SUN TZU ON THE ART OF WAR

THE OLDEST MILITARY TREATISE IN THE WORLD

Translated from the Chinese with Introduction

and Critical Notes

BY

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To my brother

Captain Valentine Giles, R.G.

in the hope that

a work 2400 years old

may yet contain lessons worth consideration

by the soldier of today

this translation

is affectionately dedicated.

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INTRODUCTION

Sun Wu and his Book

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Ssu-ma Ch`ien gives the following biography of Sun Tzu: [1]

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Sun Tzu Wu was a native of the Ch`i State. His ART OF

WAR brought him to the notice of Ho Lu, [2] King of Wu. Ho

Lu said to him: "I have carefully perused your 13 chapters.

May I submit your theory of managing soldiers to a slight

test?"

Sun Tzu replied: "You may."

Ho Lu asked: "May the test be applied to women?"

The answer was again in the affirmative, so arrangements

were made to bring 180 ladies out of the Palace. Sun Tzu

divided them into two companies, and placed one of the King's

favorite concubines at the head of each. He then bade them

all take spears in their hands, and addressed them thus: "I

presume you know the difference between front and back, right

hand and left hand?"

The girls replied: Yes.

Sun Tzu went on: "When I say "Eyes front," you must

look straight ahead. When I say "Left turn," you must face

towards your left hand. When I say "Right turn," you must

face towards your right hand. When I say "About turn," you

must face right round towards your back."

Again the girls assented. The words of command having

been thus explained, he set up the halberds and battle-axes

in order to begin the drill. Then, to the sound of drums, he

gave the order "Right turn." But the girls only burst out

laughing. Sun Tzu said: "If words of command are not clear

and distinct, if orders are not thoroughly understood, then

the general is to blame."

So he started drilling them again, and this time gave

the order "Left turn," whereupon the girls once more burst

into fits of laughter. Sun Tzu: "If words of command are

not clear and distinct, if orders are not thoroughly

understood, the general is to blame. But if his orders ARE

clear, and the soldiers nevertheless disobey, then it is the

fault of their officers."

So saying, he ordered the leaders of the two companies

to be beheaded. Now the king of Wu was watching the scene

from the top of a raised pavilion; and when he saw that his

favorite concubines were about to be executed, he was greatly

alarmed and hurriedly sent down the following message: "We

are now quite satisfied as to our general's ability to handle

troops. If We are bereft of these two concubines, our meat

and drink will lose their savor. It is our wish that they

shall not be beheaded."

Sun Tzu replied: "Having once received His Majesty's

commission to be the general of his forces, there are certain

commands of His Majesty which, acting in that capacity, I am

unable to accept."

Accordingly, he had the two leaders beheaded, and

straightway installed the pair next in order as leaders in

their place. When this had been done, the drum was sounded

for the drill once more; and the girls went through all the

evolutions, turning to the right or to the left, marching

ahead or wheeling back, kneeling or standing, with perfect

accuracy and precision, not venturing to utter a sound. Then

Sun Tzu sent a messenger to the King saying: "Your soldiers,

Sire, are now properly drilled and disciplined, and ready for

your majesty's inspection. They can be put to any use that

their sovereign may desire; bid them go through fire and

water, and they will not disobey."

But the King replied: "Let our general cease drilling

and return to camp. As for us, We have no wish to come down

and inspect the troops."

Thereupon Sun Tzu said: "The King is only fond of

words, and cannot translate them into deeds."

After that, Ho Lu saw that Sun Tzu was one who knew how

to handle an army, and finally appointed him general. In the

west, he defeated the Ch`u State and forced his way into

Ying, the capital; to the north he put fear into the States

of Ch`i and Chin, and spread his fame abroad amongst the

feudal princes. And Sun Tzu shared in the might of the King.

About Sun Tzu himself this is all that Ssu-ma Ch`ien has to

tell us in this chapter. But he proceeds to give a biography of

his descendant, Sun Pin, born about a hundred years after his

famous ancestor's death, and also the outstanding military genius

of his time. The historian speaks of him too as Sun Tzu, and in

his preface we read: "Sun Tzu had his feet cut off and yet

continued to discuss the art of war." [3] It seems likely, then,

that "Pin" was a nickname bestowed on him after his mutilation,

unless the story was invented in order to account for the name.

The crowning incident of his career, the crushing defeat of his

treacherous rival P`ang Chuan, will be found briefly related in

Chapter V. ss. 19, note.

To return to the elder Sun Tzu. He is mentioned in two

other passages of the SHIH CHI: --

In the third year of his reign [512 B.C.] Ho Lu, king of

Wu, took the field with Tzu-hsu [i.e. Wu Yuan] and Po P`ei,

and attacked Ch`u. He captured the town of Shu and slew the

two prince's sons who had formerly been generals of Wu. He

was then meditating a descent on Ying [the capital]; but the

general Sun Wu said: "The army is exhausted. It is not yet

possible. We must wait".... [After further successful

fighting,] "in the ninth year [506 B.C.], King Ho Lu

addressed Wu Tzu-hsu and Sun Wu, saying: "Formerly, you

declared that it was not yet possible for us to enter Ying.

Is the time ripe now?" The two men replied: "Ch`u's general

Tzu-ch`ang, [4] is grasping and covetous, and the princes of

T`ang and Ts`ai both have a grudge against him. If Your

Majesty has resolved to make a grand attack, you must win

over T`ang and Ts`ai, and then you may succeed." Ho Lu

followed this advice, [beat Ch`u in five pitched battles and

marched into Ying.] [5]

This is the latest date at which anything is recorded of Sun

Wu. He does not appear to have survived his patron, who died

from the effects of a wound in 496.

In another chapter there occurs this passage: [6]

From this time onward, a number of famous soldiers

arose, one after the other: Kao-fan, [7] who was employed by

the Chin State; Wang-tzu, [8] in the service of Ch`i; and Sun

Wu, in the service of Wu. These men developed and threw

light upon the principles of war.

It is obvious enough that Ssu-ma Ch`ien at least had no

doubt about the reality of Sun Wu as an historical personage; and

with one exception, to be noticed presently, he is by far the

most important authority on the period in question. It will not

be necessary, therefore, to say much of such a work as the WU

YUEH CH`UN CH`IU, which is supposed to have been written by Chao

Yeh of the 1st century A.D. The attribution is somewhat

doubtful; but even if it were otherwise, his account would be of

little value, based as it is on the SHIH CHI and expanded with

romantic details. The story of Sun Tzu will be found, for what

it is worth, in chapter 2. The only new points in it worth

noting are: (1) Sun Tzu was first recommended to Ho Lu by Wu

Tzu-hsu. (2) He is called a native of Wu. (3) He had previously

lived a retired life, and his contemporaries were unaware of his

ability.

The following passage occurs in the Huai-nan Tzu: "When

sovereign and ministers show perversity of mind, it is impossible

even for a Sun Tzu to encounter the foe." Assuming that this

work is genuine (and hitherto no doubt has been cast upon it), we

have here the earliest direct reference for Sun Tzu, for Huai-nan

Tzu died in 122 B.C., many years before the SHIH CHI was given to

the world.

Liu Hsiang (80-9 B.C.) says: "The reason why Sun Tzu at the

head of 30,000 men beat Ch`u with 200,000 is that the latter were

undisciplined."

Teng Ming-shih informs us that the surname "Sun" was

bestowed on Sun Wu's grandfather by Duke Ching of Ch`i [547-490

B.C.]. Sun Wu's father Sun P`ing, rose to be a Minister of State

in Ch`i, and Sun Wu himself, whose style was Ch`ang-ch`ing, fled

to Wu on account of the rebellion which was being fomented by the

kindred of T`ien Pao. He had three sons, of whom the second,

named Ming, was the father of Sun Pin. According to this account

then, Pin was the grandson of Wu, which, considering that Sun

Pin's victory over Wei was gained in 341 B.C., may be dismissed

as chronological impossible. Whence these data were obtained by

Teng Ming-shih I do not know, but of course no reliance whatever

can be placed in them.

An interesting document which has survived from the close of

the Han period is the short preface written by the Great Ts`ao

Ts`ao, or Wei Wu Ti, for his edition of Sun Tzu. I shall give it

in full: --

I have heard that the ancients used bows and arrows to

their advantage. [10] The SHU CHU mentions "the army" among

the "eight objects of government." The I CHING says:

"'army' indicates firmness and justice; the experienced

leader will have good fortune." The SHIH CHING says: "The

King rose majestic in his wrath, and he marshaled his

troops." The Yellow Emperor, T`ang the Completer and Wu Wang

all used spears and battle-axes in order to succor their

generation. The SSU-MA FA says: "If one man slay another of

set purpose, he himself may rightfully be slain." He who

relies solely on warlike measures shall be exterminated; he

who relies solely on peaceful measures shall perish.

Instances of this are Fu Ch`ai [11] on the one hand and Yen

Wang on the other. [12] In military matters, the Sage's rule

is normally to keep the peace, and to move his forces only

when occasion requires. He will not use armed force unless

driven to it by necessity.

Many books have I read on the subject of war and

fighting; but the work composed by Sun Wu is the profoundest

of them all. [Sun Tzu was a native of the Ch`i state, his

personal name was Wu. He wrote the ART OF WAR in 13 chapters

for Ho Lu, King of Wu. Its principles were tested on women,

and he was subsequently made a general. He led an army

westwards, crushed the Ch`u state and entered Ying the

capital. In the north, he kept Ch`i and Chin in awe. A

hundred years and more after his time, Sun Pin lived. He was

a descendant of Wu.] [13] In his treatment of deliberation

and planning, the importance of rapidity in taking the field,

[14] clearness of conception, and depth of design, Sun Tzu

stands beyond the reach of carping criticism. My

contemporaries, however, have failed to grasp the full

meaning of his instructions, and while putting into practice

the smaller details in which his work abounds, they have

overlooked its essential purport. That is the motive which

has led me to outline a rough explanation of the whole.

One thing to be noticed in the above is the explicit

statement that the 13 chapters were specially composed for King

Ho Lu. This is supported by the internal evidence of I. ss. 15,

in which it seems clear that some ruler is addressed.

In the bibliographic section of the HAN SHU, there is an

entry which has given rise to much discussion: "The works of Sun

Tzu of Wu in 82 P`IEN (or chapters), with diagrams in 9 CHUAN."

It is evident that this cannot be merely the 13 chapters known to

Ssu-ma Ch`ien, or those we possess today. Chang Shou-chieh

refers to an edition of Sun Tzu's ART OF WAR of which the "13

chapters" formed the first CHUAN, adding that there were two

other CHUAN besides. This has brought forth a theory, that the

bulk of these 82 chapters consisted of other writings of Sun Tzu

-- we should call them apocryphal -- similar to the WEN TA, of

which a specimen dealing with the Nine Situations [15] is

preserved in the T`UNG TIEN, and another in Ho Shin's commentary.

It is suggested that before his interview with Ho Lu, Sun Tzu had

only written the 13 chapters, but afterwards composed a sort of

exegesis in the form of question and answer between himself and

the King. Pi I-hsun, the author of the SUN TZU HSU LU, backs

this up with a quotation from the WU YUEH CH`UN CH`IU: "The King

of Wu summoned Sun Tzu, and asked him questions about the art of

war. Each time he set forth a chapter of his work, the King

could not find words enough to praise him." As he points out, if

the whole work was expounded on the same scale as in the above-

mentioned fragments, the total number of chapters could not fail

to be considerable. Then the numerous other treatises attributed

to Sun Tzu might be included. The fact that the HAN CHIH

mentions no work of Sun Tzu except the 82 P`IEN, whereas the Sui

and T`ang bibliographies give the titles of others in addition to

the "13 chapters," is good proof, Pi I-hsun thinks, that all of

these were contained in the 82 P`IEN. Without pinning our faith

to the accuracy of details supplied by the WU YUEH CH`UN CH`IU,

or admitting the genuineness of any of the treatises cited by Pi

I-hsun, we may see in this theory a probable solution of the

mystery. Between Ssu-ma Ch`ien and Pan Ku there was plenty of

time for a luxuriant crop of forgeries to have grown up under the

magic name of Sun Tzu, and the 82 P`IEN may very well represent a

collected edition of these lumped together with the original

work. It is also possible, though less likely, that some of them

existed in the time of the earlier historian and were purposely

ignored by him. [16]

Tu Mu's conjecture seems to be based on a passage which

states: "Wei Wu Ti strung together Sun Wu's Art of War," which

in turn may have resulted from a misunderstanding of the final

words of Ts`ao King's preface. This, as Sun Hsing-yen points

out, is only a modest way of saying that he made an explanatory

paraphrase, or in other words, wrote a commentary on it. On the

whole, this theory has met with very little acceptance. Thus,

the SSU K`U CH`UAN SHU says: "The mention of the 13 chapters in

the SHIH CHI shows that they were in existence before the HAN

CHIH, and that latter accretions are not to be considered part of

the original work. Tu Mu's assertion can certainly not be taken

as proof."

There is every reason to suppose, then, that the 13 chapters

existed in the time of Ssu-ma Ch`ien practically as we have them

now. That the work was then well known he tells us in so many

words. "Sun Tzu's 13 Chapters and Wu Ch`i's Art of War are the

two books that people commonly refer to on the subject of

military matters. Both of them are widely distributed, so I will

not discuss them here." But as we go further back, serious

difficulties begin to arise. The salient fact which has to be

faced is that the TSO CHUAN, the greatest contemporary record,

makes no mention whatsoever of Sun Wu, either as a general or as

a writer. It is natural, in view of this awkward circumstance,

that many scholars should not only cast doubt on the story of Sun

Wu as given in the SHIH CHI, but even show themselves frankly

skeptical as to the existence of the man at all. The most

powerful presentment of this side of the case is to be found in

the following disposition by Yeh Shui-hsin: [17] --

It is stated in Ssu-ma Ch`ien's history that Sun Wu was

a native of the Ch`i State, and employed by Wu; and that in

the reign of Ho Lu he crushed Ch`u, entered Ying, and was a

great general. But in Tso's Commentary no Sun Wu appears at

all. It is true that Tso's Commentary need not contain

absolutely everything that other histories contain. But Tso

has not omitted to mention vulgar plebeians and hireling

ruffians such as Ying K`ao-shu, [18] Ts`ao Kuei, [19], Chu

Chih-wu and Chuan She-chu [20]. In the case of Sun Wu, whose

fame and achievements were so brilliant, the omission is much

more glaring. Again, details are given, in their due order,

about his contemporaries Wu Yuan and the Minister P`ei. [21]

Is it credible that Sun Wu alone should have been passed

over?

In point of literary style, Sun Tzu's work belongs to

the same school as KUAN TZU, [22] LIU T`AO, [23] and the YUEH

YU [24] and may have been the production of some private

scholar living towards the end of the "Spring and Autumn" or

the beginning of the "Warring States" period. [25] The story

that his precepts were actually applied by the Wu State, is

merely the outcome of big talk on the part of his followers.

From the flourishing period of the Chou dynasty [26]

down to the time of the "Spring and Autumn," all military

commanders were statesmen as well, and the class of

professional generals, for conducting external campaigns, did

not then exist. It was not until the period of the "Six

States" [27] that this custom changed. Now although Wu was

an uncivilized State, it is conceivable that Tso should have

left unrecorded the fact that Sun Wu was a great general and

yet held no civil office? What we are told, therefore, about

Jang-chu [28] and Sun Wu, is not authentic matter, but the

reckless fabrication of theorizing pundits. The story of Ho

Lu's experiment on the women, in particular, is utterly

preposterous and incredible.

Yeh Shui-hsin represents Ssu-ma Ch`ien as having said that

Sun Wu crushed Ch`u and entered Ying. This is not quite correct.

No doubt the impression left on the reader's mind is that he at

least shared in these exploits. The fact may or may not be

significant; but it is nowhere explicitly stated in the SHIH CHI

either that Sun Tzu was general on the occasion of the taking of

Ying, or that he even went there at all. Moreover, as we know

that Wu Yuan and Po P`ei both took part in the expedition, and

also that its success was largely due to the dash and enterprise

of Fu Kai, Ho Lu's younger brother, it is not easy to see how yet

another general could have played a very prominent part in the

same campaign.

Ch`en Chen-sun of the Sung dynasty has the note: --

Military writers look upon Sun Wu as the father of their

art. But the fact that he does not appear in the TSO CHUAN,

although he is said to have served under Ho Lu King of Wu,

makes it uncertain what period he really belonged to.

He also says: --

The works of Sun Wu and Wu Ch`i may be of genuine

antiquity.

It is noticeable that both Yeh Shui-hsin and Ch`en Chen-sun,

while rejecting the personality of Sun Wu as he figures in Ssu-ma

Ch`ien's history, are inclined to accept the date traditionally

assigned to the work which passes under his name. The author of

the HSU LU fails to appreciate this distinction, and consequently

his bitter attack on Ch`en Chen-sun really misses its mark. He

makes one of two points, however, which certainly tell in favor

of the high antiquity of our "13 chapters." "Sun Tzu," he says,

"must have lived in the age of Ching Wang [519-476], because he

is frequently plagiarized in subsequent works of the Chou, Ch`in

and Han dynasties." The two most shameless offenders in this

respect are Wu Ch`i and Huai-nan Tzu, both of them important

historical personages in their day. The former lived only a

century after the alleged date of Sun Tzu, and his death is known

to have taken place in 381 B.C. It was to him, according to Liu

Hsiang, that Tseng Shen delivered the TSO CHUAN, which had been

entrusted to him by its author. [29] Now the fact that

quotations from the ART OF WAR, acknowledged or otherwise, are to

be found in so many authors of different epochs, establishes a

very strong anterior to them all, -- in other words, that Sun

Tzu's treatise was already in existence towards the end of the

5th century B.C. Further proof of Sun Tzu's antiquity is

furnished by the archaic or wholly obsolete meanings attaching to

a number of the words he uses. A list of these, which might

perhaps be extended, is given in the HSU LU; and though some of

the interpretations are doubtful, the main argument is hardly

affected thereby. Again, it must not be forgotten that Yeh Shui-

hsin, a scholar and critic of the first rank, deliberately

pronounces the style of the 13 chapters to belong to the early

part of the fifth century. Seeing that he is actually engaged in

an attempt to disprove the existence of Sun Wu himself, we may be

sure that he would not have hesitated to assign the work to a

later date had he not honestly believed the contrary. And it is

precisely on such a point that the judgment of an educated

Chinaman will carry most weight. Other internal evidence is not

far to seek. Thus in XIII. ss. 1, there is an unmistakable

allusion to the ancient system of land-tenure which had already

passed away by the time of Mencius, who was anxious to see it

revived in a modified form. [30] The only warfare Sun Tzu knows

is that carried on between the various feudal princes, in which

armored chariots play a large part. Their use seems to have

entirely died out before the end of the Chou dynasty. He speaks

as a man of Wu, a state which ceased to exist as early as 473

B.C. On this I shall touch presently.

But once refer the work to the 5th century or earlier, and

the chances of its being other than a bona fide production are

sensibly diminished. The great age of forgeries did not come

until long after. That it should have been forged in the period

immediately following 473 is particularly unlikely, for no one,

as a rule, hastens to identify himself with a lost cause. As for

Yeh Shui-hsin's theory, that the author was a literary recluse,

that seems to me quite untenable. If one thing is more apparent

than another after reading the maxims of Sun Tzu, it is that

their essence has been distilled from a large store of personal

observation and experience. They reflect the mind not only of a

born strategist, gifted with a rare faculty of generalization,

but also of a practical soldier closely acquainted with the

military conditions of his time. To say nothing of the fact that

these sayings have been accepted and endorsed by all the greatest

captains of Chinese history, they offer a combination of

freshness and sincerity, acuteness and common sense, which quite

excludes the idea that they were artificially concocted in the

study. If we admit, then, that the 13 chapters were the genuine

production of a military man living towards the end of the "CH`UN

CH`IU" period, are we not bound, in spite of the silence of the

TSO CHUAN, to accept Ssu-ma Ch`ien's account in its entirety? In

view of his high repute as a sober historian, must we not

hesitate to assume that the records he drew upon for Sun Wu's

biography were false and untrustworthy? The answer, I fear, must

be in the negative. There is still one grave, if not fatal,

objection to the chronology involved in the story as told in the

SHIH CHI, which, so far as I am aware, nobody has yet pointed

out. There are two passages in Sun Tzu in which he alludes to

contemporary affairs. The first in in VI. ss. 21: --

Though according to my estimate the soldiers of Yueh

exceed our own in number, that shall advantage them nothing

in the matter of victory. I say then that victory can be

achieved.

The other is in XI. ss. 30: --

Asked if an army can be made to imitate the SHUAI-JAN, I

should answer, Yes. For the men of Wu and the men of Yueh

are enemies; yet if they are crossing a river in the same

boat and are caught by a storm, they will come to each

other's assistance just as the left hand helps the right.

These two paragraphs are extremely valuable as evidence of

the date of composition. They assign the work to the period of

the struggle between Wu and Yueh. So much has been observed by

Pi I-hsun. But what has hitherto escaped notice is that they

also seriously impair the credibility of Ssu-ma Ch`ien's

narrative. As we have seen above, the first positive date given

in connection with Sun Wu is 512 B.C. He is then spoken of as a

general, acting as confidential adviser to Ho Lu, so that his

alleged introduction to that monarch had already taken place, and

of course the 13 chapters must have been written earlier still.

But at that time, and for several years after, down to the

capture of Ying in 506, Ch`u and not Yueh, was the great

hereditary enemy of Wu. The two states, Ch`u and Wu, had been

constantly at war for over half a century, [31] whereas the first

war between Wu and Yueh was waged only in 510, [32] and even then

was no more than a short interlude sandwiched in the midst of the

fierce struggle with Ch`u. Now Ch`u is not mentioned in the 13

chapters at all. The natural inference is that they were written

at a time when Yueh had become the prime antagonist of Wu, that

is, after Ch`u had suffered the great humiliation of 506. At

this point, a table of dates may be found useful.

B.C. |

|

514 | Accession of Ho Lu.

512 | Ho Lu attacks Ch`u, but is dissuaded from entering Ying,

| the capital. SHI CHI mentions Sun Wu as general.

511 | Another attack on Ch`u.

510 | Wu makes a successful attack on Yueh. This is the first

| war between the two states.

509 |

or | Ch`u invades Wu, but is signally defeated at Yu-chang.

508 |

506 | Ho Lu attacks Ch`u with the aid of T`ang and Ts`ai.

| Decisive battle of Po-chu, and capture of Ying. Last

| mention of Sun Wu in SHIH CHI.

505 | Yueh makes a raid on Wu in the absence of its army. Wu

| is beaten by Ch`in and evacuates Ying.

504 | Ho Lu sends Fu Ch`ai to attack Ch`u.

497 | Kou Chien becomes King of Yueh.

496 | Wu attacks Yueh, but is defeated by Kou Chien at Tsui-li.

| Ho Lu is killed.

494 | Fu Ch`ai defeats Kou Chien in the great battle of Fu-

| chaio, and enters the capital of Yueh.

485 |

or | Kou Chien renders homage to Wu. Death of Wu Tzu-hsu.

484 |

482 | Kou Chien invades Wu in the absence of Fu Ch`ai.

478 |

to | Further attacks by Yueh on Wu.

476 |

475 | Kou Chien lays siege to the capital of Wu.

473 | Final defeat and extinction of Wu.

The sentence quoted above from VI. ss. 21 hardly strikes me

as one that could have been written in the full flush of victory.

It seems rather to imply that, for the moment at least, the tide

had turned against Wu, and that she was getting the worst of the

struggle. Hence we may conclude that our treatise was not in

existence in 505, before which date Yueh does not appear to have

scored any notable success against Wu. Ho Lu died in 496, so

that if the book was written for him, it must have been during

the period 505-496, when there was a lull in the hostilities, Wu

having presumably exhausted by its supreme effort against Ch`u.

On the other hand, if we choose to disregard the tradition

connecting Sun Wu's name with Ho Lu, it might equally well have

seen the light between 496 and 494, or possibly in the period

482-473, when Yueh was once again becoming a very serious menace.

[33] We may feel fairly certain that the author, whoever he may

have been, was not a man of any great eminence in his own day.

On this point the negative testimony of the TSO CHUAN far

outweighs any shred of authority still attaching to the SHIH CHI,

if once its other facts are discredited. Sun Hsing-yen, however,

makes a feeble attempt to explain the omission of his name from

the great commentary. It was Wu Tzu-hsu, he says, who got all

the credit of Sun Wu's exploits, because the latter (being an

alien) was not rewarded with an office in the State.

