

SUN-TZU: THE PRINCIPLES OF WARFARE "THE ART OF WAR"

Chapter One: Calculations

Sun-tzu said:

Warfare is a great matter to a nation; it is the ground of death and of life; it is the way of survival and of destruction, and must be examined. Therefore, go through it by means of five factors; compare them by means of calculation, and determine their statuses: One, Way, two, Heaven, three, Ground, four, General, five, Law.

The Way is what causes the people to have the same thinking as their superiors; they may be given death, or they may be given life, but there is no fear of danger and betrayal. Heaven is dark and light, cold and hot, and the seasonal constraints. Ground is high and low, far and near, obstructed and easy, wide and narrow, and dangerous and safe. General is wisdom, credibility, benevolence, courage, and discipline. Law is organization, the chain of command, logistics, and the control of expenses. All these five no general has not heard; one who knows them is victorious, one who does not know them is not victorious.

Therefore, compare them by means of calculation, and determine their statuses. Ask: Which ruler has the Way, which general has the ability, which has gained Heaven and Ground, which carried out Law and commands, which army is strong, which officers and soldiers are trained, which reward and punish clearly, by means of these, I know victory and defeat!

A general who listens to my calculations, and uses them, will surely be victorious, keep him; a general who does not listen to my calculations, and does not use them, will surely be defeated, remove him. Calculate advantages by means of what was heard, then create force in order to assist outside missions. Force is the control of the balance of power, in accordance with advantages.

Warfare is the Way of deception. Therefore, if able, appear unable, if active, appear not active, if near, appear far, if far, appear near. If they have advantage, entice them; if they are confused, take them, if they are substantial, prepare for them, if they are strong, avoid them, if they are angry, disturb them, if they are humble, make them haughty, if they are relaxed, toil them, if they are united, separate them. Attack where they are not prepared, go out to where they do not expect. This specialized warfare leads to victory, and may not be transmitted beforehand.

Before doing battle, in the temple one calculates and will win, because many calculations were made; before doing battle, in the temple one calculates and will not win, because few calculations were made; many calculations, victory, few calculations, no victory, then how much less so when no calculations? By means of these, I can observe them, beholding victory or defeat!

Chapter Two: Doing Battle

Sun-tzu said:

Generally, the requirements of warfare are this way: One thousand quick four-horse chariots, one thousand leather rideable chariots, one hundred thousand belted armor, transporting provisions one thousand li, the distribution of internal and on the field spending, the efforts of having guests, materials such as glue and lacquer, tributes in chariots and armor, will amount to expenses of a thousand gold pieces a day. Only then can one hundred thousand troops be raised.

When doing battle, seek a quick victory. A protracted battle will blunt weapons and dampen ardor. If troops lay siege to a walled city, their strength will be exhausted. If the army is exposed to a prolonged campaign, the nation's resources will not suffice. When weapons are blunted, and ardor dampened, strength exhausted, and resources depleted, the neighboring rulers will take advantage of these complications. Then even the wisest of counsels would not be able to avert the consequences that must ensue. Therefore, I have heard of military campaigns that were clumsy but swift, but I have never seen military campaigns that were skilled but protracted. No nation has ever benefited from protracted warfare. Therefore, if one is not fully cognizant of the dangers inherent in doing battle, one cannot fully know the benefits of doing battle.

Those skilled in doing battle do not raise troops twice, or transport provisions three times. Take equipment from home but take provisions from the enemy. Then the army will be sufficient in both equipment and provisions. A nation can be impoverished by the army when it has to supply the army at great distances. When provisions are transported at a great distances, the citizens will be impoverished. Those in proximity to the army will sell goods at high prices. When goods are expensive, the citizens' wealth will be exhausted. When their wealth is exhausted, the peasantry will be afflicted with increased taxes. When all strength has been exhausted and resources depleted, all houses in the central plains utterly impoverished, seven-tenths of the citizens' wealth dissipated, the government's expenses from damaged chariots, worn-out horses, armor, helmets, arrows and crossbows, halberds and shields, draft oxen, and heavy supply wagons, will be six-tenths of its reserves.

Therefore, a wise general will strive to feed off the enemy. One bushel of the enemy's provisions is worth twenty of our own, one picul of fodder is worth twenty of our own. Killing the enemy is a matter of arousing anger in men; taking the enemy's wealth is a matter of reward. Therefore, in chariot battles, reward the first to capture at least ten chariots. Replace the enemy's flags and standards with our own. Mix the captured chariots with our own, treat the captured soldiers well. This is called defeating the enemy and increasing our strength.

Therefore, the important thing in doing battle is victory, not protracted warfare. Therefore, a general who understands warfare is the guardian of people's lives, and the ruler of the nation's security.

