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

1. Laying Plans - ji pian di yi

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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ji pian di yi

sūn zǐ yuē : bīng zhě , guó zhī dà shì 。

sǐ shēnɡ zhī dì , cún wán zhī dào , bù kě bù chá yě 。

gù jīng zhī yì wǔ shì , xiào zhī yī jì , ér suǒ qǐ qíng :

故 经 之 以 五 事 , 校 之 以 计 , 而 索 其 情 :

yìyuē dào , èr yuē tiān , sān yuē dì , sì yuē jiāng, wǔ yuē fǎ 。

一 曰 道 , 二 曰 天  , 三 曰 地 , 四 曰 将 , 五 曰 法。

dào zhě , lìng mín yǔ shàng tóng yì yě , gù ké yī yǔ zhī sǐ ,

道 者 , 令 民 与 上 同 意 也 , 故 可 以 与 之 死 ,

ké yī yǔ zhī shēng , ér bú wèi wēi 。

可以 与 之 生 , 而 不 畏 危 。

tiān zhě , yīn yáng 、

天 者 , 阴 阳 、

hán shǔ 、shí zhī yě ; dì zhě , yuǎn jìn 、xiǎn yì 、guǎng xiá 、

寒 暑 、时 制 也 ; 地 者 , 远 近 、 险 易 、广 狭 、

sǐ shēng yě ; jiāng zhě , zhì 、xīn 、rén 、yǒng 、yán yě ;

死 生 也 ; 将 者 , 智 、 信 、 仁 、 勇 、 严 也 ;

fǎ zhě , qǔ zhī 、guǎn dào 、zhǔ yǒng yě 。

法 者 , 曲 制 、 官 道 、 主 用 也 。 凡 此 五 者 , 将

mò bù wèn , zhī zhī zhě shèng , bù zhī zhě bú shèng 。

莫 不 闻 , 知 者 胜 , 不 知 者 不 胜 。

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布政者，守道也。故能而示之不能，用而示之不用。近而示之远，远而示之近。利而诱之，乱而取之，实而备之，强而避之，怒而挠之，卑而骄之，佚而劳之，亲而离之。故其无备，出其不意。此兵家之胜，不可先传也。

夫未战而庙算胜者，得算多也；未战而庙算不胜者，得算少也。多算胜，少算不胜，而况于无算乎！吾以此观之，胜负见矣。
I. LAYING PLANS

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

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. These are: (1) The Moral Law; (2) Heaven; (3) Earth; (4) The Commander; (5) Method and discipline. 5, 6. 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.

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

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

9. The Commander stands for the virtues of wisdom, sincerely, benevolence, courage and strictness. 10. 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.

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

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

13. (1) Which of the two sovereigns is imbued with the Moral law? (2) Which of the two generals has most ability? (3) With whom lie the advantages derived from Heaven and Earth? (4) On which side is discipline most rigorously enforced? (5) Which army is stronger? (6) On which side are officers and men more highly trained? (7) In which army is there the greater constancy both in reward and punishment?
14. By means of these seven considerations I can forecast victory or defeat.

15. 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!

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

17. According as circumstances are favorable, one should modify one’s plans.

18. All warfare is based on deception.

19. 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

26. Now the general who wins a battle makes many calculations in his temple ere the battle is fought. 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.