How then did the Sun Tzu legend originate? It may be that

the growing celebrity of the book imparted by degrees a kind of

factitious renown to its author. It was felt to be only right

and proper that one so well versed in the science of war should

have solid achievements to his credit as well. Now the capture

of Ying was undoubtedly the greatest feat of arms in Ho Lu's

reign; it made a deep and lasting impression on all the

surrounding states, and raised Wu to the short-lived zenith of

her power. Hence, what more natural, as time went on, than that

the acknowledged master of strategy, Sun Wu, should be popularly

identified with that campaign, at first perhaps only in the sense

that his brain conceived and planned it; afterwards, that it was

actually carried out by him in conjunction with Wu Yuan, [34] Po

P`ei and Fu Kai?

It is obvious that any attempt to reconstruct even the

outline of Sun Tzu's life must be based almost wholly on

conjecture. With this necessary proviso, I should say that he

probably entered the service of Wu about the time of Ho Lu's

accession, and gathered experience, though only in the capacity

of a subordinate officer, during the intense military activity

which marked the first half of the prince's reign. [35] If he

rose to be a general at all, he certainly was never on an equal

footing with the three above mentioned. He was doubtless present

at the investment and occupation of Ying, and witnessed Wu's

sudden collapse in the following year. Yueh's attack at this

critical juncture, when her rival was embarrassed on every side,

seems to have convinced him that this upstart kingdom was the

great enemy against whom every effort would henceforth have to be

directed. Sun Wu was thus a well-seasoned warrior when he sat

down to write his famous book, which according to my reckoning

must have appeared towards the end, rather than the beginning of

Ho Lu's reign. The story of the women may possibly have grown

out of some real incident occurring about the same time. As we

hear no more of Sun Wu after this from any source, he is hardly

likely to have survived his patron or to have taken part in the

death-struggle with Yueh, which began with the disaster at Tsui-

li.

If these inferences are approximately correct, there is a

certain irony in the fate which decreed that China's most

illustrious man of peace should be contemporary with her greatest

writer on war.

The Text of Sun Tzu

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I have found it difficult to glean much about the history of

Sun Tzu's text. The quotations that occur in early authors go to

show that the "13 chapters" of which Ssu-ma Ch`ien speaks were

essentially the same as those now extant. We have his word for

it that they were widely circulated in his day, and can only

regret that he refrained from discussing them on that account.

Sun Hsing-yen says in his preface: --

During the Ch`in and Han dynasties Sun Tzu's ART OF WAR

was in general use amongst military commanders, but they seem

to have treated it as a work of mysterious import, and were

unwilling to expound it for the benefit of posterity. Thus

it came about that Wei Wu was the first to write a commentary

on it.

As we have already seen, there is no reasonable ground to

suppose that Ts`ao Kung tampered with the text. But the text

itself is often so obscure, and the number of editions which

appeared from that time onward so great, especially during the

T`ang and Sung dynasties, that it would be surprising if numerous

corruptions had not managed to creep in. Towards the middle of

the Sung period, by which time all the chief commentaries on Sun

Tzu were in existence, a certain Chi T`ien-pao published a work

in 15 CHUAN entitled "Sun Tzu with the collected commentaries of

ten writers." There was another text, with variant readings put

forward by Chu Fu of Ta-hsing, which also had supporters among

the scholars of that period; but in the Ming editions, Sun Hsing-

yen tells us, these readings were for some reason or other no

longer put into circulation. Thus, until the end of the 18th

century, the text in sole possession of the field was one derived

from Chi T`ien-pao's edition, although no actual copy of that

important work was known to have survived. That, therefore, is

the text of Sun Tzu which appears in the War section of the great

Imperial encyclopedia printed in 1726, the KU CHIN T`U SHU CHI

CH`ENG. Another copy at my disposal of what is practically the

same text, with slight variations, is that contained in the

"Eleven philosophers of the Chou and Ch`in dynasties" [1758].

And the Chinese printed in Capt. Calthrop's first edition is

evidently a similar version which has filtered through Japanese

channels. So things remained until Sun Hsing-yen [1752-1818], a

distinguished antiquarian and classical scholar, who claimed to

be an actual descendant of Sun Wu, [36] accidentally discovered a

copy of Chi T`ien-pao's long-lost work, when on a visit to the

library of the Hua-yin temple. [37] Appended to it was the I

SHUO of Cheng Yu-Hsien, mentioned in the T`UNG CHIH, and also

believed to have perished. This is what Sun Hsing-yen designates

as the "original edition (or text)" -- a rather misleading name,

for it cannot by any means claim to set before us the text of Sun

Tzu in its pristine purity. Chi T`ien-pao was a careless

compiler, and appears to have been content to reproduce the

somewhat debased version current in his day, without troubling to

collate it with the earliest editions then available.

Fortunately, two versions of Sun Tzu, even older than the newly

discovered work, were still extant, one buried in the T`UNG TIEN,

Tu Yu's great treatise on the Constitution, the other similarly

enshrined in the T`AI P`ING YU LAN encyclopedia. In both the

complete text is to be found, though split up into fragments,

intermixed with other matter, and scattered piecemeal over a

number of different sections. Considering that the YU LAN takes

us back to the year 983, and the T`UNG TIEN about 200 years

further still, to the middle of the T`ang dynasty, the value of

these early transcripts of Sun Tzu can hardly be overestimated.

Yet the idea of utilizing them does not seem to have occurred to

anyone until Sun Hsing-yen, acting under Government instructions,

undertook a thorough recension of the text. This is his own

account: --

Because of the numerous mistakes in the text of Sun Tzu

which his editors had handed down, the Government ordered

that the ancient edition [of Chi T`ien-pao] should be used,

and that the text should be revised and corrected throughout.

It happened that Wu Nien-hu, the Governor Pi Kua, and Hsi, a

graduate of the second degree, had all devoted themselves to

this study, probably surpassing me therein. Accordingly, I

have had the whole work cut on blocks as a textbook for

military men.

The three individuals here referred to had evidently been

occupied on the text of Sun Tzu prior to Sun Hsing-yen's

commission, but we are left in doubt as to the work they really

accomplished. At any rate, the new edition, when ultimately

produced, appeared in the names of Sun Hsing-yen and only one co-

editor Wu Jen-shi. They took the "original edition" as their

basis, and by careful comparison with older versions, as well as

the extant commentaries and other sources of information such as

the I SHUO, succeeded in restoring a very large number of

doubtful passages, and turned out, on the whole, what must be

accepted as the closes approximation we are ever likely to get to

Sun Tzu's original work. This is what will hereafter be

denominated the "standard text."

The copy which I have used belongs to a reissue dated 1877.

it is in 6 PEN, forming part of a well-printed set of 23 early

philosophical works in 83 PEN. [38] It opens with a preface by

Sun Hsing-yen (largely quoted in this introduction), vindicating

the traditional view of Sun Tzu's life and performances, and

summing up in remarkably concise fashion the evidence in its

favor. This is followed by Ts`ao Kung's preface to his edition,

and the biography of Sun Tzu from the SHIH CHI, both translated

above. Then come, firstly, Cheng Yu-hsien's I SHUO, [39] with

author's preface, and next, a short miscellany of historical and

bibliographical information entitled SUN TZU HSU LU, compiled by

Pi I-hsun. As regards the body of the work, each separate

sentence is followed by a note on the text, if required, and then

by the various commentaries appertaining to it, arranged in

chronological order. These we shall now proceed to discuss

briefly, one by one.

The Commentators

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Sun Tzu can boast an exceptionally long distinguished roll

of commentators, which would do honor to any classic. Ou-yang

Hsiu remarks on this fact, though he wrote before the tale was

complete, and rather ingeniously explains it by saying that the

artifices of war, being inexhaustible, must therefore be

susceptible of treatment in a great variety of ways.

1. TS`AO TS`AO or Ts`ao Kung, afterwards known as Wei Wu Ti

[A.D. 155-220]. There is hardly any room for doubt that the

earliest commentary on Sun Tzu actually came from the pen of this

extraordinary man, whose biography in the SAN KUO CHIH reads like

a romance. One of the greatest military geniuses that the world

has seen, and Napoleonic in the scale of his operations, he was

especially famed for the marvelous rapidity of his marches, which

has found expression in the line "Talk of Ts`ao Ts`ao, and Ts`ao

Ts`ao will appear." Ou-yang Hsiu says of him that he was a great

captain who "measured his strength against Tung Cho, Lu Pu and

the two Yuan, father and son, and vanquished them all; whereupon

he divided the Empire of Han with Wu and Shu, and made himself

king. It is recorded that whenever a council of war was held by

Wei on the eve of a far-reaching campaign, he had all his

calculations ready; those generals who made use of them did not

lose one battle in ten; those who ran counter to them in any

particular saw their armies incontinently beaten and put to

flight." Ts`ao Kung's notes on Sun Tzu, models of austere

brevity, are so thoroughly characteristic of the stern commander

known to history, that it is hard indeed to conceive of them as

the work of a mere LITTERATEUR. Sometimes, indeed, owing to

extreme compression, they are scarcely intelligible and stand no

less in need of a commentary than the text itself. [40]

2. MENG SHIH. The commentary which has come down to us

under this name is comparatively meager, and nothing about the

author is known. Even his personal name has not been recorded.

Chi T`ien-pao's edition places him after Chia Lin,and Ch`ao Kung-

wu also assigns him to the T`ang dynasty, [41] but this is a

mistake. In Sun Hsing-yen's preface, he appears as Meng Shih of

the Liang dynasty [502-557]. Others would identify him with Meng

K`ang of the 3rd century. He is named in one work as the last of

the "Five Commentators," the others being Wei Wu Ti, Tu Mu, Ch`en

Hao and Chia Lin.

3. LI CH`UAN of the 8th century was a well-known writer on

military tactics. One of his works has been in constant use down

to the present day. The T`UNG CHIH mentions "Lives of famous

generals from the Chou to the T`ang dynasty" as written by him.

[42] According to Ch`ao Kung-wu and the T`IEN-I-KO catalogue, he

followed a variant of the text of Sun Tzu which differs

considerably from those now extant. His notes are mostly short

and to the point, and he frequently illustrates his remarks by

anecdotes from Chinese history.

4. TU YU (died 812) did not publish a separate commentary

on Sun Tzu, his notes being taken from the T`UNG TIEN, the

encyclopedic treatise on the Constitution which was his life-

work. They are largely repetitions of Ts`ao Kung and Meng Shih,

besides which it is believed that he drew on the ancient

commentaries of Wang Ling and others. Owing to the peculiar

arrangement of T`UNG TIEN, he has to explain each passage on its

merits, apart from the context, and sometimes his own explanation

does not agree with that of Ts`ao Kung, whom he always quotes

first. Though not strictly to be reckoned as one of the "Ten

Commentators," he was added to their number by Chi T`ien-pao,

being wrongly placed after his grandson Tu Mu.

5. TU MU (803-852) is perhaps the best known as a poet -- a

bright star even in the glorious galaxy of the T`ang period. We

learn from Ch`ao Kung-wu that although he had no practical

experience of war, he was extremely fond of discussing the

subject, and was moreover well read in the military history of

the CH`UN CH`IU and CHAN KUO eras. His notes, therefore, are

well worth attention. They are very copious, and replete with

historical parallels. The gist of Sun Tzu's work is thus

summarized by him: "Practice benevolence and justice, but on the

other hand make full use of artifice and measures of expediency."

He further declared that all the military triumphs and disasters

of the thousand years which had elapsed since Sun Tzu's death

would, upon examination, be found to uphold and corroborate, in

every particular, the maxims contained in his book. Tu Mu's

somewhat spiteful charge against Ts`ao Kung has already been

considered elsewhere.

6. CH`EN HAO appears to have been a contemporary of Tu Mu.

Ch`ao Kung-wu says that he was impelled to write a new commentary

on Sun Tzu because Ts`ao Kung's on the one hand was too obscure

and subtle, and that of Tu Mu on the other too long-winded and

diffuse. Ou-yang Hsiu, writing in the middle of the 11th

century, calls Ts`ao Kung, Tu Mu and Ch`en Hao the three chief

commentators on Sun Tzu, and observes that Ch`en Hao is

continually attacking Tu Mu's shortcomings. His commentary,

though not lacking in merit, must rank below those of his

predecessors.

7. CHIA LIN is known to have lived under the T`ang dynasty,

for his commentary on Sun Tzu is mentioned in the T`ang Shu and

was afterwards republished by Chi Hsieh of the same dynasty

together with those of Meng Shih and Tu Yu. It is of somewhat

scanty texture, and in point of quality, too, perhaps the least

valuable of the eleven.

8. MEI YAO-CH`EN (1002-1060), commonly known by his "style"

as Mei Sheng-yu, was, like Tu Mu, a poet of distinction. His

commentary was published with a laudatory preface by the great

Ou-yang Hsiu, from which we may cull the following: --

Later scholars have misread Sun Tzu, distorting his

words and trying to make them square with their own one-sided

views. Thus, though commentators have not been lacking, only

a few have proved equal to the task. My friend Sheng-yu has

not fallen into this mistake. In attempting to provide a

critical commentary for Sun Tzu's work, he does not lose

sight of the fact that these sayings were intended for states

engaged in internecine warfare; that the author is not

concerned with the military conditions prevailing under the

sovereigns of the three ancient dynasties, [43] nor with the

nine punitive measures prescribed to the Minister of War.

[44] Again, Sun Wu loved brevity of diction, but his meaning

is always deep. Whether the subject be marching an army, or

handling soldiers, or estimating the enemy, or controlling

the forces of victory, it is always systematically treated;

the sayings are bound together in strict logical sequence,

though this has been obscured by commentators who have

probably failed to grasp their meaning. In his own

commentary, Mei Sheng-yu has brushed aside all the obstinate

prejudices of these critics, and has tried to bring out the

true meaning of Sun Tzu himself. In this way, the clouds of

confusion have been dispersed and the sayings made clear. I

am convinced that the present work deserves to be handed down

side by side with the three great commentaries; and for a

great deal that they find in the sayings, coming generations

will have constant reason to thank my friend Sheng-yu.

Making some allowance for the exuberance of friendship, I am

inclined to endorse this favorable judgment, and would certainly

place him above Ch`en Hao in order of merit.

9. WANG HSI, also of the Sung dynasty, is decidedly

original in some of his interpretations, but much less judicious

than Mei Yao-ch`en, and on the whole not a very trustworthy

guide. He is fond of comparing his own commentary with that of

Ts`ao Kung, but the comparison is not often flattering to him.

We learn from Ch`ao Kung-wu that Wang Hsi revised the ancient

text of Sun Tzu, filling up lacunae and correcting mistakes. [45]

10. HO YEN-HSI of the Sung dynasty. The personal name of

this commentator is given as above by Cheng Ch`iao in the TUNG

CHIH, written about the middle of the twelfth century, but he

appears simply as Ho Shih in the YU HAI, and Ma Tuan-lin quotes

Ch`ao Kung-wu as saying that his personal name is unknown. There

seems to be no reason to doubt Cheng Ch`iao's statement,

otherwise I should have been inclined to hazard a guess and

identify him with one Ho Ch`u-fei, the author of a short treatise

on war, who lived in the latter part of the 11th century. Ho

Shih's commentary, in the words of the T`IEN-I-KO catalogue,

"contains helpful additions" here and there, but is chiefly

remarkable for the copious extracts taken, in adapted form, from

the dynastic histories and other sources.

11. CHANG YU. The list closes with a commentator of no

great originality perhaps, but gifted with admirable powers of

lucid exposition. His commentator is based on that of Ts`ao

Kung, whose terse sentences he contrives to expand and develop in

masterly fashion. Without Chang Yu, it is safe to say that much

of Ts`ao Kung's commentary would have remained cloaked in its

pristine obscurity and therefore valueless. His work is not

mentioned in the Sung history, the T`UNG K`AO, or the YU HAI, but

it finds a niche in the T`UNG CHIH, which also names him as the

author of the "Lives of Famous Generals." [46]

It is rather remarkable that the last-named four should all

have flourished within so short a space of time. Ch`ao Kung-wu

accounts for it by saying: "During the early years of the Sung

dynasty the Empire enjoyed a long spell of peace, and men ceased

to practice the art of war. but when [Chao] Yuan-hao's rebellion

came [1038-42] and the frontier generals were defeated time after

time, the Court made strenuous inquiry for men skilled in war,

and military topics became the vogue amongst all the high

officials. Hence it is that the commentators of Sun Tzu in our

dynasty belong mainly to that period. [47]

Besides these eleven commentators, there are several others

whose work has not come down to us. The SUI SHU mentions four,

namely Wang Ling (often quoted by Tu Yu as Wang Tzu); Chang Tzu-

shang; Chia Hsu of Wei; [48] and Shen Yu of Wu. The T`ANG SHU

adds Sun Hao, and the T`UNG CHIH Hsiao Chi, while the T`U SHU

mentions a Ming commentator, Huang Jun-yu. It is possible that

some of these may have been merely collectors and editors of

other commentaries, like Chi T`ien-pao and Chi Hsieh, mentioned

above.

Appreciations of Sun Tzu

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Sun Tzu has exercised a potent fascination over the minds of

some of China's greatest men. Among the famous generals who are

known to have studied his pages with enthusiasm may be mentioned

Han Hsin (d. 196 B.C.), [49] Feng I (d. 34 A.D.), [50] Lu Meng

(d. 219), [51] and Yo Fei (1103-1141). [52] The opinion of Ts`ao

Kung, who disputes with Han Hsin the highest place in Chinese

military annals, has already been recorded. [53] Still more

remarkable, in one way, is the testimony of purely literary men,

such as Su Hsun (the father of Su Tung-p`o), who wrote several

essays on military topics, all of which owe their chief

inspiration to Sun Tzu. The following short passage by him is

preserved in the YU HAI: [54] --

Sun Wu's saying, that in war one cannot make certain of

conquering, [55] is very different indeed from what other

books tell us. [56] Wu Ch`i was a man of the same stamp as

Sun Wu: they both wrote books on war, and they are linked

together in popular speech as "Sun and Wu." But Wu Ch`i's

remarks on war are less weighty, his rules are rougher and

more crudely stated, and there is not the same unity of plan

as in Sun Tzu's work, where the style is terse, but the

meaning fully brought out.

The following is an extract from the "Impartial Judgments in

the Garden of Literature" by Cheng Hou: --

Sun Tzu's 13 chapters are not only the staple and base

of all military men's training, but also compel the most

careful attention of scholars and men of letters. His

sayings are terse yet elegant, simple yet profound,

perspicuous and eminently practical. Such works as the LUN

YU, the I CHING and the great Commentary, [57] as well as the

writings of Mencius, Hsun K`uang and Yang Chu, all fall below

the level of Sun Tzu.

Chu Hsi, commenting on this, fully admits the first part of

the criticism, although he dislikes the audacious comparison with

the venerated classical works. Language of this sort, he says,

"encourages a ruler's bent towards unrelenting warfare and

reckless militarism."

Apologies for War

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Accustomed as we are to think of China as the greatest

peace-loving nation on earth, we are in some danger of forgetting

that her experience of war in all its phases has also been such

as no modern State can parallel. Her long military annals

stretch back to a point at which they are lost in the mists of

time. She had built the Great Wall and was maintaining a huge

standing army along her frontier centuries before the first Roman

legionary was seen on the Danube. What with the perpetual

collisions of the ancient feudal States, the grim conflicts with

Huns, Turks and other invaders after the centralization of

government, the terrific upheavals which accompanied the

overthrow of so many dynasties, besides the countless rebellions

and minor disturbances that have flamed up and flickered out

again one by one, it is hardly too much to say that the clash of

arms has never ceased to resound in one portion or another of the

Empire.

No less remarkable is the succession of illustrious captains

to whom China can point with pride. As in all countries, the

greatest are fond of emerging at the most fateful crises of her

history. Thus, Po Ch`i stands out conspicuous in the period when

Ch`in was entering upon her final struggle with the remaining

independent states. The stormy years which followed the break-up

of the Ch`in dynasty are illuminated by the transcendent genius

of Han Hsin. When the House of Han in turn is tottering to its

fall, the great and baleful figure of Ts`ao Ts`ao dominates the

scene. And in the establishment of the T`ang dynasty,one of the

mightiest tasks achieved by man, the superhuman energy of Li

Shih-min (afterwards the Emperor T`ai Tsung) was seconded by the

brilliant strategy of Li Ching. None of these generals need fear

comparison with the greatest names in the military history of

Europe.

In spite of all this, the great body of Chinese sentiment,

from Lao Tzu downwards, and especially as reflected in the

standard literature of Confucianism, has been consistently

pacific and intensely opposed to militarism in any form. It is

such an uncommon thing to find any of the literati defending

warfare on principle, that I have thought it worth while to

collect and translate a few passages in which the unorthodox view

is upheld. The following, by Ssu-ma Ch`ien, shows that for all

his ardent admiration of Confucius, he was yet no advocate of

peace at any price: --

Military weapons are the means used by the Sage to

punish violence and cruelty, to give peace to troublous

times, to remove difficulties and dangers, and to succor

those who are in peril. Every animal with blood in its veins

and horns on its head will fight when it is attacked. How

much more so will man, who carries in his breast the

faculties of love and hatred, joy and anger! When he is

pleased, a feeling of affection springs up within him; when

angry, his poisoned sting is brought into play. That is the

natural law which governs his being.... What then shall be

said of those scholars of our time, blind to all great

issues, and without any appreciation of relative values, who

can only bark out their stale formulas about "virtue" and

"civilization," condemning the use of military weapons? They

will surely bring our country to impotence and dishonor and

the loss of her rightful heritage; or, at the very least,

they will bring about invasion and rebellion, sacrifice of

territory and general enfeeblement. Yet they obstinately

refuse to modify the position they have taken up. The truth

is that, just as in the family the teacher must not spare the

rod, and punishments cannot be dispensed with in the State,

so military chastisement can never be allowed to fall into

abeyance in the Empire. All one can say is that this power

will be exercised wisely by some, foolishly by others, and

that among those who bear arms some will be loyal and others

rebellious. [58]

The next piece is taken from Tu Mu's preface to his

commentary on Sun Tzu: --

War may be defined as punishment, which is one of the

functions of government. It was the profession of Chung Yu

and Jan Ch`iu, both disciples of Confucius. Nowadays, the

holding of trials and hearing of litigation, the imprisonment

of offenders and their execution by flogging in the market-

place, are all done by officials. But the wielding of huge

armies, the throwing down of fortified cities, the hauling of

women and children into captivity, and the beheading of

traitors -- this is also work which is done by officials.

The objects of the rack and of military weapons are

essentially the same. There is no intrinsic difference

between the punishment of flogging and cutting off heads in

war. For the lesser infractions of law, which are easily

dealt with, only a small amount of force need be employed:

hence the use of military weapons and wholesale decapitation.

In both cases, however, the end in view is to get rid of

wicked people, and to give comfort and relief to the good....

Chi-sun asked Jan Yu, saying: "Have you, Sir, acquired

your military aptitude by study, or is it innate?" Jan Yu

replied: "It has been acquired by study." [59] "How can

that be so," said Chi-sun, "seeing that you are a disciple of

Confucius?" "It is a fact," replied Jan Yu; "I was taught by

Confucius. It is fitting that the great Sage should exercise

both civil and military functions, though to be sure my

instruction in the art of fighting has not yet gone very

far."

Now, who the author was of this rigid distinction

between the "civil" and the "military," and the limitation of

each to a separate sphere of action, or in what year of which

dynasty it was first introduced, is more than I can say.

But, at any rate, it has come about that the members of the

governing class are quite afraid of enlarging on military

topics, or do so only in a shamefaced manner. If any are

bold enough to discuss the subject, they are at once set down

as eccentric individuals of coarse and brutal propensities.

This is an extraordinary instance in which, through sheer

lack of reasoning, men unhappily lose sight of fundamental

principles.

When the Duke of Chou was minister under Ch`eng Wang, he

regulated ceremonies and made music, and venerated the arts

of scholarship and learning; yet when the barbarians of the

River Huai revolted, [60] he sallied forth and chastised

them. When Confucius held office under the Duke of Lu, and a

meeting was convened at Chia-ku, [61] he said: "If pacific

negotiations are in progress, warlike preparations should

have been made beforehand." He rebuked and shamed the

Marquis of Ch`i, who cowered under him and dared not proceed

to violence. How can it be said that these two great Sages

had no knowledge of military matters?

We have seen that the great Chu Hsi held Sun Tzu in high

esteem. He also appeals to the authority of the Classics: --

Our Master Confucius, answering Duke Ling of Wei, said:

"I have never studied matters connected with armies and

battalions." [62] Replying to K`ung Wen-tzu, he said: I

have not been instructed about buff-coats and weapons." But

if we turn to the meeting at Chia-ku, we find that he used

armed force against the men of Lai, so that the marquis of

Ch`i was overawed. Again, when the inhabitants of Pi

revolted, the ordered his officers to attack them, whereupon

they were defeated and fled in confusion. He once uttered

the words: "If I fight, I conquer." [63] And Jan Yu also

said: "The Sage exercises both civil and military

functions." [64] Can it be a fact that Confucius never

studied or received instruction in the art of war? We can

only say that he did not specially choose matters connected

with armies and fighting to be the subject of his teaching.