Chapter Three: Planning Attacks

Sun-tzu said:

Generally in warfare, keeping a nation intact is best, destroying a nation second best; keeping an army intact is best, destroying an army second best; keeping a battalion intact is best, destroying a battalion second best; keeping a company intact is best, destroying a company second best; keeping a squad intact is best, destroying a squad second best. Therefore, to gain a hundred victories in a hundred battles is not the highest excellence; to subjugate the enemy's army without doing battle is the highest of excellence. Therefore, the best warfare strategy is to attack the enemy's plans, next is to attack alliances, next is to attack the army, and the worst is to attack a walled city.

Laying siege to a city is only done when other options are not available. To build large protective shields, armored wagons, and make ready the necessary arms and equipment will require at least three months. To build earthen mounds against the walls will require another three months. If the general cannot control his temper and sends troops to swarm the walls, one third of them will be killed, and the city will still not be taken. This is the kind of calamity when laying siege to a walled city.

Therefore, one who is skilled in warfare principles subdues the enemy without doing battle, takes the enemy's walled city without attacking, and overthrows the enemy quickly, without protracted warfare. His aim must be to take All-Under-Heaven intact. Therefore, weapons will not be blunted, and gains will be intact. These are the principles of planning attacks.

Generally in warfare: If ten times the enemy's strength, surround them; if five times, attack them; if double, divide them; if equal, be able to fight them; if fewer, be able to evade them; if weaker, be able to avoid them. Therefore, a smaller army that is inflexible will be captured by a larger one.

A general is the safeguard of the nation. When this support is in place, the nation will certainly be strong. When this support is not in place, the nation will certainly not be strong.

There are three ways the ruler can bring difficulty to the army: To order an advance when not realizing the army is in no position to advance, or to order a withdrawal when not realizing the army is in no position to withdraw. This is called entangling the army. By not knowing the army's matters, and administering the army the same as administering civil matters, the officers and troops will be confused. By not knowing the army's calculations, and taking command of the army, the officers and troops will be hesitant. When the army is confused and hesitant, the neighboring rulers will take advantage. This is called a confused and hesitant army leading another to victory.

Therefore, there are five factors of knowing who will win: One who knows when he can fight, and when he cannot fight, will be victorious; one who knows how to use both large and small forces will be victorious; one who knows how to unite upper and lower ranks in purpose will be victorious; one who is prepared and waits for the unprepared will be victorious; one whose general is able and is not interfered by the ruler will be victorious. These five factors are the way to know who will win.

Therefore I say: One who knows the enemy and knows himself will not be in danger in a hundred battles. One who does not know the enemy but knows himself will sometimes win, sometimes lose. One who does not know the enemy and does not know himself will be in danger in every battle.

Chapter Four: Formation

Sun-tzu said:

In ancient times, those skilled in warfare make themselves invincible and then wait for the enemy to become vulnerable. Being invincible depends on oneself, but the enemy becoming vulnerable depends on himself. Therefore, those skilled in warfare can make themselves invincible, but cannot necessarily cause the enemy to be vulnerable. Therefore it is said one may know how to win but cannot necessarily do it.

One takes on invincibility defending, one takes on vulnerability attacking. One takes on sufficiency defending, one takes on deficiency attacking. Those skilled in defense conceal themselves in the lowest depths of the Earth, Those skilled in attack move in the highest reaches of the Heavens. Therefore, they are able to protect themselves and achieve complete victory.

Perceiving a victory when it is perceived by all is not the highest excellence. Winning battles such that the whole world says "excellent" is not the highest excellence. For lifting an autumn down is not considered great strength, seeing the sun and the moon is not considered a sign of sharp vision, hearing thunder is not considered a sign of sensitive hearing. In ancient times, those who are skilled in warfare gained victory where victory was easily gained. Therefore, the victories from those skilled in warfare are not considered of great wisdom or courage, because their victories have no miscalculations. No miscalculations mean the victories are certain, achieving victory over those who have already lost.

Therefore, those skilled in warfare establish positions that make them invincible and do not miss opportunities to attack the enemy. Therefore, a victorious army first obtains conditions for victory, then seeks to do battle. A defeated army first seeks to do battle, then obtains conditions for victory. Those skilled in warfare cultivate the Way, and preserve the Law, therefore, they govern victory and defeat.

The factors in warfare are: First, measurement, second, quantity, third, calculation, fourth, comparison, and fifth, victory. Measurements are derived from Ground, quantities are derived from measurement, calculations are derived from quantities, comparisons are derived from calculations, and victories are derived from comparisons. A victorious army is like a ton against an ounce; a defeated army is like an ounce against a ton! The victorious army is like pent up waters released, bursting through a deep gorge. This is formation.

Chapter Five: Force

Sun-tzu said:

Generally, commanding of many is like commanding of a few. It is a matter of dividing them into groups. Doing battle with a large army is like doing battle with a small army. It is a matter of communications through flags and pennants.

