Pod Chinese Lesson

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

II. Waging War - zuo zhan pian di er

Sun Z'i'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 Z'i'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 Z'i's Art of War with eChineseLearning's professional teachers!

zuò zhàn piān dì èr
作战篇第二
sūn zǐ yuē : fán yòng bīng zhī fǎ , chí chē qiān sì , gé chē qiān shèng ,
孙子曰：凡用兵之法，驰车千驷，革车千乘，
dài jiǎ shí wàn , qiān lǐ kuì liáng 。则内外之费，宾客之用，
带甲十万，千里馈粮。则内外之费，宾客之用，
jiāo qī zhī cái , chē jiǎ zhī fèng , rì fèi qiān jīn , rán hòu shí wàn zhī shǐ jū yǐ 。
胶漆之材，车甲之奉，日费千金，然后十万之师举矣。

qí yòng zhàn yě shèng , jiǔ zé dùn bīng cuò ruì , gōng chéng zé lì qū ,
其用战也胜，久则钝兵挫锐，攻城则力屈，
jiǔ pù shī zé guó yòng bù zú 。 fū dùn bīng cuò ruì , qǔ lì dān huo ,
久暴师则国用不足。夫钝兵挫锐，屈力殚货，
zé zhū hòu chénɡ qí bì ér qǐ , suī yǒu zhì zhě , bù néng shàn qí hòu yǐ 。
则诸侯乘其弊而起，虽有智者，不能善其后矣。

gù bīng wén zhuō sù , wèi dù qióng zhǐ jiǔ yě 。
故兵闻拙速，未睹巧之久也。
fū bīng jiǔ ér guò lì zhě , wèi zhī yǒu yě 。
夫兵久而国利者，未之有也。

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故不尽知用兵之害者，则不能尽知用兵之利也。

善用兵者，役不再籍，粮不三载。

取用于国，因粮于敌，故军食可足也。

国之贫于师者远输，远输则百姓贫；

近于师者贵卖，贵卖则百姓财竭，

财竭则急于丘役。力屈财殚，中原内虚于家。

兵之费十去七；公家之费，破车罢马，

甲胄矢弩，戟楯蔽橹，丘牛大车，十去之六。

故知将务食于敌，食敌一钟，当吾二十钟；

其秆一石，当吾二十石。

故杀敌者，怒也；取敌之利者，货也。故车战

dē chē shì chéng yī shàng，shǎng qí xiān dé zé，ér gèng qí jīng qí。

得车十乘已上，赏其先得者，而更其旌旗。

故兵贵胜，不贵久。

故知兵之将，生民之司命，国家安危之主也。

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

II. WAGING WAR
1. Sun Tzu said: In the operations of war, where there are in the field a thousand swift chariots, as many heavy chariots, and a hundred thousand mail-clad soldiers, with provisions enough to carry them a thousand li, the expenditure at home and at the front, including entertainment of guests, small items such as glue and paint, and sums spent on chariots and armor, will reach the total of a thousand ounces of silver per day. Such is the cost of raising an army of 100,000 men.

2. When you engage in actual fighting, if victory is long in coming, then men’s weapons will grow dull and their ardor will be damped. If you lay siege to a town, you will exhaust your strength.

3. Again, if the campaign is protracted, the resources of the State will not be equal to the strain.

4. Now, when your weapons are dulled, your ardor damped, your strength exhausted and your treasure spent, other chieftains will spring up to take advantage of your extremity. Then no man, however wise, will be able to avert the consequences that must ensue.

5. Thus, though we have heard of stupid haste in war, cleverness has never been seen associated with long delays.

6. There is no instance of a country having benefited from prolonged warfare.

7. It is only one who is thoroughly acquainted with the evils of war that can thoroughly understand the profitable way of carrying it on.

8. The skillful soldier does not raise a second levy, neither are his supply-wagons loaded more than twice.

9. Bring war material with you from home, but forage on the enemy. Thus the army will have food enough for its needs.

10. Poverty of the State exchequer causes an army to be maintained by contributions from a distance. Contributing to maintain an army at a distance causes the people to be impoverished.

11. On the other hand, the proximity of an army causes prices to go up; and high prices cause the people’s substance to be drained away.

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12. When their substance is drained away, the peasantry will be afflicted by heavy exactions.

13, 14. With this loss of substance and exhaustion of strength, the homes of the people will be stripped bare, and three-tenths of their income will be dissipated; while government expenses for broken chariots, worn-out horses, breast-plates and helmets, bows and arrows, spears and shields, protective mantles, draught-oxen and heavy wagons, will amount to four-tenths of its total revenue.

15. Hence a wise general makes a point of foraging on the enemy. One cartload of the enemy’s provisions is equivalent to twenty of one’s own, and likewise a single picul of his provender is equivalent to twenty from one’s own store.

16. Now in order to kill the enemy, our men must be roused to anger; that there may be advantage from defeating the enemy, they must have their rewards.

17. Therefore in chariot fighting, when ten or more chariots have been taken, those should be rewarded who took the first. Our own flags should be substituted for those of the enemy, and the chariots mingled and used in conjunction with ours. The captured soldiers should be kindly treated and kept.

18. This is called, using the conquered foe to augment one’s own strength.

19. In war, then, let your great object be victory, not lengthy campaigns.

20. Thus it may be known that the leader of armies is the arbiter of the people’s fate, the man on whom it depends whether the nation shall be in peace or in peril.