

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

### IX. The Army on the March - xing jun pian di jiu

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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xíng jūn piān dì jiǔ  
行 军 篇 第 九

sūn zǐ yuē : fán chù jūn xiāng dí , jué shān yī gǔ , shì shēng chù gāo , zhàn lóng wú dēng , cǐ chù shān zhī jūn yě 。 jué shuǐ bì yuǎn shuǐ , kè jué shuǐ ér lái , wù yíng zhī yú shuǐ nèi , lìng bàn jì ér jī zhī , lì ; yù zhàn zhě , wú fù yú shuǐ ér yíng kè ; shì shēng chù gāo , wú yíng shuǐ liú , cǐ chù shuǐ shàng zhī jūn yě 。 jué chì zé , wéi jí qù wú liú ; ruò jiāo jūn yú chì zé zhī zhōng , bì yī shuǐ cǎo , ér bèi zhòng shù , cǐ chù chì zé zhī jūn yě 。 píng lù chù yì , ér yòu bèi gāo , qián sǐ hòu shēng , cǐ chù píng lù zhī jūn yě 。 fán cǐ sì jūn zhī lì , huáng dì zhī suǒ yǐ shèng sì dì yě 。  
此四军之利，黄帝之所以胜四帝也。

fán jūn hào gāo ér è xià , guì yáng ér jiàn yīn , yǎng shēng ér chù

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凡军好高而恶下，贵阳而贱阴，养生而处  
shí , jūn wú bǎi jí , shì wèi bì shèng 。 qiū líng dī fáng , bì chù  
实，军无百疾，是谓必胜。丘陵堤防，必处  
qí yáng , ér yòu bèi zhī 。 cǐ bīng zhī lì , dì zhī zhù yě 。 shàng  
其阳，而右背之。此兵之利，地之助也。上  
yǔ , shuǐ mò zhì , yù shè zhě , dài qí dìng yě 。 fán dì yǒu jué  
雨，水沫至，欲涉者，待其定也。凡地有绝  
jiàn 、 tiān jǐng 、 tiān láo 、 tiān luó 、 xiàn tiān 、 tiān xì ,  
涧、天井、天牢、天罗、陷天、天隙，  
bì jí qù zhī , wù jìn yě 。 wú yuǎn zhī , dí jìn zhī ; wú yíng zhī ,  
必亟去之，勿近也。吾远之，敌近之；吾迎之，  
dí bèi zhī 。 jūn xíng yǒu xiǎn zǔ 、 huáng jǐng 、 jiā wěi 、 shān  
敌背之。军行有险阻、潢井、葭苇、山  
lín 、 yì huì zhě , bì jǐn fù suǒ zhī , cǐ fú jiān zhī suǒ chù yě 。  
林、薮荟者，必谨复索之，此伏奸之处也。

dí jìn ér jìng zhě , shì qí xiǎn yě ; yuǎn ér tiǎo zhàn zhě , yù rén  
敌近而静者，恃其险也；远而挑战者，欲人  
zhī jìn yě ; qí suǒ jū yì zhě , lì yě ; zhòng shù dòng zhě , lái  
知之进也；其所居易者，利也；众树动者，来  
yě ; zhòng cǎo duō zhàng zhě , yí yě ; niǎo qǐ zhě , fú yě ; shòu hài  
也；众草多障者，疑也；鸟起者，伏也；兽骇  
zhě , fù yě ; chén gāo ér ruì zhě , chē lái yě ; bēi ér guǎng zhě ,  
者，覆也；尘高而锐者，车来也；卑而广者，  
tú lái yě ; sàn ér tiáo dá zhě , qiāo cǎi yě ; shǎo ér wǎng lái  
徒来也；散而条达者，樵采也；少而往来  
zhě , yíng jūn yě ; cí bēi ér yì bèi zhě , jìn yě ; cí qiáng ér jìn  
者，营军也；辞卑而益备者，进也；辞强而近  
qū zhě , tuì yě ; qīng chē xiān chū jū qí cè zhě , chén yě ; wú yuē  
者，退也；轻车先出居其侧者，陈也；无约  
ē ér qǐng hé zhě , móu yě ; bēn zǒu ér chén bīng chē zhě , qī yě ;  
而请和者，谋也；奔走而陈兵车者，期也；  
bàn jìn bàn tuì zhě , yòu yě ; zhàng ér lì zhě , jī yě ; jí ér xiān  
半进半退者，诱也；杖而立者，饥也；汲而  
xiān yǐn zhě , kě yě ; jiàn lì ér bú jìn zhě , láo yě ; niǎo jí zhě ,  
饮者，渴也；见利而不进者，劳也；鸟集者，  
xū yě ; yè hū zhě , kǒng yě ; jūn rǎo zhě , jiāng bú zhòng yě ; jīng  
虚也；夜呼者，恐也；军扰者，将不重也；旌  
qí dòng zhě , luàn yě ; lì nù zhě , juàn yě ; sù mǎ ròu shí ,  
旗动者，乱也；吏怒者，倦也；粟马肉食，  
jūn wú xuán fǒu , bù fǎn qí shě zhě , qióng kòu yě ; zhūn zhūn xī