What enable an army to withstand the enemy' s attack and not be defeated are uncommon and common maneuvers. The army will be like throwing a stone against an egg; it is a matter of weakness and strength. Generally, in battle, use the common to engage the enemy and the uncommon to gain victory. Those skilled at uncommon maneuvers are as endless as the heavens and earth, and as inexhaustible as the rivers and seas.

Like the sun and the moon, they set and rise again. Like the four seasons, they pass and return again. There are no more than five musical notes, yet the variations in the five notes cannot all be heard. There are no more than five basic colors, yet the variations in the five colors cannot all be seen. There are no more than five basic flavors, yet the variations in the five flavors cannot all be tasted. In battle, there are no more than two types of attacks: Uncommon and common, yet the variations of the uncommon and common cannot all be comprehended. The uncommon and the common produce each other, like an endless circle. Who can comprehend them?

The rush of torrential waters tossing boulders illustrates force. The strike of a bird of prey breaking the body of its target illustrates timing. Therefore, the force of those skilled in warfare is overwhelming, and their timing precise. Their force is like a drawn crossbow and their timing is like the release of the trigger.

Even in the midst of the turbulence of battle, the fighting seemingly chaotic, they are not confused. Even in the midst of the turmoil of battle, the troops seemingly going around in circles, they cannot be defeated. Disorder came from order, fear came from courage, weakness came from strength. Disorder coming from order is a matter of organization, fear coming from courage is a matter of force, weakness coming from strength is a matter of formation.

Therefore, those skilled in moving the enemy use formation that which the enemy must respond. They offer bait that which the enemy must take, manipulating the enemy to move while they wait in ambush. Those skilled in warfare seek victory through force and do not require too much from individuals. Therefore, they are able to select the right men and exploit force. One who exploits force commands men into battle like rolling logs and boulders. Logs and boulders are still when on flat ground, but roll when on steep ground. Square shapes are still, but round shapes roll. Therefore, those skilled in warfare use force where the troops in battle are like boulders rolling down a steep mountain. This is force.

Chapter Six: Weakness and Strength

Sun-tzu said:

Generally the one who first occupies the battlefield awaiting the enemy is at ease; the one who comes later and rushes into battle is fatigued. Therefore those skilled in warfare move the enemy, and are not moved by the enemy. Getting the enemy to approach on his own accord is a matter of showing him advantage; stopping him from approaching is a matter of showing him harm.

Therefore, if the enemy is at ease, be able to exhaust him; if the enemy is well fed, be able to starve him; if the enemy is settled, be able to move him; appear at places where he must rush to defend, and rush to places where he least expects. To march over a thousand li without becoming distressed, march over where the enemy is not present. To be certain to take what you attack, attack where the enemy cannot defend. To be certain of safety when defending, defend where the enemy cannot attack. Therefore, against those skilled in attack, the enemy does not know where to defend; against those skilled in defense, the enemy does not know where to attack. Subtle! Subtle! They become formless. Mysterious! Mysterious! They become soundless. Therefore, they are the masters of the enemy' s fate.

To achieve an advance that cannot be hampered, rush to his weak points. To achieve a withdrawal that cannot be pursued, depart with superior speed. Therefore, if we want to do battle, even if the enemy is protected by high walls and deep moats, he cannot but do battle, because we attack what he must rescue. If we do not want to do battle, even if we merely draw a line on the ground, he will not do battle, because we divert his movements.

Therefore, if we can make the enemy show his position while we are formless, we will be at full force while the enemy is divided. If our army is at full force and the enemy is divided, then we will attack him at ten times his strength. Therefore, we are many and the enemy few. If we attack our many against his few, the enemy will be in dire straits.

The place of battle must not be made known to the enemy. If it is not known, then the enemy must prepare to defend many places. If he prepares to defend many places, then the forces will be few in number. Therefore, if he prepares to defend the front, the back will be weak. If he prepares to defend the back, the front will be weak. If he prepares to defend the left, the right will be weak. If he prepares to defend the right, the left will be weak. If he prepares to defend everywhere, everywhere will be weak. The few are those preparing to defend against others, the many are those who make others prepare to defend against them.

Therefore, if one knows the place of battle and the day of battle, he can march a thousand li and do battle. If one does not know the place of battle and the day of battle, then his left cannot aid his right, and his right cannot aid his left; his front cannot aid his back, and his back cannot aid his front. How much less so if he is separated by tens of li, or even a few li. Based on my calculations, though Yueh' s troops were many, what advantage was this to them in respect to victory? Therefore I say, victory can be achieved.

Though the enemy is many, he can be prevented from doing battle. Therefore, know the enemy' s plans and calculate their strengths and weaknesses. Provoke him, to know his patterns of movement. Determine his position, to know the ground of death and of life. Probe him, to know where he is strong and where he is weak.

