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Chinese Traditions

The Art of War

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Sun Tzu (Sunzi)

E. F. Calthrop (1908)

Credits

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About:

The most famous military treatise in the world, attributed to Sun Tzu (Sunzi), a general of the state of Wu at the end of the Spring and Autumn period.

In 13 short chapters it teaches that war is a matter of life and death for the State and must be studied with care: planning before battle, the cost of long campaigns, winning without fighting, knowing the enemy and oneself, and the use of ground, surprise, fire and spies.

For more than two thousand years it was read by generals and rulers in China, Japan and Korea, and today it is also studied in military academies, in politics and in business.

From it come maxims such as "all warfare is based on deception" and "know the enemy and know yourself, and in a hundred battles you will never be in peril". The English version is that of E. F.

Calthrop, a British officer who learned Chinese and Japanese in Japan, published in London in 1908 (The Book of War); alongside it, the Chinese text.

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I. PRELIMINARY RECKONING

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1 The words of Sun the Master:—

2 To all nations War is a great matter. Upon the army death or life depend: it is the means of the existence or destruction of the State.

3 Therefore it must be diligently studied.

4 Now, in war, besides stratagem and the situation, there are five indispensable matters. The first is called The Way; the second, Heaven; the third, Earth; the fourth, the Leader; the fifth, Law.

5 The Way or the proper conduct of man. If the ruling authority be upright, the people are united: fearless of danger, their lives are at the service of their Lord.

6 Heaven. Yin and Yang; heat and cold; time and season.

7 Earth. Distance; nature; extent; strategic position.

8 The Leader. Intelligence; truth; benevolence; courage and strictness.

9 Law. Partition and ordering of troops.

10 These things must be known by the leader: to know them is to conquer; to know them not is to be defeated.

11 Further, with regard to these and the following seven matters, the condition of the enemy must be compared with our own.

12 The seven matters are:—

13 The virtue of the prince; the ability of the general; natural advantages; the discipline of the armies; the strength of the soldiers; training of the soldiers; justice both in reward and punishment.

14 Knowing these things, I can foretell the victor. If a general under me fight according to my plans, he always conquers, and I continue to employ him; if he differ from my plans, he will be defeated and dismissed from my service.

15 Wherefore, with regard to the foregoing, considering that with us lies the advantage, and the generals agreeing, we create a situation which promises victory; but as the moment and method cannot be fixed beforehand, the plan must be modified according to circumstances.

16 War is a thing of pretence; therefore, when capable of action, we pretend disability; when near to the enemy, we pretend to be far; when far away, we pretend to be near.

17 Allure the enemy by giving him a small advantage. Confuse and capture him. If there be defects, give an appearance of perfection, and awe the enemy. Pretend to be strong, and so cause the enemy to avoid you. Make him angry, and confuse his plans. Pretend to be inferior, and cause him to despise you. If he have superabundance of strength, tire him out; if united, make divisions in his camp. Attack weak points, and appear in unexpected places.

18 These are the secrets of the successful strategist, therefore they must not be made known beforehand.

19 At the reckoning in the Sanctuary before fighting, victory is to the side that excels in the foregoing matters. They that have many of these will conquer; they that have few will not conquer; hopeless, indeed, are they that have none.

20 If the condition of both sides with regard to these matters be known, I can foretell the victor.

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II. OPERATIONS OF WAR

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1 Sun the Master said:—

2 Now the requirements of war are such that we need a thousand light chariots with four horses each; a thousand leather-covered chariots, and one hundred thousand armoured men; and we must send supplies to distant fields.

2.2 Wherefore the cost at home and in the field, the entertainment of guests, glue and lacquer for repairs, and necessities for the upkeep of waggons and armour are such that in one day a thousand pieces of gold are spent. With that amount a force of one hundred thousand men can be raised:— you have the instruments of victory.

3 But, even if victorious, let the operations long continue, and the soldiers' ardour decreases, the weapons become worn, and, if a siege be undertaken, strength disappears.

4 Again, if the war last long, the country's means do not suffice. Then, when the soldiers are worn out, weapons blunted, strength gone and funds spent, neighbouring princes arise and attack that weakened country. At such a time the wisest man cannot mend the matter.

5 For, while quick accomplishment has been known to give the victory to the unskilful, the skilful general has never gained advantage from lengthy operations. In fact, there never has been a country which has benefited from a prolonged war.

6 He who does not know the evils of war will not reap advantage thereby. He who is skilful in war does not make a second levy, does not load his supply waggons thrice.

7 War material and arms we obtain from home, but food sufficient for the army's needs can be taken from the enemy.

8 The cost of supplying the army in distant fields is the chief drain on the resources of a state: if the war be distant, the citizens are impoverished.

9 In the neighbourhood of an army prices are high, and so the money of the soldiers and followers is used up. Likewise the state funds are exhausted, and frequent levies must be made; the strength of the army is dissipated, money is spent, the citizen's home swept bare: in all, seven-tenths of his income is forfeited.

9.2 Again, as regards State property, chariots are broken, horses worn out, armour and helmet, arrow and bow, spear, shield, pike and fighting tower, waggon and oxen used and gone, so that six-tenths of the Government's income is spent.