Sun Hsing-yen, the editor of Sun Tzu, writes in similar

strain: --

Confucius said: "I am unversed in military matters."

[65] He also said: "If I fight, I conquer." Confucius

ordered ceremonies and regulated music. Now war constitutes

one of the five classes of State ceremonial, [66] and must

not be treated as an independent branch of study. Hence, the

words "I am unversed in" must be taken to mean that there are

things which even an inspired Teacher does not know. Those

who have to lead an army and devise stratagems, must learn

the art of war. But if one can command the services of a

good general like Sun Tzu, who was employed by Wu Tzu-hsu,

there is no need to learn it oneself. Hence the remark added

by Confucius: "If I fight, I conquer."

The men of the present day, however, willfully interpret

these words of Confucius in their narrowest sense, as though

he meant that books on the art of war were not worth reading.

With blind persistency, they adduce the example of Chao Kua,

who pored over his father's books to no purpose, [67] as a

proof that all military theory is useless. Again, seeing

that books on war have to do with such things as opportunism

in designing plans, and the conversion of spies, they hold

that the art is immoral and unworthy of a sage. These people

ignore the fact that the studies of our scholars and the

civil administration of our officials also require steady

application and practice before efficiency is reached. The

ancients were particularly chary of allowing mere novices to

botch their work. [68] Weapons are baneful [69] and fighting

perilous; and useless unless a general is in constant

practice, he ought not to hazard other men's lives in battle.

[70] Hence it is essential that Sun Tzu's 13 chapters should

be studied.

Hsiang Liang used to instruct his nephew Chi [71] in the

art of war. Chi got a rough idea of the art in its general

bearings, but would not pursue his studies to their proper

outcome, the consequence being that he was finally defeated

and overthrown. He did not realize that the tricks and

artifices of war are beyond verbal computation. Duke Hsiang

of Sung and King Yen of Hsu were brought to destruction by

their misplaced humanity. The treacherous and underhand

nature of war necessitates the use of guile and stratagem

suited to the occasion. There is a case on record of

Confucius himself having violated an extorted oath, [72] and

also of his having left the Sung State in disguise. [73] Can

we then recklessly arraign Sun Tzu for disregarding truth and

honesty?

Bibliography

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The following are the oldest Chinese treatises on war, after

Sun Tzu. The notes on each have been drawn principally from the

SSU K`U CH`UAN SHU CHIEN MING MU LU, ch. 9, fol. 22 sqq.

1. WU TZU, in 1 CHUAN or 6 chapters. By Wu Ch`i (d. 381

B.C.). A genuine work. See SHIH CHI, ch. 65.

2. SSU-MA FA, in 1 CHUAN or 5 chapters. Wrongly attributed

to Ssu-ma Jang-chu of the 6th century B.C. Its date, however,

must be early, as the customs of the three ancient dynasties are

constantly to be met within its pages. See SHIH CHI, ch. 64.

The SSU K`U CH`UAN SHU (ch. 99, f. 1) remarks that the

oldest three treatises on war, SUN TZU, WU TZU and SSU-MA FA,

are, generally speaking, only concerned with things strictly

military -- the art of producing, collecting, training and

drilling troops, and the correct theory with regard to measures

of expediency, laying plans, transport of goods and the handling

of soldiers -- in strong contrast to later works, in which the

science of war is usually blended with metaphysics, divination

and magical arts in general.

3. LIU T`AO, in 6 CHUAN, or 60 chapters. Attributed to Lu

Wang (or Lu Shang, also known as T`ai Kung) of the 12th century

B.C. [74] But its style does not belong to the era of the Three

Dynasties. Lu Te-ming (550-625 A.D.) mentions the work, and

enumerates the headings of the six sections so that the forgery

cannot have been later than Sui dynasty.

4. WEI LIAO TZU, in 5 CHUAN. Attributed to Wei Liao (4th

cent. B.C.), who studied under the famous Kuei-ku Tzu. The work

appears to have been originally in 31 chapters, whereas the text

we possess contains only 24. Its matter is sound enough in the

main, though the strategical devices differ considerably from

those of the Warring States period. It is been furnished with a

commentary by the well-known Sung philosopher Chang Tsai.

5. SAN LUEH, in 3 CHUAN. Attributed to Huang-shih Kung, a

legendary personage who is said to have bestowed it on Chang

Liang (d. 187 B.C.) in an interview on a bridge. But here again,

the style is not that of works dating from the Ch`in or Han

period. The Han Emperor Kuang Wu [25-57 A.D.] apparently quotes

from it in one of his proclamations; but the passage in question

may have been inserted later on, in order to prove the

genuineness of the work. We shall not be far out if we refer it

to the Northern Sung period [420-478 A.D.], or somewhat earlier.

6. LI WEI KUNG WEN TUI, in 3 sections. Written in the form

of a dialogue between T`ai Tsung and his great general Li Ching,

it is usually ascribed to the latter. Competent authorities

consider it a forgery, though the author was evidently well

versed in the art of war.

7. LI CHING PING FA (not to be confounded with the

foregoing) is a short treatise in 8 chapters, preserved in the

T`ung Tien, but not published separately. This fact explains its

omission from the SSU K`U CH`UAN SHU.

8. WU CH`I CHING, in 1 CHUAN. Attributed to the legendary

minister Feng Hou, with exegetical notes by Kung-sun Hung of the

Han dynasty (d. 121 B.C.), and said to have been eulogized by the

celebrated general Ma Lung (d. 300 A.D.). Yet the earliest

mention of it is in the SUNG CHIH. Although a forgery, the work

is well put together.

Considering the high popular estimation in which Chu-ko

Liang has always been held, it is not surprising to find more

than one work on war ascribed to his pen. Such are (1) the SHIH

LIU TS`E (1 CHUAN), preserved in the YUNG LO TA TIEN; (2) CHIANG

YUAN (1 CHUAN); and (3) HSIN SHU (1 CHUAN), which steals

wholesale from Sun Tzu. None of these has the slightest claim to

be considered genuine.

Most of the large Chinese encyclopedias contain extensive

sections devoted to the literature of war. The following

references may be found useful: --

T`UNG TIEN (circa 800 A.D.), ch. 148-162.

T`AI P`ING YU LAN (983), ch. 270-359.

WEN HSIEN TUNG K`AO (13th cent.), ch. 221.

YU HAI (13th cent.), ch. 140, 141.

SAN TS`AI T`U HUI (16th cent).

KUANG PO WU CHIH (1607), ch. 31, 32.

CH`IEN CH`IO LEI SHU (1632), ch. 75.

YUAN CHIEN LEI HAN (1710), ch. 206-229.

KU CHIN T`U SHU CHI CH`ENG (1726), section XXX, esp. ch. 81-

90.

HSU WEN HSIEN T`UNG K`AO (1784), ch. 121-134.

HUANG CH`AO CHING SHIH WEN PIEN (1826), ch. 76, 77.

The bibliographical sections of certain historical works

also deserve mention: --

CH`IEN HAN SHU, ch. 30.

SUI SHU, ch. 32-35.

CHIU T`ANG SHU, ch. 46, 47.

HSIN T`ANG SHU, ch. 57,60.

SUNG SHIH, ch. 202-209.

T`UNG CHIH (circa 1150), ch. 68.

To these of course must be added the great Catalogue of the

Imperial Library: --

SSU K`U CH`UAN SHU TSUNG MU T`I YAO (1790), ch. 99, 100.

Footnotes

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1. SHI CHI, ch. 65.

2. He reigned from 514 to 496 B.C.

3. SHI CHI, ch. 130.

4. The appellation of Nang Wa.

5. SHI CHI, ch. 31.

6. SHI CHI, ch. 25.

7. The appellation of Hu Yen, mentioned in ch. 39 under the year

637.

8. Wang-tzu Ch`eng-fu, ch. 32, year 607.

9. The mistake is natural enough. Native critics refer to a

work of the Han dynasty, which says: "Ten LI outside the WU gate

[of the city of Wu, now Soochow in Kiangsu] there is a great

mound, raised to commemorate the entertainment of Sun Wu of Ch`i,

who excelled in the art of war, by the King of Wu."

10. "They attached strings to wood to make bows, and sharpened

wood to make arrows. The use of bows and arrows is to keep the

Empire in awe."

11. The son and successor of Ho Lu. He was finally defeated and

overthrown by Kou chien, King of Yueh, in 473 B.C. See post.

12. King Yen of Hsu, a fabulous being, of whom Sun Hsing-yen

says in his preface: "His humanity brought him to destruction."

13. The passage I have put in brackets is omitted in the T`U

SHU, and may be an interpolation. It was known, however to Chang

Shou-chieh of the T`ang dynasty, and appears in the T`AI P`ING YU

LAN.

14. Ts`ao Kung seems to be thinking of the first part of chap.

II, perhaps especially of ss. 8.

15. See chap. XI.

16. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that WU TZU, which is

not in 6 chapters, has 48 assigned to it in the HAN CHIH.

Likewise, the CHUNG YUNG is credited with 49 chapters, though now

only in one only. In the case of very short works, one is

tempted to think that P`IEN might simply mean "leaves."

17. Yeh Shih of the Sung dynasty [1151-1223].

18. He hardly deserves to be bracketed with assassins.

19. See Chapter 7, ss. 27 and Chapter 11, ss. 28.

20. See Chapter 11, ss. 28. Chuan Chu is the abbreviated form

of his name.

21. I.e. Po P`ei. See ante.

22. The nucleus of this work is probably genuine, though large

additions have been made by later hands. Kuan chung died in 645

B.C.

23. See infra, beginning of INTRODUCTION.

24. I do not know what this work, unless it be the last chapter

of another work. Why that chapter should be singled out,

however, is not clear.

25. About 480 B.C.

26. That is, I suppose, the age of Wu Wang and Chou Kung.

27. In the 3rd century B.C.

28. Ssu-ma Jang-chu, whose family name was T`ien, lived in the

latter half of the 6th century B.C., and is also believed to have

written a work on war. See SHIH CHI, ch. 64, and infra at the

beginning of the INTRODUCTION.

29. See Legge's Classics, vol. V, Prolegomena p. 27. Legge

thinks that the TSO CHUAN must have been written in the 5th

century, but not before 424 B.C.

30. See MENCIUS III. 1. iii. 13-20.

31. When Wu first appears in the CH`UN CH`IU in 584, it is

already at variance with its powerful neighbor. The CH`UN CH`IU

first mentions Yueh in 537, the TSO CHUAN in 601.

32. This is explicitly stated in the TSO CHUAN, XXXII, 2.

33. There is this to be said for the later period, that the feud

would tend to grow more bitter after each encounter, and thus

more fully justify the language used in XI. ss. 30.

34. With Wu Yuan himself the case is just the reverse: -- a

spurious treatise on war has been fathered on him simply because

he was a great general. Here we have an obvious inducement to

forgery. Sun Wu, on the other hand, cannot have been widely

known to fame in the 5th century.

35. From TSO CHUAN: "From the date of King Chao's accession

[515] there was no year in which Ch`u was not attacked by Wu."

36. Preface ad fin: "My family comes from Lo-an, and we are

really descended from Sun Tzu. I am ashamed to say that I only

read my ancestor's work from a literary point of view, without

comprehending the military technique. So long have we been

enjoying the blessings of peace!"

37. Hoa-yin is about 14 miles from T`ung-kuan on the eastern

border of Shensi. The temple in question is still visited by

those about the ascent of the Western Sacred Mountain. It is

mentioned in a text as being "situated five LI east of the

district city of Hua-yin. The temple contains the Hua-shan

tablet inscribed by the T`ang Emperor Hsuan Tsung [713-755]."

38. See my "Catalogue of Chinese Books" (Luzac & Co., 1908), no.

40.

39. This is a discussion of 29 difficult passages in Sun Tzu.

40. Cf. Catalogue of the library of Fan family at Ningpo: "His

commentary is frequently obscure; it furnishes a clue, but does

not fully develop the meaning."

41. WEN HSIEN T`UNG K`AO, ch. 221.

42. It is interesting to note that M. Pelliot has recently

discovered chapters 1, 4 and 5 of this lost work in the "Grottos

of the Thousand Buddhas." See B.E.F.E.O., t. VIII, nos. 3-4, p.

525.

43. The Hsia, the Shang and the Chou. Although the last-named

was nominally existent in Sun Tzu's day, it retained hardly a

vestige of power, and the old military organization had

practically gone by the board. I can suggest no other

explanation of the passage.

44. See CHOU LI, xxix. 6-10.

45. T`UNG K`AO, ch. 221.

46. This appears to be still extant. See Wylie's "Notes," p. 91

(new edition).

47. T`UNG K`AO, loc. cit.

48. A notable person in his day. His biography is given in the

SAN KUO CHIH, ch. 10.

49. See XI. ss. 58, note.

50. HOU HAN SHU, ch. 17 ad init.

51. SAN KUO CHIH, ch. 54.

52. SUNG SHIH, ch. 365 ad init.

53. The few Europeans who have yet had an opportunity of

acquainting themselves with Sun Tzu are not behindhand in their

praise. In this connection, I may perhaps be excused for quoting

from a letter from Lord Roberts, to whom the sheets of the

present work were submitted previous to publication: "Many of

Sun Wu's maxims are perfectly applicable to the present day, and

no. 11 [in Chapter VIII] is one that the people of this country

would do well to take to heart."

54. Ch. 140.

55. See IV. ss. 3.

56. The allusion may be to Mencius VI. 2. ix. 2.

57. The TSO CHUAN.

58. SHIH CHI, ch. 25, fol. I.

59. Cf. SHIH CHI, ch 47.

60. See SHU CHING, preface ss. 55.

61. See SHIH CHI, ch. 47.

62. Lun Yu, XV. 1.

63. I failed to trace this utterance.

64. Supra.

65. Supra.

66. The other four being worship, mourning, entertainment of

guests, and festive rites. See SHU CHING, ii. 1. III. 8, and

CHOU LI, IX. fol. 49.

67. See XIII. ss. 11, note.

68. This is a rather obscure allusion to the TSO CHUAN, where

Tzu-ch`an says: "If you have a piece of beautiful brocade, you

will not employ a mere learner to make it up."

69. Cf. TAO TE CHING, ch. 31.

70. Sun Hsing-yen might have quoted Confucius again. See LUN

YU, XIII. 29, 30.

71. Better known as Hsiang Yu [233-202 B.C.].

72. SHIH CHI, ch. 47.

73. SHIH CHI, ch. 38.

74. See XIII. ss. 27, note. Further details on T`ai Kung will

be found in the SHIH CHI, ch. 32 ad init. Besides the tradition

which makes him a former minister of Chou Hsin, two other

accounts of him are there given, according to which he would

appear to have been first raised from a humble private station by

Wen Wang.

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I. LAYING PLANS

[Ts`ao Kung, in defining the meaning of the Chinese for the

title of this chapter, says it refers to the deliberations in the

temple selected by the general for his temporary use, or as we

should say, in his tent. See. ss. 26.]

1. Sun Tzu said: The art of war is of vital importance to

the State.

2. It is a matter of life and death, a road either to

safety or to ruin. Hence it is a subject of inquiry which can on

no account be neglected.

3. The art of war, then, is governed by five constant

factors, to be taken into account in one's deliberations, when

seeking to determine the conditions obtaining in the field.

4. These are: (1) The Moral Law; (2) Heaven; (3) Earth;

(4) The Commander; (5) Method and discipline.

[It appears from what follows that Sun Tzu means by "Moral

Law" a principle of harmony, not unlike the Tao of Lao Tzu in its

moral aspect. One might be tempted to render it by "morale,"

were it not considered as an attribute of the ruler in ss. 13.]

5, 6. The MORAL LAW causes the people to be in complete

accord with their ruler, so that they will follow him regardless

of their lives, undismayed by any danger.

[Tu Yu quotes Wang Tzu as saying: "Without constant

practice, the officers will be nervous and undecided when

mustering for battle; without constant practice, the general will

be wavering and irresolute when the crisis is at hand."]

7. HEAVEN signifies night and day, cold and heat, times and

seasons.

[The commentators, I think, make an unnecessary mystery of

two words here. Meng Shih refers to "the hard and the soft,

waxing and waning" of Heaven. Wang Hsi, however, may be right in

saying that what is meant is "the general economy of Heaven,"

including the five elements, the four seasons, wind and clouds,

and other phenomena.]

8. EARTH comprises distances, great and small; danger and

security; open ground and narrow passes; the chances of life and

death.

9. The COMMANDER stands for the virtues of wisdom,

sincerely, benevolence, courage and strictness.

[The five cardinal virtues of the Chinese are (1) humanity

or benevolence; (2) uprightness of mind; (3) self-respect, self-

control, or "proper feeling;" (4) wisdom; (5) sincerity or good

faith. Here "wisdom" and "sincerity" are put before "humanity or

benevolence," and the two military virtues of "courage" and

"strictness" substituted for "uprightness of mind" and "self-

respect, self-control, or 'proper feeling.'"]

10. By METHOD AND DISCIPLINE are to be understood the

marshaling of the army in its proper subdivisions, the

graduations of rank among the officers, the maintenance of roads

by which supplies may reach the army, and the control of military

expenditure.

11. These five heads should be familiar to every general:

he who knows them will be victorious; he who knows them not will

fail.

12. Therefore, in your deliberations, when seeking to

determine the military conditions, let them be made the basis of

a comparison, in this wise: --

13. (1) Which of the two sovereigns is imbued with the

Moral law?

[I.e., "is in harmony with his subjects." Cf. ss. 5.]

(2) Which of the two generals has most ability?

(3) With whom lie the advantages derived from Heaven and

Earth?

[See ss. 7,8]

(4) On which side is discipline most rigorously enforced?

[Tu Mu alludes to the remarkable story of Ts`ao Ts`ao (A.D.

155-220), who was such a strict disciplinarian that once, in

accordance with his own severe regulations against injury to

standing crops, he condemned himself to death for having allowed

him horse to shy into a field of corn! However, in lieu of

losing his head, he was persuaded to satisfy his sense of justice

by cutting off his hair. Ts`ao Ts`ao's own comment on the

present passage is characteristically curt: "when you lay down a

law, see that it is not disobeyed; if it is disobeyed the

offender must be put to death."]

(5) Which army is stronger?

[Morally as well as physically. As Mei Yao-ch`en puts it,

freely rendered, "ESPIRIT DE CORPS and 'big battalions.'"]

(6) On which side are officers and men more highly trained?

[Tu Yu quotes Wang Tzu as saying: "Without constant

practice, the officers will be nervous and undecided when

mustering for battle; without constant practice, the general will

be wavering and irresolute when the crisis is at hand."]

(7) In which army is there the greater constancy both in

reward and punishment?

[On which side is there the most absolute certainty that

merit will be properly rewarded and misdeeds summarily punished?]

14. By means of these seven considerations I can forecast

victory or defeat.

15. The general that hearkens to my counsel and acts upon

it, will conquer: --let such a one be retained in command! The

general that hearkens not to my counsel nor acts upon it, will

suffer defeat: --let such a one be dismissed!

[The form of this paragraph reminds us that Sun Tzu's

treatise was composed expressly for the benefit of his patron Ho

Lu, king of the Wu State.]

16. While heading the profit of my counsel, avail yourself

also of any helpful circumstances over and beyond the ordinary

rules.

17. According as circumstances are favorable, one should

modify one's plans.

[Sun Tzu, as a practical soldier, will have none of the

"bookish theoric." He cautions us here not to pin our faith to

abstract principles; "for," as Chang Yu puts it, "while the main

laws of strategy can be stated clearly enough for the benefit of

all and sundry, you must be guided by the actions of the enemy in

attempting to secure a favorable position in actual warfare." On

the eve of the battle of Waterloo, Lord Uxbridge, commanding the

cavalry, went to the Duke of Wellington in order to learn what

his plans and calculations were for the morrow, because, as he

explained, he might suddenly find himself Commander-in-chief and

would be unable to frame new plans in a critical moment. The

Duke listened quietly and then said: "Who will attack the first

tomorrow -- I or Bonaparte?" "Bonaparte," replied Lord Uxbridge.

"Well," continued the Duke, "Bonaparte has not given me any idea

of his projects; and as my plans will depend upon his, how can

you expect me to tell you what mine are?" [1] ]

18. All warfare is based on deception.

[The truth of this pithy and profound saying will be

admitted by every soldier. Col. Henderson tells us that

Wellington, great in so many military qualities, was especially

distinguished by "the extraordinary skill with which he concealed

his movements and deceived both friend and foe."]

19. Hence, when able to attack, we must seem unable; when

using our forces, we must seem inactive; when we are near, we

must make the enemy believe we are far away; when far away, we

must make him believe we are near.

20. Hold out baits to entice the enemy. Feign disorder,

and crush him.

[All commentators, except Chang Yu, say, "When he is in

disorder, crush him." It is more natural to suppose that Sun Tzu

is still illustrating the uses of deception in war.]

21. If he is secure at all points, be prepared for him. If

he is in superior strength, evade him.

22. If your opponent is of choleric temper, seek to

irritate him. Pretend to be weak, that he may grow arrogant.

[Wang Tzu, quoted by Tu Yu, says that the good tactician

plays with his adversary as a cat plays with a mouse, first

feigning weakness and immobility, and then suddenly pouncing upon

him.]

23. If he is taking his ease, give him no rest.

[This is probably the meaning though Mei Yao-ch`en has the

note: "while we are taking our ease, wait for the enemy to tire

himself out." The YU LAN has "Lure him on and tire him out."]

If his forces are united, separate them.

[Less plausible is the interpretation favored by most of the

commentators: "If sovereign and subject are in accord, put

division between them."]

24. Attack him where he is unprepared, appear where you are

not expected.

25. These military devices, leading to victory, must not be

divulged beforehand.

26. Now the general who wins a battle makes many

calculations in his temple ere the battle is fought.

[Chang Yu tells us that in ancient times it was customary

for a temple to be set apart for the use of a general who was

about to take the field, in order that he might there elaborate

his plan of campaign.]

The general who loses a battle makes but few calculations

beforehand. Thus do many calculations lead to victory, and few

calculations to defeat: how much more no calculation at all! It

is by attention to this point that I can foresee who is likely to

win or lose.

[1] "Words on Wellington," by Sir. W. Fraser.

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II. WAGING WAR

[Ts`ao Kung has the note: "He who wishes to fight must

first count the cost," which prepares us for the discovery that

the subject of the chapter is not what we might expect from the

title, but is primarily a consideration of ways and means.]

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,

[The "swift chariots" were lightly built and, according to

Chang Yu, used for the attack; the "heavy chariots" were heavier,

and designed for purposes of defense. Li Ch`uan, it is true,

says that the latter were light, but this seems hardly probable.

It is interesting to note the analogies between early Chinese

warfare and that of the Homeric Greeks. In each case, the war-

chariot was the important factor, forming as it did the nucleus

round which was grouped a certain number of foot-soldiers. With

regard to the numbers given here, we are informed that each swift

chariot was accompanied by 75 footmen, and each heavy chariot by

25 footmen, so that the whole army would be divided up into a

thousand battalions, each consisting of two chariots and a

hundred men.]

with provisions enough to carry them a thousand LI,

[2.78 modern LI go to a mile. The length may have varied

slightly since Sun Tzu's time.]

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.

[This concise and difficult sentence is not well explained

by any of the commentators. Ts`ao Kung, Li Ch`uan, Meng Shih, Tu

Yu, Tu Mu and Mei Yao-ch`en have notes to the effect that a

general, though naturally stupid, may nevertheless conquer

through sheer force of rapidity. Ho Shih says: "Haste may be

stupid, but at any rate it saves expenditure of energy and

treasure; protracted operations may be very clever, but they

bring calamity in their train." Wang Hsi evades the difficulty

by remarking: "Lengthy operations mean an army growing old,

wealth being expended, an empty exchequer and distress among the

people; true cleverness insures against the occurrence of such

calamities." Chang Yu says: "So long as victory can be

attained, stupid haste is preferable to clever dilatoriness."

Now Sun Tzu says nothing whatever, except possibly by

implication, about ill-considered haste being better than

ingenious but lengthy operations. What he does say is something

much more guarded, namely that, while speed may sometimes be

injudicious, tardiness can never be anything but foolish -- if

only because it means impoverishment to the nation. In

considering the point raised here by Sun Tzu, the classic example

of Fabius Cunctator will inevitably occur to the mind. That

general deliberately measured the endurance of Rome against that

of Hannibals's isolated army, because it seemed to him that the

latter was more likely to suffer from a long campaign in a

strange country. But it is quite a moot question whether his

tactics would have proved successful in the long run. Their

reversal it is true, led to Cannae; but this only establishes a

negative presumption in their favor.]

