



SHAMBHALA DRAGON EDITIONS

# THE ART OF WAR

Sun Tzu



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## PLANNING A SIEGE

MASTER SUN

The general rule for use of the military is that it is better to keep a nation intact than to destroy it. It is better to keep an army intact than to destroy it, better to keep a division intact than to destroy it, better to keep a battalion intact than to destroy it, better to keep a unit intact than to destroy it.

CAO CAO

If you raise an army and penetrate deeply into your opponent's territory, keeping on the move, blocking the space between the inner stronghold and the outer city walls, cutting off communications between inside and outside, then if the opponent surrenders completely, that is best. If you attack destructively and take a nation by force, that is a lesser accomplishment.

JIA LIN

If you can keep the opponent's nation intact, then your own nation will also be intact. So this is best.

LI QUAN

This means that killing is not the important thing.

DU YOU

It is best if an enemy nation comes and surrenders of its own accord. To attack and defeat it is inferior to this.

HO YANXI

The best policy is to use strategy, influence, and the trend of events to cause the adversary to submit willingly.

ZHANG YU

Zhang Yu quoted a statement by Wei Liaozi: "Practicing martial arts, assess your opponents; cause them to lose spirit and direction so that even if the opposing army is intact it is useless—this is winning by the Tao. If you destroy the opposing army and kill the generals, mount the ramparts shooting, gather a mob and usurp the land, this is winning by force."

Zhang Yu then explained, "So winning by the Tao and winning by force mean the same as keeping a nation intact and destroying a nation. Treating the people mercifully while punishing criminals, gaining complete victory with the country intact, is best."

WANG XI

Nation, army, division, battalion, unit—great or small, keep it intact and your dignity will be improved thereby; destroy it, and your dignity will suffer.

MASTER SUN

Therefore those who win every battle are not really skillful—those who render others' armies helpless without fighting are the best of all.

CAO CAO

The best victory is when the opponent surrenders of its own accord before there are any actual hostilities.

LI QUAN

Overcome your opponent by calculation.

CHEN HAO

When you do battle, it is necessary to kill people, so it is best to win without fighting.

JIA LIN

Best of all is when your troops are held in such awe that everyone comes to surrender. This is preferable to winning by trickery, violence, and slaughter.

MEI YAOCHEN

This is a matter of disliking to inflict injury.

ZHANG YU

If you can only prevail after doing battle, there will surely be many casualties, so this is not good. If you make it clear what is to be rewarded and what punished, make your directives reliable, keep your machines in good repair, train and exercise your officers and troops, and let their strengths be known so as to overcome the opponent psychologically, this is considered very good.

WANG XI

In military operations, what is valued is foiling the opponent's strategy, not pitched battle.

HO YANXI

Ho Yanxi related this story: When Wang Po of the latter Han dynasty struck Chu Chien and Su Mo, he returned to camp after battle. His enemies regrouped and tried to provoke another skirmish, but Wang Po refused to come out.

As Wang Po was having a dinner party with his officers, Su Mo's men showered the camp with a rain of arrows. One of them even struck the wine keg in front of Wang Po. Wang Po, however, sat there calmly, not stirring a bit.

At that point an officer remarked that Su Mo was already at the end of his rope and would be easy to strike. Wang Po refused, saying, "Su Mo's mercenaries are from far away, and they are short on supplies—that is why they are trying to pick a winner-take-all fight. If I close off my camp and keep my soldiers in, this is what is called 'best of all.'"

MASTER SUN

Therefore the superior militarist strikes while schemes are being laid.

CAO CAO

When the opponent is just beginning to plan its strategy, it is easy to strike.

DU YOU

Just when the opponent is setting up a plan to mobilize its forces, if your army strikes and suppresses them, that is best. Therefore one of the great warrior-emperors said, "Those who are good at getting rid of trouble are those who take care of it before it arises; those who are good at overcoming opponents are those who win before there is form."

MEI YAOCHEN

This means winning by intelligence.

WANG XI

It is best to thwart people by intelligent planning.

HO YANXI

When the enemy begins to plot an attack against you, you first attack them—this is easy. Figure out the direction of the enemy's plans and deploy your forces accordingly, attacking at the outset of their intentions.

ZHANG YU

Zhang Yu noted that some say that what Master Sun was saying here was that the best military operation is to attack strategically, meaning to use unusual tactics and secret calculations to seize victory without even battling.

