you are beforehand with your adversary, you should occupy the raised and sunny spots, and there wait for him to come up.⁵³¹

If the enemy has occupied them before you, do not follow him, but retreat and try to entice him away.⁵³²

If you are situated at a great distance from the enemy, and the strength of the two armies is equal,⁵³³ it is not easy to provoke a battle,⁵³⁴ and fighting will be to your disadvantage.

These six are the principles connected with Earth.⁵³⁵ The general who has attained a responsible post must be careful to study them.⁵³⁶

Now an army is exposed to six several calamities, not arising from natural causes,⁵³⁷ but from faults for which the general is responsible. These are: (1) Flight; (2) insubordination; (3) collapse; (4) ruin; (5) disorganization; (6) rout.⁵³⁸

Other conditions being equal, if one force is hurled against another ten times its size, the result will be the flight of the former.⁵³⁹

When the common soldiers are too strong and their officers too weak, the result is insubordination.⁵⁴⁰

When the officers are too strong and the common soldiers too weak, the result is collapse.⁵⁴¹

When the higher officers⁵⁴² are angry and insubordinate, and on meeting the enemy give battle on their own account from a feeling of resentment, before the commander-in-chief can tell whether or no he is in a position to fight, the result is ruin.⁵⁴³

When the general is weak and without authority; when his orders are not clear and distinct;⁵⁴⁴ when there are no fixed duties assigned to officers and men,⁵⁴⁵ and the ranks are formed in a slovenly haphazard manner, the result is utter disorganization.

When a general, unable to estimate the enemy's strength, allows an inferior force to engage a larger one, or hurls a weak detachment against a powerful one, and neglects to place picked soldiers in the front rank, the result must be a rout.⁵⁴⁶

These are six ways of courting defeat,⁵⁴⁷ which must be carefully noted by the general who has attained a responsible post.⁵⁴⁸

The natural formation of the country is the soldier's best ally;⁵⁴⁹ but a power of estimating the adversary,⁵⁵⁰ of controlling the forces of victory,⁵⁵¹ and of shrewdly calculating difficulties, dangers and distances,⁵⁵² constitutes the test of a great general.⁵⁵³

He who knows these things, and in fighting puts his knowledge into practice, will win his battles. He who knows them not, nor practices them, will surely be defeated.

If fighting is sure to result in victory, then you must fight, even though the ruler forbid it; if fighting will not result in victory, then you must not fight even at the ruler's bidding.⁵⁵⁴

The general who advances without coveting fame and retreats without fearing disgrace,⁵⁵⁵ whose only thought is to protect his country and do good service for his sovereign,⁵⁵⁶ is the jewel of the kingdom.⁵⁵⁷

Regard your soldiers as your children, and they will follow you into the deepest valleys; look upon them as your own beloved sons, and they will stand by you even unto death.⁵⁵⁸

If, however, you are indulgent, but unable to make your authority felt; kindhearted, but unable to enforce your commands; and incapable, moreover, of quelling disorder:⁵⁵⁹ then your soldiers must be likened to spoilt children; they are useless for any practical purpose.⁵⁶⁰

If we know that our own men are in a condition to attack, but are unaware that the enemy is not open to attack, we have gone only halfway towards victory.⁵⁶¹

If we know that the enemy is open to attack, but are unaware that our own men are not in a condition to attack, we have gone only halfway towards victory.⁵⁶²

If we know that the enemy is open to attack, and also know that our men are in a condition to attack, but are unaware that the nature of the ground makes fighting impracticable, we have still gone only halfway towards victory.⁵⁶³

Hence the experienced soldier, once in motion, is never bewildered; once he has broken camp, he is never at a loss.⁵⁶⁴

Hence the saying: If you know the enemy and know yourself, your victory will not stand in doubt;⁵⁶⁵ if you know Heaven and know Earth,⁵⁶⁶ you may make your victory complete.⁵⁶⁷

Chapter XI: The Nine Situations

XI

The Nine Situations⁵⁶⁸

Sun Tz said: The art of war recognizes nine varieties of ground: (1) Dispersive ground; (2) facile ground; (3) contentious ground; (4) open ground; (5) ground of intersecting highways; (6) serious ground; (7) difficult ground; (8) hemmed-in ground; (9) desperate ground.