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.

[That is, with rapidity. Only one who knows the disastrous

effects of a long war can realize the supreme importance of

rapidity in bringing it to a close. Only two commentators seem

to favor this interpretation, but it fits well into the logic of

the context, whereas the rendering, "He who does not know the

evils of war cannot appreciate its benefits," is distinctly

pointless.]

8. The skillful soldier does not raise a second levy,

neither are his supply-wagons loaded more than twice.

[Once war is declared, he will not waste precious time in

waiting for reinforcements, nor will he return his army back for

fresh supplies, but crosses the enemy's frontier without delay.

This may seem an audacious policy to recommend, but with all

great strategists, from Julius Caesar to Napoleon Bonaparte, the

value of time -- that is, being a little ahead of your opponent --

has counted for more than either numerical superiority or the

nicest calculations with regard to commissariat.]

9. Bring war material with you from home, but forage on the

enemy. Thus the army will have food enough for its needs.

[The Chinese word translated here as "war material"

literally means "things to be used", and is meant in the widest

sense. It includes all the impedimenta of an army, apart from

provisions.]

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.

[The beginning of this sentence does not balance properly

with the next, though obviously intended to do so. The

arrangement, moreover, is so awkward that I cannot help

suspecting some corruption in the text. It never seems to occur

to Chinese commentators that an emendation may be necessary for

the sense, and we get no help from them there. The Chinese words

Sun Tzu used to indicate the cause of the people's impoverishment

clearly have reference to some system by which the husbandmen

sent their contributions of corn to the army direct. But why

should it fall on them to maintain an army in this way, except

because the State or Government is too poor to do so?]

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.

[Wang Hsi says high prices occur before the army has left

its own territory. Ts`ao Kung understands it of an army that has

already crossed the frontier.]

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;

[Tu Mu and Wang Hsi agree that the people are not mulcted

not of 3/10, but of 7/10, of their income. But this is hardly to

be extracted from our text. Ho Shih has a characteristic tag:

"The PEOPLE being regarded as the essential part of the State,

and FOOD as the people's heaven, is it not right that those in

authority should value and be careful of both?"]

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.

[Because twenty cartloads will be consumed in the process of

transporting one cartload to the front. A PICUL is a unit of

measure equal to 133.3 pounds (65.5 kilograms).]

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.

[Tu Mu says: "Rewards are necessary in order to make the

soldiers see the advantage of beating the enemy; thus, when you

capture spoils from the enemy, they must be used as rewards, so

that all your men may have a keen desire to fight, each on his

own account."]

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.

[As Ho Shih remarks: "War is not a thing to be trifled

with." Sun Tzu here reiterates the main lesson which this

chapter is intended to enforce."]

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.

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III. ATTACK BY STRATAGEM

1. Sun Tzu said: In the practical art of war, the best

thing of all is to take the enemy's country whole and intact; to

shatter and destroy it is not so good. So, too, it is better to

recapture an army entire than to destroy it, to capture a

regiment, a detachment or a company entire than to destroy them.

[The equivalent to an army corps, according to Ssu-ma Fa,

consisted nominally of 12500 men; according to Ts`ao Kung, the

equivalent of a regiment contained 500 men, the equivalent to a

detachment consists from any number between 100 and 500, and the

equivalent of a company contains from 5 to 100 men. For the last

two, however, Chang Yu gives the exact figures of 100 and 5

respectively.]

2. Hence to fight and conquer in all your battles is not

supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the

enemy's resistance without fighting.

[Here again, no modern strategist but will approve the words

of the old Chinese general. Moltke's greatest triumph, the

capitulation of the huge French army at Sedan, was won

practically without bloodshed.]

3. Thus the highest form of generalship is to balk the

enemy's plans;

[Perhaps the word "balk" falls short of expressing the full

force of the Chinese word, which implies not an attitude of

defense, whereby one might be content to foil the enemy's

stratagems one after another, but an active policy of counter-

attack. Ho Shih puts this very clearly in his note: "When the

enemy has made a plan of attack against us, we must anticipate

him by delivering our own attack first."]

the next best is to prevent the junction of the enemy's forces;

[Isolating him from his allies. We must not forget that Sun

Tzu, in speaking of hostilities, always has in mind the numerous

states or principalities into which the China of his day was

split up.]

the next in order is to attack the enemy's army in the field;

[When he is already at full strength.]

and the worst policy of all is to besiege walled cities.

4. The rule is, not to besiege walled cities if it can

possibly be avoided.

[Another sound piece of military theory. Had the Boers

acted upon it in 1899, and refrained from dissipating their

strength before Kimberley, Mafeking, or even Ladysmith, it is

more than probable that they would have been masters of the

situation before the British were ready seriously to oppose

them.]

The preparation of mantlets, movable shelters, and various

implements of war, will take up three whole months;

[It is not quite clear what the Chinese word, here

translated as "mantlets", described. Ts`ao Kung simply defines

them as "large shields," but we get a better idea of them from Li

Ch`uan, who says they were to protect the heads of those who were

assaulting the city walls at close quarters. This seems to

suggest a sort of Roman TESTUDO, ready made. Tu Mu says they

were wheeled vehicles used in repelling attacks, but this is

denied by Ch`en Hao. See supra II. 14. The name is also applied

to turrets on city walls. Of the "movable shelters" we get a

fairly clear description from several commentators. They were

wooden missile-proof structures on four wheels, propelled from

within, covered over with raw hides, and used in sieges to convey

parties of men to and from the walls, for the purpose of filling

up the encircling moat with earth. Tu Mu adds that they are now

called "wooden donkeys."]

and the piling up of mounds over against the walls will take

three months more.

[These were great mounds or ramparts of earth heaped up to

the level of the enemy's walls in order to discover the weak

points in the defense, and also to destroy the fortified turrets

mentioned in the preceding note.]

5. The general, unable to control his irritation, will

launch his men to the assault like swarming ants,

[This vivid simile of Ts`ao Kung is taken from the spectacle

of an army of ants climbing a wall. The meaning is that the

general, losing patience at the long delay, may make a premature

attempt to storm the place before his engines of war are ready.]

with the result that one-third of his men are slain, while the

town still remains untaken. Such are the disastrous effects of a

siege.

[We are reminded of the terrible losses of the Japanese

before Port Arthur, in the most recent siege which history has to

record.]

6. Therefore the skillful leader subdues the enemy's troops

without any fighting; he captures their cities without laying

siege to them; he overthrows their kingdom without lengthy

operations in the field.

[Chia Lin notes that he only overthrows the Government, but

does no harm to individuals. The classical instance is Wu Wang,

who after having put an end to the Yin dynasty was acclaimed

"Father and mother of the people."]

7. With his forces intact he will dispute the mastery of

the Empire, and thus, without losing a man, his triumph will be

complete.

[Owing to the double meanings in the Chinese text, the

latter part of the sentence is susceptible of quite a different

meaning: "And thus, the weapon not being blunted by use, its

keenness remains perfect."]

This is the method of attacking by stratagem.

8. It is the rule in war, if our forces are ten to the

enemy's one, to surround him; if five to one, to attack him;

[Straightway, without waiting for any further advantage.]

if twice as numerous, to divide our army into two.

[Tu Mu takes exception to the saying; and at first sight,

indeed, it appears to violate a fundamental principle of war.

Ts'ao Kung, however, gives a clue to Sun Tzu's meaning: "Being

two to the enemy's one, we may use one part of our army in the

regular way, and the other for some special diversion." Chang Yu

thus further elucidates the point: "If our force is twice as

numerous as that of the enemy, it should be split up into two

divisions, one to meet the enemy in front, and one to fall upon

his rear; if he replies to the frontal attack, he may be crushed

from behind; if to the rearward attack, he may be crushed in

front." This is what is meant by saying that 'one part may be

used in the regular way, and the other for some special

diversion.' Tu Mu does not understand that dividing one's army

is simply an irregular, just as concentrating it is the regular,

strategical method, and he is too hasty in calling this a

mistake."]

9. If equally matched, we can offer battle;

[Li Ch`uan, followed by Ho Shih, gives the following

paraphrase: "If attackers and attacked are equally matched in

strength, only the able general will fight."]

if slightly inferior in numbers, we can avoid the enemy;

[The meaning, "we can WATCH the enemy," is certainly a great

improvement on the above; but unfortunately there appears to be

no very good authority for the variant. Chang Yu reminds us that

the saying only applies if the other factors are equal; a small

difference in numbers is often more than counterbalanced by

superior energy and discipline.]

if quite unequal in every way, we can flee from him.

10. Hence, though an obstinate fight may be made by a small

force, in the end it must be captured by the larger force.

11. Now the general is the bulwark of the State; if the

bulwark is complete at all points; the State will be strong; if

the bulwark is defective, the State will be weak.

[As Li Ch`uan tersely puts it: "Gap indicates deficiency;

if the general's ability is not perfect (i.e. if he is not

thoroughly versed in his profession), his army will lack

strength."]

12. There are three ways in which a ruler can bring

misfortune upon his army:--

13. (1) By commanding the army to advance or to retreat,

being ignorant of the fact that it cannot obey. This is called

hobbling the army.

[Li Ch`uan adds the comment: "It is like tying together the

legs of a thoroughbred, so that it is unable to gallop." One

would naturally think of "the ruler" in this passage as being at

home, and trying to direct the movements of his army from a

distance. But the commentators understand just the reverse, and

quote the saying of T`ai Kung: "A kingdom should not be

governed from without, and army should not be directed from

within." Of course it is true that, during an engagement, or

when in close touch with the enemy, the general should not be in

the thick of his own troops, but a little distance apart.

Otherwise, he will be liable to misjudge the position as a whole,

and give wrong orders.]

14. (2) By attempting to govern an army in the same way as

he administers a kingdom, being ignorant of the conditions which

obtain in an army. This causes restlessness in the soldier's

minds.

[Ts`ao Kung's note is, freely translated: "The military

sphere and the civil sphere are wholly distinct; you can't handle

an army in kid gloves." And Chang Yu says: "Humanity and

justice are the principles on which to govern a state, but not an

army; opportunism and flexibility, on the other hand, are

military rather than civil virtues to assimilate the governing of

an army"--to that of a State, understood.]

15. (3) By employing the officers of his army without

discrimination,

[That is, he is not careful to use the right man in the

right place.]

through ignorance of the military principle of adaptation to

circumstances. This shakes the confidence of the soldiers.

[I follow Mei Yao-ch`en here. The other commentators refer

not to the ruler, as in SS. 13, 14, but to the officers he

employs. Thus Tu Yu says: "If a general is ignorant of the

principle of adaptability, he must not be entrusted with a

position of authority." Tu Mu quotes: "The skillful employer of

men will employ the wise man, the brave man, the covetous man,

and the stupid man. For the wise man delights in establishing

his merit, the brave man likes to show his courage in action, the

covetous man is quick at seizing advantages, and the stupid man

has no fear of death."]

16. But when the army is restless and distrustful, trouble

is sure to come from the other feudal princes. This is simply

bringing anarchy into the army, and flinging victory away.

17. Thus we may know that there are five essentials for

victory: (1) He will win who knows when to fight and when not to

fight.

[Chang Yu says: If he can fight, he advances and takes the

offensive; if he cannot fight, he retreats and remains on the

defensive. He will invariably conquer who knows whether it is

right to take the offensive or the defensive.]

(2) He will win who knows how to handle both superior and

inferior forces.

[This is not merely the general's ability to estimate

numbers correctly, as Li Ch`uan and others make out. Chang Yu

expounds the saying more satisfactorily: "By applying the art of

war, it is possible with a lesser force to defeat a greater, and

vice versa. The secret lies in an eye for locality, and in not

letting the right moment slip. Thus Wu Tzu says: 'With a

superior force, make for easy ground; with an inferior one, make

for difficult ground.'"]

(3) He will win whose army is animated by the same spirit

throughout all its ranks.

(4) He will win who, prepared himself, waits to take the

enemy unprepared.

(5) He will win who has military capacity and is not

interfered with by the sovereign.

[Tu Yu quotes Wang Tzu as saying: "It is the sovereign's

function to give broad instructions, but to decide on battle it

is the function of the general." It is needless to dilate on the

military disasters which have been caused by undue interference

with operations in the field on the part of the home government.

Napoleon undoubtedly owed much of his extraordinary success to

the fact that he was not hampered by central authority.]

18. Hence the saying: If you know the enemy and know

yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If

you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you

will also suffer a defeat.

[Li Ch`uan cites the case of Fu Chien, prince of Ch`in, who

in 383 A.D. marched with a vast army against the Chin Emperor.

When warned not to despise an enemy who could command the

services of such men as Hsieh An and Huan Ch`ung, he boastfully

replied: "I have the population of eight provinces at my back,

infantry and horsemen to the number of one million; why, they

could dam up the Yangtsze River itself by merely throwing their

whips into the stream. What danger have I to fear?"

Nevertheless, his forces were soon after disastrously routed at

the Fei River, and he was obliged to beat a hasty retreat.]

If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in

every battle.

[Chang Yu said: "Knowing the enemy enables you to take the

offensive, knowing yourself enables you to stand on the

defensive." He adds: "Attack is the secret of defense; defense

is the planning of an attack." It would be hard to find a better

epitome of the root-principle of war.]

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IV. TACTICAL DISPOSITIONS

[Ts`ao Kung explains the Chinese meaning of the words for

the title of this chapter: "marching and countermarching on the

part of the two armies with a view to discovering each other's

condition." Tu Mu says: "It is through the dispositions of an

army that its condition may be discovered. Conceal your

dispositions, and your condition will remain secret, which leads

to victory,; show your dispositions, and your condition will

become patent, which leads to defeat." Wang Hsi remarks that the

good general can "secure success by modifying his tactics to meet

those of the enemy."]

1. Sun Tzu said: The good fighters of old first put

themselves beyond the possibility of defeat, and then waited for

an opportunity of defeating the enemy.

2. To secure ourselves against defeat lies in our own

hands, but the opportunity of defeating the enemy is provided by

the enemy himself.

[That is, of course, by a mistake on the enemy's part.]

3. Thus the good fighter is able to secure himself against

defeat,

[Chang Yu says this is done, "By concealing the disposition

of his troops, covering up his tracks, and taking unremitting

precautions."]

but cannot make certain of defeating the enemy.

4. Hence the saying: One may KNOW how to conquer without

being able to DO it.

5. Security against defeat implies defensive tactics;

ability to defeat the enemy means taking the offensive.

[I retain the sense found in a similar passage in ss. 1-3,

in spite of the fact that the commentators are all against me.

The meaning they give, "He who cannot conquer takes the

defensive," is plausible enough.]

6. Standing on the defensive indicates insufficient

strength; attacking, a superabundance of strength.

7. The general who is skilled in defense hides in the most

secret recesses of the earth;

[Literally, "hides under the ninth earth," which is a

metaphor indicating the utmost secrecy and concealment, so that

the enemy may not know his whereabouts."]

he who is skilled in attack flashes forth from the topmost

heights of heaven.

[Another metaphor, implying that he falls on his adversary

like a thunderbolt, against which there is no time to prepare.

This is the opinion of most of the commentators.]

Thus on the one hand we have ability to protect ourselves; on the

other, a victory that is complete.

8. To see victory only when it is within the ken of the

common herd is not the acme of excellence.

[As Ts`ao Kung remarks, "the thing is to see the plant

before it has germinated," to foresee the event before the action

has begun. Li Ch`uan alludes to the story of Han Hsin who, when

about to attack the vastly superior army of Chao, which was

strongly entrenched in the city of Ch`eng-an, said to his

officers: "Gentlemen, we are going to annihilate the enemy, and

shall meet again at dinner." The officers hardly took his words

seriously, and gave a very dubious assent. But Han Hsin had

already worked out in his mind the details of a clever stratagem,

whereby, as he foresaw, he was able to capture the city and

inflict a crushing defeat on his adversary."]

9. Neither is it the acme of excellence if you fight and

conquer and the whole Empire says, "Well done!"

[True excellence being, as Tu Mu says: "To plan secretly,

to move surreptitiously, to foil the enemy's intentions and balk

his schemes, so that at last the day may be won without shedding

a drop of blood." Sun Tzu reserves his approbation for things

that

"the world's coarse thumb

And finger fail to plumb."]

10. To lift an autumn hair is no sign of great strength;

["Autumn" hair" is explained as the fur of a hare, which is

finest in autumn, when it begins to grow afresh. The phrase is a

very common one in Chinese writers.]

to see the sun and moon is no sign of sharp sight; to hear the

noise of thunder is no sign of a quick ear.

[Ho Shih gives as real instances of strength, sharp sight

and quick hearing: Wu Huo, who could lift a tripod weighing 250

stone; Li Chu, who at a distance of a hundred paces could see

objects no bigger than a mustard seed; and Shih K`uang, a blind

musician who could hear the footsteps of a mosquito.]

11. What the ancients called a clever fighter is one who

not only wins, but excels in winning with ease.

[The last half is literally "one who, conquering, excels in

easy conquering." Mei Yao-ch`en says: "He who only sees the

obvious, wins his battles with difficulty; he who looks below the

surface of things, wins with ease."]

12. Hence his victories bring him neither reputation for

wisdom nor credit for courage.

[Tu Mu explains this very well: "Inasmuch as his victories

are gained over circumstances that have not come to light, the

world as large knows nothing of them, and he wins no reputation

for wisdom; inasmuch as the hostile state submits before there

has been any bloodshed, he receives no credit for courage."]

13. He wins his battles by making no mistakes.

[Ch`en Hao says: "He plans no superfluous marches, he

devises no futile attacks." The connection of ideas is thus

explained by Chang Yu: "One who seeks to conquer by sheer

strength, clever though he may be at winning pitched battles, is

also liable on occasion to be vanquished; whereas he who can look

into the future and discern conditions that are not yet manifest,

will never make a blunder and therefore invariably win."]

Making no mistakes is what establishes the certainty of victory,

for it means conquering an enemy that is already defeated.

14. Hence the skillful fighter puts himself into a position

which makes defeat impossible, and does not miss the moment for

defeating the enemy.

[A "counsel of perfection" as Tu Mu truly observes.

"Position" need not be confined to the actual ground occupied by

the troops. It includes all the arrangements and preparations

which a wise general will make to increase the safety of his

army.]

15. Thus it is that in war the victorious strategist only

seeks battle after the victory has been won, whereas he who is

destined to defeat first fights and afterwards looks for victory.

[Ho Shih thus expounds the paradox: "In warfare, first lay

plans which will ensure victory, and then lead your army to

battle; if you will not begin with stratagem but rely on brute

strength alone, victory will no longer be assured."]

16. The consummate leader cultivates the moral law, and

strictly adheres to method and discipline; thus it is in his

power to control success.

17. In respect of military method, we have, firstly,

Measurement; secondly, Estimation of quantity; thirdly,

Calculation; fourthly, Balancing of chances; fifthly, Victory.

18. Measurement owes its existence to Earth; Estimation of

quantity to Measurement; Calculation to Estimation of quantity;

Balancing of chances to Calculation; and Victory to Balancing of

chances.

[It is not easy to distinguish the four terms very clearly

in the Chinese. The first seems to be surveying and measurement

of the ground, which enable us to form an estimate of the enemy's

strength, and to make calculations based on the data thus

obtained; we are thus led to a general weighing-up, or comparison

of the enemy's chances with our own; if the latter turn the

scale, then victory ensues. The chief difficulty lies in third

term, which in the Chinese some commentators take as a

calculation of NUMBERS, thereby making it nearly synonymous with

the second term. Perhaps the second term should be thought of as

a consideration of the enemy's general position or condition,

while the third term is the estimate of his numerical strength.

On the other hand, Tu Mu says: "The question of relative

strength having been settled, we can bring the varied resources

of cunning into play." Ho Shih seconds this interpretation, but

weakens it. However, it points to the third term as being a

calculation of numbers.]

19. A victorious army opposed to a routed one, is as a

pound's weight placed in the scale against a single grain.

[Literally, "a victorious army is like an I (20 oz.) weighed

against a SHU (1/24 oz.); a routed army is a SHU weighed against

an I." The point is simply the enormous advantage which a

disciplined force, flushed with victory, has over one demoralized

by defeat." Legge, in his note on Mencius, I. 2. ix. 2, makes

the I to be 24 Chinese ounces, and corrects Chu Hsi's statement

that it equaled 20 oz. only. But Li Ch`uan of the T`ang dynasty

here gives the same figure as Chu Hsi.]

20. The onrush of a conquering force is like the bursting

of pent-up waters into a chasm a thousand fathoms deep.

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V. ENERGY

1. Sun Tzu said: The control of a large force is the same

principle as the control of a few men: it is merely a question

of dividing up their numbers.

[That is, cutting up the army into regiments, companies,

etc., with subordinate officers in command of each. Tu Mu

reminds us of Han Hsin's famous reply to the first Han Emperor,

who once said to him: "How large an army do you think I could

lead?" "Not more than 100,000 men, your Majesty." "And you?"

asked the Emperor. "Oh!" he answered, "the more the better."]

2. Fighting with a large army under your command is nowise

different from fighting with a small one: it is merely a

question of instituting signs and signals.

3. To ensure that your whole host may withstand the brunt

of the enemy's attack and remain unshaken - this is effected by

maneuvers direct and indirect.

[We now come to one of the most interesting parts of Sun

Tzu's treatise, the discussion of the CHENG and the CH`I." As it

is by no means easy to grasp the full significance of these two

terms, or to render them consistently by good English

equivalents; it may be as well to tabulate some of the

commentators' remarks on the subject before proceeding further.

Li Ch`uan: "Facing the enemy is CHENG, making lateral diversion

is CH`I. Chia Lin: "In presence of the enemy, your troops

should be arrayed in normal fashion, but in order to secure

victory abnormal maneuvers must be employed." Mei Yao-ch`en:

"CH`I is active, CHENG is passive; passivity means waiting for an

opportunity, activity beings the victory itself." Ho Shih: "We

must cause the enemy to regard our straightforward attack as one

that is secretly designed, and vice versa; thus CHENG may also be

CH`I, and CH`I may also be CHENG." He instances the famous

exploit of Han Hsin, who when marching ostensibly against Lin-

chin (now Chao-i in Shensi), suddenly threw a large force across

the Yellow River in wooden tubs, utterly disconcerting his

opponent. [Ch`ien Han Shu, ch. 3.] Here, we are told, the march

on Lin-chin was CHENG, and the surprise maneuver was CH`I."

Chang Yu gives the following summary of opinions on the words:

"Military writers do not agree with regard to the meaning of CH`I

and CHENG. Wei Liao Tzu [4th cent. B.C.] says: 'Direct warfare

favors frontal attacks, indirect warfare attacks from the rear.'

Ts`ao Kung says: 'Going straight out to join battle is a direct

operation; appearing on the enemy's rear is an indirect

maneuver.' Li Wei-kung [6th and 7th cent. A.D.] says: 'In war,

to march straight ahead is CHENG; turning movements, on the other

hand, are CH`I.' These writers simply regard CHENG as CHENG, and

CH`I as CH`I; they do not note that the two are mutually

interchangeable and run into each other like the two sides of a

circle [see infra, ss. 11]. A comment on the T`ang Emperor T`ai

Tsung goes to the root of the matter: 'A CH`I maneuver may be

CHENG, if we make the enemy look upon it as CHENG; then our real

attack will be CH`I, and vice versa. The whole secret lies in

confusing the enemy, so that he cannot fathom our real intent.'"

To put it perhaps a little more clearly: any attack or other

operation is CHENG, on which the enemy has had his attention

fixed; whereas that is CH`I," which takes him by surprise or

comes from an unexpected quarter. If the enemy perceives a

movement which is meant to be CH`I," it immediately becomes

CHENG."]

4. That the impact of your army may be like a grindstone

dashed against an egg - this is effected by the science of weak

points and strong.

5. In all fighting, the direct method may be used for

joining battle, but indirect methods will be needed in order to

secure victory.

[Chang Yu says: "Steadily develop indirect tactics, either

by pounding the enemy's flanks or falling on his rear." A

brilliant example of "indirect tactics" which decided the

fortunes of a campaign was Lord Roberts' night march round the

Peiwar Kotal in the second Afghan war. [1]

6. Indirect tactics, efficiently applied, are inexhausible

as Heaven and Earth, unending as the flow of rivers and streams;

like the sun and moon, they end but to begin anew; like the four

seasons, they pass away to return once more.

[Tu Yu and Chang Yu understand this of the permutations of

CH`I and CHENG." But at present Sun Tzu is not speaking of CHENG

at all, unless, indeed, we suppose with Cheng Yu-hsien that a

clause relating to it has fallen out of the text. Of course, as

has already been pointed out, the two are so inextricably

interwoven in all military operations, that they cannot really be

considered apart. Here we simply have an expression, in

figurative language, of the almost infinite resource of a great

leader.]