The ultimate skill is to take up a position where you are formless. If you are formless, the most penetrating spies will not be able to discern you, or the wisest counsels will not be able to do calculations against you. With formation, the army achieves victories yet they do not understand how. Everyone knows the formation by which you achieved victory, yet no one knows the formations by which you were able to create victory. Therefore, your strategy for victories in battle is not repetitious, and your formations in response to the enemy are endless.

The army' s formation is like water. The water' s formation avoids the high and rushes to the low. So an army' s formation avoids the strong and rushes to the weak. Water' s formation adapts to the ground when flowing. So then an army' s formation adapts to the enemy to achieve victory. Therefore, an army does not have constant force, or have constant formation. Those who are able to adapt and change in accord with the enemy and achieve victory are called divine. Therefore, of the five elements, none a constant victor, of the four seasons, none has constant position; the sun has short and long spans, and the moon waxes and wanes.

Chapter Seven: Armed Struggle

Sun-tzu said:

Generally, the principles of warfare are: The general receives his commands from the ruler, assembles the troops, mobilizes the army, and sets up camp. There is nothing more difficult than armed struggle. In armed struggle, the difficulty is turning the circuitous into the direct, and turning adversity into advantage. Therefore, if you make the enemy's route circuitous and bait him with advantages, though you start out behind him, you will arrive before him. This is to know the calculations of the circuitous and of the direct.

Therefore, armed struggle has advantages, and armed struggle has risks. If the entire army mobilizes for an advantage, you will not arrive on time. If a reduced army mobilizes for an advantage, your stores and equipment will be lost. For this reason, by rolling up your armor, rushing forward without stopping day or night, covering twice the usual distance for an advantage a hundred li away, the general will be captured. The strong will arrive first, the weak will lag behind, and as a rule, only one-tenth will arrive. If one struggles for an advantage fifty li away, the general of the front forces will be thwarted, and as a rule only one half will arrive. If one struggles for an advantage thirty li away, then two-thirds of the army will arrive. For this reason, if an army is without its equipment will lose; if an army is without its provisions will lose; if the army is without its stores will lose.

Therefore, one who does not know the intentions of the rulers of the neighboring states cannot secure alliances. One who does not know the mountains and forests, gorges and defiles, swamps and wetlands cannot advance the army.

One who does not use local guides cannot take advantage of the ground.

Therefore, the army is established on deception, mobilized by advantage, and changed through dividing up and consolidating the troops. Therefore, it advances like the wind; it marches like the forest; it invades and plunders like fire; it stands like the mountain; it is formless like the dark; it strikes like thunder. When you plunder the countryside, divide the wealth among your troops; when you expand your territory, divide up and hold places of advantage. Calculate the situation, and then move. Those who know the principles of the circuitous and direct will be victorious. This is armed struggle.

The Book of Military Administration says: It is because words cannot be clearly heard in battle, drums and gongs are used; it is because troops cannot see each other clearly in battle, flags and pennants are used. Therefore, in night battles use torches and drums; in day battles use flags and pennants. Drums, gongs, flags, and pennants are used to unite men's eyes and ears. When the men are united, the brave cannot advance alone, the cowardly cannot retreat alone. These are the principles for employing a large number of troops. Therefore, in night battles, use many torches and drums, and in day battles, use many flags and pennants in order to influence men's eyes and ears.

The energy of the army can be dampened, and the general's mind can be dampened. Therefore, in the morning, energy is high, but during the day energy begins to flag; and in the evening, energy is exhausted. Therefore, those skilled in the use of force avoid high energy, and strike when energy is exhausted. This is the way to manage energy. Disciplined, wait for disorder; calm, wait for clamor. This is the way to manage the mind. Near, wait for the distant; rested, wait for the fatigued; full, wait for the hungry. This is the way to manage strength. Do not do battle with well-ordered flags; do not do battle with well-regulated formations. This is the way to manage adaptation. Therefore, the principles of warfare are: Do not attack an enemy that has the high ground; do not attack an enemy that has his back to a hill; do not pursue feigned retreats; do not attack elite troops; do not swallow the enemy's bait; do not thwart an enemy retreating home. If you surround the enemy, leave an outlet; do not press an enemy that is cornered. These are the principles of warfare.

Chapter Eight: Nine Changes

Sun-tzu said:

Generally, the principles of warfare are: The general receives his commands from the ruler, assembles the armies, and mobilizes the masses. Do not camp on difficult ground. Unite with your allies on intersecting ground. Do not stay on open ground. Be prepared on surrounded ground. Do battle on deadly ground. There are routes not to be taken; there are armies not to be attacked; there are walled cities not to be besieged; there are grounds not to be penetrated; there are commands not to be obeyed.

Therefore, the general who knows the advantages of the nine changes knows how to use the troops. If the general does not know the advantages of the nine changes, even if he knows the lay of the land, he will not be able to take advantage of the ground. He who commands an army but does not know the principles of the nine changes, even if he is familiar with the five advantages, will not be able to best use his troops.

