

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

X.Terrain - di xing pian di shi

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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dì xíng piān dì shí
地形篇第十

sūn zǐ yuē : dì xíng yǒu tōng zhě , yǒu guà zhě , yǒu zhī zhě ,
孙子曰：地形有通者，有挂者，有支者，
yǒu ài zhě , yǒu xiǎn zhě , yǒu yuǎn zhě 。 wǒ ké yǐ wǎng , bǐ ké
有隘者，有险者，有远者。我可以往，彼可
yǐ lái , yuē tōng 。 tōng xíng zhě , xiān jū gāo yáng , lì liáng
以来，曰通。通形者，先居高阳，利粮
dào , yǐ zhàn zé lì 。 ké yǐ wǎng , nán yǐ fǎn , yuē guà 。 guà xíng
道，以战则利。可以往，难以返，曰挂。挂形
zhě , dí wú bèi , chū ér shèng zhī ; dí ruò yǒu bèi , chū ér bú shèng ,
者，敌无备，出而胜之；敌若有备，出而不胜，
nán yǐ fǎn , bú lì 。 wǒ chū ér bú lì , bǐ chū ér bú lì , yuē zhī 。
难以返，不利。我出而不利，彼出而不利，曰支。
zhī xíng zhě , dí suī lì wǒ , wǒ wú chū yě ; yǐn ér qù zhī , lìng dí
支形者，敌虽利我，我无出也；引而去之，令敌
bàn chū ér jī zhī , lì 。 ài xíng zhě , wǒ xiān jū zhī , bì yíng zhī
半出而击之，利。隘形者，我先居之，必盈之
yǐ dài dí 。 ruò dí xiān jū zhī , yíng ér wù cóng , bù yíng ér cóng
以待敌。若敌先居之，盈而勿从，不盈而从
zhī 。 xiǎn xíng zhě , wǒ xiān jū zhī , bì jū gāo yáng yǐ dài dí ;
之。险形者，我先居之，必居高阳以待敌；

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ruò dí xiān jū zhī , yǐn ér qù zhī , wù cóng yě 。 yuǎn xíng zhě ,
若 敌 先 居 之 ， 引 而 去 之 ， 勿 从 也 。 远 形 者 ，
shì jūn , nán yǐ tiǎo zhàn , zhàn ér bú lì 。 fán cǐ liù zhě , dì zhī
势 均 ， 难 以 挑 战 ， 战 而 不 利 。 凡 此 六 者 ， 地 之
dào yě , jiāng zhī zhì rèn , bù kě bù chá yě 。
道 也 ， 将 之 至 任 ， 不 可 不 察 也 。

gù bīng yǒu zǒu zhě , yǒu chí zhě , yǒu xiàn zhě , yǒu bēng zhě ,
故 兵 有 走 者 ， 有 驰 者 ， 有 陷 者 ， 有 崩 者 ，
yǒu luàn zhě , yǒu běi zhě 。 fán cǐ liù zhě , fēi tiān zhī zāi , jiāng
有 乱 者 ， 有 北 者 。 凡 此 六 者 ， 非 天 之 灾 ， 将
zhī guò yě 。 fū shì jūn , yī yì jī shí , yuē zǒu ; zú qiáng lì ruò ,
之 过 也 。 夫 势 均 ， 以 一 击 十 ， 曰 走 ； 卒 强 吏 弱 ，
yuē chí ; lì qiáng zú ruò , yuē xiàn ; dà lì nù ér bù fú , yù dí duì
曰 驰 ； 吏 强 卒 弱 ， 曰 陷 ； 大 吏 怒 而 不 服 ， 遇 敌 恣
ér zì zhàn , jiāng bù zhī qí néng , yuē bēng ; jiāng ruò bù yán ,
而 自 战 ， 将 不 知 其 能 ， 曰 崩 ； 将 弱 不 严 ，
jiāo dào bù míng , lì zú wú cháng , chén bīng zòng héng , yuē luàn ;
教 道 不 明 ， 吏 卒 无 常 ， 陈 兵 纵 横 ， 曰 乱 ；
jiàng bù néng liào dí , yǐ shǎo hé zhòng , yǐ ruò jī qiáng , bīng wú
将 不 能 料 敌 ， 以 少 合 众 ， 以 弱 击 强 ， 兵 无
xuǎn fēng , yuē běi 。 fán cǐ liù zhě , bài zhī dào yě , jiāng zhī
选 锋 ， 曰 北 。 凡 此 六 者 ， 败 之 道 也 ， 将 之
zhì rèn , bù kě bù chá yě 。
至 任 ， 不 可 不 察 也 。