When a chieftain is fighting in his own territory, it is dispersive ground.⁵⁶⁹

When he has penetrated into hostile territory, but to no great distance, it is facile ground.⁵⁷⁰

Ground the possession of which imports great advantage to either side, is contentious ground.⁵⁷¹

Ground on which each side has liberty of movement is open ground.⁵⁷²

Ground which forms the key to three contiguous states,⁵⁷³ so that he who occupies it first has most of the Empire at his command,⁵⁷⁴ is a ground of intersecting highways.⁵⁷⁵

When an army has penetrated into the heart of a hostile country, leaving a number of fortified cities in its rear,⁵⁷⁶ it is serious ground.⁵⁷⁷

Mountain forests,⁵⁷⁸ rugged steeps, marshes and fens, all country that is hard to traverse: this is difficult ground.⁵⁷⁹

Ground which is reached through narrow gorges, and from which we can only retire by tortuous paths, so that a small number of the enemy would suffice to crush a large body of our men: this is hemmed in ground.

Ground on which we can only be saved from destruction by fighting without delay, is desperate ground.⁵⁸⁰

On dispersive ground, therefore, fight not. On facile ground, halt not. On contentious ground, attack not.⁵⁸¹

On open ground, do not try to block the enemy's way.⁵⁸² On the ground of intersecting highways, join hands with your allies.⁵⁸³

On serious ground, gather in plunder.⁵⁸⁴ In difficult ground, keep steadily on the march.⁵⁸⁵

On hemmed-in ground, resort to stratagem.⁵⁸⁶ On desperate ground, fight.⁵⁸⁷

Those who were called skilful leaders of old⁵⁸⁸ knew how to drive a wedge between the enemy's front and rear;⁵⁸⁹ to prevent cooperation between his large and small divisions; to hinder the good troops from rescuing the bad,⁵⁹⁰ the officers from rallying their men.⁵⁹¹

When the enemy's men were scattered, they prevented them from concentrating;⁵⁹² even when their forces were united, they managed to keep them in disorder.⁵⁹³

When it was to their advantage, they made a forward move; when otherwise, they stopped still.⁵⁹⁴

If asked how to cope with a great host of the enemy in orderly array and on the point of marching to the attack,⁵⁹⁵ I should say: "Begin by seizing something which your opponent holds dear; then he will be amenable to your will."⁵⁹⁶

Rapidity is the essence of war:⁵⁹⁷ take advantage of the enemy's unreadiness, make your way by unexpected routes, and attack unguarded spots.

The following are the principles to be observed by an invading force: The further you penetrate into a

country, the greater will be the solidarity of your troops, and thus the defenders will not prevail against you.

Make forays in fertile country in order to supply your army with food.⁵⁹⁸

Carefully study the well-being of your men,⁵⁹⁹ and do not overtax them. Concentrate your energy and hoard your strength.⁶⁰⁰ Keep your army continually on the move,⁶⁰¹ and devise unfathomable plans.⁶⁰²

Throw your soldiers into positions whence there is no escape, and they will prefer death to flight.⁶⁰³ If they will face death, there is nothing they may not achieve.⁶⁰⁴ Officers and men alike will put forth their uttermost strength.⁶⁰⁵

Soldiers when in desperate straits lose the sense of fear. If there is no place of refuge, they will stand firm. If they are in hostile country, they will show a stubborn front.⁶⁰⁶ If there is no help for it, they will fight hard.

Thus, without waiting to be marshaled, the soldiers will be constantly on the qui vive;⁶⁰⁷ without waiting to be asked, they will do your will;⁶⁰⁸ without restrictions, they will be faithful;⁶⁰⁹ without giving orders, they can be trusted.⁶¹⁰

Prohibit the taking of omens, and do away with superstitious doubts.⁶¹¹ Then, until death itself comes, no calamity need be feared.⁶¹²

If our soldiers are not overburdened with money, it is not because they have a distaste for riches; if their lives are not unduly long, it is not because they are disinclined to longevity.⁶¹³

On the day they are ordered out to battle, your soldiers may weep,⁶¹⁴ those sitting up bedewing their garments, and those lying down letting the tears run down their cheeks.⁶¹⁵ But let them once be brought to bay, and they will display the courage of a Chu or a Kuei.⁶¹⁶

The skilful tactician may be likened to the shuai-jan. Now the shuai-jan is a snake that is found in the Chang mountains.⁶¹⁷ Strike at its head, and you will be attacked by its tail; strike at its tail, and you will be attacked by its head; strike at its middle,⁶¹⁸ and you will be attacked by head and tail both.