MASTER SUN

The next best is to attack alliances.

LI QUAN

This means attacking when alliances are first established.

CHEN HAO

Some say this means that when the enemy has already mobilized and is negotiating, strike and overcome them—this is next best.

MENG SHI

If you carry on alliances with strong countries, your enemies won't dare to plot against you.

MEI YAOCHEN

This means winning by intimidation.

WANG XI

It means if you cannot completely thwart the schemes of the enemy, you should then work on his alliances, to try to make them fall apart.

HO YANXI

What Master Sun said was to attack when you come in contact with the enemy, meaning that when your forces are about to clash, you set up a dummy force to scare them and make them unable either to advance or retreat, and then take advantage of that opportunity to come up and conquer them. Since the neighbors have also been helped by this action of yours, the enemy cannot but be isolated and weak.

MASTER SUN

The next best is to attack the army.

CAO CAO

This means when the army is already formed.

JIA LIN

To be good at successful attack, deploying your forces without a hitch, is yet another notch down. Therefore a great warrior-emperor said, "One who fights for victory in front of bared blades is not a good general."

MEI YAOCHEN

This means winning by fighting.

MASTER SUN

The lowest is to attack a city. Siege of a city is only done as a last resort.

CAO CAO

When the enemy has called in its resources and is defending a city, to attack them in this condition is the lowest form of military operation.

LI QUAN

When you garrison an army in a walled city, the officers get stale and the soldiers get lazy.

DU YOU

This means that when you attack cities and butcher towns, this is the lowest form of attack, because there are many casualties.

WANG XI

Soldiers are killed and maimed without necessarily taking over the city.

ZHANG YU

The siege of cities and butchering of towns not only ages the army and wastes resources, it also has a lot of casualties, so it is the lowest form of attack. When you besiege a city, then your power will be used up in that, so you do it only if it is absolutely necessary, as a last resort.

MASTER SUN

Take three months to prepare your machines and three months to complete your siege engineering.

DU MU

He means that it is necessary to take time to really prepare machines and constructions thoroughly, lest many people be injured. As one of the ancient strategists said, "Those who cannot deploy their machines effectively are in trouble."

MEI YAOCHEN

If neither intimidation nor intelligence are sufficient to overcome people, and you have no choice but to attack them where they live, then you must take adequate time to prepare.

ZHANG YU

Some say that Master Sun's point here is that you shouldn't get angry and rush to attack. This is why he says to take time, not because there is necessarily a specific time.

MASTER SUN

If the general cannot overcome his anger and has his army swarm over the citadel, killing a third of his soldiers, and yet the citadel is still not taken, this is a disastrous attack.

CAO CAO

If the general is so enraged that he cannot wait for the siege machines, and he sends his soldiers over the walls like a swarm of ants, this is killing and maiming the soldiers.

JIA LIN

Just ingratiate yourself with the people while causing inward rifts among the military, and the city will conquer itself.

MASTER SUN

Therefore one who is good at martial arts overcomes others' forces without battle, conquers others' cities without siege, destroys others' nations without taking a long time.

LI QUAN

Use tactics to overcome opponents by dispiriting them rather than by battling with them; take their cities by strategy. Destroy their countries artfully, do not die in protracted warfare.

MEI YAOCHEN

Battle means hurting people, siege means destroying things.

HO YANXI

This means attacking at the planning and attacking the alliances, so as not to come to the point of actually doing battle. This is why classical martial arts say that the best of strategists does not fight. One who is good at laying siege does not lay

siege with an army, but uses strategy to thwart the opponents, causing them to overcome themselves and destroy themselves, rather than taking them by a long and troublesome campaign.

ZHANG YU

A skillful martialist ruins plans, spoils relations, cuts off supplies, or blocks the way, and hence can overcome people without fighting. One way that a city can be taken is to attack a place they will be sure to want to save, so as to draw the enemy out of the city stronghold to come to the rescue, and then take the city by sneak attack.

DU MU

When the enemy is in a condition that you can take advantage of, if you do not lose the opportunity to crush them as if they were dry rot, then it will not take long.

MASTER SUN

It is imperative to contest all factions for complete victory, so the army is not garrisoned and the profit can be total. This is the law of strategic siege.

