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.

Want to know why business people like it so much? Come and learn Sun *Zi*’s Art of War with eChineseLearning’s professional teachers!

---

**yònɡ jiàn piān dì shí sān**

用 间 篇 第 十 三

sūn zǐ yuē : fán xīnɡ shī shí wàn , chū zhēnɡ qiān lǐ , bǎi xìng zhī fèi , gōnɡ jiā zhī fèng , rì fèi qiān jīn , nèi wài sāo dòng , dài yǔ dào lù , bù dé cāo shì zhě , qī shí wàn jiā . xìānɡ shǒu shù yú 道 路 , 不 得 操 事 者 , 七 十 万 家 。 相 守 数 nián , yī zhènɡ yī rì zhī shènɡ , èr āi jué lǜ bǎi jīn , bù zhī dì 年 , 以 争 一 日 之 胜 , 而 爱 爵 禄 百 金 , 不 知 敌 zhī qíng zhě , bù rén zhī zhī yě , fēi rén zhī jiānɡ yě , fēi zhǔ zhī 之情 者 , 不 仁 之 至 也 , 非 人 之 将 也 , 非 主 之 zuǒ yě , fēi shènɡ zhī zhū yě 。 佐 也 , 非 胜 之 主 也。

gù mínɡ jūn xián jiānɡ , suǒ yǐ dōnɡ ér shènɡ rén , chénɡ ɡōnɡ chū 故 明 君 贤 将 , 所 以 动 而 胜 人 , 成 功 出 yǔ zhōnɡ zhě , xiān zhī yě 。 xiān zhī zhě , bù kě ɡǔ yú guì shén , 于 众 者 , 先 知 也 。 先 知 者 , 不 可 取 于 鬼 神 , bù kě xiǎnɡ yǔ shí , bù kě yán yǔ dū , bì ɡǔ yú rén , zhī dí zhī qíng 不 可 象 于 事 , 不 可 验 于 度 , 必 取 于 人 , 知 敌 之 情

---

Take PRIVATE Chinese lesson!
Live Professional Teachers from China!
Sign up for a free trial on [www.echineselearning.com](http://www.echineselearning.com)
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 sī jiān ； yǒu shēng jiān ； wǔ jiān jù qǐ ； mò zhī qí dào ； shǐ
有死间 ； 有生间 ； 五间俱起 ； 莫知其道 ； 是
wèi shēn jī ； rén jùn zhī bǎo yě ； yīn jiān zhě ； yīn qí xiàng rèn
谓神纪 ； 人君之宝也 ； 因间者 ； 因其乡人
ér yòng zhī ； nèi jiān zhě ； yīn qí guǎn rén ér yòng zhī ； fǎn jiān
而用之 ； 内间者 ； 因其官人而用之 ； 反间
zhě ； yīn qí dù jiān ér yòng zhī ； sǐ jiān zhě ； wéi kuàng shí yú
者 ； 因其敌间而用之 ； 死间者 ； 为诡事于
wài ； líng wú jiān zhī zhī ； ér chuān yù dì 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 zhī bù néng yòng jiān ； fēi rén yì bù néng shí
密于间 ； 非圣智不能用间 ； 非仁义不能使
jiān ； fēi wèi miào bù néng dé jiān zhī shī ； wéi zāi wéi zāi ！ wú
间 ； 非微妙不能得间之实 ； 微哉微哉 ！ 无
suǒ 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 。 fǎn jūn zhī suǒ yù jī ； chéng zhī suǒ yǔ gōng ； rén
gào者皆死 ； 凡军之所欲击 ； 城之所欲攻 ；
人 zhī suǒ yǔ shā ； bì xiān zhī qí shǒu jiāng ； zuǒ yòu ； yè zhě ； mén
之欲杀 ； 必先知其守将 、 左右 、 谒者 、 门
zhě ； shē rén zhī xìng míng ； líng wú jiān bì suǒ zhī zhī ； bi 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 lǐ zhī ； dào ér shé zhī ；
敌人之间来间我者 ； 从而利之 ； 导而舍之 ；
gù fǎn jiān kě dé ér yòng yě 。 yīn shí 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 shī yě ； yīn shí ér zhī zhī ； gù sī jiān wéi kuàng
内间可得而使也 ； 因是而知之 ； 故死间为
gāo shì ； kě shī gāo dì ； yīn shí ér zhī zhī ； gù shēng jiān kě shí rú qǐ。
事 ； 可使告敌 ； 因是而知之 ； 故生间可使如期。
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.


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 water, because on them depends an army’s ability to move.