fū dì xíng zhě , bīng zhī zhù yě 。 liào dí zhì shèng , jì xiǎn è yuǎn
夫 地 形 者 ， 兵 之 助 也 。 料 敌 制 胜 ， 计 险 厄 远
jìn , shàng jiāng zhī dào yě 。 zhī cǐ ér yòng zhàn zhě bì shèng , bù
近 ， 上 将 之 道 也 。 知 此 而 用 战 者 必 胜 ， 不
zhī cǐ ér yòng zhàn zhě bì bài 。 gù zhàn dào bì shèng , zhǔ yuē wú
知 此 而 用 战 者 必 败 。 故 战 道 必 胜 ， 主 曰 无
zhàn , bì zhàn kě yě ; zhàn dào bú shèng , zhǔ yuē bì zhàn , wú zhàn
战 ， 必 战 可 也 ； 战 道 不 胜 ， 主 曰 必 战 ， 无 战
kě yě 。 gù jìn bù qiú míng , tuì bú bì zuì , wéi rén shì bǎo , ér
可 也 。 故 进 不 求 名 ， 退 不 避 罪 ， 惟 人 是 保 ， 而
lì hé yú zhǔ , guó zhī bǎo yě 。
利 合 于 主 ， 国 之 宝 也 。

shì zú rú yīng ér , gù ké yǐ yǔ zhī fù shēn xī ; shì zú rú ài zǐ ,

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视卒如婴儿，故可以与之赴深溪；视卒如爱子，
gù kě yǔ zhī jù sǐ 。 hòu ér bù néng shǐ , ài ér bù néng lìng , luàn
故可与之俱死。厚而不能使，爱而不能令，乱
ér bù néng zhì , pì ruò jiāo zǐ , bù kě yòng yě 。
而不能治，譬若骄子，不可用也。

zhī wú zú zhī kě yǐ jī , ér bù zhī dí zhī bù kě jī , shèng zhī bàn
知吾卒之可以击，而不知敌之不可击，胜之半
yě ; zhī dí zhī kě jī , ér bù zhī wǒ zú zhī bù kě yǐ jī , shèng zhī
也；知敌之可击，而不知我卒之不可以击，胜之
bàn yě ; zhī dí zhī kě jī , zhī wú zú zhī kě yǐ jī , ér bù zhī dì xíng
半也；知敌之可击，知吾卒之可以击，而不知地
形

zhī bù kě yǐ zhàn , shèng zhī bàn yě 。 gù zhī bīng zhě , dòng ér bù
之不可以战，胜之半也。故知兵者，动而不
mí , jǔ ér bù qióng 。 gù yuē : zhī bǐ zhī jǐ , shèng nǎi bú dài ;
迷，举而不穷。故曰：知彼知己，胜乃不殆；

zhī tiān zhī dì , shèng nǎi bú qióng 。
知天知地，胜乃不穷。

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

X. TERRAIN

1. Sun Tzu said: We may distinguish six kinds of terrain, to wit: (1) Accessible ground; (2) entangling ground; (3) temporizing ground; (4) narrow passes; (5) precipitous heights; (6) positions at a great distance from the enemy.

2. Ground which can be freely traversed by both sides is called accessible.

3. With regard to ground of this nature, be before the enemy in occupying the raised and sunny spots, and carefully guard your line of supplies. Then you will be able to fight with advantage.