Therefore, the intelligent general contemplates both the advantages and disadvantages. Contemplating the advantages, he fulfills his calculations; contemplating the disadvantages, he removes his difficulties. Therefore, subjugate the neighboring rulers with potential disadvantages, labor the neighboring rulers with constant matters, and have the neighboring rulers rush after advantages.

So the principles of warfare are: Do not depend on the enemy not coming, but depend on our readiness against him. Do not depend on the enemy not attacking, but depend on our position that cannot be attacked. Therefore, there are five dangerous traits of a general: He who is reckless can be killed. He who is cowardly can be captured. He who is quick tempered can be insulted. He who is moral can be shamed. He who is fond of the people can be worried. These five traits are faults in a general, and are disastrous in warfare. The army's destruction, and the death of the general are due to these five dangerous traits. They must be examined.

Chapter Nine: Army Maneuvers

Sun-tzu said:

Generally, on positioning the army and observing the enemy: To cross mountains, stay close to the valleys; observe on high ground and face the sunny side. If the enemy holds the high ground, do not ascend and do battle with him. This is positioning the army in the mountains. After crossing a river, you must stay far away from it. If the enemy crosses a river, do not meet him in the water. When half of his forces has crossed, it will then be advantageous to strike. If you want to do battle with the enemy, do not position your forces near the water facing the enemy; take high ground facing the sunny side, and do not position downstream. This is positioning the army near rivers. After crossing swamps and wetlands, strive to quickly get through them, and do not linger. If you do battle in swamps and wetlands, you must position close to grass, with the trees to your back. This is positioning the army in swamps and wetlands. On level ground, position on places that are easy to maneuver with your right backed by high ground, with the dangerous ground in front, and safe ground to the back. This is positioning the army on level ground. These are the four positions advantageous to the army, which enabled the Yellow Emperor to conquer four rulers.

Generally, the army prefers high ground and dislikes low ground, values the sunny side and despises the shady side, nourishes its health and occupies places with resources, and avoids numerous sicknesses. These factors mean certain victory. Where there are hills and embankments, you must position on the sunny side, with the hills and embankments to your right back. These are advantages to the army.

Use the ground for assistance. When the rainwater rises and descends down to where you want to cross, wait until it settles. Where there is ground with impassable ravines, Heaven' s Wells, Heaven' s Prisons, Heaven' s Nets, Heaven' s Pits, and Heaven' s Fissures, you must march quickly away from them. Do not approach them. When we distance from them, draw the enemy to approach them. When we move to face the enemy, he will have them at his back. When the army is flanked by high ground, wetlands, tall reeds and grass, mountain forests, or areas with thick undergrowth, you must search carefully and thoroughly, because these are places where men lie in ambush or where spies hide.

If the enemy is close and remains quiet, he occupies a natural stronghold. If the enemy is far away and challenges you to do battle, he wants you to advance, because he occupies level ground that is to his advantage. If trees move, he is advancing; if there are obstacles placed in the undergrowth, he wants to make us suspicious; if the birds take flight, he is lying in ambush; if the animals are in fear, he is preparing to attack; if dust is high in straight columns, his chariots are advancing; if dust is low and wide, his infantry is advancing. If the dust is scattered, he is gathering wood; if the dust is sparse, coming and going, he is encamping.

If he speaks humbly, but increases warfare readiness, he will advance. If he speaks belligerently and advances aggressively, he will retreat. If he speaks apologetically, he needs a rest. If his light chariots move first and take position on the flanks, he is setting up for battle. If he seeks peace without a treaty, he is calculating. If he sets up his troops rapidly, he is expecting reinforcements.

If half of his troops advances and half of his troops retreats, he is trying to lure you. If the troops lean on their weapons, they are hungry. If the troops who draw water drink first, they are thirsty. If he sees advantage but does not take it, he is tired. If birds gather, he is not there. If his troops cry at night, they are afraid. If the army is unsettled, the general is weak. If the enemy' s flags and pennants move about, he is in chaos. If the officers are irritable, they are exhausted. If his horses are fed grain and his men meat, no longer hangs up cooking pots, and does not return to camp, he is desperate.

If troops constantly gather in small groups and whisper together, he has lost his men. If he gives out rewards frequently, he is running out of resources. If he gives out punishments frequently, he is dire straits. If he is brutal at first, and then fears the masses, he is the extreme of ineptitude. If he comes with offerings, he wants to rest. If his troops confront you with anger, but do not do battle or leave their position, he must be investigated. In warfare, numbers may not necessarily be an advantage; do not advance aggressively.

It is enough to consolidate your strength, calculate the enemy, and get support from your men. One who lacks strategic planning and underestimates the enemy will be captured. If one punishes the troops before their loyalty is formed, they will be disobedient. If they are disobedient, they will be difficult to use. If one does not punish the troops after their loyalty is formed, they cannot be used. Therefore, if he commands them by benevolence, and unifies them by discipline, this is called certain victory. If commands are consistently enforced when training men, they will be obedient; if commands are not consistently enforced when training men, they will be disobedient. If commands are consistently executed, they are in accord with the general.

