

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

II. Waging War - zuo zhan pian di er

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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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 。 zé nèi wài zhī fèi , bīn kè zhī yòng ,
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 shī jǔ 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 , qū lì dān huò ,
久 暴 师 则 国 用 不 足 。 夫 钝 兵 挫 锐 , 屈 力 殫 货 ,
zé zhū hóu chéng 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 dǔ qiǎo zhī jiǔ yě 。
故 兵 闻 拙 速 , 未 睹 巧 之 久 也 。
fū bīng jiǔ ér guó lì zhě , wèi zhī yǒu yě 。
夫 兵 久 而 国 利 者 , 未 之 有 也 。

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gù bú jìn zhī yòng bīngzhī hài zhě, zé bù néng jìn zhī yòng bīngzhī lì yě 。
故 不 尽 知 用 兵 之 害 者, 则 不 能 尽 知 用 兵 之 利 也 。

shàn yòng bīng zhě , yì bú zài jí , liáng bù sān zǎi 。
善 用 兵 者 , 役 不 再 籍 , 粮 不 三 载 。
qǔ yòng yú guó , yīn liáng yú dí , gù jūn shí kě zú yě 。
取 用 于 国 , 因 粮 于 敌, 故 军 食 可 足 也 。

guó zhī pín yú shī zhě yuǎn shū , yuǎn shū zé bǎi xìng pín ;
国 之 贫 于 师 者 远 输 , 远 输 则 百 姓 贫 ;
jìn yú shī zhě guì mài , guì mài zé bǎi xìng cái jié ,
近 于 师 者 贵 卖 , 贵 卖 则 百 姓 财 竭 ,
cái jié zé jí yú qiū yì 。 lì qū cái dān , zhōng yuán nèi xū yú jiā 。
财 竭 则 急 于 丘 役 。 力 屈 财 殫 , 中 原 内 虚 于 家 。

bǎi xìng zhī fèi shí qù zhī qī ; gōng jiā zhī fèi , pò chē bà mǎ ,
百 姓 之 费 十 去 之 七 ; 公 家 之 费 , 破 车 罢 马 ,

jiǎ zhòu shǐ nǚ , jǐ shǔn bì lǚ , qiū niú dà chē , shí qù zhī liù 。
甲 冑 矢 弩 , 戟 楯 蔽 櫓 , 丘 牛 大 车 , 十 去 之 六 。

gù zhì jiàng wù shí yú dí , shí dí yì zhōng , dāng wú èr shí zhōng ;
故 智 将 务 食 于 敌 , 食 敌 一 钟 , 当 吾 二 十 钟 ;
qí gǎn yì dān , dāng wú èr shí dān 。
其 秆 一 石 , 当 吾 二 十 石 。

gù shā dí zhě , nù yě ; qǔ dí zhī lì zhě , huò yě 。 gù chē zhàn
故 杀 敌 者 , 怒 也 ; 取 敌 之 利 者 , 货 也 。 故 车 战
dé chē shí chéng yǐ shàng , shǎng qí xiān dé zhě , ér gēng qí jīng qí 。
得 车 十 乘 已 上 , 赏 其 先 得 者 , 而 更 其 旌 旗 。
chē zá ér chéng zhī , zú shàn ér yǎng zhī , shì wèi shèng dí ér yì qiáng 。
车 杂 而 乘 之 , 卒 善 而 养 之 , 是 谓 胜 敌 而 益 强 。
gù bīng guì shèng , bú guì jiǔ 。
故 兵 贵 胜 , 不 贵 久 。

gù zhī bīng zhī jiàng , shēng mǐn zhī sī mìng , guó jiā ān wēi zhī zhǔ yě 。
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

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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.

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.