4. Ground which can be abandoned but is hard to re-occupy is called entangling.

5. From a position of this sort, if the enemy is unprepared, you may sally forth and defeat him. But if the enemy is prepared for your coming, and you fail to defeat him, then, return being impossible, disaster will ensue.

6. When the position is such that neither side will gain by making the first move, it is called temporizing ground.

7. In a position of this sort, even though the enemy should offer us an attractive bait, it will be advisable not to stir forth, but rather to retreat, thus enticing the enemy in his turn; then, when part of his army has come out, we may deliver our attack with advantage.

8. With regard to narrow passes, if you can occupy them first, let them be strongly garrisoned and await the advent of the enemy.

9. Should the army forestall you in occupying a pass, do not go after him if the pass is fully garrisoned, but only if it is weakly garrisoned.

10. With regard to precipitous heights, if you are beforehand with your adversary, you should occupy the raised and sunny spots, and there wait for him to come up.

11. If the enemy has occupied them before you, do not follow him, but retreat and try to entice him away.

12. If you are situated at a great distance from the enemy, and the strength of the two armies is equal, it is not easy to provoke a battle, and fighting will be to your disadvantage.

13. These six are the principles connected with Earth. The general who has attained a responsible post must be careful to study them.

14. Now an army is exposed to six several calamities, not arising from natural causes, but from faults for which the general is responsible. These are: (1) Flight; (2) insubordination; (3) collapse; (4) ruin; (5) disorganization; (6) rout.

15. Other conditions being equal, if one force is hurled against another ten times its size, the result will be the flight of the former.

16. When the common soldiers are too strong and their officers too weak, the result is insubordination. When the officers are too strong and the common soldiers too weak, the result is collapse.

17. When the higher officers are angry and insubordinate, and on meeting the enemy give battle on their own account from a feeling of resentment, before the commander-in-chief can tell whether or no he is in a position to fight, the result is ruin.

18. When the general is weak and without authority; when his orders are not clear and distinct; when there are no fixed duties assigned to officers and men, and the ranks are formed in a slovenly haphazard manner, the result is utter disorganization.

19. When a general, unable to estimate the enemy's strength, allows an inferior force to engage a larger one, or hurls a weak detachment against a powerful one, and neglects to place picked soldiers in the front rank, the result must be rout.

20. These are six ways of courting defeat, which must be carefully noted by the general who has attained a responsible post.

21. The natural formation of the country is the soldier's best ally; but a power of estimating the adversary, of controlling the forces of victory, and of shrewdly calculating difficulties, dangers and distances, constitutes the test of a great general.

22. He who knows these things, and in fighting puts his knowledge into practice, will win his battles. He who knows them not, nor practices them, will surely be defeated.

23. If fighting is sure to result in victory, then you must fight, even though the ruler forbid it; if fighting will not result in victory, then you must not fight even at the ruler's bidding.

24. The general who advances without coveting fame and retreats without fearing disgrace, whose only thought is to protect his country and do good service for his sovereign, is the jewel of the kingdom.

25. Regard your soldiers as your children, and they will follow you into the deepest valleys; look upon them as your own beloved sons, and they will stand by you even unto death.

26. If, however, you are indulgent, but unable to make your authority felt; kind-hearted, but unable to enforce your commands; and incapable, moreover, of quelling disorder: then your soldiers must be likened to spoiled children; they are useless for any practical purpose.

27. If we know that our own men are in a condition to attack, but are unaware that the enemy is not open to attack, we have gone only halfway towards victory.

28. If we know that the enemy is open to attack, but are unaware that our own men are not in a condition to attack, we have gone only halfway towards victory.

29. If we know that the enemy is open to attack, and also know that our men are in a condition to attack, but are unaware that the nature of the ground makes fighting impracticable, we have still gone only halfway towards victory.

30. Hence the experienced soldier, once in motion, is never bewildered; once he has broken camp, he is never at a loss.

31. Hence the saying: If you know the enemy and know yourself, your victory will not stand in doubt; if you know Heaven and know Earth, you may make your victory complete.