

Advanced lesson - Sun Zi Bing Fa - Sun Tzu on the Art of War

III. Attack by Stratagem - mou gong pian di san

Sun Zi's Art of War was written by Sun Wu in the final year of the Spring and Autumn Period (770BC - 476BC).

It is not only the oldest Chinese military work in existence but also the oldest book of military theory in the world, well-known for a long time in the history of the military academy in China and abroad.

Sun Zi's Art of War has altogether 13 chapters. Both concise and comprehensive, this book sum up the experience of ancient wars, bring to light the many laws of war which are of universal significance.

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原文:

móu gōng piān dì sān
谋攻篇第三

sūn zǐ yuē : fán yòng bīng zhī fǎ , quán guó wéi shàng , pò guó cì zhī ; quán lǚ wéi shàng , pò lǚ cì zhī ; quán zú wéi shàng , pò zú cì zhī ; quán wǔ wéi shàng , pò wǔ cì zhī 。
孙子曰：凡用兵之法，全国为上，破国次之；全旅为上，破旅次之；全卒为上，破卒次之；全伍为上，破伍次之。

shì wèi bǎi zhàn bǎi shèng , fēi shàn zhī shàn zhě yě ;
是谓百战百胜，非善之善者也；
bú zhàn ér qū rén zhī bīng , shàn zhī shàn zhě yě 。
不战而屈人之兵，善之善者也。

gù shàng bīng fá móu , qí cì fá jiāo , qí cì fá bīng , qí xià gōng chéng 。
故上兵伐谋，其次伐交，其次伐兵，其下攻城。

gōng chéng zhī fǎ , wéi bù dé yǐ 。 xiū lǚ fén yūn , jù qì xiè ,
攻城之法，为不得已。修橧辳輜，具器械，
sān yuè ér hòu chéng ; jù yīn , yòu sān yuè ér hòu yǐ 。
三月而后成；距堙，又三月而后已。
jiàng bú shèng qí fèn ér yǐ fù zhī , shā shì sān fēn zhī yì ér
将不胜其忿而蚁附之，杀士三分之一而

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chéng bù bá zhě , cǐ gōng zhī zāi yě 。
城 不 拔 者 ， 此 攻 之 灾 也 。

gù shàn yòng bīng zhě , qū rén zhī bīng ér fēi zhàn yě ,
故 善 用 兵 者 ， 屈 人 之 兵 而 非 战 也 ，
bá rén zhī chéng ér fēi gōng yě , huǐ rén zhī guó ér fēi jiǔ yě 。
拔 人 之 城 而 非 攻 也 ， 毁 人 之 国 而 非 久 也 。
bì yǐ quán zhēng yú tiān xià , gù bīng bú dùn ér lì kě quán ,
必 以 全 争 于 天 下 ， 故 兵 不 钝 而 利 可 全 ，
cǐ móu gōng zhī fǎ yě 。
此 谋 攻 之 法 也 。

gù yòng bīng zhī fǎ , shí zé wéi zhī , wǔ zé gōng zhī ,
故 用 兵 之 法 ， 十 则 围 之 ， 五 则 攻 之 ，

bèi zé fēn zhī , dí zé néng zhàn zhī , shǎo zé néng táo zhī ,
倍 则 分 之 ， 敌 则 能 战 之 ， 少 则 能 逃 之 ，
bú ruò néng bì zhī 。 gù xiǎo dí zhī jiān , dà dí zhī qín yě 。
不 若 能 避 之 。 故 小 敌 之 坚 ， 大 敌 之 擒 也 。
fū jiàng zhě , guó zhī fù yě 。 fù zhōu ér guó bì qiáng ,
夫 将 者 ， 国 之 辅 也 。 辅 周 而 国 必 强 ，
fǔ xì zé guó bì ruò 。
辅 隙 则 国 必 弱 。

gù jūn zhī suǒ yǐ huàn yú jūn zhě sān : bù zhī jūn zhī bù kě yǐ
故 君 之 所 以 患 于 军 者 三 : 不 知 军 之 不 可 以
jìn ér wèi zhī jìn , bù zhī jūn zhī bù kě yǐ tuì ér wèi zhī tuì ,
进 而 谓 之 进 ， 不 知 军 之 不 可 以 退 而 谓 之 退 ，
shì wèi mí jūn ; bù zhī sān jūn zhī shì , ér tóng sān jūn zhī
是 谓 糜 军 ; 不 知 三 军 之 事 ， 而 同 三 军 之
zhèng zhě , zé jūn shì huò yǐ ; bù zhī sān jūn zhī quán ,
政 者 ， 则 军 士 惑 矣 ; 不 知 三 军 之 权 ，
ér tóng sān jūn zhī rèn , zé jūn shì yí yǐ 。
而 同 三 军 之 任 ， 则 军 士 疑 矣 。
sān jūn jì huò qiě yí , zé zhū hóu zhī nán zhì yǐ 。
三 军 既 惑 且 疑 ， 则 诸 侯 之 难 至 矣 。
shì wèi luàn jūn yǐn shèng 。
是 谓 乱 军 引 胜 。

gù zhī shèng yǒu wǔ : zhī kě yǐ zhàn yǔ bù kě yǐ zhàn zhě shèng ,
故 知 胜 有 五 : 知 可 以 战 与 不 可 以 战 者 胜 ，

shí zhòng guǎ zhī yòng zhě shèng , shàng xià tóng yù zhě shèng ,
识众寡之用者胜，上下同欲者胜，
yǐ yú dài bù yú zhě shèng , jiāng néng ér jūn bú yù zhě shèng 。
以虞待不虞者胜，将能而君不御者胜。
cǐ wǔ zhě , zhī shèng zhī dào yě 。
此五者，知胜之道也。

gù yuē : zhī bǐ zhī jǐ zhě , bǎi zhàn bú dài ; bù zhī bǐ ér
故曰：知彼知己者，百战不殆；不知彼而
zhī jǐ , yí shèng yí fù ; bù zhī bǐ bù zhī jǐ , měi zhàn bì dài 。
知己，一胜一负；不知彼不知己，每战必殆。

Translation: (Translated from the Chinese version By LIONEL GILES, M. A. (1910))

III. ATTACK BY STRATAGEM

1. Sun Tzu 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 recapture an army entire than to destroy it, to capture a regiment, a detachment or a company entire than to destroy them.
2. Hence to fight and conquer in all your battles is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting.
3. Thus the highest form of generalship is to balk the enemy's plans; the next best is to prevent the junction of the enemy's forces; the next in order is to attack the enemy's army in the field; and the worst policy of all is to besiege walled cities.
4. The rule is, not to besiege walled cities if it can possibly be avoided. The preparation of mantlets, movable shelters, and various implements of war, will take up three whole months; and the piling up of mounds over against the walls will take three months more.
5. The general, unable to control his irritation, will launch his men to the assault like swarming ants, 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.

6. Therefore the skillful 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.

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

8. 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; if twice as numerous, to divide our army into two.

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

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

11. 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.

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

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

14. (2) 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.

15. (3) By employing the officers of his army without discrimination, through ignorance of the military principle of adaptation to circumstances. This shakes the confidence of the soldiers.

16. 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.

17. Thus we may know that there are five essentials for victory: (1) He will win who knows when to fight and when not to fight. (2) He will win who knows how to handle both superior and inferior forces. (3) He will win whose army is animated by the same spirit throughout all its ranks. (4) He will win who, prepared himself, waits to take the enemy unprepared. (5) He will win who has military capacity and is not interfered with by the sovereign.

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