7. There are not more than five musical notes, yet the

combinations of these five give rise to more melodies than can

ever be heard.

8. There are not more than five primary colors (blue,

yellow, red, white, and black), yet in combination they produce

more hues than can ever been seen.

9 There are not more than five cardinal tastes (sour,

acrid, salt, sweet, bitter), yet combinations of them yield more

flavors than can ever be tasted.

10. In battle, there are not more than two methods of

attack - the direct and the indirect; yet these two in

combination give rise to an endless series of maneuvers.

11. The direct and the indirect lead on to each other in

turn. It is like moving in a circle - you never come to an end.

Who can exhaust the possibilities of their combination?

12. The onset of troops is like the rush of a torrent which

will even roll stones along in its course.

13. The quality of decision is like the well-timed swoop of

a falcon which enables it to strike and destroy its victim.

[The Chinese here is tricky and a certain key word in the

context it is used defies the best efforts of the translator. Tu

Mu defines this word as "the measurement or estimation of

distance." But this meaning does not quite fit the illustrative

simile in ss. 15. Applying this definition to the falcon, it

seems to me to denote that instinct of SELF RESTRAINT which keeps

the bird from swooping on its quarry until the right moment,

together with the power of judging when the right moment has

arrived. The analogous quality in soldiers is the highly

important one of being able to reserve their fire until the very

instant at which it will be most effective. When the "Victory"

went into action at Trafalgar at hardly more than drifting pace,

she was for several minutes exposed to a storm of shot and shell

before replying with a single gun. Nelson coolly waited until he

was within close range, when the broadside he brought to bear

worked fearful havoc on the enemy's nearest ships.]

14. Therefore the good fighter will be terrible in his

onset, and prompt in his decision.

[The word "decision" would have reference to the measurement

of distance mentioned above, letting the enemy get near before

striking. But I cannot help thinking that Sun Tzu meant to use

the word in a figurative sense comparable to our own idiom "short

and sharp." Cf. Wang Hsi's note, which after describing the

falcon's mode of attack, proceeds: "This is just how the

'psychological moment' should be seized in war."]

15. Energy may be likened to the bending of a crossbow;

decision, to the releasing of a trigger.

[None of the commentators seem to grasp the real point of

the simile of energy and the force stored up in the bent cross-

bow until released by the finger on the trigger.]

16. Amid the turmoil and tumult of battle, there may be

seeming disorder and yet no real disorder at all; amid confusion

and chaos, your array may be without head or tail, yet it will be

proof against defeat.

[Mei Yao-ch`en says: "The subdivisions of the army having

been previously fixed, and the various signals agreed upon, the

separating and joining, the dispersing and collecting which will

take place in the course of a battle, may give the appearance of

disorder when no real disorder is possible. Your formation may

be without head or tail, your dispositions all topsy-turvy, and

yet a rout of your forces quite out of the question."]

17. Simulated disorder postulates perfect discipline,

simulated fear postulates courage; simulated weakness postulates

strength.

[In order to make the translation intelligible, it is

necessary to tone down the sharply paradoxical form of the

original. Ts`ao Kung throws out a hint of the meaning in his

brief note: "These things all serve to destroy formation and

conceal one's condition." But Tu Mu is the first to put it quite

plainly: "If you wish to feign confusion in order to lure the

enemy on, you must first have perfect discipline; if you wish to

display timidity in order to entrap the enemy, you must have

extreme courage; if you wish to parade your weakness in order to

make the enemy over-confident, you must have exceeding

strength."]

18. Hiding order beneath the cloak of disorder is simply a

question of subdivision;

[See supra, ss. 1.]

concealing courage under a show of timidity presupposes a fund of

latent energy;

[The commentators strongly understand a certain Chinese word

here differently than anywhere else in this chapter. Thus Tu Mu

says: "seeing that we are favorably circumstanced and yet make

no move, the enemy will believe that we are really afraid."]

masking strength with weakness is to be effected by tactical

dispositions.

[Chang Yu relates the following anecdote of Kao Tsu, the

first Han Emperor: "Wishing to crush the Hsiung-nu, he sent out

spies to report on their condition. But the Hsiung-nu,

forewarned, carefully concealed all their able-bodied men and

well-fed horses, and only allowed infirm soldiers and emaciated

cattle to be seen. The result was that spies one and all

recommended the Emperor to deliver his attack. Lou Ching alone

opposed them, saying: "When two countries go to war, they are

naturally inclined to make an ostentatious display of their

strength. Yet our spies have seen nothing but old age and

infirmity. This is surely some ruse on the part of the enemy,

and it would be unwise for us to attack." The Emperor, however,

disregarding this advice, fell into the trap and found himself

surrounded at Po-teng."]

19. Thus one who is skillful at keeping the enemy on the

move maintains deceitful appearances, according to which the

enemy will act.

[Ts`ao Kung's note is "Make a display of weakness and want."

Tu Mu says: "If our force happens to be superior to the enemy's,

weakness may be simulated in order to lure him on; but if

inferior, he must be led to believe that we are strong, in order

that he may keep off. In fact, all the enemy's movements should

be determined by the signs that we choose to give him." Note the

following anecdote of Sun Pin, a descendent of Sun Wu: In 341

B.C., the Ch`i State being at war with Wei, sent T`ien Chi and

Sun Pin against the general P`ang Chuan, who happened to be a

deadly personal enemy of the later. Sun Pin said: "The Ch`i

State has a reputation for cowardice, and therefore our adversary

despises us. Let us turn this circumstance to account."

Accordingly, when the army had crossed the border into Wei

territory, he gave orders to show 100,000 fires on the first

night, 50,000 on the next, and the night after only 20,000.

P`ang Chuan pursued them hotly, saying to himself: "I knew these

men of Ch`i were cowards: their numbers have already fallen away

by more than half." In his retreat, Sun Pin came to a narrow

defile, with he calculated that his pursuers would reach after

dark. Here he had a tree stripped of its bark, and inscribed

upon it the words: "Under this tree shall P`ang Chuan die."

Then, as night began to fall, he placed a strong body of archers

in ambush near by, with orders to shoot directly they saw a

light. Later on, P`ang Chuan arrived at the spot, and noticing

the tree, struck a light in order to read what was written on it.

His body was immediately riddled by a volley of arrows, and his

whole army thrown into confusion. [The above is Tu Mu's version

of the story; the SHIH CHI, less dramatically but probably with

more historical truth, makes P`ang Chuan cut his own throat with

an exclamation of despair, after the rout of his army.] ]

He sacrifices something, that the enemy may snatch at it.

20. By holding out baits, he keeps him on the march; then

with a body of picked men he lies in wait for him.

[With an emendation suggested by Li Ching, this then reads,

"He lies in wait with the main body of his troops."]

21. The clever combatant looks to the effect of combined

energy, and does not require too much from individuals.

[Tu Mu says: "He first of all considers the power of his

army in the bulk; afterwards he takes individual talent into

account, and uses each men according to his capabilities. He

does not demand perfection from the untalented."]

Hence his ability to pick out the right men and utilize combined

energy.

22. When he utilizes combined energy, his fighting men

become as it were like unto rolling logs or stones. For it is

the nature of a log or stone to remain motionless on level

ground, and to move when on a slope; if four-cornered, to come to

a standstill, but if round-shaped, to go rolling down.

[Ts`au Kung calls this "the use of natural or inherent

power."]

23. Thus the energy developed by good fighting men is as

the momentum of a round stone rolled down a mountain thousands

of feet in height. So much on the subject of energy.

[The chief lesson of this chapter, in Tu Mu's opinion, is

the paramount importance in war of rapid evolutions and sudden

rushes. "Great results," he adds, "can thus be achieved with

small forces."]

[1] "Forty-one Years in India," chapter 46.

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VI. WEAK POINTS AND STRONG

[Chang Yu attempts to explain the sequence of chapters as

follows: "Chapter IV, on Tactical Dispositions, treated of the

offensive and the defensive; chapter V, on Energy, dealt with

direct and indirect methods. The good general acquaints himself

first with the theory of attack and defense, and then turns his

attention to direct and indirect methods. He studies the art of

varying and combining these two methods before proceeding to the

subject of weak and strong points. For the use of direct or

indirect methods arises out of attack and defense, and the

perception of weak and strong points depends again on the above

methods. Hence the present chapter comes immediately after the

chapter on Energy."]

1. Sun Tzu said: Whoever is first in the field and awaits

the coming of the enemy, will be fresh for the fight; whoever is

second in the field and has to hasten to battle will arrive

exhausted.

2. Therefore the clever combatant imposes his will on the

enemy, but does not allow the enemy's will to be imposed on him.

[One mark of a great soldier is that he fight on his own

terms or fights not at all. [1] ]

3. By holding out advantages to him, he can cause the enemy

to approach of his own accord; or, by inflicting damage, he can

make it impossible for the enemy to draw near.

[In the first case, he will entice him with a bait; in the

second, he will strike at some important point which the enemy

will have to defend.]

4. If the enemy is taking his ease, he can harass him;

[This passage may be cited as evidence against Mei Yao-

Ch`en's interpretation of I. ss. 23.]

if well supplied with food, he can starve him out; if quietly

encamped, he can force him to move.

5. Appear at points which the enemy must hasten to defend;

march swiftly to places where you are not expected.

6. An army may march great distances without distress, if

it marches through country where the enemy is not.

[Ts`ao Kung sums up very well: "Emerge from the void [q.d.

like "a bolt from the blue"], strike at vulnerable points, shun

places that are defended, attack in unexpected quarters."]

7. You can be sure of succeeding in your attacks if you

only attack places which are undefended.

[Wang Hsi explains "undefended places" as "weak points; that

is to say, where the general is lacking in capacity, or the

soldiers in spirit; where the walls are not strong enough, or the

precautions not strict enough; where relief comes too late, or

provisions are too scanty, or the defenders are variance amongst

themselves."]

You can ensure the safety of your defense if you only hold

positions that cannot be attacked.

[I.e., where there are none of the weak points mentioned

above. There is rather a nice point involved in the

interpretation of this later clause. Tu Mu, Ch`en Hao, and Mei

Yao-ch`en assume the meaning to be: "In order to make your

defense quite safe, you must defend EVEN those places that are

not likely to be attacked;" and Tu Mu adds: "How much more,

then, those that will be attacked." Taken thus, however, the

clause balances less well with the preceding--always a

consideration in the highly antithetical style which is natural

to the Chinese. Chang Yu, therefore, seems to come nearer the

mark in saying: "He who is skilled in attack flashes forth from

the topmost heights of heaven [see IV. ss. 7], making it

impossible for the enemy to guard against him. This being so,

the places that I shall attack are precisely those that the enemy

cannot defend.... He who is skilled in defense hides in the most

secret recesses of the earth, making it impossible for the enemy

to estimate his whereabouts. This being so, the places that I

shall hold are precisely those that the enemy cannot attack."]

8. Hence that general is skillful in attack whose opponent

does not know what to defend; and he is skillful in defense whose

opponent does not know what to attack.

[An aphorism which puts the whole art of war in a nutshell.]

9. O divine art of subtlety and secrecy! Through you we

learn to be invisible, through you inaudible;

[Literally, "without form or sound," but it is said of

course with reference to the enemy.]

and hence we can hold the enemy's fate in our hands.

10. You may advance and be absolutely irresistible, if you

make for the enemy's weak points; you may retire and be safe from

pursuit if your movements are more rapid than those of the enemy.

11. If we wish to fight, the enemy can be forced to an

engagement even though he be sheltered behind a high rampart and

a deep ditch. All we need do is attack some other place that he

will be obliged to relieve.

[Tu Mu says: "If the enemy is the invading party, we can

cut his line of communications and occupy the roads by which he

will have to return; if we are the invaders, we may direct our

attack against the sovereign himself." It is clear that Sun Tzu,

unlike certain generals in the late Boer war, was no believer in

frontal attacks.]

12. If we do not wish to fight, we can prevent the enemy

from engaging us even though the lines of our encampment be

merely traced out on the ground. All we need do is to throw

something odd and unaccountable in his way.

[This extremely concise expression is intelligibly

paraphrased by Chia Lin: "even though we have constructed

neither wall nor ditch." Li Ch`uan says: "we puzzle him by

strange and unusual dispositions;" and Tu Mu finally clinches the

meaning by three illustrative anecdotes--one of Chu-ko Liang, who

when occupying Yang-p`ing and about to be attacked by Ssu-ma I,

suddenly struck his colors, stopped the beating of the drums, and

flung open the city gates, showing only a few men engaged in

sweeping and sprinkling the ground. This unexpected proceeding

had the intended effect; for Ssu-ma I, suspecting an ambush,

actually drew off his army and retreated. What Sun Tzu is

advocating here, therefore, is nothing more nor less than the

timely use of "bluff."]

13. By discovering the enemy's dispositions and remaining

invisible ourselves, we can keep our forces concentrated, while

the enemy's must be divided.

[The conclusion is perhaps not very obvious, but Chang Yu

(after Mei Yao-ch`en) rightly explains it thus: "If the enemy's

dispositions are visible, we can make for him in one body;

whereas, our own dispositions being kept secret, the enemy will

be obliged to divide his forces in order to guard against attack

from every quarter."]

14. We can form a single united body, while the enemy must

split up into fractions. Hence there will be a whole pitted

against separate parts of a whole, which means that we shall be

many to the enemy's few.

15. And if we are able thus to attack an inferior force

with a superior one, our opponents will be in dire straits.

16. The spot where we intend to fight must not be made

known; for then the enemy will have to prepare against a possible

attack at several different points;

[Sheridan once explained the reason of General Grant's

victories by saying that "while his opponents were kept fully

employed wondering what he was going to do, HE was thinking most

of what he was going to do himself."]

and his forces being thus distributed in many directions, the

numbers we shall have to face at any given point will be

proportionately few.

17. For should the enemy strengthen his van, he will weaken

his rear; should he strengthen his rear, he will weaken his van;

should he strengthen his left, he will weaken his right; should

he strengthen his right, he will weaken his left. If he sends

reinforcements everywhere, he will everywhere be weak.

[In Frederick the Great's INSTRUCTIONS TO HIS GENERALS we

read: "A defensive war is apt to betray us into too frequent

detachment. Those generals who have had but little experience

attempt to protect every point, while those who are better

acquainted with their profession, having only the capital object

in view, guard against a decisive blow, and acquiesce in small

misfortunes to avoid greater."]

18. Numerical weakness comes from having to prepare against

possible attacks; numerical strength, from compelling our

adversary to make these preparations against us.

[The highest generalship, in Col. Henderson's words, is "to

compel the enemy to disperse his army, and then to concentrate

superior force against each fraction in turn."]

19. Knowing the place and the time of the coming battle, we

may concentrate from the greatest distances in order to fight.

[What Sun Tzu evidently has in mind is that nice calculation

of distances and that masterly employment of strategy which

enable a general to divide his army for the purpose of a long and

rapid march, and afterwards to effect a junction at precisely the

right spot and the right hour in order to confront the enemy in

overwhelming strength. Among many such successful junctions

which military history records, one of the most dramatic and

decisive was the appearance of Blucher just at the critical

moment on the field of Waterloo.]

20. But if neither time nor place be known, then the left

wing will be impotent to succor the right, the right equally

impotent to succor the left, the van unable to relieve the rear,

or the rear to support the van. How much more so if the furthest

portions of the army are anything under a hundred LI apart, and

even the nearest are separated by several LI!

[The Chinese of this last sentence is a little lacking in

precision, but the mental picture we are required to draw is

probably that of an army advancing towards a given rendezvous in

separate columns, each of which has orders to be there on a fixed

date. If the general allows the various detachments to proceed

at haphazard, without precise instructions as to the time and

place of meeting, the enemy will be able to annihilate the army

in detail. Chang Yu's note may be worth quoting here: "If we do

not know the place where our opponents mean to concentrate or the

day on which they will join battle, our unity will be forfeited

through our preparations for defense, and the positions we hold

will be insecure. Suddenly happening upon a powerful foe, we

shall be brought to battle in a flurried condition, and no mutual

support will be possible between wings, vanguard or rear,

especially if there is any great distance between the foremost

and hindmost divisions of the army."]

21. Though according to my estimate the soldiers of Yueh

exceed our own in number, that shall advantage them nothing in

the matter of victory. I say then that victory can be achieved.

[Alas for these brave words! The long feud between the two

states ended in 473 B.C. with the total defeat of Wu by Kou Chien

and its incorporation in Yueh. This was doubtless long after Sun

Tzu's death. With his present assertion compare IV. ss. 4.

Chang Yu is the only one to point out the seeming discrepancy,

which he thus goes on to explain: "In the chapter on Tactical

Dispositions it is said, 'One may KNOW how to conquer without

being able to DO it,' whereas here we have the statement that

'victory' can be achieved.' The explanation is, that in the

former chapter, where the offensive and defensive are under

discussion, it is said that if the enemy is fully prepared, one

cannot make certain of beating him. But the present passage

refers particularly to the soldiers of Yueh who, according to Sun

Tzu's calculations, will be kept in ignorance of the time and

place of the impending struggle. That is why he says here that

victory can be achieved."]

22. Though the enemy be stronger in numbers, we may prevent

him from fighting. Scheme so as to discover his plans and the

likelihood of their success.

[An alternative reading offered by Chia Lin is: "Know

beforehand all plans conducive to our success and to the enemy's

failure."

23. Rouse him, and learn the principle of his activity or

inactivity.

[Chang Yu tells us that by noting the joy or anger shown by

the enemy on being thus disturbed, we shall be able to conclude

whether his policy is to lie low or the reverse. He instances

the action of Cho-ku Liang, who sent the scornful present of a

woman's head-dress to Ssu-ma I, in order to goad him out of his

Fabian tactics.]

Force him to reveal himself, so as to find out his vulnerable

spots.

24. Carefully compare the opposing army with your own, so

that you may know where strength is superabundant and where it is

deficient.

[Cf. IV. ss. 6.]

25. In making tactical dispositions, the highest pitch you

can attain is to conceal them;

[The piquancy of the paradox evaporates in translation.

Concealment is perhaps not so much actual invisibility (see supra

ss. 9) as "showing no sign" of what you mean to do, of the plans

that are formed in your brain.]

conceal your dispositions, and you will be safe from the prying

of the subtlest spies, from the machinations of the wisest

brains.

[Tu Mu explains: "Though the enemy may have clever and

capable officers, they will not be able to lay any plans against

us."]

26. How victory may be produced for them out of the enemy's

own tactics--that is what the multitude cannot comprehend.

27. All men can see the tactics whereby I conquer, but what

none can see is the strategy out of which victory is evolved.

[I.e., everybody can see superficially how a battle is won;

what they cannot see is the long series of plans and combinations

which has preceded the battle.]

28. Do not repeat the tactics which have gained you one

victory, but let your methods be regulated by the infinite

variety of circumstances.

[As Wang Hsi sagely remarks: "There is but one root-

principle underlying victory, but the tactics which lead up to it

are infinite in number." With this compare Col. Henderson: "The

rules of strategy are few and simple. They may be learned in a

week. They may be taught by familiar illustrations or a dozen

diagrams. But such knowledge will no more teach a man to lead an

army like Napoleon than a knowledge of grammar will teach him to

write like Gibbon."]

29. Military tactics are like unto water; for water in its

natural course runs away from high places and hastens downwards.

30. So in war, the way is to avoid what is strong and to

strike at what is weak.

[Like water, taking the line of least resistance.]

31. Water shapes its course according to the nature of the

ground over which it flows; the soldier works out his victory in

relation to the foe whom he is facing.

32. Therefore, just as water retains no constant shape, so

in warfare there are no constant conditions.

33. He who can modify his tactics in relation to his

opponent and thereby succeed in winning, may be called a heaven-

born captain.

34. The five elements (water, fire, wood, metal, earth) are

not always equally predominant;

[That is, as Wang Hsi says: "they predominate

alternately."]

the four seasons make way for each other in turn.

[Literally, "have no invariable seat."]

There are short days and long; the moon has its periods of waning

and waxing.

[Cf. V. ss. 6. The purport of the passage is simply to

illustrate the want of fixity in war by the changes constantly

taking place in Nature. The comparison is not very happy,

however, because the regularity of the phenomena which Sun Tzu

mentions is by no means paralleled in war.]

[1] See Col. Henderson's biography of Stonewall Jackson, 1902

ed., vol. II, p. 490.

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VII. MANEUVERING

1. Sun Tzu said: In war, the general receives his commands

from the sovereign.

2. Having collected an army and concentrated his forces, he

must blend and harmonize the different elements thereof before

pitching his camp.

["Chang Yu says: "the establishment of harmony and

confidence between the higher and lower ranks before venturing

into the field;" and he quotes a saying of Wu Tzu (chap. 1 ad

init.): "Without harmony in the State, no military expedition

can be undertaken; without harmony in the army, no battle array

can be formed." In an historical romance Sun Tzu is represented

as saying to Wu Yuan: "As a general rule, those who are waging

war should get rid of all the domestic troubles before proceeding

to attack the external foe."]

3. After that, comes tactical maneuvering, than which there

is nothing more difficult.

[I have departed slightly from the traditional

interpretation of Ts`ao Kung, who says: "From the time of

receiving the sovereign's instructions until our encampment over

against the enemy, the tactics to be pursued are most difficult."

It seems to me that the tactics or maneuvers can hardly be said

to begin until the army has sallied forth and encamped, and

Ch`ien Hao's note gives color to this view: "For levying,

concentrating, harmonizing and entrenching an army, there are

plenty of old rules which will serve. The real difficulty comes

when we engage in tactical operations." Tu Yu also observes that

"the great difficulty is to be beforehand with the enemy in

seizing favorable position."]

The difficulty of tactical maneuvering consists in turning the

devious into the direct, and misfortune into gain.

[This sentence contains one of those highly condensed and

somewhat enigmatical expressions of which Sun Tzu is so fond.

This is how it is explained by Ts`ao Kung: "Make it appear that

you are a long way off, then cover the distance rapidly and

arrive on the scene before your opponent." Tu Mu says:

"Hoodwink the enemy, so that he may be remiss and leisurely while

you are dashing along with utmost speed." Ho Shih gives a

slightly different turn: "Although you may have difficult ground

to traverse and natural obstacles to encounter this is a drawback

which can be turned into actual advantage by celerity of

movement." Signal examples of this saying are afforded by the

two famous passages across the Alps--that of Hannibal, which laid

Italy at his mercy, and that of Napoleon two thousand years

later, which resulted in the great victory of Marengo.]

4. Thus, to take a long and circuitous route, after

enticing the enemy out of the way, and though starting after him,

to contrive to reach the goal before him, shows knowledge of the

artifice of DEVIATION.

[Tu Mu cites the famous march of Chao She in 270 B.C. to

relieve the town of O-yu, which was closely invested by a Ch`in

army. The King of Chao first consulted Lien P`o on the

advisability of attempting a relief, but the latter thought the

distance too great, and the intervening country too rugged and

difficult. His Majesty then turned to Chao She, who fully

admitted the hazardous nature of the march, but finally said:

"We shall be like two rats fighting in a whole--and the pluckier

one will win!" So he left the capital with his army, but had

only gone a distance of 30 LI when he stopped and began

throwing up entrenchments. For 28 days he continued

strengthening his fortifications, and took care that spies should

carry the intelligence to the enemy. The Ch`in general was

overjoyed, and attributed his adversary's tardiness to the fact

that the beleaguered city was in the Han State, and thus not

actually part of Chao territory. But the spies had no sooner

departed than Chao She began a forced march lasting for two days

and one night, and arrive on the scene of action with such

astonishing rapidity that he was able to occupy a commanding

position on the "North hill" before the enemy had got wind of his

movements. A crushing defeat followed for the Ch`in forces, who

were obliged to raise the siege of O-yu in all haste and retreat

across the border.]

5. Maneuvering with an army is advantageous; with an

undisciplined multitude, most dangerous.

[I adopt the reading of the T`UNG TIEN, Cheng Yu-hsien and

the T`U SHU, since they appear to apply the exact nuance required

in order to make sense. The commentators using the standard text

take this line to mean that maneuvers may be profitable, or they

may be dangerous: it all depends on the ability of the general.]

6. If you set a fully equipped army in march in order to

snatch an advantage, the chances are that you will be too late.

On the other hand, to detach a flying column for the purpose

involves the sacrifice of its baggage and stores.

[Some of the Chinese text is unintelligible to the Chinese

commentators, who paraphrase the sentence. I submit my own

rendering without much enthusiasm, being convinced that there is

some deep-seated corruption in the text. On the whole, it is

clear that Sun Tzu does not approve of a lengthy march being

undertaken without supplies. Cf. infra, ss. 11.]

