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 ɡōnɡ piān dì sān
谋 攻 篇 第 三

sūn zi yuē : fán yòng bīnɡ zhī fǎ , quán guó wéi shàn , pò guó cì zhī ; quán lǚ wéi shàn , pò lǚ cì zhī ; quán zú wéi shàn , guó cì zhī ; quán wǔ wéi shàn , pò wǔ cì zhī .

破 卒 次之 ; 全 伍 为 上 , 破 伍 次 之。

shì wèi bǎi zhàn bǎi shènɡ , fēi shàn zhī shàn zhě yě ;

是 谓 百 战 百 胜 , 非 善 之 善 者 也 ;

bù zhàn ér qū rén zhī bīnɡ , shàn zhī shàn zhě yě .

不 战 而 屈 人 之 兵 , 善 之 善 者 也 。

故 上 兵 伐 谋 , 其 次 伐 交 , 其 次 伐 兵 , 其 下 攻 城 。

攻 城 之 法 , 为 不 得 已 。 修 橹 勱 幧 , 具 器 械 ,

sān yuè ér hòu chénɡ ; jù yín , yòu sān yuè ér hòu yǐ 。

三 月 而 后 成 : 距 墟 , 又 三 月 而 后 已 。

jiàng bù shèng qí fèn ér yì fù zhī , shā shì sān fēn zhī yí ér 将 不 胜 其 恒 而 及 之 , 杀 士 三 分 之 一 而
chéng bù bá zhě, cǐ ɡōnɡ zhī zāi yě.
城 不 拔 者, 此 攻 之 灾 也。

gù shàn yònɡ bīnɡ zhě, qù rén zhī bīnɡ ér féi zhàn yě,
故 善 用 兵 者, 屈 人 之 兵 而 非 战 也,
bá rén zhī chéng ér féi ɡōnɡ yě, huí rén zhī guó ér féi jiǔ yě.
拔人 之 城 而 非 攻 也, 毁人 之 国 而 非 久 也,
bǐ yì quán zhēnɡ yǔ tiān xià, ɡù bīnɡ bù dùn ér lì kě quán,
必 以 全 争 于 天 下, 故 兵 不 钝 而 利 可 全,
cǐ móu ɡōnɡ zhī fǎ yě.
此 谋 攻 之 法 也。

gù yònɡ bīnɡ zhī fǎ, shí zé wéi zhī, wǔ zé ɡōnɡ zhī,
故 用 兵 之 法, 十 则 围 之, 五 则 攻 之,
bèi zé fēn zhī, dì zé nénɡ zhàn zhī, shǎo zé nénɡ táo zhī,
倍 则 分 之, 敌 则 能 战 而 退, 少 则 能 逃 之,
bù ruò néng bì zhī. ɡù xiǎo dì zhī jiān, dà dì zhī qín yě.
不 若 能 避 之。故 小 敌 之 坚, 大 敌 之 摒 也, fǔ jiànɡ zhě, ɡuó zhī fǔ yě. fǔ zhōu ér guó bǐ qiánɡ,
夫 将 者, 国 之 辅 也。辅 周 而 国 必 强, fǔ xì zé ɡuó bǐ ruò.
辅 隙 则 国 必 弱。

gù jūn zhī suǒ yǐ huàn yú jūn zhě sān: bù zhī jūn zhī bù ké 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 ké yǐ tuí ér wèi zhī tuí,
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, èr tóng sān jūn zhī
是 谓 嘻 军: 不 知 三 军 之 事, 而 同 三 军 之
zhènɡ 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, èr tóng sān jūn zhī rèn, zé jūn shì yí yǐ.
而 同 三 军 之 任, 则 军 士 疑 矣。
sān jūn jí huò qié yǐ, zé zhū hòu zhī nán zhī 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 ké yǐ zhàn yǔ bù ké yǐ zhàn zhē shèng,
故 知 胜 有 五: 知 可 以 战 与 不 可 以 战 者 胜,
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.

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

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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.