10 Therefore the intelligent general strives to feed on the enemy; one bale of the enemy's rice counts as twenty from our own waggons; one bundle of the enemy's forage is better than twenty of our own.

11 Incitement must be given to vanquish the enemy.

12 They who take advantage of the enemy should be rewarded.

13 They who are the first to lay their hands on more than ten of the enemy's chariots should be rewarded; the enemy's standard on the chariots exchanged for our own; the captured chariots mixed with our own chariots

and taken into use.

14 The accompanying warriors must be treated well, so that, while the enemy is beaten, our side increases in strength,

15 Now the object of war is victory; not lengthy operations, even skilfully conducted.

16 The good general is the lord of the people's lives, the guardian of the country's welfare.

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III. THE ATTACK BY STRATAGEM

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1 Sun the Master said:—

2 Now by the laws of war, better than defeating a country by fire and the sword, is to take it without strife.

3 Better to capture the enemy's army intact than to overcome it after fierce resistance.

4 Better to capture the “Lu,” the “Tsu” or the “Wu” whole, than to destroy them in battle.

5 To fight and conquer one hundred times is not the perfection of attainment, for the supreme art is to subdue the enemy without fighting.

6 Wherefore the most skilful warrior outwits the enemy by superior stratagem; the next in merit prevents the enemy from uniting his forces; next to him is he who engages the enemy’s army; while to besiege his citadel is the worst expedient. A siege should not be undertaken if it can possibly be avoided.

6.2 For, before a siege can be commenced, three months are required for the construction of stages, battering-rams and siege engines; then a further three months are required in front of the citadel, in order to make the “Chuyin.”

6.3 Wherefore the general is angered, his patience exhausted, his men surge like ants against the ramparts before the time is ripe, and one-third of them are killed to no purpose. Such are the misfortunes that sieges

entail.

7 Therefore the master of war causes the enemy's forces to yield, but without fighting; he captures his fortress, but without besieging it; and without lengthy fighting takes the enemy's kingdom. Without tarnishing his weapons he gains the complete advantage.

8 This is the assault by stratagem. By the rules of war, if ten times as strong as the enemy, surround him; with five times his strength, attack; with double his numbers, divide. If equal in strength, exert to the utmost, and fight; if inferior in numbers, manœuvre and await the opportunity; if altogether inferior, offer no chance of battle. A determined stand by inferior numbers does but lead to their capture.

9 The warrior is the country's support. If his aid be entire, the country is of necessity strong; if it be at all deficient, then is the country weak.

10 Now a prince may embarrass his army in three ways, namely:—

11 Ignorant that the army in the field should not advance, to order it to go forward; or, ignorant that the army should not retreat, order it to retire.

12 This is to tie the army as with a string,

13 Ignorant of military affairs, to rule the armies in the same way as the state.

14 This is to perplex the soldiers.

15 Ignorant of the situation of the army, to settle its dispositions. This is to fill the soldiers with distrust.

16 If the army be perplexed and distrustful, then dangers from neighbouring princes arise. The army is confounded, and offered up to the enemy,

17 There are five occasions when victory can be foretold:—

18 When the general knows the time to fight and when not to fight; or understands when to employ large or small numbers; when government and people are of one mind; when the state is prepared, and chooses the enemy's unguarded moment for attack; when the general possesses ability, and is not interfered with by his prince.

19 These five things are the heralds of victory.

20 It has been said aforetime that he who knows both sides has nothing to fear in a hundred fights; he who is ignorant of the enemy, and fixes his eyes only on his own side, conquers, and the next time is defeated; he who not only is ignorant of the enemy, but also of his own resources, is invariably defeated,

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IV. THE ORDER OF BATTLE

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1 Sun the Master said:—

2 The ancient masters of war first made their armies invincible, then waited until the adversary could with certainty be defeated.

3 The causes of defeat come from within; victory is born in the enemy's camp.

4 Skilful soldiers make defeat impossible, and further render the enemy incapable of victory.

5 But, as it is written, the conditions necessary for victory may be present, but they cannot always be obtained.

6 If victory be unattainable, we stand on the defensive; if victory be sure, we attack.

7 Deficiency compels defence; super-abundance permits attack.

8 The skilful in defence crouch, hidden in the deepest shades; the skilful in attack push to the topmost heaven.

9 If these precepts be observed, victory is certain.

10 A victory, even if popularly proclaimed as such by the common folk, may not be a true success. To win in fight, and for the kingdom to say, "Well done," does not mark the summit of attainment. To lift an autumn fleeceis no proof of strength; the eyes that only see the sun and moon are not the eagle's; to hear the thunder is no great thing.

11 As has been said aforetime, the able warrior gains the victory without desperate and bloody engagements, and wins thereby no reputation for wisdom or brave deeds. To fight is to win, for he attacks only when the enemy has sown the seeds of defeat.

12 Moreover, the skilful soldier in a secure position does not let pass the moment when the enemy should be attacked. The army that conquers makes certain of victory, and then seeks battle.

13 The army destined to defeat, fights, trusting that chance may bring success to its arms.

14 The skilful leader is steadfast in the "Way"; upholds the Law, and thereby controls the issue.

15 Touching the laws of war, it is said: first, the rule; second, the measure; third, the tables; fourth, the scales; fifth, the foretelling of victory.