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军无悬瓠，不返其舍者，穷寇也；谆谆翕  
xī , xú yǔ rén yán zhě , shī zhòng yě ; shù shǎng zhě , jiǒng yě ;  
翕，徐与人言者，失众也；数赏者，窘也；  
shù fá zhě , kùn yě ; xiān bào ér hòu wèi qí zhòng zhě , bù jīng zhī  
数罚者，困也；先暴而后畏其众者，不精之  
zhì yě ; lái wěi xiè zhě , yù xiū xi yě 。 bīng nù ér xiāng yíng ,  
至也；来委谢者，欲休息也。兵怒而相迎，  
jiǔ ér bù hé , yòu bù xiāng qù , bì jǐn chá zhī 。  
久而不合，又不相去，必谨察之。

bīng fēi yì duō yě , wéi wú wǔ jìn , zú yǐ bìng lì 、 liào dí 、 qǔ  
兵非益多也，惟无武进，足以并力、料敌、取  
rén ér yǐ 。 fū wéi wú lǜ ér yì dí zhě , bì qín yú rén 。  
人而已。夫惟无虑而易敌者，必擒于人。

zú wèi qīn fù ér fá zhī , zé bù fú , bù fú zé nán yòng yě ; zú yǐ  
卒未亲附而罚之，则不服，不服则难用也；卒已  
qīn fù ér fá bù xíng , zé bù kě yòng yě 。 gù lìng zhī yǐ wén , qí zhī  
亲附而罚不行，则不可用也。故令之以文，齐之  
yǐ wǔ , shì wèi bì qǔ 。 lìng sù xíng , yǐ jiāo qí mín , zé mín fú ;  
以武，是谓必取。令素行，以教其民，则民服；  
lìng bú sù xíng , yǐ jiāo qí mín , zé mín bù fú 。 lìng sù xíng zhě ,  
令不素行，以教其民，则民不服。令素行者，  
yǔ zhòng xiāng dé yě 。  
与众相得也。

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

## IX. THE ARMY ON THE MARCH

1. Sun Tzu said: We come now to the question of encamping the army, and observing signs of the enemy. Pass quickly over mountains, and keep in the neighborhood of valleys.
2. Camp in high places, facing the sun. Do not climb heights in order to fight. So much for mountain warfare.
3. After crossing a river, you should get far away from it.

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4. When an invading force crosses a river in its onward march, do not advance to meet it in mid-stream. It will be best to let half the army get across, and then deliver your attack.
5. If you are anxious to fight, you should not go to meet the invader near a river which he has to cross.
6. Moor your craft higher up than the enemy, and facing the sun. Do not move up-stream to meet the enemy. So much for river warfare.
7. In crossing salt-marshes, your sole concern should be to get over them quickly, without any delay.
8. 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. So much for operations in salt-marches.
9. In dry, level country, take up an easily accessible position with rising ground to your right and on your rear, so that the danger may be in front, and safety lie behind. So much for campaigning in flat country.
10. These are the four useful branches of military knowledge which enabled the Yellow Emperor to vanquish four several sovereigns.
11. All armies prefer high ground to low and sunny places to dark.
12. If you are careful of your men, and camp on hard ground, the army will be free from disease of every kind, and this will spell victory.
13. 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.
14. When, in consequence of heavy rains up-country, a river which you wish to ford is swollen and flecked with foam, you must wait until it subsides.
15. Country in which there are precipitous cliffs with torrents running between, deep natural hollows, confined places, tangled thickets, quagmires and crevasses, should be left with all possible speed and not approached.

16. 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

23. 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. When it branches out in different directions, it shows that parties have been sent to collect firewood. A few clouds of dust moving to and fro signify that the army is encamping.

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

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

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

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

28. When some are seen advancing and some retreating, it is a lure.
29. When the soldiers stand leaning on their spears, they are faint from want of food.
30. If those who are sent to draw water begin by drinking themselves, the army is suffering from thirst.
31. If the enemy sees an advantage to be gained and makes no effort to secure it, the soldiers are exhausted.
32. If birds gather on any spot, it is unoccupied. Clamor by night betokens nervousness.
33. If there is disturbance in the camp, the general's authority is weak. If the banners and flags are shifted about, sedition is afoot. If the officers are angry, it means that the men are weary.
34. When an army feeds its horses with grain and kills its cattle for food, and when the men do not hang their cooking-pots over the camp-fires, showing that they will not return to their tents, you may know that they are determined to fight to the death.
35. The sight of men whispering together in small knots or speaking in subdued tones points to disaffection amongst the rank and file.
36. Too frequent rewards signify that the enemy is at the end of his resources; too many punishments betray a condition of dire distress.
37. To begin by bluster, but afterwards to take fright at the enemy's numbers, shows a supreme lack of intelligence.
38. When envoys are sent with compliments in their mouths, it is a sign that the enemy wishes for a truce.
39. 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.
40. If our troops are no more in number than the enemy, that is amply sufficient; it only means that no direct attack can be made. What we can

do is simply to concentrate all our available strength, keep a close watch on the enemy, and obtain reinforcements.

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

42. 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.

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

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

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