7. Thus, if you order your men to roll up their buff-coats,

and make forced marches without halting day or night, covering

double the usual distance at a stretch,

[The ordinary day's march, according to Tu Mu, was 30 LI;

but on one occasion, when pursuing Liu Pei, Ts`ao Ts`ao is said

to have covered the incredible distance of 300 \_li\_ within

twenty-four hours.]

doing a hundred LI in order to wrest an advantage, the leaders of

all your three divisions will fall into the hands of the enemy.

8. The stronger men will be in front, the jaded ones will

fall behind, and on this plan only one-tenth of your army will

reach its destination.

[The moral is, as Ts`ao Kung and others point out: Don't

march a hundred LI to gain a tactical advantage, either with or

without impedimenta. Maneuvers of this description should be

confined to short distances. Stonewall Jackson said: "The

hardships of forced marches are often more painful than the

dangers of battle." He did not often call upon his troops for

extraordinary exertions. It was only when he intended a

surprise, or when a rapid retreat was imperative, that he

sacrificed everything for speed. [1] ]

9. If you march fifty LI in order to outmaneuver the enemy,

you will lose the leader of your first division, and only half

your force will reach the goal.

[Literally, "the leader of the first division will be

TORN AWAY."]

10. If you march thirty LI with the same object, two-thirds

of your army will arrive.

[In the T`UNG TIEN is added: "From this we may know the

difficulty of maneuvering."]

11. We may take it then that an army without its baggage-

train is lost; without provisions it is lost; without bases of

supply it is lost.

[I think Sun Tzu meant "stores accumulated in depots." But

Tu Yu says "fodder and the like," Chang Yu says "Goods in

general," and Wang Hsi says "fuel, salt, foodstuffs, etc."]

12. We cannot enter into alliances until we are acquainted

with the designs of our neighbors.

13. We are not fit to lead an army on the march unless we

are familiar with the face of the country--its mountains and

forests, its pitfalls and precipices, its marshes and swamps.

14. We shall be unable to turn natural advantage to account

unless we make use of local guides.

[ss. 12-14 are repeated in chap. XI. ss. 52.]

15. In war, practice dissimulation, and you will succeed.

[In the tactics of Turenne, deception of the enemy,

especially as to the numerical strength of his troops, took a

very prominent position. [2] ]

16. Whether to concentrate or to divide your troops, must

be decided by circumstances.

17. Let your rapidity be that of the wind,

[The simile is doubly appropriate, because the wind is not

only swift but, as Mei Yao-ch`en points out, "invisible and

leaves no tracks."]

your compactness that of the forest.

[Meng Shih comes nearer to the mark in his note: "When

slowly marching, order and ranks must be preserved"--so as to

guard against surprise attacks. But natural forest do not grow

in rows, whereas they do generally possess the quality of density

or compactness.]

18. In raiding and plundering be like fire,

[Cf. SHIH CHING, IV. 3. iv. 6: "Fierce as a blazing fire

which no man can check."]

is immovability like a mountain.

[That is, when holding a position from which the enemy is

trying to dislodge you, or perhaps, as Tu Yu says, when he is

trying to entice you into a trap.]

19. Let your plans be dark and impenetrable as night, and

when you move, fall like a thunderbolt.

[Tu Yu quotes a saying of T`ai Kung which has passed into a

proverb: "You cannot shut your ears to the thunder or your eyes

to the lighting--so rapid are they." Likewise, an attack should

be made so quickly that it cannot be parried.]

20. When you plunder a countryside, let the spoil be

divided amongst your men;

[Sun Tzu wishes to lessen the abuses of indiscriminate

plundering by insisting that all booty shall be thrown into a

common stock, which may afterwards be fairly divided amongst

all.]

when you capture new territory, cut it up into allotments for the

benefit of the soldiery.

[Ch`en Hao says "quarter your soldiers on the land, and let

them sow and plant it." It is by acting on this principle, and

harvesting the lands they invaded, that the Chinese have

succeeded in carrying out some of their most memorable and

triumphant expeditions, such as that of Pan Ch`ao who penetrated

to the Caspian, and in more recent years, those of Fu-k`ang-an

and Tso Tsung-t`ang.]

21. Ponder and deliberate before you make a move.

[Chang Yu quotes Wei Liao Tzu as saying that we must not

break camp until we have gained the resisting power of the enemy

and the cleverness of the opposing general. Cf. the "seven

comparisons" in I. ss. 13.]

22. He will conquer who has learnt the artifice of

deviation.

[See supra, SS. 3, 4.]

Such is the art of maneuvering.

[With these words, the chapter would naturally come to an

end. But there now follows a long appendix in the shape of an

extract from an earlier book on War, now lost, but apparently

extant at the time when Sun Tzu wrote. The style of this

fragment is not noticeable different from that of Sun Tzu

himself, but no commentator raises a doubt as to its

genuineness.]

23. The Book of Army Management says:

[It is perhaps significant that none of the earlier

commentators give us any information about this work. Mei Yao-

Ch`en calls it "an ancient military classic," and Wang Hsi, "an

old book on war." Considering the enormous amount of fighting

that had gone on for centuries before Sun Tzu's time between the

various kingdoms and principalities of China, it is not in itself

improbable that a collection of military maxims should have been

made and written down at some earlier period.]

On the field of battle,

[Implied, though not actually in the Chinese.]

the spoken word does not carry far enough: hence the institution

of gongs and drums. Nor can ordinary objects be seen clearly

enough: hence the institution of banners and flags.

24. Gongs and drums, banners and flags, are means whereby

the ears and eyes of the host may be focused on one particular

point.

[Chang Yu says: "If sight and hearing converge

simultaneously on the same object, the evolutions of as many as a

million soldiers will be like those of a single man."!]

25. The host thus forming a single united body, is it

impossible either for the brave to advance alone, or for the

cowardly to retreat alone.

[Chuang Yu quotes a saying: "Equally guilty are those who

advance against orders and those who retreat against orders." Tu

Mu tells a story in this connection of Wu Ch`i, when he was

fighting against the Ch`in State. Before the battle had begun,

one of his soldiers, a man of matchless daring, sallied forth by

himself, captured two heads from the enemy, and returned to camp.

Wu Ch`i had the man instantly executed, whereupon an officer

ventured to remonstrate, saying: "This man was a good soldier,

and ought not to have been beheaded." Wu Ch`i replied: "I fully

believe he was a good soldier, but I had him beheaded because he

acted without orders."]

This is the art of handling large masses of men.

26. In night-fighting, then, make much use of signal-fires

and drums, and in fighting by day, of flags and banners, as a

means of influencing the ears and eyes of your army.

[Ch`en Hao alludes to Li Kuang-pi's night ride to Ho-yang at

the head of 500 mounted men; they made such an imposing display

with torches, that though the rebel leader Shih Ssu-ming had a

large army, he did not dare to dispute their passage.]

27. A whole army may be robbed of its spirit;

["In war," says Chang Yu, "if a spirit of anger can be made

to pervade all ranks of an army at one and the same time, its

onset will be irresistible. Now the spirit of the enemy's

soldiers will be keenest when they have newly arrived on the

scene, and it is therefore our cue not to fight at once, but to

wait until their ardor and enthusiasm have worn off, and then

strike. It is in this way that they may be robbed of their keen

spirit." Li Ch`uan and others tell an anecdote (to be found in

the TSO CHUAN, year 10, ss. 1) of Ts`ao Kuei, a protege of Duke

Chuang of Lu. The latter State was attacked by Ch`i, and the

duke was about to join battle at Ch`ang-cho, after the first roll

of the enemy's drums, when Ts`ao said: "Not just yet." Only

after their drums had beaten for the third time, did he give the

word for attack. Then they fought, and the men of Ch`i were

utterly defeated. Questioned afterwards by the Duke as to the

meaning of his delay, Ts`ao Kuei replied: "In battle, a

courageous spirit is everything. Now the first roll of the drum

tends to create this spirit, but with the second it is already on

the wane, and after the third it is gone altogether. I attacked

when their spirit was gone and ours was at its height. Hence our

victory." Wu Tzu (chap. 4) puts "spirit" first among the "four

important influences" in war, and continues: "The value of a

whole army--a mighty host of a million men--is dependent on one

man alone: such is the influence of spirit!"]

a commander-in-chief may be robbed of his presence of mind.

[Chang Yu says: "Presence of mind is the general's most

important asset. It is the quality which enables him to

discipline disorder and to inspire courage into the panic-

stricken." The great general Li Ching (A.D. 571-649) has a

saying: "Attacking does not merely consist in assaulting walled

cities or striking at an army in battle array; it must include

the art of assailing the enemy's mental equilibrium."]

28. Now a soldier's spirit is keenest in the morning;

[Always provided, I suppose, that he has had breakfast. At

the battle of the Trebia, the Romans were foolishly allowed to

fight fasting, whereas Hannibal's men had breakfasted at

their leisure. See Livy, XXI, liv. 8, lv. 1 and 8.]

by noonday it has begun to flag; and in the evening, his mind is

bent only on returning to camp.

29. A clever general, therefore, avoids an army when its

spirit is keen, but attacks it when it is sluggish and inclined

to return. This is the art of studying moods.

30. Disciplined and calm, to await the appearance of

disorder and hubbub amongst the enemy:--this is the art of

retaining self-possession.

31. To be near the goal while the enemy is still far from

it, to wait at ease while the enemy is toiling and struggling, to

be well-fed while the enemy is famished:--this is the art of

husbanding one's strength.

32. To refrain from intercepting an enemy whose banners are

in perfect order, to refrain from attacking an army drawn up in

calm and confident array:--this is the art of studying

circumstances.

33. It is a military axiom not to advance uphill against

the enemy, nor to oppose him when he comes downhill.

34. Do not pursue an enemy who simulates flight; do not

attack soldiers whose temper is keen.

35. Do not swallow bait offered by the enemy.

[Li Ch`uan and Tu Mu, with extraordinary inability to see a

metaphor, take these words quite literally of food and drink that

have been poisoned by the enemy. Ch`en Hao and Chang Yu

carefully point out that the saying has a wider application.]

Do not interfere with an army that is returning home.

[The commentators explain this rather singular piece of

advice by saying that a man whose heart is set on returning home

will fight to the death against any attempt to bar his way, and

is therefore too dangerous an opponent to be tackled. Chang Yu

quotes the words of Han Hsin: "Invincible is the soldier who

hath his desire and returneth homewards." A marvelous tale is

told of Ts`ao Ts`ao's courage and resource in ch. 1 of the SAN

KUO CHI: In 198 A.D., he was besieging Chang Hsiu in Jang, when

Liu Piao sent reinforcements with a view to cutting off Ts`ao's

retreat. The latter was obliged to draw off his troops, only to

find himself hemmed in between two enemies, who were guarding

each outlet of a narrow pass in which he had engaged himself. In

this desperate plight Ts`ao waited until nightfall, when he bored

a tunnel into the mountain side and laid an ambush in it. As

soon as the whole army had passed by, the hidden troops fell on

his rear, while Ts`ao himself turned and met his pursuers in

front, so that they were thrown into confusion and annihilated.

Ts`ao Ts`ao said afterwards: "The brigands tried to check my

army in its retreat and brought me to battle in a desperate

position: hence I knew how to overcome them."]

36. When you surround an army, leave an outlet free.

[This does not mean that the enemy is to be allowed to

escape. The object, as Tu Mu puts it, is "to make him believe

that there is a road to safety, and thus prevent his fighting

with the courage of despair." Tu Mu adds pleasantly: "After

that, you may crush him."]

Do not press a desperate foe too hard.

[Ch`en Hao quotes the saying: "Birds and beasts when

brought to bay will use their claws and teeth." Chang Yu says:

"If your adversary has burned his boats and destroyed his

cooking-pots, and is ready to stake all on the issue of a battle,

he must not be pushed to extremities." Ho Shih illustrates the

meaning by a story taken from the life of Yen-ch`ing. That

general, together with his colleague Tu Chung-wei was surrounded

by a vastly superior army of Khitans in the year 945 A.D. The

country was bare and desert-like, and the little Chinese force

was soon in dire straits for want of water. The wells they bored

ran dry, and the men were reduced to squeezing lumps of mud and

sucking out the moisture. Their ranks thinned rapidly, until at

last Fu Yen-ch`ing exclaimed: "We are desperate men. Far better

to die for our country than to go with fettered hands into

captivity!" A strong gale happened to be blowing from the

northeast and darkening the air with dense clouds of sandy dust.

To Chung-wei was for waiting until this had abated before

deciding on a final attack; but luckily another officer, Li Shou-

cheng by name, was quicker to see an opportunity, and said:

"They are many and we are few, but in the midst of this sandstorm

our numbers will not be discernible; victory will go to the

strenuous fighter, and the wind will be our best ally."

Accordingly, Fu Yen-ch`ing made a sudden and wholly unexpected

onslaught with his cavalry, routed the barbarians and succeeded

in breaking through to safety.]

37. Such is the art of warfare.

[1] See Col. Henderson, op. cit. vol. I. p. 426.

[2] For a number of maxims on this head, see "Marshal Turenne"

(Longmans, 1907), p. 29.

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VIII. VARIATION IN TACTICS

[The heading means literally "The Nine Variations," but as

Sun Tzu does not appear to enumerate these, and as, indeed, he

has already told us (V SS. 6-11) that such deflections from the

ordinary course are practically innumerable, we have little

option but to follow Wang Hsi, who says that "Nine" stands for an

indefinitely large number. "All it means is that in warfare we

ought to very our tactics to the utmost degree.... I do not know

what Ts`ao Kung makes these Nine Variations out to be, but it has

been suggested that they are connected with the Nine Situations"

- of chapt. XI. This is the view adopted by Chang Yu. The only

other alternative is to suppose that something has been lost--a

supposition to which the unusual shortness of the chapter lends

some weight.]

1. Sun Tzu said: In war, the general receives his

commands from the sovereign, collects his army and concentrates

his forces.

[Repeated from VII. ss. 1, where it is certainly more in

place. It may have been interpolated here merely in order to

supply a beginning to the chapter.]

2. When in difficult country, do not encamp. In country

where high roads intersect, join hands with your allies. Do not

linger in dangerously isolated positions.

[The last situation is not one of the Nine Situations as

given in the beginning of chap. XI, but occurs later on (ibid.

ss. 43. q.v.). Chang Yu defines this situation as being situated

across the frontier, in hostile territory. Li Ch`uan says it is

"country in which there are no springs or wells, flocks or herds,

vegetables or firewood;" Chia Lin, "one of gorges, chasms and

precipices, without a road by which to advance."]

In hemmed-in situations, you must resort to stratagem. In

desperate position, you must fight.

3. There are roads which must not be followed,

["Especially those leading through narrow defiles," says Li

Ch`uan, "where an ambush is to be feared."]

armies which must be not attacked,

[More correctly, perhaps, "there are times when an army must

not be attacked." Ch`en Hao says: "When you see your way to

obtain a rival advantage, but are powerless to inflict a real

defeat, refrain from attacking, for fear of overtaxing your men's

strength."]

towns which must not be besieged,

[Cf. III. ss. 4 Ts`ao Kung gives an interesting

illustration from his own experience. When invading the

territory of Hsu-chou, he ignored the city of Hua-pi, which lay

directly in his path, and pressed on into the heart of the

country. This excellent strategy was rewarded by the subsequent

capture of no fewer than fourteen important district cities.

Chang Yu says: "No town should be attacked which, if taken,

cannot be held, or if left alone, will not cause any trouble."

Hsun Ying, when urged to attack Pi-yang, replied: "The city is

small and well-fortified; even if I succeed intaking it, it will

be no great feat of arms; whereas if I fail, I shall make myself

a laughing-stock." In the seventeenth century, sieges still

formed a large proportion of war. It was Turenne who directed

attention to the importance of marches, countermarches and

maneuvers. He said: "It is a great mistake to waste men in

taking a town when the same expenditure of soldiers will gain a

province." [1] ]

positions which must not be contested, commands of the sovereign

which must not be obeyed.

[This is a hard saying for the Chinese, with their reverence

for authority, and Wei Liao Tzu (quoted by Tu Mu) is moved to

exclaim: "Weapons are baleful instruments, strife is

antagonistic to virtue, a military commander is the negation of

civil order!" The unpalatable fact remains, however, that even

Imperial wishes must be subordinated to military necessity.]

4. The general who thoroughly understands the advantages

that accompany variation of tactics knows how to handle his

troops.

5. The general who does not understand these, may be well

acquainted with the configuration of the country, yet he will not

be able to turn his knowledge to practical account.

[Literally, "get the advantage of the ground," which means

not only securing good positions, but availing oneself of natural

advantages in every possible way. Chang Yu says: "Every kind of

ground is characterized by certain natural features, and also

gives scope for a certain variability of plan. How it is

possible to turn these natural features to account unless

topographical knowledge is supplemented by versatility of mind?"]

6. So, the student of war who is unversed in the art of war

of varying his plans, even though he be acquainted with the Five

Advantages, will fail to make the best use of his men.

[Chia Lin tells us that these imply five obvious and

generally advantageous lines of action, namely: "if a certain

road is short, it must be followed; if an army is isolated, it

must be attacked; if a town is in a parlous condition, it must be

besieged; if a position can be stormed, it must be attempted; and

if consistent with military operations, the ruler's commands must

be obeyed." But there are circumstances which sometimes forbid a

general to use these advantages. For instance, "a certain road

may be the shortest way for him, but if he knows that it abounds

in natural obstacles, or that the enemy has laid an ambush on it,

he will not follow that road. A hostile force may be open to

attack, but if he knows that it is hard-pressed and likely to

fight with desperation, he will refrain from striking," and so

on.]

7. Hence in the wise leader's plans, considerations of

advantage and of disadvantage will be blended together.

["Whether in an advantageous position or a disadvantageous

one," says Ts`ao Kung, "the opposite state should be always

present to your mind."]

8. If our expectation of advantage be tempered in this way,

we may succeed in accomplishing the essential part of our

schemes.

[Tu Mu says: "If we wish to wrest an advantage from the

enemy, we must not fix our minds on that alone, but allow for the

possibility of the enemy also doing some harm to us, and let this

enter as a factor into our calculations."]

9. If, on the other hand, in the midst of difficulties we

are always ready to seize an advantage, we may extricate

ourselves from misfortune.

[Tu Mu says: "If I wish to extricate myself from a

dangerous position, I must consider not only the enemy's ability

to injure me, but also my own ability to gain an advantage over

the enemy. If in my counsels these two considerations are

properly blended, I shall succeed in liberating myself.... For

instance; if I am surrounded by the enemy and only think of

effecting an escape, the nervelessness of my policy will incite

my adversary to pursue and crush me; it would be far better to

encourage my men to deliver a bold counter-attack, and use the

advantage thus gained to free myself from the enemy's toils."

See the story of Ts`ao Ts`ao, VII. ss. 35, note.]

10. Reduce the hostile chiefs by inflicting damage on them;

[Chia Lin enumerates several ways of inflicting this injury,

some of which would only occur to the Oriental mind:--"Entice

away the enemy's best and wisest men, so that he may be left

without counselors. Introduce traitors into his country, that

the government policy may be rendered futile. Foment intrigue

and deceit, and thus sow dissension between the ruler and his

ministers. By means of every artful contrivance, cause

deterioration amongst his men and waste of his treasure. Corrupt

his morals by insidious gifts leading him into excess. Disturb

and unsettle his mind by presenting him with lovely women."

Chang Yu (after Wang Hsi) makes a different interpretation of Sun

Tzu here: "Get the enemy into a position where he must suffer

injury, and he will submit of his own accord."]

and make trouble for them,

[Tu Mu, in this phrase, in his interpretation indicates that

trouble should be make for the enemy affecting their

"possessions," or, as we might say, "assets," which he considers

to be "a large army, a rich exchequer, harmony amongst the

soldiers, punctual fulfillment of commands." These give us a

whip-hand over the enemy.]

and keep them constantly engaged;

[Literally, "make servants of them." Tu Yu says "prevent

the from having any rest."]

hold out specious allurements, and make them rush to any given

point.

[Meng Shih's note contains an excellent example of the

idiomatic use of: "cause them to forget PIEN (the reasons for

acting otherwise than on their first impulse), and hasten in our

direction."]

11. The art of war teaches us to rely not on the likelihood

of the enemy's not coming, but on our own readiness to receive

him; not on the chance of his not attacking, but rather on the

fact that we have made our position unassailable.

12. There are five dangerous faults which may affect a

general: (1) Recklessness, which leads to destruction;

["Bravery without forethought," as Ts`ao Kung analyzes it,

which causes a man to fight blindly and desperately like a mad

bull. Such an opponent, says Chang Yu, "must not be encountered

with brute force, but may be lured into an ambush and slain."

Cf. Wu Tzu, chap. IV. ad init.: "In estimating the character of

a general, men are wont to pay exclusive attention to his

courage, forgetting that courage is only one out of many

qualities which a general should possess. The merely brave man

is prone to fight recklessly; and he who fights recklessly,

without any perception of what is expedient, must be condemned."

Ssu-ma Fa, too, make the incisive remark: "Simply going to one's

death does not bring about victory."]

(2) cowardice, which leads to capture;

[Ts`ao Kung defines the Chinese word translated here as

"cowardice" as being of the man "whom timidity prevents from

advancing to seize an advantage," and Wang Hsi adds "who is quick

to flee at the sight of danger." Meng Shih gives the closer

paraphrase "he who is bent on returning alive," this is, the man

who will never take a risk. But, as Sun Tzu knew, nothing is to

be achieved in war unless you are willing to take risks. T`ai

Kung said: "He who lets an advantage slip will subsequently

bring upon himself real disaster." In 404 A.D., Liu Yu pursued

the rebel Huan Hsuan up the Yangtsze and fought a naval battle

with him at the island of Ch`eng-hung. The loyal troops numbered

only a few thousands, while their opponents were in great force.

But Huan Hsuan, fearing the fate which was in store for him

should be be overcome, had a light boat made fast to the side of

his war-junk, so that he might escape, if necessary, at a

moment's notice. The natural result was that the fighting spirit

of his soldiers was utterly quenched, and when the loyalists made

an attack from windward with fireships, all striving with the

utmost ardor to be first in the fray, Huan Hsuan's forces were

routed, had to burn all their baggage and fled for two days and

nights without stopping. Chang Yu tells a somewhat similar story

of Chao Ying-ch`i, a general of the Chin State who during a

battle with the army of Ch`u in 597 B.C. had a boat kept in

readiness for him on the river, wishing in case of defeat to be

the first to get across.]

(3) a hasty temper, which can be provoked by insults;

[Tu Mu tells us that Yao Hsing, when opposed in 357 A.D. by

Huang Mei, Teng Ch`iang and others shut himself up behind his

walls and refused to fight. Teng Ch`iang said: "Our adversary

is of a choleric temper and easily provoked; let us make constant

sallies and break down his walls, then he will grow angry and

come out. Once we can bring his force to battle, it is doomed to

be our prey." This plan was acted upon, Yao Hsiang came out to

fight, was lured as far as San-yuan by the enemy's pretended

flight, and finally attacked and slain.]

(4) a delicacy of honor which is sensitive to shame;

[This need not be taken to mean that a sense of honor is

really a defect in a general. What Sun Tzu condemns is rather an

exaggerated sensitiveness to slanderous reports, the thin-skinned

man who is stung by opprobrium, however undeserved. Mei Yao-

ch`en truly observes, though somewhat paradoxically: "The seek

after glory should be careless of public opinion."]

(5) over-solicitude for his men, which exposes him to worry

and trouble.

[Here again, Sun Tzu does not mean that the general is to be

careless of the welfare of his troops. All he wishes to

emphasize is the danger of sacrificing any important military

advantage to the immediate comfort of his men. This is a

shortsighted policy, because in the long run the troops will

suffer more from the defeat, or, at best, the prolongation of the

war, which will be the consequence. A mistaken feeling of pity

will often induce a general to relieve a beleaguered city, or to

reinforce a hard-pressed detachment, contrary to his military

instincts. It is now generally admitted that our repeated

efforts to relieve Ladysmith in the South African War were so

many strategical blunders which defeated their own purpose. And

in the end, relief came through the very man who started out with

the distinct resolve no longer to subordinate the interests of

the whole to sentiment in favor of a part. An old soldier of one

of our generals who failed most conspicuously in this war, tried

once, I remember, to defend him to me on the ground that he was

always "so good to his men." By this plea, had he but known it,

he was only condemning him out of Sun Tzu's mouth.]

13. These are the five besetting sins of a general, ruinous

to the conduct of war.

14. When an army is overthrown and its leader slain, the

cause will surely be found among these five dangerous faults.

Let them be a subject of meditation.

[1] "Marshal Turenne," p. 50.

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IX. THE ARMY ON THE MARCH

[The contents of this interesting chapter are better

indicated in ss. 1 than by this heading.]