CAO CAO

You do not fight with your enemy, but you do win completely, establishing victory everywhere, not garrisoning armies and bloodying blades.

MEI YAOCHEN

Complete victory is when the army does not fight, the city is not besieged, the destruction does not go on long, but in each case the enemy is overcome by strategy. This is called strategic siege. In this way you do not dull your army, and your profit is naturally complete.

ZHANG YU

If you do not fight, your soldiers will not be wounded, if you do not lay siege, your strength will not be exhausted, if you do not continue long, your resources will not be used up. This is how

you establish yourself completely victorious over the world. Thereby there are none of the ills associated with garrisons and violence, and there are the benefits of a prosperous country and a strong army. This is the good general's art of strategic siege.

MASTER SUN

So the rule for use of the military is that if you outnumber the opponent ten to one, then surround them; five to one, attack; two to one, divide.

CAO CAO

When you outnumber the enemy ten to one, then surround them—that is, if the generals are equal in intelligence and bravery, and the soldiers are equal in competence. When you outnumber the enemy five to one, use three fifths of your forces for direct attacks, the other two fifths for surprise attacks. If you outnumber the enemy two to one, then divide your forces into two parts, one for direct assault and one for surprise attacks.

DU MU

It takes ten times as many soldiers to surround an opponent, because you have to set your encirclement up at some distance from the enemy, so the area you are covering is large, and you have to be on strict guard, thus if you do not have a lot of soldiers there will be gaps and leaks.

Now if there is division among the ranks of the enemy, so that there is no coherent chain of command, then they will fall apart by themselves, even if you do not surround them. If you do surround them under such circumstances, needless to say they will be annihilated. When Master Sun says you need ten times their number to surround the enemy, this is when your leaders are equal in intelligence and courage and your soldiers are equal in competence, not when there is dissension in the enemy's own ranks.

HO YANXI

When you calculate and compare the strength of your forces and those of your opponent, take into account the talent,

intelligence, and courage of the generals—if you are ten times stronger than the enemy, this is ten to one, and you can surround them, foiling any attempts to get away.

DU MU

If you are five to one against your opponent, then you should take three fifths of your forces, divide them into three units to attack the enemy from one side, keeping back two fifths, watching for points of unpreparedness on the opponent's part, and taking advantage of them by surprise attacks.

CHEN HAO

When your forces are said to be five times those of the enemy, this just means you have extra power. Their forces are deployed here and there, so how could you attack them by only three routes? The specific numbers here only refer to attacking a citadel.

DU MU

If you are two to one against your opponent, you should take part of your forces and have them head for the opponent's critical points, or attack some point that the opponent will surely go to defend, so that the opponent will split off to go to the rescue, and you can use the other part of your forces to strike them. The principles of war are not a matter of numbers—in every engagement there are both surprise and frontal attacks, and you do not wait until you have a lot of soldiers to set up reserves for surprise attacks.

DU YOU

When you outnumber the opponent two to one, then one part of your attack force makes a direct assault, one part makes surprise strikes. As they are insufficient to adapt, this confuses the opponent's soldiers and separates them from their army. So a great warrior-emperor said, "If you cannot divide and move, you cannot talk about surprise maneuvers."

MASTER SUN

If you are equal, then fight if you are able. If you are fewer, then keep away if you are able. If you are not as good, then flee if you are able.

CAO CAO

If your forces are equal to those of the enemy, even if you are good you should still set up ambushes and surprise attacks to prevail over them. Otherwise, be defensive and do not engage in battle, or if outmatched, take your soldiers and run away.

WANG XI

To be able means to be able to motivate others to fight to the death. If you seize victory by raids and ambushes, this is called superiority in intelligence. It is not a matter of clash of armies.

LI QUAN

If you calculate your power to be less than that of the opponent, then strengthen your defense, do not go out and get your edge snapped. Wait until the mood of the enemy gets sluggish, and then go out and attack by surprise.

DU MU

If your forces are not equal to those of the enemy, avoid their edge for the time being, waiting for a gap; then make a determined bid for victory. To be able also means to be able to endure anger and humiliation, not going out to meet the opponent's challenges.

CHEN HAO

That is not so. It just means that if the enemy's soldiers are more than yours, then you should run away from them, thereby making them haughty and using this in your future plans. It does not mean enduring anger and humiliation.