Asked if an army can be made to imitate the shuai-jan,⁶¹⁹ I should answer, Yes. For the men of Wu and the men of Yüeh are enemies;⁶²⁰ yet if they are crossing a river in the same boat and are caught by a storm, they will come to each other's assistance just as the left hand helps the right.⁶²¹

Hence it is not enough to put one's trust in the tethering of horses,⁶²² and the burying of chariot wheels in the ground.⁶²³

The principle on which to manage an army is to set up one standard of courage which all must reach.⁶²⁴

How to make the best of both strong and weak, that is a question involving the proper use of ground.⁶²⁵

Thus the skilful general conducts his army just as though he were leading a single man, willy-nilly, by the hand.⁶²⁶

It is the business of a general to be quiet and thus ensure secrecy; upright and just, and thus maintain order.⁶²⁷

He must be able to mystify his officers and men by false reports and appearances,⁶²⁸ and thus keep them in total ignorance.⁶²⁹

By altering his arrangements and changing his plans,⁶³⁰ he keeps the enemy without definite knowledge.⁶³¹ By shifting his camp and taking circuitous routes, he prevents the enemy from anticipating his purpose.⁶³²

At the critical moment, the leader of an army acts like one who has climbed up a height and then kicks away the ladder behind him.⁶³³ He carries his men deep into hostile territory before he shows his hand.⁶³⁴

He burns his boats and breaks his cooking-pots;⁶³⁵ like a shepherd driving a flock of sheep, he drives his men this way and that, and none knows whither he is going.⁶³⁶

To muster his host and bring it into danger:, this may be termed the business of the general.⁶³⁷

The different measures suited to the nine varieties of ground;⁶³⁸ the expediency of aggressive or defensive tactics;⁶³⁹ and the fundamental laws of human nature: these are things that must most certainly be studied.

When invading hostile territory, the general principle is, that penetrating deeply brings cohesion; penetrating but a short way means dispersion.⁶⁴⁰

When you leave your own country behind, and take your army across neighborhood territory,⁶⁴¹ you find yourself on critical ground.⁶⁴² When there are means of communication⁶⁴³ on all four sides, the ground is one of intersecting highways.⁶⁴⁴

When you penetrate deeply into a country, it is serious ground. When you penetrate but a little way, it is facile ground.

When you have the enemy's strongholds on your rear,⁶⁴⁵ and narrow passes in front, it is hemmed-in ground. When there is no place of refuge at all, it is desperate ground.

Therefore, on dispersive ground, I would inspire my men with unity of purpose.⁶⁴⁶ On facile ground, I would see that there is close connection between all parts of my army.⁶⁴⁷

On contentious ground, I would hurry up my rear.⁶⁴⁸

On open ground, I would keep a vigilant eye on my defences.⁶⁴⁹ On ground of intersecting highways, I would consolidate my alliances.⁶⁵⁰

On serious ground, I would try to ensure a continuous stream of supplies.⁶⁵¹ On difficult ground, I would keep pushing on along the road.⁶⁵²

On hemmed-in ground, I would block any way of retreat.⁶⁵³ On desperate ground, I would proclaim to my soldiers the hopelessness of saving their lives.⁶⁵⁴

For it is the soldier's disposition to offer an obstinate resistance when surrounded, to fight hard when he cannot help himself, and to obey promptly when he has fallen into danger.⁶⁵⁵

We cannot enter into alliance with neighboring princes until we are acquainted with their designs. We are not fit to lead an army on the march unless we are familiar with the face of the country, its mountains and forests, its pitfalls and precipices, its marshes and swamps. We shall be unable to turn natural advantages to account unless we make use of local guides.⁶⁵⁶

To be ignorant of any one of the following four or five principles⁶⁵⁷ does not befit a warlike prince.⁶⁵⁸

When a warlike prince attacks a powerful state, his generalship shows itself in preventing the concentration of the enemy's forces. He overawes his opponents,⁶⁵⁹ and their allies are prevented from joining against him.⁶⁶⁰

Hence he does not strive⁶⁶¹ to ally himself with all and sundry,⁶⁶² nor does he foster the power of other states. He carries out his own secret designs,⁶⁶³ keeping his antagonists in awe.⁶⁶⁴ Thus he is able to capture their cities and overthrow their kingdoms.⁶⁶⁵

Bestow rewards without regard to rule,⁶⁶⁶ issue orders⁶⁶⁷ without regard to previous arrangements;⁶⁶⁸

and you will be able to handle a whole army⁶⁶⁹ as though you had to do with but a single man.⁶⁷⁰

Confront your soldiers with the deed itself; never let them know your design.⁶⁷¹ When the outlook is bright, bring it before their eyes; but tell them nothing when the situation is gloomy.