1. Sun Tzu said: We come now to the question of encamping

the army, and observing signs of the enemy. Pass quickly over

mountains, and keep in the neighborhood of valleys.

[The idea is, not to linger among barren uplands, but to

keep close to supplies of water and grass. Cf. Wu Tzu, ch. 3:

"Abide not in natural ovens," i.e. "the openings of valleys."

Chang Yu tells the following anecdote: Wu-tu Ch`iang was a

robber captain in the time of the Later Han, and Ma Yuan was sent

to exterminate his gang. Ch`iang having found a refuge in the

hills, Ma Yuan made no attempt to force a battle, but seized all

the favorable positions commanding supplies of water and forage.

Ch`iang was soon in such a desperate plight for want of

provisions that he was forced to make a total surrender. He did

not know the advantage of keeping in the neighborhood of

valleys."]

2. Camp in high places,

[Not on high hills, but on knolls or hillocks elevated above

the surrounding country.]

facing the sun.

[Tu Mu takes this to mean "facing south," and Ch`en Hao

"facing east." Cf. infra, SS. 11, 13.

Do not climb heights in order to fight. So much for mountain

warfare.

3. After crossing a river, you should get far away from it.

["In order to tempt the enemy to cross after you," according

to Ts`ao Kung, and also, says Chang Yu, "in order not to be

impeded in your evolutions." The T`UNG TIEN reads, "If THE ENEMY

crosses a river," etc. But in view of the next sentence, this is

almost certainly an interpolation.]

4. When an invading force crosses a river in its onward

march, do not advance to meet it in mid-stream. It will be best

to let half the army get across, and then deliver your attack.

[Li Ch`uan alludes to the great victory won by Han Hsin over

Lung Chu at the Wei River. Turning to the CH`IEN HAN SHU, ch.

34, fol. 6 verso, we find the battle described as follows: "The

two armies were drawn up on opposite sides of the river. In the

night, Han Hsin ordered his men to take some ten thousand sacks

filled with sand and construct a dam higher up. Then, leading

half his army across, he attacked Lung Chu; but after a time,

pretending to have failed in his attempt, he hastily withdrew to

the other bank. Lung Chu was much elated by this unlooked-for

success, and exclaiming: "I felt sure that Han Hsin was really a

coward!" he pursued him and began crossing the river in his turn.

Han Hsin now sent a party to cut open the sandbags, thus

releasing a great volume of water, which swept down and prevented

the greater portion of Lung Chu's army from getting across. He

then turned upon the force which had been cut off, and

annihilated it, Lung Chu himself being amongst the slain. The

rest of the army, on the further bank, also scattered and fled in

all directions.]

5. If you are anxious to fight, you should not go to meet

the invader near a river which he has to cross.

[For fear of preventing his crossing.]

6. Moor your craft higher up than the enemy, and facing the

sun.

[See supra, ss. 2. The repetition of these words in

connection with water is very awkward. Chang Yu has the note:

"Said either of troops marshaled on the river-bank, or of boats

anchored in the stream itself; in either case it is essential to

be higher than the enemy and facing the sun." The other

commentators are not at all explicit.]

Do not move up-stream to meet the enemy.

[Tu Mu says: "As water flows downwards, we must not pitch

our camp on the lower reaches of a river, for fear the enemy

should open the sluices and sweep us away in a flood. Chu-ko Wu-

hou has remarked that 'in river warfare we must not advance

against the stream,' which is as much as to say that our fleet

must not be anchored below that of the enemy, for then they would

be able to take advantage of the current and make short work of

us." There is also the danger, noted by other commentators, that

the enemy may throw poison on the water to be carried down to

us.]

So much for river warfare.

7. In crossing salt-marshes, your sole concern should be to

get over them quickly, without any delay.

[Because of the lack of fresh water, the poor quality of the

herbage, and last but not least, because they are low, flat, and

exposed to attack.]

8. If forced to fight in a salt-marsh, you should have

water and grass near you, and get your back to a clump of trees.

[Li Ch`uan remarks that the ground is less likely to be

treacherous where there are trees, while Tu Mu says that they

will serve to protect the rear.]

So much for operations in salt-marches.

9. In dry, level country, take up an easily accessible

position with rising ground to your right and on your rear,

[Tu Mu quotes T`ai Kung as saying: "An army should have a

stream or a marsh on its left, and a hill or tumulus on its

right."]

so that the danger may be in front, and safety lie behind. So

much for campaigning in flat country.

10. These are the four useful branches of military

knowledge

[Those, namely, concerned with (1) mountains, (2) rivers,

(3) marshes, and (4) plains. Compare Napoleon's "Military

Maxims," no. 1.]

which enabled the Yellow Emperor to vanquish four several

sovereigns.

[Regarding the "Yellow Emperor": Mei Yao-ch`en asks, with

some plausibility, whether there is an error in the text as

nothing is known of Huang Ti having conquered four other

Emperors. The SHIH CHI (ch. 1 ad init.) speaks only of his

victories over Yen Ti and Ch`ih Yu. In the LIU T`AO it is

mentioned that he "fought seventy battles and pacified the

Empire." Ts`ao Kung's explanation is, that the Yellow Emperor

was the first to institute the feudal system of vassals princes,

each of whom (to the number of four) originally bore the title of

Emperor. Li Ch`uan tells us that the art of war originated under

Huang Ti, who received it from his Minister Feng Hou.]

11. All armies prefer high ground to low.

["High Ground," says Mei Yao-ch`en, "is not only more

agreement and salubrious, but more convenient from a military

point of view; low ground is not only damp and unhealthy, but

also disadvantageous for fighting."]

and sunny places to dark.

12. If you are careful of your men,

[Ts`ao Kung says: "Make for fresh water and pasture, where

you can turn out your animals to graze."]

and camp on hard ground, the army will be free from disease of

every kind,

[Chang Yu says: "The dryness of the climate will prevent

the outbreak of illness."]

and this will spell victory.

13. When you come to a hill or a bank, occupy the sunny

side, with the slope on your right rear. Thus you will at once

act for the benefit of your soldiers and utilize the natural

advantages of the ground.

14. When, in consequence of heavy rains up-country, a river

which you wish to ford is swollen and flecked with foam, you must

wait until it subsides.

15. Country in which there are precipitous cliffs with

torrents running between, deep natural hollows,

[The latter defined as "places enclosed on every side by

steep banks, with pools of water at the bottom.]

confined places,

[Defined as "natural pens or prisons" or "places surrounded

by precipices on three sides--easy to get into, but hard to get

out of."]

tangled thickets,

[Defined as "places covered with such dense undergrowth that

spears cannot be used."]

quagmires

[Defined as "low-lying places, so heavy with mud as to be

impassable for chariots and horsemen."]

and crevasses,

[Defined by Mei Yao-ch`en as "a narrow difficult way between

beetling cliffs." Tu Mu's note is "ground covered with trees and

rocks, and intersected by numerous ravines and pitfalls." This

is very vague, but Chia Lin explains it clearly enough as a

defile or narrow pass, and Chang Yu takes much the same view. On

the whole, the weight of the commentators certainly inclines to

the rendering "defile." But the ordinary meaning of the Chinese

in one place is "a crack or fissure" and the fact that the

meaning of the Chinese elsewhere in the sentence indicates

something in the nature of a defile, make me think that Sun Tzu

is here speaking of crevasses.]

should be left with all possible speed and not approached.

16. While we keep away from such places, we should get the

enemy to approach them; while we face them, we should let the

enemy have them on his rear.

17. If in the neighborhood of your camp there should be any

hilly country, ponds surrounded by aquatic grass, hollow basins

filled with reeds, or woods with thick undergrowth, they must be

carefully routed out and searched; for these are places where men

in ambush or insidious spies are likely to be lurking.

[Chang Yu has the note: "We must also be on our guard

against traitors who may lie in close covert, secretly spying out

our weaknesses and overhearing our instructions."]

18. When the enemy is close at hand and remains quiet, he

is relying on the natural strength of his position.

[Here begin Sun Tzu's remarks on the reading of signs, much

of which is so good that it could almost be included in a modern

manual like Gen. Baden-Powell's "Aids to Scouting."]

19. When he keeps aloof and tries to provoke a battle, he

is anxious for the other side to advance.

[Probably because we are in a strong position from which he

wishes to dislodge us. "If he came close up to us, says Tu Mu,

"and tried to force a battle, he would seem to despise us, and

there would be less probability of our responding to the

challenge."]

20. If his place of encampment is easy of access, he is

tendering a bait.

21. Movement amongst the trees of a forest shows that the

enemy is advancing.

[Ts`ao Kung explains this as "felling trees to clear a

passage," and Chang Yu says: "Every man sends out scouts to

climb high places and observe the enemy. If a scout sees that

the trees of a forest are moving and shaking, he may know that

they are being cut down to clear a passage for the enemy's

march."]

The appearance of a number of screens in the midst of thick grass

means that the enemy wants to make us suspicious.

[Tu Yu's explanation, borrowed from Ts`ao Kung's, is as

follows: "The presence of a number of screens or sheds in the

midst of thick vegetation is a sure sign that the enemy has fled

and, fearing pursuit, has constructed these hiding-places in

order to make us suspect an ambush." It appears that these

"screens" were hastily knotted together out of any long grass

which the retreating enemy happened to come across.]

22. The rising of birds in their flight is the sign of an

ambuscade.

[Chang Yu's explanation is doubtless right: "When birds

that are flying along in a straight line suddenly shoot upwards,

it means that soldiers are in ambush at the spot beneath."]

Startled beasts indicate that a sudden attack is coming.

23. When there is dust rising in a high column, it is the

sign of chariots advancing; when the dust is low, but spread over

a wide area, it betokens the approach of infantry.

["High and sharp," or rising to a peak, is of course

somewhat exaggerated as applied to dust. The commentators

explain the phenomenon by saying that horses and chariots, being

heavier than men, raise more dust, and also follow one another in

the same wheel-track, whereas foot-soldiers would be marching in

ranks, many abreast. According to Chang Yu, "every army on the

march must have scouts some way in advance, who on sighting dust

raised by the enemy, will gallop back and report it to the

commander-in-chief." Cf. Gen. Baden-Powell: "As you move along,

say, in a hostile country, your eyes should be looking afar for

the enemy or any signs of him: figures, dust rising, birds

getting up, glitter of arms, etc." [1] ]

When it branches out in different directions, it shows that

parties have been sent to collect firewood. A few clouds of dust

moving to and fro signify that the army is encamping.

[Chang Yu says: "In apportioning the defenses for a

cantonment, light horse will be sent out to survey the position

and ascertain the weak and strong points all along its

circumference. Hence the small quantity of dust and its

motion."]

24. Humble words and increased preparations are signs that

the enemy is about to advance.

["As though they stood in great fear of us," says Tu Mu.

"Their object is to make us contemptuous and careless, after

which they will attack us." Chang Yu alludes to the story of

T`ien Tan of the Ch`i-mo against the Yen forces, led by Ch`i

Chieh. In ch. 82 of the SHIH CHI we read: "T`ien Tan openly

said: 'My only fear is that the Yen army may cut off the noses

of their Ch`i prisoners and place them in the front rank to fight

against us; that would be the undoing of our city.' The other

side being informed of this speech, at once acted on the

suggestion; but those within the city were enraged at seeing

their fellow-countrymen thus mutilated, and fearing only lest

they should fall into the enemy's hands, were nerved to defend

themselves more obstinately than ever. Once again T`ien Tan sent

back converted spies who reported these words to the enemy:

"What I dread most is that the men of Yen may dig up the

ancestral tombs outside the town, and by inflicting this

indignity on our forefathers cause us to become faint-hearted.'

Forthwith the besiegers dug up all the graves and burned the

corpses lying in them. And the inhabitants of Chi-mo, witnessing

the outrage from the city-walls, wept passionately and were all

impatient to go out and fight, their fury being increased

tenfold. T`ien Tan knew then that his soldiers were ready for

any enterprise. But instead of a sword, he himself too a

mattock in his hands, and ordered others to be distributed

amongst his best warriors, while the ranks were filled up with

their wives and concubines. He then served out all the remaining

rations and bade his men eat their fill. The regular soldiers

were told to keep out of sight, and the walls were manned with

the old and weaker men and with women. This done, envoys were

dispatched to the enemy's camp to arrange terms of surrender,

whereupon the Yen army began shouting for joy. T`ien Tan also

collected 20,000 ounces of silver from the people, and got the

wealthy citizens of Chi-mo to send it to the Yen general with the

prayer that, when the town capitulated, he would allow their

homes to be plundered or their women to be maltreated. Ch`i

Chieh, in high good humor, granted their prayer; but his army now

became increasingly slack and careless. Meanwhile, T`ien Tan got

together a thousand oxen, decked them with pieces of red silk,

painted their bodies, dragon-like, with colored stripes, and

fastened sharp blades on their horns and well-greased rushes on

their tails. When night came on, he lighted the ends of the

rushes, and drove the oxen through a number of holes which he had

pierced in the walls, backing them up with a force of 5000 picked

warriors. The animals, maddened with pain, dashed furiously

into the enemy's camp where they caused the utmost confusion and

dismay; for their tails acted as torches, showing up the hideous

pattern on their bodies, and the weapons on their horns killed or

wounded any with whom they came into contact. In the meantime,

the band of 5000 had crept up with gags in their mouths, and now

threw themselves on the enemy. At the same moment a frightful

din arose in the city itself, all those that remained behind

making as much noise as possible by banging drums and hammering

on bronze vessels, until heaven and earth were convulsed by the

uproar. Terror-stricken, the Yen army fled in disorder, hotly

pursued by the men of Ch`i, who succeeded in slaying their

general Ch`i Chien.... The result of the battle was the ultimate

recovery of some seventy cities which had belonged to the Ch`i

State."]

Violent language and driving forward as if to the attack are

signs that he will retreat.

25. When the light chariots come out first and take up a

position on the wings, it is a sign that the enemy is forming for

battle.

26. Peace proposals unaccompanied by a sworn covenant

indicate a plot.

[The reading here is uncertain. Li Ch`uan indicates "a

treaty confirmed by oaths and hostages." Wang Hsi and Chang Yu,

on the other hand, simply say "without reason," "on a frivolous

pretext."]

27. When there is much running about

[Every man hastening to his proper place under his own

regimental banner.]

and the soldiers fall into rank, it means that the critical

moment has come.

28. When some are seen advancing and some retreating, it is

a lure.

29. When the soldiers stand leaning on their spears, they

are faint from want of food.

30. If those who are sent to draw water begin by drinking

themselves, the army is suffering from thirst.

[As Tu Mu remarks: "One may know the condition of a whole

army from the behavior of a single man."]

31. If the enemy sees an advantage to be gained and makes

no effort to secure it, the soldiers are exhausted.

32. If birds gather on any spot, it is unoccupied.

[A useful fact to bear in mind when, for instance, as Ch`en

Hao says, the enemy has secretly abandoned his camp.]

Clamor by night betokens nervousness.

33. If there is disturbance in the camp, the general's

authority is weak. If the banners and flags are shifted about,

sedition is afoot. If the officers are angry, it means that the

men are weary.

[Tu Mu understands the sentence differently: "If all the

officers of an army are angry with their general, it means that

they are broken with fatigue" owing to the exertions which he has

demanded from them.]

34. When an army feeds its horses with grain and kills its

cattle for food,

[In the ordinary course of things, the men would be fed on

grain and the horses chiefly on grass.]

and when the men do not hang their cooking-pots over the camp-

fires, showing that they will not return to their tents, you may

know that they are determined to fight to the death.

[I may quote here the illustrative passage from the HOU HAN

SHU, ch. 71, given in abbreviated form by the P`EI WEN YUN FU:

"The rebel Wang Kuo of Liang was besieging the town of Ch`en-

ts`ang, and Huang-fu Sung, who was in supreme command, and Tung

Cho were sent out against him. The latter pressed for hasty

measures, but Sung turned a deaf ear to his counsel. At last the

rebels were utterly worn out, and began to throw down their

weapons of their own accord. Sung was not advancing to the

attack, but Cho said: 'It is a principle of war not to pursue

desperate men and not to press a retreating host.' Sung

answered: 'That does not apply here. What I am about to attack

is a jaded army, not a retreating host; with disciplined troops I

am falling on a disorganized multitude, not a band of desperate

men.' Thereupon he advances to the attack unsupported by his

colleague, and routed the enemy, Wang Kuo being slain."]

35. The sight of men whispering together in small knots or

speaking in subdued tones points to disaffection amongst the rank

and file.

36. Too frequent rewards signify that the enemy is at the

end of his resources;

[Because, when an army is hard pressed, as Tu Mu says, there

is always a fear of mutiny, and lavish rewards are given to keep

the men in good temper.]

too many punishments betray a condition of dire distress.

[Because in such case discipline becomes relaxed, and

unwonted severity is necessary to keep the men to their duty.]

37. To begin by bluster, but afterwards to take fright at

the enemy's numbers, shows a supreme lack of intelligence.

[I follow the interpretation of Ts`ao Kung, also adopted by

Li Ch`uan, Tu Mu, and Chang Yu. Another possible meaning set

forth by Tu Yu, Chia Lin, Mei Tao-ch`en and Wang Hsi, is: "The

general who is first tyrannical towards his men, and then in

terror lest they should mutiny, etc." This would connect the

sentence with what went before about rewards and punishments.]

38. When envoys are sent with compliments in their mouths,

it is a sign that the enemy wishes for a truce.

[Tu Mu says: "If the enemy open friendly relations be

sending hostages, it is a sign that they are anxious for an

armistice, either because their strength is exhausted or for some

other reason." But it hardly needs a Sun Tzu to draw such an

obvious inference.]

39. If the enemy's troops march up angrily and remain

facing ours for a long time without either joining battle or

taking themselves off again, the situation is one that demands

great vigilance and circumspection.

[Ts`ao Kung says a maneuver of this sort may be only a ruse

to gain time for an unexpected flank attack or the laying of an

ambush.]

40. If our troops are no more in number than the enemy,

that is amply sufficient; it only means that no direct attack can

be made.

[Literally, "no martial advance." That is to say, CHENG

tactics and frontal attacks must be eschewed, and stratagem

resorted to instead.]

What we can do is simply to concentrate all our available

strength, keep a close watch on the enemy, and obtain

reinforcements.

[This is an obscure sentence, and none of the commentators

succeed in squeezing very good sense out of it. I follow Li

Ch`uan, who appears to offer the simplest explanation: "Only the

side that gets more men will win." Fortunately we have Chang Yu

to expound its meaning to us in language which is lucidity

itself: "When the numbers are even, and no favorable opening

presents itself, although we may not be strong enough to deliver

a sustained attack, we can find additional recruits amongst our

sutlers and camp-followers, and then, concentrating our forces

and keeping a close watch on the enemy, contrive to snatch the

victory. But we must avoid borrowing foreign soldiers to help

us." He then quotes from Wei Liao Tzu, ch. 3: "The nominal

strength of mercenary troops may be 100,000, but their real value

will be not more than half that figure."]

41. He who exercises no forethought but makes light of his

opponents is sure to be captured by them.

[Ch`en Hao, quoting from the TSO CHUAN, says: "If bees and

scorpions carry poison, how much more will a hostile state! Even

a puny opponent, then, should not be treated with contempt."]

42. If soldiers are punished before they have grown

attached to you, they will not prove submissive; and, unless

submissive, then will be practically useless. If, when the

soldiers have become attached to you, punishments are not

enforced, they will still be unless.

43. Therefore soldiers must be treated in the first

instance with humanity, but kept under control by means of iron

discipline.

[Yen Tzu [B.C. 493] said of Ssu-ma Jang-chu: "His civil

virtues endeared him to the people; his martial prowess kept his

enemies in awe." Cf. Wu Tzu, ch. 4 init.: "The ideal commander

unites culture with a warlike temper; the profession of arms

requires a combination of hardness and tenderness."]

This is a certain road to victory.

44. If in training soldiers commands are habitually

enforced, the army will be well-disciplined; if not, its

discipline will be bad.

45. If a general shows confidence in his men but always

insists on his orders being obeyed,

[Tu Mu says: "A general ought in time of peace to show

kindly confidence in his men and also make his authority

respected, so that when they come to face the enemy, orders may

be executed and discipline maintained, because they all trust and

look up to him." What Sun Tzu has said in ss. 44, however, would

lead one rather to expect something like this: "If a general is

always confident that his orders will be carried out," etc."]

the gain will be mutual.

[Chang Yu says: "The general has confidence in the men

under his command, and the men are docile, having confidence in

him. Thus the gain is mutual" He quotes a pregnant sentence

from Wei Liao Tzu, ch. 4: "The art of giving orders is not to

try to rectify minor blunders and not to be swayed by petty

doubts." Vacillation and fussiness are the surest means of

sapping the confidence of an army.]

[1] "Aids to Scouting," p. 26.

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X. TERRAIN

[Only about a third of the chapter, comprising ss. ss. 1-13,

deals with "terrain," the subject being more fully treated in ch.

XI. The "six calamities" are discussed in SS. 14-20, and the

rest of the chapter is again a mere string of desultory remarks,

though not less interesting, perhaps, on that account.]

1. Sun Tzu said: We may distinguish six kinds of terrain,

to wit: (1) Accessible ground;

[Mei Yao-ch`en says: "plentifully provided with roads and

means of communications."]

(2) entangling ground;

[The same commentator says: "Net-like country, venturing

into which you become entangled."]

(3) temporizing ground;

[Ground which allows you to "stave off" or "delay."]

(4) narrow passes; (5) precipitous heights; (6) positions at a

great distance from the enemy.

[It is hardly necessary to point out the faultiness of this

classification. A strange lack of logical perception is shown in

the Chinaman's unquestioning acceptance of glaring cross-

divisions such as the above.]

2. Ground which can be freely traversed by both sides is

called ACCESSIBLE.

3. With regard to ground of this nature, be before the

enemy in occupying the raised and sunny spots, and carefully

guard your line of supplies.

[The general meaning of the last phrase is doubtlessly, as

Tu Yu says, "not to allow the enemy to cut your communications."

In view of Napoleon's dictum, "the secret of war lies in the

communications," [1] we could wish that Sun Tzu had done more

than skirt the edge of this important subject here and in I. ss.

10, VII. ss. 11. Col. Henderson says: "The line of supply may

be said to be as vital to the existence of an army as the heart

to the life of a human being. Just as the duelist who finds his

adversary's point menacing him with certain death, and his own

guard astray, is compelled to conform to his adversary's

movements, and to content himself with warding off his thrusts,

so the commander whose communications are suddenly threatened

finds himself in a false position, and he will be fortunate if he

has not to change all his plans, to split up his force into more

or less isolated detachments, and to fight with inferior numbers

on ground which he has not had time to prepare, and where defeat

will not be an ordinary failure, but will entail the ruin or

surrender of his whole army." [2]

Then you will be able to fight with advantage.

4. Ground which can be abandoned but is hard to re-occupy

is called ENTANGLING.

5. From a position of this sort, if the enemy is

unprepared, you may sally forth and defeat him. But if the enemy

is prepared for your coming, and you fail to defeat him, then,

return being impossible, disaster will ensue.

6. When the position is such that neither side will gain by

making the first move, it is called TEMPORIZING ground.

[Tu Mu says: "Each side finds it inconvenient to move, and

the situation remains at a deadlock."]

7. In a position of this sort, even though the enemy should

offer us an attractive bait,

[Tu Yu says, "turning their backs on us and pretending to

flee." But this is only one of the lures which might induce us

to quit our position.]

it will be advisable not to stir forth, but rather to retreat,

thus enticing the enemy in his turn; then, when part of his army

has come out, we may deliver our attack with advantage.

8. With regard to NARROW PASSES, if you can occupy them

first, let them be strongly garrisoned and await the advent of

the enemy.

[Because then, as Tu Yu observes, "the initiative will lie

with us, and by making sudden and unexpected attacks we shall

have the enemy at our mercy."]

9. Should the army forestall you in occupying a pass, do

not go after him if the pass is fully garrisoned, but only if it

is weakly garrisoned.

10. With regard to PRECIPITOUS HEIGHTS, if you are

beforehand with your adversary, you should occupy the raised and

sunny spots, and there wait for him to come up.

[Ts`ao Kung says: "The particular advantage of securing

heights and defiles is that your actions cannot then be dictated

by the enemy." [For the enunciation of the grand principle

alluded to, see VI. ss. 2]. Chang Yu tells the following

anecdote of P`ei Hsing-chien (A.D. 619-682), who was sent on a

punitive expedition against the Turkic tribes. "At night he

pitched his camp as usual, and it had already been completely

fortified by wall and ditch, when suddenly he gave orders that

the army should shift its quarters to a hill near by. This was

highly displeasing to his officers, who protested loudly against

the extra fatigue which it would entail on the men. P`ei Hsing-

chien, however, paid no heed to their remonstrances and had the

camp moved as quickly as possible. The same night, a terrific

storm came on, which flooded their former place of encampment to

the depth of over twelve feet. The recalcitrant officers were

amazed at the sight, and owned that they had been in the wrong.