Chapter Ten: Ground Formation

Sun-tzu said:

The grounds are accessible, entrapping, stalemated, narrow, steep, and expansive. If you can go through but the enemy cannot, it is called accessible. For accessible ground, first take the high and the sunny side, and convenient supply routes. You then do battle with the advantage. If you can go through but difficult to go back, it is called entrapping. For entrapping ground, if the enemy is unprepared, advance and defeat him. If the enemy is prepared, and you advance and are not victorious, it will be difficult to go back; this is disadvantageous. If it is not advantageous to advance or for the enemy to advance, it is called stalemated. For stalemated ground, though the enemy offers you advantage, do not advance. Withdraw. If you strike them when half has advanced, this is advantageous.

For narrow ground, we must occupy it first; be prepared and wait for the enemy. If the enemy occupies it first, and is prepared, do not follow him. If he is not prepared, follow him. For steep ground, if you occupy it first, occupy the high on the sunny side and wait for the enemy. If the enemy occupies it first, withdraw; do not follow him. For expansive ground, if the forces are equal, it will be difficult to do battle. Doing battle will not be advantageous. These are the six Ways of ground. They are the general's responsibility, and must be examined.

In warfare, there are flight, insubordination, deterioration, collapse, chaos, and setback. These six situations are not caused by Heaven or Ground, but by the general. If the forces are equal, and one attacks ten, this is called flight. If the troops are strong but the officers weak, this is called insubordination. If the officers are strong but the troops weak, this is called deterioration.

If the officers are angry and insubordinate, doing battle with the enemy under anger and insubordination, and the general does not know their abilities, this is called collapse. If the general is weak and not disciplined, his instructions not clear, the officers and troops lack discipline and their formation in disarray, this is called chaos. If the general cannot calculate his enemy, and uses a small number against a large number, his weak attacking the strong, and has no selected vanguard, this is called setback. These are the six Ways of defeat. They are the general's responsibility, and must be examined. Formations of the ground assist the army.

To calculate the enemy, create conditions leading to victory, calculating the dangers and distances. They are the Ways of the superior general. Those who do battle and know these are certain for victory. Those who do battle and do not know these are certain for defeat. Therefore, if the Way of warfare indicates certain victory, though the ruler does not want to do battle, the general may do battle. If the Way of warfare indicates defeat, though the ruler wants to do battle, the general may not do battle. Therefore, the general who does not advance to seek glory, or does not withdraw to avoid punishment, but cares for only the people's security and promotes the people's interests, is the nation's treasure.

He looks upon his troops as children, and they will advance to the deepest valleys. He looks upon his troops as his own children, and they will die with him. If the general is kind to the troops, but cannot use them, or if the general loves the troops, but cannot command them, or if the general does not discipline the troops, but cannot establish order, the troops are like spoiled children and are useless.

If I know the troops can attack, but do not know the enemy cannot attack, my victory is half. If I know the enemy can be attacked, but do not know the troops cannot attack, my victory is half. If I know the enemy can be attacked, and know the troops can attack, but do not know the ground in battle, my victory is half. Therefore, one who knows how to advance the army is limitless when taking action. Therefore I say, if you know the enemy and know yourself, the victory is not at risk. If you know the Heaven and you know the Ground, the victory is complete.

Chapter Eleven: Nine Grounds

Sun-tzu said:

The principles of warfare are: There are dispersive ground, marginal ground, contentious ground, open ground, intersecting ground, critical ground, difficult ground, surrounded ground, and deadly ground. Where the rulers do battle in their own ground, this is called dispersive ground. Where one enters the other's ground but not deep, this is called marginal ground. Where it is advantageous if you occupy it and it is advantageous if the enemy occupies it, this is called contentious ground. Where one can come and go, this is called open ground.

Where ground is surrounded by others, and the first one to reach it will gain the support of the masses, this is called intersecting ground. Where one enters deep into enemy ground, with many walled cities and towns to his back, this is called critical ground. Where there are mountains and forests, defiles and ravines, swamps and wetlands, and places difficult to pass, this is called difficult ground. Where the entrance is narrow, the exit circuitous, allowing the enemy to attack his few to our many, this is called surrounded ground. Where if one who does battle with full force survives, and one who does not do battle with full force perishes, this is called deadly ground.

Therefore, on dispersive ground, do not do battle. On marginal ground, do not stop. On contentious ground, do not attack. On open ground, do not become separated. On intersecting ground, form alliances. On critical ground, plunder. On difficult ground, press on. On surrounded ground, be prepared. On deadly ground, do battle.