JIA LIN

If they are more numerous than you, retreat and hide your troop formations so that the enemy does not know, then set out ambushes to lie in wait for them, set up ruses to confuse them. This, too, is a way of victory.

ZHANG YU

The advice to keep away and not do battle if the opponent is more numerous also applies to the case where all else is equal,

the quality of the leadership and of the troops. If your forces are orderly while theirs are chaotic, if you are excited and they are sluggish, then even if they are more numerous you can do battle. If your soldiers, strength, strategy, and courage are all less than that of the opponent, then you should retreat and watch for an opening.

MASTER SUN

Therefore if the smaller side is stubborn, it becomes the captive of the larger side.

LI QUAN

If the smaller side battles stubbornly without taking its strength into account, it will surely be captured by the larger side.

MENG SHI

The small cannot stand up to the large—this means that if a small country does not assess its power and dares to become the enemy of a large country, no matter how firm its defenses be, it will inevitably become a captive nation. The *Spring and Autumn Annals* say, "If you cannot be strong, and yet cannot be weak, this will result in your defeat."

HO YANXI

Ho Yanxi told the story of Right General Su Jian of the Han dynasty, a vice-general in the wars with the invading Huns of ancient times. Right General Su and Forward General Zhao of the Forward Army were leading a division of several thousand troops when he encountered a Hunnish force ten times as large.

They fought all day, until the Chinese army was decimated. Now Forward General Zhao, a foreigner who had earlier surrendered to the Chinese in exchange for rank and title, was invited by the Huns to join them, so he took the rest of his mounted troops, about eight hundred or so, and surrendered to the Shanyu, the Hunnish chieftain. Right General Su, now having lost his entire army, was at a loss to know where to go, being the sole survivor.

The great general asked several of his top advisers what to do about the case of Right General Su. One said, "We have not executed a single vice-general on this campaign. Now this Su



Jian has deserted his army—we should execute him to show how serious we are.”

But another said, “No, that is not right. The rule of martial arts says that it is the very stubbornness of the smaller side that makes it the captive of the larger side. Now this Su was alone with a few thousand troops when he ran into the Shanyu with a few tens of thousands; he fought hard for over a day, not daring to have any other thought as long as any of his soldiers were left. If we execute him now that he has come back by himself, this would be showing people there is no sense in returning!”

MASTER SUN

Generals are assistants of the nation. When their assistance is complete, the country is strong. When their assistance is defective, the country is weak.

CAO CAO

When the generals are completely thorough, their plans do not leak out. If they are defective, their formations are revealed outside.

JIA LIN

The strength or weakness of a country depends on its generals. If the generals help the leadership and are thoroughly capable, then the country will be strong. If the generals do not help the leadership, and harbor duplicity in their hearts, then the country will be weak. Therefore it is imperative to be careful in choosing people for positions of responsibility.

HO YANXI

Complete means having both ability and intelligence. When a country has generals that are thoroughly able and intelligent, then that country is safe and strong. This means that generals have to be completely capable and completely knowledgeable in all operations. Generals in the field must already be acquainted with all the sciences of warfare before they can command their own soldiers and assess battle formations.

WANG XI

Complete means that when generals are good and wise, then they are both loyal and capable. To be lacking means to be missing something.

ZHANG YU

When the strategy of the generals is thoroughgoing, opponents cannot see into it, so the country is strong. If there is even a slight gap, then opponents can take aggressive advantage of this, so the country is weak.

MASTER SUN

So there are three ways in which a civil leadership causes the military trouble. When a civil leadership unaware of the facts tells its armies to advance when it should not, or tells its armies to retreat when it should not, this is called tying up the armies. When the civil leadership is ignorant of military affairs but shares equally in the government of the armies, the soldiers get confused. When the civil leadership is ignorant of military maneuvers but shares equally in the command of the armies, the soldiers hesitate. Once the armies are confused and hesitant, trouble comes from competitors. This is called taking away victory by deranging the military.

WANG XI

To get rid of these problems, it is necessary to delegate unbridled authority, so it is imperative that officers who are to be generals be both loyal and talented.

DU MU

If the military were to be governed in the same way as ordinary civilian society, then the soldiers would be confused, because there are already customs of military procedure and command in effect.