16 For the rule is the survey of land; the measure tells the amount of that land's produce; the tables its population; from the seales their weight or quality is made known; and then can we calculate victory or defeat.

17 The army that conquers as against the army destined to defeat, is as a beam against a feather in the scales. The attack of conquering forces is as the outburst of long-pent-up waters into sunken valleys.

18 Such are the orders of battle.

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V. THE SPIRIT OF THE TROOPS

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1 Sun the Master said:—

2 The control of large numbers is possible, and like unto that of small numbers, if we subdivide them.

3 By means of drum, bell and flag, the direction of large forces in battle is possible, and like unto the direction of small forces.

4 By the skilful interchange of normal and abnormal manœuvres are the armies certainly preserved from defeat.

5 The enemy is crushed, like the fall of a grindstone upon an egg, by knowledge of his strength and weakness, and by the employment of truth and artifice,

6 Moreover, in battle the enemy is engaged with the normal and defeated by the abnormal force.

7 The abnormal force, skilfully handled, is like the heaven and earth, eternal; as the tides and the flow of rivers, unceasing; like the sun and moon, for ever interchanging; coming and passing, as the seasons.

8 There are five notes; but by combinations, innumerable harmonies are produced. There are but five colours; but if we mix them, the shades are infinite. There are five tastes, but if we mix them there are more flavours than the palate can distinguish.

9 In war there are but two forces, the normal and the abnormal; but they are capable of infinite variation. Their mutual interchange is like a wheel, having neither beginning or end. They are a mystery that none can penetrate. As the rush of rock-shouldering torrents, so is the spirit of the troops.

10 Like the well-judged flight of the falcon, in a flash crushing its quarry, so should the stroke be timed.

11 Wherefore the spirit of the good fighter is terrifying, his occasions sudden; like the stretched cross-bow, whose string is released at the touch of the trigger.

12 In the maze and tumult of the battle, there is no confusion; in the thick of action the battle array is impenetrable.

13 If discipline be perfect, disorder can be simulated; if truly bold, we can feign fear; if really strong, we can feign weakness.

14 We simulate disorder by subdivision; fear, by spirit; weakness, by battle formation.

15 We set the enemy in motion by adopting different formations to which he must conform.

16 If we offer the enemy a point of advantage, he will certainly take it: we give him an advantage, set him in motion and then fall upon him. Wherefore the good fighter seeks victory from spirit, and does not depend entirely upon the skill of his men. He is careful in his choice, and leaves the rest to battle force; yet, when an opening or advantage shows, he pushes it to its limits.

17 As a log or rock which, motionless on flat ground, yet moves with ever-increasing force when set on an incline, so await the opportunity, and so act when the opportunity arrives.

18 If the general be skilful, the spirit of his troops is as the impetus of a round stone rolled from the top of a high mountain.

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VI. EMPTINESS AND STRENGTH

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1 Sun the Master said:—

2 To be the first in the field, and there to await the enemy, is to husband strength.

3 To be late, and hurrying to advance to meet the foe, is exhausting. The good fighter contrives to make the enemy approach; he does not allow himself to be beguiled by the enemy.

4 By offering an apparent advantage, he induces the enemy to take up a position that will cause his defeat; he plants obstructions to dissuade him from acting in such a way as to threaten his own dispositions.

5 If the enemy be at rest in comfortable quarters, harass him; if he be living in plenty, cut off his supplies; if sitting composedly awaiting attack, cause him to move.

6 This may be done by appearing where the enemy is not, and assaulting unexpected points.

7 If we go where the enemy is not, we may go a thousand leagues without exhaustion.

8 If we attack those positions which the enemy has not defended, we invariably take them: but on the defence we must be strong, even where we are not likely to be attacked.

9 Against those skilful in attack, the enemy does not know where to defend: against those skilful in defence, the enemy does not know where to attack.

10 Now the secrets of the art of offence are not to be easily apprehended, as a certain shape or noise can be understood, of the senses; but when these secrets are once learnt, the enemy is mastered.

11 We attack, and the enemy cannot resist, because we attack his insufficiency; we retire, and the enemy cannot pursue, because we retire too quickly.

12 Again, when we are anxious to fight, but the enemy is serenely secure behind high walls and deep moats; we attack some such other place that he must certainly come out to relieve.

13 When we do not want to fight, we occupy an unfortified line; and prevent the enemy from attacking by keeping him in suspense.

14 By making feints, and causing the enemy to be uncertain as to our movements, we unite, whilst he must divide.

15 We become one body; the enemy being separated into ten parts. We attack the divided ten with the united one. We are many, the enemy is few, and in superiority of numbers there is economy of strength.

16 The place selected for attack must be kept secret. If the enemy know not where he will be attacked, he must prepare in every quarter, and so be everywhere weak.

17 If the enemy strengthen his front, he must weaken his rear; if he strengthen his right, his left is weakened; and if he strengthen his left, his right is weakened.

18 Everywhere to make preparations, is to be everywhere weak. The enemy is weakened by his extended preparations, and we gain in strength.

19 Having decided on the place and day of attack, though the enemy be a hundred leagues away, we can defeat him.

20 If the ground and occasion be not known, the front cannot help the rear; the left cannot support the right, nor the right the left, nor the rear the front. For on occasion, the parts of the army are two score leagues apart, while a distance of four or five leagues is comparatively close.

