

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

XIII. The Use of Spies - yong jian pian di shi 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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yòng jiàn piān dì shí sān
用 间 篇 第 十 三

sūn zǐ yuē : fán xīng shī shí wàn , chū zhēng qiān lǐ , bǎi xìng zhī fèi , gōng jiā zhī fèng , rì fèi qiān jīn , nèi wài sāo dòng , dài yú dào lù , bù dé cāo shì zhě , qī shí wàn jiā 。 xiāng shǒu shù nián , yǐ zhēng yī rì zhī shèng , ér ài jué lù bǎi jīn , bù zhī dí zhī qíng zhě , bù rén zhī zhì yě , fēi rén zhī jiāng yě , fēi zhǔ zhī zuǒ yě , fēi shèng zhī zhǔ yě 。
孙 子 曰 : 凡 兴 师 十 万 , 出 征 千 里 , 百 姓 之 费 , 公 家 之 奉 , 日 费 千 金 , 内 外 骚 动 , 殆 于 道 路 , 不 得 操 事 者 , 七 十 万 家 。 相 守 数 年 , 以 争 一 日 之 胜 , 而 爱 爵 禄 百 金 , 不 知 敌 之 情 者 , 不 仁 之 至 也 , 非 人 之 将 也 , 非 主 之 佐 也 , 非 胜 之 主 也 。

gù míng jūn xián jiāng , suǒ yǐ dòng ér shèng rén , chéng gōng chū yú zhòng zhě , xiān zhī yě 。 xiān zhī zhě , bù kě qǔ yú guǐ shén , bù kě xiàng yú shì , bù kě yàn yú dù , bì qǔ yú rén , zhī dí zhī qíng
故 明 君 贤 将 , 所 以 动 而 胜 人 , 成 功 出 于 众 者 , 先 知 也 。 先 知 者 , 不 可 取 于 鬼 神 , 不 可 象 于 事 , 不 可 验 于 度 , 必 取 于 人 , 知 敌 之 情

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zhě yě 。
者 也 。

gù yòng jiān yǒu wǔ : yǒu yīn jiān , yǒu nèi jiān , yǒu fǎn jiān ,
故 用 间 有 五 : 有 因 间 , 有 内 间 , 有 反 间 ,
yǒu sǐ jiān , yǒu shēng jiān 。 wǔ jiān jù qǐ , mò zhī qí dào , shì
有 死 间 , 有 生 间 。 五 间 俱 起 , 莫 知 其 道 , 是
wèi shén jì 。 rén jūn zhī bǎo yě 。 yīn jiān zhě , yīn qí xiāng rén
谓 神 纪 。 人 君 之 宝 也 。 因 间 者 , 因 其 乡 人
ér yòng zhī ; nèi jiān zhě , yīn qí guān rén ér yòng zhī ; fǎn jiān
而 用 之 ; 内 间 者 , 因 其 官 人 而 用 之 ; 反 间
zhě , yīn qí dí jiān ér yòng zhī ; sǐ jiān zhě , wéi kuáng shì yú
者 , 因 其 敌 间 而 用 之 ; 死 间 者 , 为 诳 事 于
wài , lìng wú jiān zhī zhī , ér chuán yú dí jiān yě ; shēng jiān zhě ,
外 , 令 吾 间 知 之 , 而 传 于 敌 间 也 ; 生 间 者 ,
fǎn bào yě 。
反 报 也 。

gù sān jūn zhī shì , mò qīn yú jiān , shǎng mò hòu yú jiān , shì mò
故 三 军 之 事 , 莫 亲 于 间 , 赏 莫 厚 于 间 , 事 莫
mì yú jiān 。 fēi shèng zhì bù néng yòng jiān , fēi rén yì bù néng shǐ
密 于 间 。 非 圣 智 不 能 用 间 , 非 仁 义 不 能 使
jiān , fēi wēi miào bù néng dé jiān zhī shí 。 wēi zāi wēi zāi ! wú
间 , 非 微 妙 不 能 得 间 之 实 。 微 哉 微 哉 ! 无
suǒ bú yòng jiān yě 。 jiān shì wèi fā ér xiān wén zhě , jiān yǔ suǒ
所 不 用 间 也 。 间 事 未 发 而 先 闻 者 , 间 与 所
gào zhě jiē sǐ 。 fán jūn zhī suǒ yù jī , chéng zhī suǒ yù gōng , rén
告 者 皆 死 。 凡 军 之 所 欲 击 , 城 之 所 欲 攻 , 人
zhī suǒ yù shā , bì xiān zhī qí shǒu jiāng 、 zuǒ yòu 、 yè zhě 、 mén
之 所 欲 杀 , 必 先 知 其 守 将 、 左 右 、 谒 者 、 门
zhě 、 shě rén zhī xìng míng , lìng wú jiān bì suǒ zhī zhī 。 bì suǒ
者 、 舍 人 之 姓 名 , 令 吾 间 必 索 知 之 。 必 索
dí rén zhī jiān lái jiān wǒ zhě , yīn ér lì zhī , dǎo ér shě zhī ,
敌 人 之 间 来 间 我 者 , 因 而 利 之 , 导 而 舍 之 ,
gù fǎn jiān kě dé ér yòng yě 。 yīn shì ér zhī zhī , gù xiāng jiān 、
故 反 间 可 得 而 用 也 。 因 是 而 知 之 , 故 乡 间 、
nèi jiān kě dé ér shǐ yě ; yīn shì ér zhī zhī , gù sǐ jiān wéi kuáng
内 间 可 得 而 使 也 ; 因 是 而 知 之 , 故 死 间 为 诳
shì , kě shǐ gào dí ; yīn shì ér zhī zhī , gù shēng jiān kě shǐ rú qī 。
事 , 可 使 告 敌 ; 因 是 而 知 之 , 故 生 间 可 使 如 期 。