Place your army in deadly peril, and it will survive; plunge it into desperate straits, and it will come off in safety.⁶⁷²

For it is precisely when a force has fallen into harm's way that is capable of striking a blow for victory.⁶⁷³

Success in warfare is gained by carefully accommodating ourselves to the enemy's purpose.⁶⁷⁴

By persistently hanging on the enemy's flank,⁶⁷⁵ we shall succeed in the long run⁶⁷⁶ in killing the commander-in-chief.⁶⁷⁷

This is called ability to accomplish a thing by sheer cunning.⁶⁷⁸

On the day that you take up your command,⁶⁷⁹ block the frontier passes,⁶⁸⁰ destroy the official tallies,⁶⁸¹ and stop the passage of all emissaries.⁶⁸²

Be stern in the council-chamber,⁶⁸³ so that you may control the situation.⁶⁸⁴

If the enemy leaves a door open, you must rush in.⁶⁸⁵

ForeSTALL your opponent by seizing what he holds dear,⁶⁸⁶ and subtly contrive to time his arrival on the ground.⁶⁸⁷

Walk in the path defined by rule,⁶⁸⁸ and accommodate yourself to the enemy until you can fight a decisive battle.⁶⁸⁹

At first, then, exhibit the coyness of a maiden, until the enemy gives you an opening; afterwards emulate the rapidity of a running hare, and it will be too late for the enemy to oppose you.⁶⁹⁰

Chapter XII: The Attack by Fire

XII

The Attack by Fire⁶⁹¹

Sun Tz said: There are five ways of attacking with fire. The first is to burn soldiers in their camp;⁶⁹² the second is to burn stores;⁶⁹³ the third is to burn baggage trains;⁶⁹⁴ the fourth is to burn arsenals and magazines;⁶⁹⁵ the fifth is to hurl dropping fire amongst the enemy.⁶⁹⁶

In order to carry out an attack, we must have means available;⁶⁹⁷ the material for raising fire should always be kept in readiness.⁶⁹⁸

There is a proper season for making attacks with fire, and special days for starting a conflagration.⁶⁹⁹

The proper season is when the weather is very dry; the special days are those when the moon is in the constellations of the Sieve, the Wall, the Wing or the Crossbar;⁷⁰⁰ for these four are all days of rising wind.⁷⁰¹

In attacking with fire, one should be prepared to meet five possible developments:⁷⁰²

When fire breaks out inside the enemy's camp, respond at once⁷⁰³ with an attack from without.

If there is an outbreak of fire, but the enemy's soldiers remain quiet, bide your time and do not attack.⁷⁰⁴

When the force of the flames has reached its height, follow it up with an attack, if that is practicable; if not, stay where you are.⁷⁰⁵

If it is possible to make an assault with fire from without, do not wait for it to break out within, but deliver your attack at a favourable moment.⁷⁰⁶

When you start a fire, be to windward of it. Do not attack from the leeward.⁷⁰⁷

A wind that rises in the daytime lasts long, but a night breeze soon falls.⁷⁰⁸

In every army, the five developments connected with fire must be known, the movements of the stars calculated, and a watch kept for the proper days.⁷⁰⁹

Hence those who use fire as an aid to the attack show intelligence;⁷¹⁰ those who use water as an aid to the attack gain an accession of strength.⁷¹¹

By means of water, an enemy may be intercepted, but not robbed of all his belongings.⁷¹²

Unhappy is the fate of one who tries to win his battles and succeed in his attacks without cultivating the spirit of enterprise; for the result is waste of time and general stagnation.⁷¹³

Hence the saying: The enlightened ruler lays his plans well ahead; the good general cultivates his resources.⁷¹⁴

Move not unless you see an advantage;⁷¹⁵ use not your troops unless there is something to be gained; fight not unless the position is critical.⁷¹⁶

No ruler should put troops into the field merely to gratify his own spleen; no general should fight a battle simply out of pique.⁷¹⁷

If it is to your advantage, make a forward move; if not, stay where you are.⁷¹⁸

Anger may in time change to gladness; vexation may be succeeded by content.⁷¹⁹

But a kingdom that has once been destroyed can never come again into being;⁷²⁰ nor can the dead ever be brought back to life.