21 The soldiers of Wuare less than the soldiers of Yueh; but as superiority in numbers does not of necessity bring victory, I say, then, that we may obtain the victory,

22 If the enemy be many in number, prevent him from taking advantage of his superiority, and ascertain his plan of operations. Provoke the enemy and discover the state of his troops; feint and discover the strength of his position. Flap wings, and unmask his sufficiency or insufficiency. By constant feints and excursions, we may produce on the enemy an impression of intangibility, which neither spies nor art can dispel.

23 The general makes his plans in accordance with the dispositions of the enemy, and puts his hosts in motion; but the multitude cannot appreciate the general's intention; they see the signs of victory, but they cannot discover the means. If a victory be gained by a certain stratagem, do not repeat it. Vary the stratagem according to circumstances.

24 An army may be likened to water.

25 Water leaves dry the high places, and seeks the hollows. An army turns from strength and attacks emptiness.

26 The flow of water is regulated by the shape of the ground; victory is gained by acting in accordance with the state of the enemy.

27 The shape of water is indeterminate; likewise the spirit of war is not fixed.

28 The leader who changes his tactics in accordance with his adversary, and thereby controls the issue, may be called the God of war.

29 Among the five elements there is no settled precedence; the four seasons come and go; the days are long and short; and the moon waxes and wanes. So in war there is no fixity.

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VII. BATTLE TACTICS

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1 Sun the Master said:—

2 For the most part, military procedure is as follows:—

3 The general receives orders from his lord; assembles and settles harmony among the forces, and takes the field.

4 There is nothing more difficult than Battle Tactics. Their difficulty lies in the calculation of time and distance, and the reversal of misfortune.

5 To make the enemy take a circuitous route by a show of gain, and then, whilst starting after him, to arrive before him, is to be a master of the art of manœuvre.

6 The operations of an army may reap advantage; the wrangles of a multitude are frought with peril.

7 Employing our whole force at one time in order to gain advantage over the enemy, we may not have time enough to gain our object. If we push on with a portion of the force only, the transport is lost.

7.2 Discarding helmet and armour; stopping neither day nor night; marching double distance; doing double work; and finally contending with the enemy at a distance of a hundred leagues: results in the loss of the general. Since the strong men arrive first, and the tired drop in rear, only one-tenth of the forces is available.

8 A forced march of fifty leagues to secure an advantage may result in failure to the leader of the vanguard, for only half his men will arrive.

9 After a forced march of thirty leagues to secure an advantage, only two-thirds of the army will be available.

10 Further, a lack of ammunition, of supplies, or of stores, may lead to disaster.

11 The ruler who is ignorant of the designs of neighbouring princes, cannot treat with them.

12 He who is ignorant of mountain and forest, defile and marsh, cannot lead an army. He who does not employ a guide, cannot gain advantage from the ground.

13 Disguise your movements; await a favourable opportunity; divide or unite according to circumstance.

14 Let your attack be swift as the wind; your march calm like the forest; your occupation devastating as fire. In defence, as a mountain rest firm; like darkness impenetrable to the enemy. Let your movements be swift as the lightning.

15 Let as many as possible take part in the plunder: distribute the profit from the captured territory.

16 So he who understands the crooked and the straight way conquers.

17 These are the methods of Battle Tactics.

18 According to the ancient books on war, the drum and bell are used, because the voice does not carry; the flag is used to assist the sight. The use of bell, drum, banner and flag is to attract the united attention of eye and ear.

When all are united, the strong are not left to go forward alone, the cowardly are not free to retreat unrestricted. In this way can a multitude be used.

19 Therefore in night fighting, beacons and drums are largely used; in day fighting, a great number of banners and flags and the enemy's eyes and ears are confounded.

20 We thus awe his army, and defeat his general's ambition.

21 In the morning the spirits are keen; at midday there is a laziness; in the evening a desire to return. Wherefore, he who uses his soldiers well, avoids the time when the spirits are keen; but attacks the enemy when he is languid or seeking his camp.

22 Thus should the nature of energy be turned to account.

23 To oppose confusion with order, clamour with quiet, is to have the heart under control,

24 To await an enemy from a distance, to oppose hunger with satiety, rest with fatigue, is the way to husband strength.

25 Do not attack where lines of banners wave, nor the serried ranks of battle spread, but patiently await your time.

26 Do not attack an enemy on high ground, nor one who has high ground at his back. Do not pursue an enemy who is imitating flight; do not attack a spirited enemy.

27 If the enemy offer an allurement, do not take it.

28 Do not interfere with an enemy who has struck camp, and is about to retire. When surrounding an enemy, allow him an outlet. Do not press a desperate enemy.

29 These are the methods of employing troops.

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VIII. THE NINE CHANGES

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1 Sun the Master said:—

2 In general, the procedure of war is:— the Leader, having received orders from his lord, assembles the armies.

3 Do not camp on marshy or low-lying ground; enter into friendly relations with neighbouring states; do not linger in a far country; use stratagem in mountainous and wooded country; on death ground, fight.

4 There are always roads that must be avoided; forces that must not be attacked; castles that must not be besieged; ground that must not be chosen for encounter; orders from the lord that must not be obeyed.