In ancient times, those skilled in warfare were able to prevent the unity of the enemy's front and back, the many and the few, the noble and the peasants, and the superiors and the subordinates. Have the enemy be separated and unable to assemble; if the enemy is assembled, it should not be organized. Move when advantageous, stop when not advantageous.

Ask: If the enemy is large in number and advances, what should be the response? I say: Seize what he values, and he will do what you wish. The essential factor in warfare is speed. To take advantage of the enemy's lack of preparation, take unexpected routes to attack where the enemy is not prepared.

Generally, the Way of invading is when one has penetrated deep into enemy ground, the troops are united; the defender will not be able to prevail. If you plunder the fertile fields, the army will have enough provisions. If you take care of your health, avoid fatigue, you will be united, and will build strength. When moving troops and calculating plans, be formless. Throw your troops into situations where there is no escape, where they will die before escaping. When they are about to die, what can they not do? They will exert their full strength.

When the troops are in desperate situations, they fear nothing; having penetrated deep in enemy ground, they are united. When there are no other alternatives, they will fight. Therefore, though not disciplined, they are alert; though not asked, they are devoted; though without promises, they are faithful; and though not commanded, they are trustworthy. Prohibit omens, and get rid of doubts, and they will die without any other thoughts.

The soldiers do not have wealth, but not because they dislike material goods; they do not live long, but not because they dislike longevity. On the day the men are issued orders to do battle, the sitting soldiers' tears will soak their sleeves, and the lying soldiers' tears will roll down their cheeks. However, if you throw them into a desperate situation, they will have the courage of Chuan Chu or Ts' adKuei.

Therefore, those skilled in warfare are like the shuaijan. The shuaijan is a serpent on Mount Chang. If you strike its head, its tail attacks; if you strike its tail, its head attacks; if you strike its middle, both the head and tail attack. Ask: Can forces be made like the shuaijan? I say: They can. The men of Wu and Yueh hated each other, however, encountering severe winds when crossing a river on the same boat, they assisted each other like left and right hands. Therefore, hobbling horses and burying chariot wheels are not enough. The Way of organization is uniting their courage, making the best of the strong and the weak through the principles of Ground. Therefore, one who is skilled in warfare leads them by the hand like they are one person; they cannot but follow.

It is important for a general to be calm and remote, upright and disciplined, and be able to mystify his men's eyes and ears, keeping them ignorant. He changes his methods and plans, keeping them from knowing. He changes his campsites and takes circuitous routes, keeping them from anticipating. The day the general leads his troops into battle, it is like climbing up high and throwing away the ladder. He leads his troops deep into enemy ground, and releases the trigger. He burns his boats and destroys the cooking pots. He commands his troops like herding sheep; being herded to and fro without them knowing where they are going. Assembling the masses of the army, and throwing them into danger are the responsibility of the general.

Adaptations to the nine grounds, the advantages in defensive and offensive maneuvers, and the patterns of human emotions must be examined. Generally, the Way of invading is: When troops are deep in enemy ground, they are united; when troops are not deep in enemy ground, they are scattered. Where you leave your country, and lead the troops across the border into enemy ground, this is called isolated ground. Where there are four sides open, this is

called intersecting ground. Where you penetrated deep in enemy ground, this is called critical ground. Where you penetrated little in enemy ground, this is called marginal ground. Where the back is impassable and the front is narrow, this is called surrounded ground. Where there is nowhere to go, this is called deadly ground.

Therefore, on isolated ground, I have my troops united. On marginal ground, I consolidate my troops. On contentious ground, I hurry my back. On open ground, I pay attention to our defenses. On intersecting ground, I strengthen our alliances. On critical ground, I maintain continuous supply of provisions. On difficult ground, I press on quickly. On surrounded ground, I block off openings. On deadly ground, I show the troops our resolve to fight to the death. Therefore, the nature of the army is: To defend when surrounded, to fight hard when there are no other alternatives, and to obey commands promptly when in danger.

Therefore, one who does not know the intentions of the rulers of the neighboring states cannot secure alliances. One who does not know the mountains and forests, gorges and defiles, swamps and wetlands cannot advance the army. One who does not use local guides cannot take advantage of the ground. One who does not know any one of these matters cannot command the army of a ruler.

When the army of a ruler attacks a great nation, the nation's masses cannot assemble. When its power overwhelms the nation, alliances cannot be formed. Therefore, one does not contend for alliances with other nations. One does not foster the power of other nations. If one pursues his aims, overwhelming the enemy, then, he can take the enemy's cities and overthrow kingdoms.

Give out rewards transcending law, give out commands transcending policy. Command the masses like commanding one person. Give your troops tasks, but do not reveal them your plans. Get them to face danger, but do not reveal the advantages. Throw them into danger and they will survive; put them on deadly ground and they will live. Only if the troops are in situations of danger will they turn defeat into victory.