Hence the enlightened ruler is heedful, and the good general full of caution.⁷²¹ This is the way to keep a country at peace and an army intact.⁷²²

Chapter XIII: The Use of Spies

XIII

The Use of Spies⁷²³

Sun Tz said: Raising a host of a hundred thousand men and marching them great distances entails heavy loss on the people and a drain on the resources of the State. The daily expenditure will amount to a thousand ounces of silver.⁷²⁴ There will be commotion at home and abroad, and men will drop down exhausted on the highways.⁷²⁵ As many as seven hundred thousand families will be impeded in their labour.⁷²⁶

Hostile armies may face each other for years, striving for the victory which is decided in a single day. This being so, to remain in ignorance of the enemy's condition simply because one grudges the outlay of a hundred ounces of silver in honors and emoluments,⁷²⁷ is the height of inhumanity.⁷²⁸

One who acts thus is no leader of men, no present help to his sovereign,⁷²⁹ no master of victory.⁷³⁰

Thus, what enables the wise sovereign and the good general to strike and conquer, and achieve things beyond the reach of ordinary men, is foreknowledge.⁷³¹

Now this foreknowledge cannot be elicited from spirits;⁷³² it cannot be obtained inductively from experience,⁷³³ nor by any deductive calculation.⁷³⁴

Knowledge of the enemy's dispositions can only be obtained from other men.⁷³⁵

Hence the use of spies, of whom there are five classes: (1) Local spies; (2) inward spies; (3) converted spies; (4) doomed spies; (5) surviving spies.

When these five kinds of spy are all at work, none can discover the secret system.⁷³⁶ This is called⁷³⁷ "divine manipulation of the threads."⁷³⁸ It is the sovereign's most precious faculty.⁷³⁹

Having local spies⁷⁴⁰ means employing the services of the inhabitants of a district.⁷⁴¹

Having inward spies, making use of officials of the enemy.⁷⁴²

Having converted spies, getting hold of the enemy's spies and using them for our own purposes.⁷⁴³

Having doomed spies, doing certain things openly for purposes of deception, and allowing our spies to know of them and report them to the enemy.⁷⁴⁴

Surviving spies, finally, are those who bring back news from the enemy's camp.⁷⁴⁵

Hence it is that which none in the whole army are more intimate relations to be maintained than with spies.⁷⁴⁶ None should be more liberally rewarded.⁷⁴⁷ In no other business should greater secrecy be preserved.⁷⁴⁸

Spies cannot be usefully employed⁷⁴⁹ without a certain intuitive sagacity.⁷⁵⁰

They cannot be properly managed without benevolence and straightforwardness.⁷⁵¹

Without subtle ingenuity of mind, one cannot make certain of the truth of their reports.⁷⁵²

Be subtle! be subtle!⁷⁵³ and use your spies for every kind of business.

If a secret piece of news is divulged by a spy before the time is ripe, he must be put to death together with the man to whom the secret was told.⁷⁵⁴

Whether the object be to crush an army, to storm a city, or to assassinate an individual, it is always necessary to begin by finding out the names of the attendants,⁷⁵⁵ the aides-de-camp,⁷⁵⁶ and doorkeepers and sentries⁷⁵⁷ of the general in command.⁷⁵⁸ Our spies must be commissioned to

ascertain these.⁷⁵⁹

The enemy's spies who have come to spy on us must be sought out,⁷⁶⁰ tempted with bribes, led away and comfortably housed.⁷⁶¹ Thus they will become converted spies and available for our service.

It is through the information brought by the converted spy that we are able to acquire and employ local and inward spies.⁷⁶²

It is owing to his information, again, that we can cause the doomed spy to carry false tidings to the enemy.⁷⁶³

Lastly, it is by his information that the surviving spy can be used on appointed occasions.⁷⁶⁴

The end and aim of spying in all its five varieties is knowledge of the enemy;⁷⁶⁵ and this knowledge can only be derived, in the first instance, from the converted spy.⁷⁶⁶ Hence it is essential that the converted spy be treated with the utmost liberality.

Of old, the rise of the Yin dynasty⁷⁶⁷ was due to I Chih⁷⁶⁸ who had served under the Hsia. Likewise, the rise of the Chou dynasty was due to Lu Ya⁷⁶⁹ who had served under the Yin.⁷⁷⁰

Hence it is only the enlightened ruler and the wise general who will use the highest intelligence of the army for purposes of spying⁷⁷¹ and thereby they achieve great results.⁷⁷² Spies are a most important element in war, because on them depends an army's ability to move.⁷⁷³

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