5 The general who knows the Nine Changes understands the use of troops; on the contrary, he who does not understand them, can make no use of his topographical knowledge.

6 In the management of armies, if the art of the Nine Changes be understood, a knowledge of the Five Advantages is of no avail.

7 The wise man considers well both advantage and disadvantage. He sees a way out of adversity, and on the day of victory to danger is not blind.

8 In reducing an enemy to submission, inflict all possible damage upon him; make him undertake useless adventures; also make neighbouring rulers move as you would desire them by tempting them with gain.

Wherefore in the conduct of war do not depend on the enemy's not coming, but rely on your own preparations; do not count on the enemy not attacking your fortress, but leave nothing undefended.

9 Generals must be on their guard against these five dangerous faults:—

10 Blind impetuosity, which leads to death.

11 Over-cautiousness, which leads to capture.

12 Quick temper, which brings insult.

13 A too rigid propriety, which invites disgrace.

14 Over-regard for the troops, which causes inconvenience.

15 These five faults in the leader are disastrous in war. The overthrow of the army and the slaughter of the general arise from them. Therefore they must be carefully considered.

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IX. MOVEMENT OF TROOPS

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1 Sun the Master said:—

2 Touching the disposal of troops and observation of the enemy in relation to mountain warfare:—

3 Cross mountains and camp in valleys, selecting positions of safety.

4 Place the army on high ground, and avoid an enemy in high places.

5 In relation to water:—

6 After crossing waters, pass on immediately to a distance. When the enemy is crossing a stream, do not meet and engage him in the waters, but strike when half his force has passed over. Do not advance on an enemy near water, but place the army on high ground, and in safety.

7 Do not fight when the enemy is between the army and the source of the river. With regard to marshes:—

8 Cross salty marshes quickly; do not linger near them.

9 If by chance compelled to fight in the neighbourhood of a marsh, seek a place where there is water and grass, and trees in plenty in the rear.

10 In open country place the army in a convenient place with rising ground in the right rear; so that while in front lies death, behind there is safety.

11 Such is war in flat country.

12 Huangti, by observing these things, gained the victory over four Princes.

13 As a rule, the soldiers prefer high ground to low. They prefer sunny places to those the sun does not reach.

14 If the health of the troops be considered, and they are encamped on high and sunny ground, diseases will be avoided, and victory made certain.

15 If there be rising ground, encamp on its sunny side and in front of it; for thereby the soldiers are benefited, and the ground used to our advantage. If, owing to rains in the upper reaches, the river become turbulent, do not cross until the waters have quieted.

16 Steep and impassable valleys; well-like places; confined places; tangled impenetrable ground; swamps and bogs; narrow passages with pitfalls:—quickly pass from these, and approach them not. Cause the enemy to approach near to them, but keep yourself from these places; face them, so that the enemy has them in his rear,

17 If there be near to the army, precipices, ponds, meres, reeds and rushes, or thick forests and trees, search them thoroughly. These are places where the enemy is likely to be in ambush.

18 When the enemy is close, but quiet, he is strong in reliance on natural defences.

19 If the enemy challenge to fight from afar, he wishes you to advance.

20 If the enemy be encamped in open country, it is with some special object in view

21 Movement among the trees shows that the enemy is advancing. Broken branches and trodden grass, as of the passing of a large host, must be regarded with suspicion.

22 The rising of birds shows an ambush.

23 Startled beasts show that the enemy is stealthily approaching from several sides. High, straight spurts of dust betoken that chariots are coming.

24 Long, low masses of dust show the coming of infantry.

25 Here and there, thin and high columns of dust are signs that firewood and fodder are being collected.

26 Small clouds of dust moving to and fro are signs that the enemy is preparing to encamp for a short time.

27 Busy preparations and smooth words show that the enemy is about to advance to attack,

28 Big words, and the spurring forward of horsemen, are signs that the enemy is about to retire.

29 An advance of the light chariots to the flanks of the camp is a sign that the enemy is coming forth to fight. Without consultation, suddenly to desire an armistice, is a mark of ulterior design.

30 The passing to and fro of messengers, and the forming up of troops, show that the enemy has some movement on foot.

31 An advance, followed by sudden retirement, is a lure to attack.

32 When the enemy use their weapons to rest upon, they are hungry.

33 If the drawers of water drink at the river, the enemy is suffering from thirst.

34 Disregard of booty that lies ready at hand is a sign of exhaustion.

35 The clustering of birds round a position shows that it is unoccupied.

36 Voices calling in the night betoken alarm.

37 Disorder in the army is a sign that the general is disregarded.

38 A changing about of flags and banners is a sign that the army is unsettled.

39 If the officers be angry, it is because the soldiers are tired, and slow to obey.

40 The killing of horses for food shows that the enemy is short of provisions.

41 When the cooking-pots are hung up on the wall and the soldiers turn not in again, the enemy is at an end of his resources.

42 Exceeding graciousness and familiarity on the part of the general show that he has lost the confidence of the soldiers.

43 Frequent rewards show that discipline is at an end.

44 Frequent punishments are a sign that the general is in difficulties.

45 The general who first blusters, and then is obsequious, is without perception.

46 He who offers apologies and hostages is anxious for a truce.

47 When both sides, eager for a fight, face each other for a considerable time, neither advancing nor retiring, the occasion requires the utmost vigilance and circumspection.