MEI YAOCHEN

Military and civil affairs are different, dealing with different matters. If you try to use the methods of civilian government to govern a military operation, the operation will become confused.

ZHANG YU

A nation can be governed by humanity and justice, but not an army. An army can be guided by maneuvering, but not a nation. When there are among civilian officials attached to military commands those who do not know about military strategy, if they are allowed to share in the responsibilities of the military leadership, then the chain of command will not be unified, and the soldiers will become hesitant.

DU MU

Also, if a general lacks the planning ability to assess the officers and place them in positions where they can use the best of their abilities, instead assigning them automatically and thus not making full use of their talents, then the army will become hesitant.

Huang Shigong said, "Those who are good at delegating responsibility employ the intelligent, the brave, the greedy, and the foolish. The intelligent are glad to establish their merit, the brave like to act out their ambitions, the greedy welcome an opportunity to pursue profit, and the foolish do not care if they die."

If your own army is hesitant and confused, you bring trouble on yourself, as if you were to bring enemies in to overcome you.

MENG SHI

When the army troops are in doubt about their responsibilities and confused about what to do, then competitors will take advantage of this disorganized condition and cause trouble.

MASTER SUN

So there are five ways of knowing who will win.

Those who know when to fight and when not to

fight are victorious. Those who discern when to use many or few troops are victorious. Those whose upper and lower ranks have the same desire are victorious. Those who face the unprepared with preparation are victorious. Those whose generals are able and are not constrained by their governments are victorious. These five are the ways to know who will win.

HO YANXI

Assess yourselves and your opponents.

DU YOU

Sometimes a large group cannot effectively attack a small group, and then again sometimes weakness can be used to control the strong. Those who can adapt to the situation are victorious. This is why tradition in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* says, "Military conquest is a matter of coordination, not of masses."

ZHANG YU

Among the methods of deploying troops, there are ways by which a few can overcome many, and there are ways in which many can overcome a few. It is a matter of assessing their use and not misapplying them.

Also, when the generals are all of one mind, the armies coordinate their efforts, and everyone wants to fight, then no one can stand up to such a force.

Be invincible at all times, so as to be prepared for opponents. As Wu Qi said, "When you go out the door, be as if you were seeing an enemy." And Shi Li said, "Be prepared, and you will not be defeated."

When generals have intelligence and courage, they should be entrusted with the responsibility to accomplish their work, and not controlled by civilians.

JIA LIN

The movements of the armies must adapt to the situation on the spot—nothing causes more trouble than trying to run them from behind the lines.

WANG XI

If the civilian leadership tries to control able generals, it will be unable to eliminate hesitation and avoidance. An enlightened leadership is one that knows its people and can delegate authority effectively. In the field it is necessary to take advantage of opportunities as they present themselves, without hesitation—how can this be controlled from far away?

HO YANXI

As a rule, in a military operation you need to change tactics a hundred times at every pace, proceeding when you see you can, falling back when you know there is an impasse. To talk about government orders for all this is like going to announce to your superiors that you want to put out a fire—by the time you get back with an order, there is nothing left but ashes.

DU MU

Du Mu quoted Wei Liaozi, saying, "The general is not controlled by heaven above, is not controlled by earth below, is not controlled by humanity in between. This is why 'the military is an instrument of ill omen.' The general is an officer of death."

MASTER SUN

So it is said that if you know others and know yourself, you will not be imperiled in a hundred battles; if you do not know others but know yourself, you win one and lose one; if you do not know others and do not know yourself, you will be imperiled in every single battle.

LI QUAN

If you assess your strength and can fend off opponents, what danger is there? If because of your own strength you fail to measure opponents, then victory is uncertain.

DU MU

Compare your government to that of the enemy; compare your military leadership to that of the enemy; compare your logistics to that of your enemy; compare your ground to that of your

enemy. Having established these comparisons, you will have a preview of superiorities and inferiorities, weaknesses and strengths; this will enable you to prevail every time in subsequent military operations.

ZHANG YU

When you know others, then you are able to attack them. When you know yourself, you are able to protect yourself. Attack is the time for defense, defense is a strategy of attack. If you know this, you will not be in danger even if you fight a hundred battles.

When you only know yourself, this means guarding your energy and waiting. This is why knowing defense but not offense means half victory and half defeat.

When you know neither the arts of defense nor the arts of attack, you will lose in battle.