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wǔ jiān zhī shì , zhǔ bì zhī zhī , zhī zhī bì zài yú fǎn jiān , gù
五 间 之 事 ， 主 必 知 之 ， 知 之 必 在 于 反 间 ， 故
fǎn jiān bù kě bú hòu yě 。
反 间 不 可 不 厚 也 。

xī yīn zhī xìng yě , yī zhì zài xià ; zhōu zhī xìng yě , lǚ yá zài
昔 殷 之 兴 也 ， 伊 摯 在 夏 ； 周 之 兴 也 ， 吕 牙 在
yīn 。 gù wéi míng jūn xián jiāng , néng yǐ shàng zhì wéi jiān zhě ,
殷 。 故 惟 明 君 贤 将 ， 能 以 上 智 为 间 者 ，
bì chéng dà gōng 。 cǐ bīng zhī yào , sān jūn zhī suǒ shì ér dòng yě 。
必 成 大 功 。 此 兵 之 要 ， 三 军 之 所 恃 而 动 也 。

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

XIII. THE USE OF SPIES

1. Sun Tzu said: Raising a host of a hundred thousand men and marching them great distances entails heavy loss on the people and a drain on the resources of the State. The daily expenditure will amount to a thousand ounces of silver. There will be commotion at home and abroad, and men will drop down exhausted on the highways. As many as seven hundred thousand families will be impeded in their labor.

2. Hostile armies may face each other for years, striving for the victory which is decided in a single day. This being so, to remain in ignorance of the enemy's condition simply because one grudges the outlay of a hundred ounces of silver in honors and emoluments, is the height of inhumanity.

3. One who acts thus is no leader of men, no present help to his sovereign, no master of victory.

4. Thus, what enables the wise sovereign and the good general to strike and conquer, and achieve things beyond the reach of ordinary men, is foreknowledge.

5. Now this foreknowledge cannot be elicited from spirits; it cannot be obtained inductively from experience, nor by any deductive calculation.

6. Knowledge of the enemy's dispositions can only be obtained from other men.
7. Hence the use of spies, of whom there are five classes: (1) Local spies; (2) inward spies; (3) converted spies; (4) doomed spies; (5) surviving spies.
8. When these five kinds of spy are all at work, none can discover the secret system. This is called "divine manipulation of the threads." It is the sovereign's most precious faculty.
9. Having local spies means employing the services of the inhabitants of a district.
10. Having inward spies, making use of officials of the enemy.
11. Having converted spies, getting hold of the enemy's spies and using them for our own purposes.
12. Having doomed spies, doing certain things openly for purposes of deception, and allowing our spies to know of them and report them to the enemy.
13. Surviving spies, finally, are those who bring back news from the enemy's camp.
14. Hence it is that which none in the whole army are more intimate relations to be maintained than with spies. None should be more liberally rewarded. In no other business should greater secrecy be preserved.
15. Spies cannot be usefully employed without a certain intuitive sagacity.
16. They cannot be properly managed without benevolence and straightforwardness.
17. Without subtle ingenuity of mind, one cannot make certain of the truth of their reports.
18. Be subtle! be subtle! and use your spies for every kind of business.

19. If a secret piece of news is divulged by a spy before the time is ripe, he must be put to death together with the man to whom the secret was told.
20. Whether the object be to crush an army, to storm a city, or to assassinate an individual, it is always necessary to begin by finding out the names of the attendants, the aides-de-camp, and door-keepers and sentries of the general in command. Our spies must be commissioned to ascertain these.
21. The enemy's spies who have come to spy on us must be sought out, tempted with bribes, led away and comfortably housed. Thus they will become converted spies and available for our service.
22. It is through the information brought by the converted spy that we are able to acquire and employ local and inward spies.
23. It is owing to his information, again, that we can cause the doomed spy to carry false tidings to the enemy.
24. Lastly, it is by his information that the surviving spy can be used on appointed occasions.
25. The end and aim of spying in all its five varieties is knowledge of the enemy; and this knowledge can only be derived, in the first instance, from the converted spy. Hence it is essential that the converted spy be treated with the utmost liberality.
26. Of old, the rise of the Yin dynasty was due to I Chih who had served under the Hsia. Likewise, the rise of the Chou dynasty was due to Lu Ya who had served under the Yin.
27. Hence it is only the enlightened ruler and the wise general who will use the highest intelligence of the army for purposes of spying and thereby they achieve great results. Spies are a most important element in war, because on them depends an army's ability to move.