48 Numbers are no certain mark of strength.

49 Even if incapable of a headlong assault, if the forces be united, and the enemy's condition ascertained, victory is possible,

50 He who without taking thought makes light of the enemy is certain to be captured.

51 If a general who is strange to the troops punish them, they cease to obey him. If they are not obedient, they cannot be usefully employed.

52 If the troops know the general, but are not affected by his punishments, they are useless.

53 By humane treatment we obtain obedience; authority brings uniformity. Thus we obtain victory.

54 If the people have been trained in obedience from the beginning, they respect their leader's commands.

55 If the people be not early trained to obedience, they do not respect their leader's commands.

56 Orders are always obeyed, if general and soldiers are in sympathy.

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X. GROUND

✦

1 Sun the Master said:—

2 With regard to the different natures of ground there are:—

3 Open ground; broken ground; suspended ground; defiles; precipices; far countries.

4 Open ground is that where either side has liberty of movement: be quick to occupy any high ground in the neighbourhood and consider well the line of supplies.

5 Broken ground. Advance is easy, but retreat from it is difficult. Here, if the enemy be not prepared, we may win: but should he be prepared, and defeat us, and retreat be impossible, then there is disaster.

6 Suspended ground. The side that takes the initiative is under a disadvantage. Here, if the enemy offer some allurement, we should not advance: but rather, by feigning retreat, wait until he has put forth half his force. Then we may attack him with advantage.

7 Defiles, make haste to occupy; garrison strongly and await the enemy. Should the enemy be before you, and in strength, do not engage him; but if there be unoccupied points, attack him.

8 In precipitous ground quickly occupy a position on a sunny height, and await the enemy. If the enemy be before you, withdraw and do not attack him.

9 If distant from the enemy, and the forces be equal, to take the initiative is disadvantageous.

10 Now, these are the six kinds of ground. It is the duty of generals to study them.

11 Again, there are six calamities among the troops, arising, not from defect of ground, or lack of opportunity, but from the general's incapacity.

12 These are: repulse, relaxation, distress, disorganisation, confusion and rout.

13 If troops be sent to attack an enemy of equal quality, but ten times their number, they retire discomfited.

14 Strong soldiers with weak officers cause relaxation.

15 Able officers with feeble soldiers cause distress.

16 Enraged senior officers, who fall upon the enemy without orders, and obey not the general because he does not recognise their abilities, produce disorganisation.

17 Weak and amiable generals, whose directions and leadership are vague, whose officers' and men's duties are not fixed, and whose dispositions are contradictory, produce confusion. Generals, who are unable to estimate the enemy, who oppose small numbers to large, weakness to strength, and who do not put picked men in the van of the army, cause it to be routed.

18 These six things lead to defeat. It is the duty of the general to study them carefully.

19 Ground is the handmaid of victory.

20 Ability to estimate the enemy, and plan the victory; an eye for steepness, command and distances; these are the qualities of the good general.

21 Whosoever knows these things, conquers; he who understands them not, is defeated,

22 If victory be certain from the military standpoint, fight, even if the lord forbid.

23 If defeat be certain from the military standpoint, do not fight, even though the lord commands it.

24 The general who advances, from no thought of his own glory, or retires, regardless of punishment; but only strives for the people's welfare, and his lord's advantage, is a treasure to the state.

25 The good general cares for his soldiers, and lovingly treats them as his children; as a consequence they follow him through deep valleys, and are beside him in death.

26 Nevertheless, over-care for the soldiers may cause disobedience; over-attention may make them unserviceable; over-indulgence may produce disorder: they become like spoilt children, and cannot be used.

27 He who is confident of his own men, but is ignorant that the enemy should not be attacked, has no certainty of victory.

28 He who knows that the enemy may be attacked with advantage, but knows not his own men, has no certainty of victory.

29 Confidence in the troops, right judgment when to attack the enemy, but ignorance of the ground, bring uncertain victory.

30 The wise soldier, once in motion, does not waver, and is never at a loss.

31 As has been said: “Know thyself; know the enemy; fear not for victory.”

32 Also, if the season and the opportunity be realised, and the ground known, complete victory is certain.

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XI. NINE GROUNDS

✦

1 Sun the Master said:—

2 In respect to the conduct of war there are:—

3 Distracting ground; disturbing ground; ground of contention; intersecting ground; path-ridden ground; deeply-involved ground; difficult ground; enclosed ground; death ground.

4 At all times, when the prince fights in his own territory, it is called distracting ground.

5 That ground a short way inside the enemy's border is called disturbing ground.

6 Ground giving advantage to whichever side is in possession, is called ground of contention.

7 Ground to which either side has access, is called intersecting ground.

8 Ground between three provinces first possession of which enables the peoples of the earth to be controlled, is called path-ridden ground.

9 The interior of the enemy's country with many of his fortified towns in rear, is called deeply-involved ground.

10 Mountain and forest, precipices, ravines, marsh and swamp, all places where passage is hard, are called difficult ground.