The concern of warfare is that operations are in accord with the enemy's intentions. If one then concentrates his strength on the enemy, killing his general a thousand li away, this is called achieving objectives through wit and skill. Therefore, on the day war is declared, close off all borders, destroy all passports, and do not allow their envoys to pass. Go through your plans in the temple and bring about the execution of those plans.

If the enemy presents an opportunity, take advantage of it. Attack what he values most. Do not advance on any fixed day or time; calculate and adapt to the enemy to determine the matter of doing battle. Therefore, be like a maiden; once the enemy opens the door, be like a scurrying hare. The enemy will be unable to prevail.

Chapter Twelve: Fire Attacks

Sun-tzu said:

There are five kinds of fire attacks: One, burning personnel; two, burning provisions; three, burning equipment; four, burning stores; five, burning weapons.

Using fire attacks depends on proper conditions. Equipment for fire attacks must be available beforehand. There are appropriate seasons for using fire attacks, and appropriate days for raising fires. The appropriate season is when the weather is dry; the appropriate day is when the moon is at Chi, Pi, I, or Chen. These four days are when there are rising winds.

Generally, in fire attacks, you must respond according to the five changes of fire: If the fires are set inside enemy camp, you must respond quickly outside the enemy camp; if the fires are set but the enemy is calm, then wait, do not attack. Let the fire reach its height, and follow up if you can, stay if you cannot; If the fire attack can be set outside, without relying on the inside, set it when the time is right. If the fire is set upwind, do not attack downwind. If it is windy all during the day, the wind will stop at night. The army must know the five changes of fire, to be able to calculate the appropriate days. Those who use fire to assist in attacks are intelligent, those who use water to assist in attacks are powerful. Water can be used to cut off the enemy, but cannot be used to plunder.

If one gains victory in battle and is successful in attacks, but does not exploit those achievements, it is disastrous.

This is called waste and delay. Therefore, I say the wise general thinks about it, and the good general executes it.

If it is not advantageous, do not move; if there is no gain, do not use troops; if there is no danger, do not do battle.

The ruler may not move his army out of anger; the general may not do battle out of wrath. If it is advantageous, move; if it is not advantageous, stop. Those angry will be happy again, and those wrathful will be cheerful again, but a destroyed nation cannot exist again, the dead cannot be brought back to life. Therefore, the enlightened ruler is prudent, the good general is cautious. This is the Way of securing the nation, and preserving the army.

Chapter Thirteen: Using Spies

Sun-tzu said:

Generally, raising an army of a hundred thousand and advancing it a thousand li, the expenses to the people and the nation' s resources are one thousand gold pieces a day. Those in commotion internally and externally, those exhausted on the roads, and those unable to do their daily work are seven hundred thousand families. Two sides remain in standoff for several years in order to do battle for a decisive victory on a single day. Yet one refusing to outlay a hundred pieces of gold and thereby does not know the enemy' s situation is the height of inhumanity.

This one is not the general of the people, a help to the ruler, or the master of victory.

What enables the enlightened rulers and good generals to conquer the enemy at every move and achieve extraordinary success is foreknowledge. Foreknowledge cannot be elicited from ghosts and spirits; it cannot be inferred from comparison of previous events, or from the calculations of the heavens, but must be obtained from people who have knowledge of the enemy' s situation.

Therefore there are five kinds of spies used: Local spies, internal spies, double spies, dead spies, and living spies.

When all five are used, and no one knows their Way, it is called the divine organization, and is the ruler' s treasure.

For local spies, we use the enemy' s people. For internal spies we use the enemy' s officials. For double spies we use the enemy' s spies. For dead spies we use agents to spread misinformation to the enemy. For living spies, we use agents to return with reports.

Therefore, of those close to the army, none is closer than spies, no reward more generously given, and no matter in greater secrecy. Only the wisest ruler can use spies; only the most benevolent and upright general can use spies, and only the most alert and observant person can get the truth using spies. It is subtle, subtle!

There is nowhere that spies cannot be used. If a spy' s activities are leaked before they are to begin, the spy and those who know should be put to death. Generally, if you want to attack an army, besiege a walled city, assassinate individuals, you must know the identities of the defending generals, assistants, associates, gate guards, and officers.

You must have spies seek and learn them. You must seek enemy spies. Bribe them, and instruct and retain them.

Therefore, double spies can be obtained and used. From their knowledge, you can obtain local and internal spies.

From their knowledge, the dead spies can spread misinformation to the enemy. From their knowledge, our living spies can be used as planned. The ruler must know these five kinds of espionage.

This knowledge depends on the double spies. Therefore, you must treat them with the utmost generosity. In ancient times, the rise of the Yin dynasty was due to I Chih, who served the house of Hsia; the rise of the Chou dynasty was due to Lu Ya, who served the house of Yin. Therefore, enlightened rulers and good generals who are able to obtain intelligent agents as spies are certain for great achievements. This is essential for warfare, and what the army depends on to move.

Source: <http://www.sonshi.com>

Adaptation: Johnny Virgil