11 A narrow entrance and winding outlet, where a small number can oppose a large force, is called enclosed ground.

12 That ground where delay means disaster, is called death ground.

13 Wherefore, do not fight on distracting ground; do not linger on disturbing ground.

14 If the enemy be in possession of disputed ground, do not attack.

15 In intersecting ground, do not interrupt the highways.

16 At the crossing of highways, cultivate intercourse,

17 When deeply involved, levy and store up the enemy's property.

18 Quickly depart from difficult ground. On enclosed ground, use stratagem.

19 On death ground, fight.

20 The skilful fighters of old were at pains to disconnect the enemy's front and rear; they cut asunder small and large forces of the enemy; prevented mutual help between his officers and men; spread mistrust between high and low. They scattered the enemy, and prevented him from concentrating; if his soldiers were assembled, they were without unity.

21 If there be a chance of victory, move; if there be no chance of success, stand fast.

22 If I were asked how a powerful and united force of the enemy should be met, I would say: lay hands on what the enemy cherishes and he will conform to our desires.

23 In war, above all, speed sustains the spirit of the troops. Strike before the enemy is ready; and attack his unpreparedness from an unexpected quarter.

24 With regard to war in foreign lands. When strangers in a far country the soldiers are united and are proof against defeat. Plunder fertile plains so that the army is fed; be careful of the health of the soldiers; do not tire them uselessly; unite their minds; store up strength; plan well and secretly. If there be no refuge the soldiers will not fly from death.

25 If there be no alternative but death, the soldiers exert themselves to the utmost.

26 In desperate places, soldiers lose the sense of fear.

27 If there be no place of refuge, there will be no wavering.

28 If deeply involved in the enemy's country, there is unity.

29 If it be unavoidable, the soldiers will fight their hardest. Even without warnings they are vigilant; they comply without insistence; without stipulations they are tractable; without explicit instructions they will trust the general and obey him.

30 Prohibit the discussion of signs and omens, and remove the soldiers' doubts; then to the moment of death they will be undistracted.

31 Riches are denied the soldiers, not because money is a bad thing; old age is forbidden them, but not because long life is evil. Hardships and danger are the proper lot of the soldier.

32 When the order for attack is given, the collars of those who are sitting may be wet with tears; tears may roll down the cheeks of those reclining; yet these men, in a desperate place, will fight with the courage of Chu and Kuei.

33 Soldiers should be used like the snakes on Mt. Chang; which, if you hit on the head, the tail will strike you; if you hit the tail, the head will strike you; if you strike its middle, head and tail will strike you together.

34 Should any one ask me whether men can be made to move like these snakes, I say, yes. The men of Wu and Yueh hate each other; yet, if they cross a river in the same boat and a storm overtake them, they help each other like the two hands.

35 The horses may be tied, and the chariot wheels sunk in the mud; but that does not prevent flight. Universal courage and unity depend on good management.

36 The best results from both the weak and strong are obtained by a proper use of the ground.

37 The skilful warrior can lead his army, as a man leads another by the hand, because he places it in a desperate position.

38 The general should be calm, inscrutable, just and prudent. He should keep his officers and men in ignorance of his plans, and inform no one of any changes or fresh departures. By changing his camps, and taking devious and unexpected routes, his plans cannot be guessed.

39 As one taking away the ladder from under those mounted upon the roof, so acts the general when his men are assembled to fight. He penetrates into the heart of the enemy's country and then divulges his plans. He drives the army hither and thither like a flock of sheep, knowing not whither they go.

40 Therefore the general should assemble the armies, and place them in a desperate position. The different natures of the Nine Grounds; the suiting of the means to the occasion; the hearts of men: these are things that must be studied.

41 When deep in the interior of a hostile country, there is cohesion; if only on the borders, there is distraction. To leave home and cross the borders is to be free from interference.

42 On distracting ground, unite the soldiers' minds,

43 On disturbing ground, keep together.

44 On disputed ground, try to take the enemy in rear.

45 On intersecting ground, look well to the defences.

46 On path-ridden ground, cultivate intercourse.

47 On deeply-involved ground be careful of supplies.

48 On difficult ground, do not linger.

49 On enclosed ground, close the path of escape.

50 On death ground, show the soldiers that there is no chance of survival. It is the nature of soldiers to defend when surrounded, to fight with energy when compelled thereto, to pursue the enemy if he retreat,

51 He cannot treat with other rulers who knows not their ambitions.

52 He who knows not mountain and forest; cliffs; ravines; lakes and marshes; cannot conduct an army.

53 He who does not use guides, cannot take advantage of the ground.

54 He who has not a complete knowledge of the Nine Grounds, cannot gain military dominion.

55 The great general, when attacking a powerful nation, prevents the enemy from concentrating his hosts.

56 He overawes the enemy so that other states cannot join against him.

57 He does not struggle for the favour of other states; nor is he careful of their rights, He has confidence in himself, and awes the enemy.

58 Therefore he easily takes the fortress, or reduces the country to subjection. In the bestowal of rewards, or in his orders, he is not bound by ancient rule.

59 He manages his forces as though they were one man.

60 Orders should direct the soldiers; but while what is advantageous should be made known, what is disadvantageous should be concealed.

61 If the forces be plunged into danger, there is survival; from death ground there is retrieval; for the force in danger gains the victory.

62 Discover the enemy's intentions by conforming to his movements. When these are discovered, then, with one stroke, the general may be killed, even though he be one hundred leagues distant.

63 When war is declared, close the barriers; destroy passports; prevent the passage of the enemy's spies; conduct the business of the government with vigilance.

64 Take immediate advantage of the enemy's weakness; discover what he most values, and plan to seize it, Shape your plans according to rule, and the circumstances of the enemy.

65 At first behave with the discretion of a maiden; then, when the enemy gives an opening, dart in like a rabbit.

66 The enemy cannot defend himself.

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XII. ASSAULT BY FIRE

✦

1 Sun the Master said:—

2 There are five ways of attack by fire:

3 The first is called barrack burning; the second, commissariat burning; the third, equipment burning; the fourth, store burning; the fifth, the company burning.

4 The moment for the fire assault must be suitable. Further, appliances must always be kept at hand.

5 There is a time and day proper for the setting and carrying out of the fire assault; namely: such time as the weather is dry; and a day when the moon is in the quarters of the stars Chi, Pi. I, Chen: for these are days of wind.

6 Regard well the developments that will certainly arise from the fire, and act upon them. When fire breaks out inside the enemy's camp, thrust upon him with all speed from without; but if his soldiers be quiet, wait, and do not attack,

7 When the fire is at its height, attack or not, as opportunity may arise.

8 If the opportunity be favourable, set fire to the enemy’s camp, and do not wait for it to break out from within,

9 When fire breaks out on the windward side, do not attack from the leeward.

10 Wind that rises in the day lasts long. Wind that rises in the night time quickly passes away.

11 The peculiarities of the five burnings must be known, and the calendar studied, and, if the attack is to be assisted, the fire must be unquenchable.

12 If water is to assist the attack, the flood must be overwhelming.

13 Water may isolate or divide the enemy; fire may consume his camp; but unless victory or possession be obtained, the enemy quickly recovers, and misfortunes arise. The war drags on, and money is spent.

14 Let the enlightened lord consider well; and the good general keep the main object in view. If no advantage is to be gained thereby, do not move; without prospect of victory, do not use the soldiers; do not fight unless the state be in danger.

15 War should not be undertaken because the lord is in a moment of passion. The general must not fight because there is anger in his heart.

16 Do not make war unless victory may be gained thereby; if there be prospect of victory, move; if there be no prospect, de not move.

17 For passion may change to gladness, anger passes away; but a country, once overturned, cannot be restored; the dead cannot be brought to life.

18 Wherefore it is written, the enlightened lord is circumspect, and the good general takes heed; then is the state secure, and the army victorious in battle.

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XIII. THE EMPLOYMENT OF SPIES

✦

1 Sun the Master said:—

2 Calling 100,000 men to arms, and transporting them a hundred leagues, is such an undertaking that in one day 1,000 taels of the citizens' and nobles' money are spent; commotions arise within and without the state; carriers fall down exhausted on the line of march of the army; and the occupations of 700,000 homes are upset

3 Again, for years the armies may face each other; yet the issue may depend on a single day's victory.

4 Wherefore, by grudging slight expense in titles and salaries to spies, to remain in ignorance of the enemy's circumstances, is to be without humanity. Such a person is no general; he is no assistance to his lord; he is no master of victory.

5 The enlightened ruler and the wise general who act, win, and are distinguished beyond the common, are informed beforehand.

6 This knowledge is not to be got by calling on gods and demons; nor does it come of past experience nor calculation. It is through men that knowledge of the enemy is gained.

7 Now the five kinds of spies are these: village spies, inner spies, converted spies, death spies, living spies.

8 If these five means be employed simultaneously, none can discover their working. This is called the Mysterious Thread: it is the Lord's Treasure.

9 Village spies are such people of the country as give information.

10 Inner spies are those of the enemy's officials employed by us.

11 Converted spies are those of the enemy's spies in our pay. Death spies are sent to misinform the enemy, and to spread false reports through our spies already in the enemy's lines.

12 Living spies return to report.

13 In connection with the armies, spies should be treated with the greatest kindness; and in dealing out reward, they should receive the most generous treatment. All matters relating to spies are secret.

14 Without infinite capacity in the general, the employment of spies is impossible. Their treatment requires benevolence and uprightness. Except they be observed with the closest attention, the truth will not be obtained from them.

15 Wonderful indeed is the power of spies.

16 There is no occasion when they cannot be used.

17 If a secret matter be spoken of before the time is ripe, the spy who told the matter, and the man who repeated the same, should be put to death. If desirous of attacking an army; of besieging a fortress; or of killing a certain person; first of all, learn the names of the general in charge; of his right-hand men; of those who introduce visitors to the Presence; of the gate keeper and the sentries. Then set the spies to watch them.

18 Seek out the enemy's spies who come to Spy on us; give them money; cause them to be lodged and cared for; and convert them to the service. Through them we are enabled to obtain spies among the enemy's villagers

and officials.

19 By means of the converted spy, we can construct a false story for the death spy to carry to the enemy.

20 It is through the converted spy that we are able to use the five varieties, to their utmost advantage; therefore he must be liberally treated.

21 In ancient times the rise to power of the province of Yin was due to Ichih, who was sent to the country of Hsia. Likewise during the foundation of the state of Chu, Luya lived among the people of Shang.

22 Wherefore, intelligent rulers and wise generals use the cleverest men as spies, and invariably acquire great merit. The spy is a necessity to the army. Upon him the movement of the army depends.

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