'How did you know what was going to happen?' they asked. P`ei

Hsing-chien replied: 'From this time forward be content to obey

orders without asking unnecessary questions.' From this it may

be seen," Chang Yu continues, "that high and sunny places are

advantageous not only for fighting, but also because they are

immune from disastrous floods."]

11. If the enemy has occupied them before you, do not

follow him, but retreat and try to entice him away.

[The turning point of Li Shih-min's campaign in 621 A.D.

against the two rebels, Tou Chien-te, King of Hsia, and Wang

Shih-ch`ung, Prince of Cheng, was his seizure of the heights of

Wu-lao, in spike of which Tou Chien-te persisted in his attempt

to relieve his ally in Lo-yang, was defeated and taken prisoner.

See CHIU T`ANG, ch. 2, fol. 5 verso, and also ch. 54.]

12. If you are situated at a great distance from the enemy,

and the strength of the two armies is equal, it is not easy to

provoke a battle,

[The point is that we must not think of undertaking a long

and wearisome march, at the end of which, as Tu Yu says, "we

should be exhausted and our adversary fresh and keen."]

and fighting will be to your disadvantage.

13. These six are the principles connected with Earth.

[Or perhaps, "the principles relating to ground." See,

however, I. ss. 8.]

The general who has attained a responsible post must be careful

to study them.

14. Now an army is exposed to six several calamities, not

arising from natural causes, but from faults for which the

general is responsible. These are: (1) Flight; (2)

insubordination; (3) collapse; (4) ruin; (5) disorganization; (6)

rout.

15. Other conditions being equal, if one force is hurled

against another ten times its size, the result will be the FLIGHT

of the former.

16. When the common soldiers are too strong and their

officers too weak, the result is INSUBORDINATION.

[Tu Mu cites the unhappy case of T`ien Pu [HSIN T`ANG SHU,

ch. 148], who was sent to Wei in 821 A.D. with orders to lead an

army against Wang T`ing-ts`ou. But the whole time he was in

command, his soldiers treated him with the utmost contempt, and

openly flouted his authority by riding about the camp on donkeys,

several thousands at a time. T`ien Pu was powerless to put a

stop to this conduct, and when, after some months had passed, he

made an attempt to engage the enemy, his troops turned tail and

dispersed in every direction. After that, the unfortunate man

committed suicide by cutting his throat.]

When the officers are too strong and the common soldiers too

weak, the result is COLLAPSE.

[Ts`ao Kung says: "The officers are energetic and want to

press on, the common soldiers are feeble and suddenly collapse."]

17. When the higher officers are angry and insubordinate,

and on meeting the enemy give battle on their own account from a

feeling of resentment, before the commander-in-chief can tell

whether or no he is in a position to fight, the result is RUIN.

[Wang Hsi`s note is: "This means, the general is angry

without cause, and at the same time does not appreciate the

ability of his subordinate officers; thus he arouses fierce

resentment and brings an avalanche of ruin upon his head."]

18. When the general is weak and without authority; when

his orders are not clear and distinct;

[Wei Liao Tzu (ch. 4) says: "If the commander gives his

orders with decision, the soldiers will not wait to hear them

twice; if his moves are made without vacillation, the soldiers

will not be in two minds about doing their duty." General Baden-

Powell says, italicizing the words: "The secret of getting

successful work out of your trained men lies in one nutshell--in

the clearness of the instructions they receive." [3] Cf. also

Wu Tzu ch. 3: "the most fatal defect in a military leader is

difference; the worst calamities that befall an army arise from

hesitation."]

when there are no fixes duties assigned to officers and men,

[Tu Mu says: "Neither officers nor men have any regular

routine."]

and the ranks are formed in a slovenly haphazard manner, the

result is utter DISORGANIZATION.

19. When a general, unable to estimate the enemy's

strength, allows an inferior force to engage a larger one, or

hurls a weak detachment against a powerful one, and neglects to

place picked soldiers in the front rank, the result must be ROUT.

[Chang Yu paraphrases the latter part of the sentence and

continues: "Whenever there is fighting to be done, the keenest

spirits should be appointed to serve in the front ranks, both in

order to strengthen the resolution of our own men and to

demoralize the enemy." Cf. the primi ordines of Caesar ("De

Bello Gallico," V. 28, 44, et al.).]

20. These are six ways of courting defeat, which must be

carefully noted by the general who has attained a responsible

post.

[See supra, ss. 13.]

21. The natural formation of the country is the soldier's

best ally;

[Ch`en Hao says: "The advantages of weather and season are

not equal to those connected with ground."]

but a power of estimating the adversary, of controlling the

forces of victory, and of shrewdly calculating difficulties,

dangers and distances, constitutes the test of a great general.

22. He who knows these things, and in fighting puts his

knowledge into practice, will win his battles. He who knows them

not, nor practices them, will surely be defeated.

23. If fighting is sure to result in victory, then you must

fight, even though the ruler forbid it; if fighting will not

result in victory, then you must not fight even at the ruler's

bidding.

[Cf. VIII. ss. 3 fin. Huang Shih-kung of the Ch`in dynasty,

who is said to have been the patron of Chang Liang and to have

written the SAN LUEH, has these words attributed to him: "The

responsibility of setting an army in motion must devolve on the

general alone; if advance and retreat are controlled from the

Palace, brilliant results will hardly be achieved. Hence the

god-like ruler and the enlightened monarch are content to play a

humble part in furthering their country's cause [lit., kneel down

to push the chariot wheel]." This means that "in matters lying

outside the zenana, the decision of the military commander must

be absolute." Chang Yu also quote the saying: "Decrees from the

Son of Heaven do not penetrate the walls of a camp."]

24. The general who advances without coveting fame and

retreats without fearing disgrace,

[It was Wellington, I think, who said that the hardest thing

of all for a soldier is to retreat.]

whose only thought is to protect his country and do good service

for his sovereign, is the jewel of the kingdom.

[A noble presentiment, in few words, of the Chinese "happy

warrior." Such a man, says Ho Shih, "even if he had to suffer

punishment, would not regret his conduct."]

25. Regard your soldiers as your children, and they will

follow you into the deepest valleys; look upon them as your own

beloved sons, and they will stand by you even unto death.

[Cf. I. ss. 6. In this connection, Tu Mu draws for us an

engaging picture of the famous general Wu Ch`i, from whose

treatise on war I have frequently had occasion to quote: "He

wore the same clothes and ate the same food as the meanest of his

soldiers, refused to have either a horse to ride or a mat to

sleep on, carried his own surplus rations wrapped in a parcel,

and shared every hardship with his men. One of his soldiers was

suffering from an abscess, and Wu Ch`i himself sucked out the

virus. The soldier's mother, hearing this, began wailing and

lamenting. Somebody asked her, saying: 'Why do you cry? Your

son is only a common soldier, and yet the commander-in-chief

himself has sucked the poison from his sore.' The woman replied,

'Many years ago, Lord Wu performed a similar service for my

husband, who never left him afterwards, and finally met his death

at the hands of the enemy. And now that he has done the same for

my son, he too will fall fighting I know not where.'" Li Ch`uan

mentions the Viscount of Ch`u, who invaded the small state of

Hsiao during the winter. The Duke of Shen said to him: "Many of

the soldiers are suffering severely from the cold." So he made a

round of the whole army, comforting and encouraging the men; and

straightway they felt as if they were clothed in garments lined

with floss silk.]

26. If, however, you are indulgent, but unable to make your

authority felt; kind-hearted, but unable to enforce your

commands; and incapable, moreover, of quelling disorder: then

your soldiers must be likened to spoilt children; they are

useless for any practical purpose.

[Li Ching once said that if you could make your soldiers

afraid of you, they would not be afraid of the enemy. Tu Mu

recalls an instance of stern military discipline which occurred

in 219 A.D., when Lu Meng was occupying the town of Chiang-ling.

He had given stringent orders to his army not to molest the

inhabitants nor take anything from them by force. Nevertheless,

a certain officer serving under his banner, who happened to be a

fellow-townsman, ventured to appropriate a bamboo hat belonging

to one of the people, in order to wear it over his regulation

helmet as a protection against the rain. Lu Meng considered that

the fact of his being also a native of Ju-nan should not be

allowed to palliate a clear breach of discipline, and accordingly

he ordered his summary execution, the tears rolling down his

face, however, as he did so. This act of severity filled the

army with wholesome awe, and from that time forth even articles

dropped in the highway were not picked up.]

27. If we know that our own men are in a condition to

attack, but are unaware that the enemy is not open to attack, we

have gone only halfway towards victory.

[That is, Ts`ao Kung says, "the issue in this case is

uncertain."]

28. If we know that the enemy is open to attack, but are

unaware that our own men are not in a condition to attack, we

have gone only halfway towards victory.

[Cf. III. ss. 13 (1).]

29. If we know that the enemy is open to attack, and also

know that our men are in a condition to attack, but are unaware

that the nature of the ground makes fighting impracticable, we

have still gone only halfway towards victory.

30. Hence the experienced soldier, once in motion, is never

bewildered; once he has broken camp, he is never at a loss.

[The reason being, according to Tu Mu, that he has taken his

measures so thoroughly as to ensure victory beforehand. "He does

not move recklessly," says Chang Yu, "so that when he does move,

he makes no mistakes."]

31. Hence the saying: If you know the enemy and know

yourself, your victory will not stand in doubt; if you know

Heaven and know Earth, you may make your victory complete.

[Li Ch`uan sums up as follows: "Given a knowledge of three

things--the affairs of men, the seasons of heaven and the natural

advantages of earth--, victory will invariably crown your

battles."]

[1] See "Pensees de Napoleon 1er," no. 47.

[2] "The Science of War," chap. 2.

[3] "Aids to Scouting," p. xii.

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XI. THE NINE SITUATIONS

1. Sun Tzu said: The art of war recognizes nine varieties

of ground: (1) Dispersive ground; (2) facile ground; (3)

contentious ground; (4) open ground; (5) ground of intersecting

highways; (6) serious ground; (7) difficult ground; (8) hemmed-in

ground; (9) desperate ground.

2. When a chieftain is fighting in his own territory, it is

dispersive ground.

[So called because the soldiers, being near to their homes

and anxious to see their wives and children, are likely to seize

the opportunity afforded by a battle and scatter in every

direction. "In their advance," observes Tu Mu, "they will lack

the valor of desperation, and when they retreat, they will find

harbors of refuge."]

3. When he has penetrated into hostile territory, but to no

great distance, it is facile ground.

[Li Ch`uan and Ho Shih say "because of the facility for

retreating," and the other commentators give similar

explanations. Tu Mu remarks: "When your army has crossed the

border, you should burn your boats and bridges, in order to make

it clear to everybody that you have no hankering after home."]

4. Ground the possession of which imports great advantage

to either side, is contentious ground.

[Tu Mu defines the ground as ground "to be contended for."

Ts`ao Kung says: "ground on which the few and the weak can

defeat the many and the strong," such as "the neck of a pass,"

instanced by Li Ch`uan. Thus, Thermopylae was of this

classification because the possession of it, even for a few days

only, meant holding the entire invading army in check and thus

gaining invaluable time. Cf. Wu Tzu, ch. V. ad init.: "For

those who have to fight in the ratio of one to ten, there is

nothing better than a narrow pass." When Lu Kuang was returning

from his triumphant expedition to Turkestan in 385 A.D., and had

got as far as I-ho, laden with spoils, Liang Hsi, administrator

of Liang-chou, taking advantage of the death of Fu Chien, King of

Ch`in, plotted against him and was for barring his way into the

province. Yang Han, governor of Kao-ch`ang, counseled him,

saying: "Lu Kuang is fresh from his victories in the west, and

his soldiers are vigorous and mettlesome. If we oppose him in

the shifting sands of the desert, we shall be no match for him,

and we must therefore try a different plan. Let us hasten to

occupy the defile at the mouth of the Kao-wu pass, thus cutting

him off from supplies of water, and when his troops are

prostrated with thirst, we can dictate our own terms without

moving. Or if you think that the pass I mention is too far off,

we could make a stand against him at the I-wu pass, which is

nearer. The cunning and resource of Tzu-fang himself would be

expended in vain against the enormous strength of these two

positions." Liang Hsi, refusing to act on this advice, was

overwhelmed and swept away by the invader.]

5. Ground on which each side has liberty of movement is

open ground.

[There are various interpretations of the Chinese adjective

for this type of ground. Ts`ao Kung says it means "ground

covered with a network of roads," like a chessboard. Ho Shih

suggested: "ground on which intercommunication is easy."]

6. Ground which forms the key to three contiguous states,

[Ts`au Kung defines this as: "Our country adjoining the

enemy's and a third country conterminous with both." Meng Shih

instances the small principality of Cheng, which was bounded on

the north-east by Ch`i, on the west by Chin, and on the south by

Ch`u.]

so that he who occupies it first has most of the Empire at his

command,

[The belligerent who holds this dominating position can

constrain most of them to become his allies.]

is a ground of intersecting highways.

7. When an army has penetrated into the heart of a hostile

country, leaving a number of fortified cities in its rear, it is

serious ground.

[Wang Hsi explains the name by saying that "when an army has

reached such a point, its situation is serious."]

8. Mountain forests,

[Or simply "forests."]

rugged steeps, marshes and fens--all country that is hard to

traverse: this is difficult ground.

9. Ground which is reached through narrow gorges, and from

which we can only retire by tortuous paths, so that a small

number of the enemy would suffice to crush a large body of our

men: this is hemmed in ground.

10. Ground on which we can only be saved from destruction

by fighting without delay, is desperate ground.

[The situation, as pictured by Ts`ao Kung, is very similar

to the "hemmed-in ground" except that here escape is no longer

possible: "A lofty mountain in front, a large river behind,

advance impossible, retreat blocked." Ch`en Hao says: "to be on

'desperate ground' is like sitting in a leaking boat or crouching

in a burning house." Tu Mu quotes from Li Ching a vivid

description of the plight of an army thus entrapped: "Suppose an

army invading hostile territory without the aid of local guides:

-- it falls into a fatal snare and is at the enemy's mercy. A

ravine on the left, a mountain on the right, a pathway so

perilous that the horses have to be roped together and the

chariots carried in slings, no passage open in front, retreat cut

off behind, no choice but to proceed in single file. Then,

before there is time to range our soldiers in order of battle,

the enemy is overwhelming strength suddenly appears on the scene.

Advancing, we can nowhere take a breathing-space; retreating, we

have no haven of refuge. We seek a pitched battle, but in vain;

yet standing on the defensive, none of us has a moment's respite.

If we simply maintain our ground, whole days and months will

crawl by; the moment we make a move, we have to sustain the

enemy's attacks on front and rear. The country is wild,

destitute of water and plants; the army is lacking in the

necessaries of life, the horses are jaded and the men worn-out,

all the resources of strength and skill unavailing, the pass so

narrow that a single man defending it can check the onset of ten

thousand; all means of offense in the hands of the enemy, all

points of vantage already forfeited by ourselves:--in this

terrible plight, even though we had the most valiant soldiers and

the keenest of weapons, how could they be employed with the

slightest effect?" Students of Greek history may be reminded of

the awful close to the Sicilian expedition, and the agony of the

Athenians under Nicias and Demonsthenes. [See Thucydides, VII.

78 sqq.].]

11. On dispersive ground, therefore, fight not. On facile

ground, halt not. On contentious ground, attack not.

[But rather let all your energies be bent on occupying the

advantageous position first. So Ts`ao Kung. Li Ch`uan and

others, however, suppose the meaning to be that the enemy has

already forestalled us, sot that it would be sheer madness to

attack. In the SUN TZU HSU LU, when the King of Wu inquires what

should be done in this case, Sun Tzu replies: "The rule with

regard to contentious ground is that those in possession have the

advantage over the other side. If a position of this kind is

secured first by the enemy, beware of attacking him. Lure him

away by pretending to flee--show your banners and sound your

drums--make a dash for other places that he cannot afford to

lose--trail brushwood and raise a dust--confound his ears and

eyes--detach a body of your best troops, and place it secretly in

ambuscade. Then your opponent will sally forth to the rescue."]

12. On open ground, do not try to block the enemy's way.

[Because the attempt would be futile, and would expose the

blocking force itself to serious risks. There are two

interpretations available here. I follow that of Chang Yu. The

other is indicated in Ts`ao Kung's brief note: "Draw closer

together"--i.e., see that a portion of your own army is not cut

off.]

On the ground of intersecting highways, join hands with your

allies.

[Or perhaps, "form alliances with neighboring states."]

13. On serious ground, gather in plunder.

[On this, Li Ch`uan has the following delicious note: "When

an army penetrates far into the enemy's country, care must be

taken not to alienate the people by unjust treatment. Follow the

example of the Han Emperor Kao Tsu, whose march into Ch`in

territory was marked by no violation of women or looting of

valuables. [Nota bene: this was in 207 B.C., and may well cause

us to blush for the Christian armies that entered Peking in 1900

A.D.] Thus he won the hearts of all. In the present passage,

then, I think that the true reading must be, not 'plunder,' but

'do not plunder.'" Alas, I fear that in this instance the worthy

commentator's feelings outran his judgment. Tu Mu, at least, has

no such illusions. He says: "When encamped on 'serious ground,'

there being no inducement as yet to advance further, and no

possibility of retreat, one ought to take measures for a

protracted resistance by bringing in provisions from all sides,

and keep a close watch on the enemy."]

In difficult ground, keep steadily on the march.

[Or, in the words of VIII. ss. 2, "do not encamp.]

14. On hemmed-in ground, resort to stratagem.

[Ts`au Kung says: "Try the effect of some unusual

artifice;" and Tu Yu amplifies this by saying: "In such a

position, some scheme must be devised which will suit the

circumstances, and if we can succeed in deluding the enemy, the

peril may be escaped." This is exactly what happened on the

famous occasion when Hannibal was hemmed in among the mountains

on the road to Casilinum, and to all appearances entrapped by the

dictator Fabius. The stratagem which Hannibal devised to baffle

his foes was remarkably like that which T`ien Tan had also

employed with success exactly 62 years before. [See IX. ss. 24,

note.] When night came on, bundles of twigs were fastened to the

horns of some 2000 oxen and set on fire, the terrified animals

being then quickly driven along the mountain side towards the

passes which were beset by the enemy. The strange spectacle of

these rapidly moving lights so alarmed and discomfited the Romans

that they withdrew from their position, and Hannibal's army

passed safely through the defile. [See Polybius, III. 93, 94;

Livy, XXII. 16 17.]

On desperate ground, fight.

[For, as Chia Lin remarks: "if you fight with all your

might, there is a chance of life; where as death is certain if

you cling to your corner."]

15. Those who were called skillful leaders of old knew how

to drive a wedge between the enemy's front and rear;

[More literally, "cause the front and rear to lose touch

with each other."]

to prevent co-operation between his large and small divisions; to

hinder the good troops from rescuing the bad, the officers from

rallying their men.

16. When the enemy's men were united, they managed to keep

them in disorder.

17. When it was to their advantage, they made a forward

move; when otherwise, they stopped still.

[Mei Yao-ch`en connects this with the foregoing: "Having

succeeded in thus dislocating the enemy, they would push forward

in order to secure any advantage to be gained; if there was no

advantage to be gained, they would remain where they were."]

18. If asked how to cope with a great host of the enemy in

orderly array and on the point of marching to the attack, I

should say: "Begin by seizing something which your opponent

holds dear; then he will be amenable to your will."

[Opinions differ as to what Sun Tzu had in mind. Ts`ao Kung

thinks it is "some strategical advantage on which the enemy is

depending." Tu Mu says: "The three things which an enemy is

anxious to do, and on the accomplishment of which his success

depends, are: (1) to capture our favorable positions; (2) to

ravage our cultivated land; (3) to guard his own communications."

Our object then must be to thwart his plans in these three

directions and thus render him helpless. [Cf. III. ss. 3.] By

boldly seizing the initiative in this way, you at once throw the

other side on the defensive.]

19. Rapidity is the essence of war:

[According to Tu Mu, "this is a summary of leading

principles in warfare," and he adds: "These are the profoundest

truths of military science, and the chief business of the

general." The following anecdotes, told by Ho Shih, shows the

importance attached to speed by two of China's greatest generals.

In 227 A.D., Meng Ta, governor of Hsin-ch`eng under the Wei

Emperor Wen Ti, was meditating defection to the House of Shu, and

had entered into correspondence with Chu-ko Liang, Prime Minister

of that State. The Wei general Ssu-ma I was then military

governor of Wan, and getting wind of Meng Ta's treachery, he at

once set off with an army to anticipate his revolt, having

previously cajoled him by a specious message of friendly import.

Ssu-ma's officers came to him and said: "If Meng Ta has leagued

himself with Wu and Shu, the matter should be thoroughly

investigated before we make a move." Ssu-ma I replied: "Meng Ta

is an unprincipled man, and we ought to go and punish him at

once, while he is still wavering and before he has thrown off the

mask." Then, by a series of forced marches, be brought his army

under the walls of Hsin-ch`eng with in a space of eight days.

Now Meng Ta had previously said in a letter to Chu-ko Liang:

"Wan is 1200 LI from here. When the news of my revolt reaches

Ssu-ma I, he will at once inform his imperial master, but it will

be a whole month before any steps can be taken, and by that time

my city will be well fortified. Besides, Ssu-ma I is sure not to

come himself, and the generals that will be sent against us are

not worth troubling about." The next letter, however, was filled

with consternation: "Though only eight days have passed since I

threw off my allegiance, an army is already at the city-gates.

What miraculous rapidity is this!" A fortnight later, Hsin-

ch`eng had fallen and Meng Ta had lost his head. [See

CHIN SHU, ch. 1, f. 3.] In 621 A.D., Li Ching was sent from

K`uei-chou in Ssu-ch`uan to reduce the successful rebel Hsiao

Hsien, who had set up as Emperor at the modern Ching-chou Fu in

Hupeh. It was autumn, and the Yangtsze being then in flood,

Hsiao Hsien never dreamt that his adversary would venture to come

down through the gorges, and consequently made no preparations.

But Li Ching embarked his army without loss of time, and was just

about to start when the other generals implored him to postpone

his departure until the river was in a less dangerous state for

navigation. Li Ching replied: "To the soldier, overwhelming

speed is of paramount importance, and he must never miss

opportunities. Now is the time to strike, before Hsiao Hsien

even knows that we have got an army together. If we seize the

present moment when the river is in flood, we shall appear before

his capital with startling suddenness, like the thunder which is

heard before you have time to stop your ears against it. [See

VII. ss. 19, note.] This is the great principle in war. Even if

he gets to know of our approach, he will have to levy his

soldiers in such a hurry that they will not be fit to oppose us.

Thus the full fruits of victory will be ours." All came about as

he predicted, and Hsiao Hsien was obliged to surrender, nobly

stipulating that his people should be spared and he alone suffer

the penalty of death.]

take advantage of the enemy's unreadiness, make your way by

unexpected routes, and attack unguarded spots.

20. The following are the principles to be observed by an

invading force: The further you penetrate into a country, the

greater will be the solidarity of your troops, and thus the

defenders will not prevail against you.

21. Make forays in fertile country in order to supply your

army with food.

[Cf. supra, ss. 13. Li Ch`uan does not venture on a note

here.]

22. Carefully study the well-being of your men,

[For "well-being", Wang Hsi means, "Pet them, humor them,

give them plenty of food and drink, and look after them

generally."]

and do not overtax them. Concentrate your energy and hoard your

strength.

[Ch`en recalls the line of action adopted in 224 B.C. by the

famous general Wang Chien, whose military genius largely

contributed to the success of the First Emperor. He had invaded

the Ch`u State, where a universal levy was made to oppose him.

But, being doubtful of the temper of his troops, he declined all

invitations to fight and remained strictly on the defensive. In

vain did the Ch`u general try to force a battle: day after day

Wang Chien kept inside his walls and would not come out, but

devoted his whole time and energy to winning the affection and

confidence of his men. He took care that they should be well

fed, sharing his own meals with them, provided facilities for

bathing, and employed every method of judicious indulgence to

weld them into a loyal and homogenous body. After some time had

elapsed, he told off certain persons to find out how the men were

amusing themselves. The answer was, that they were contending

with one another in putting the weight and long-jumping. When

Wang Chien heard that they were engaged in these athletic

pursuits, he knew that their spirits had been strung up to the

required pitch and that they were now ready for fighting. By

this time the Ch`u army, after repeating their challenge again

and again, had marched away eastwards in disgust. The Ch`in

general immediately broke up his camp and followed them, and in

the battle that ensued they were routed with great slaughter.

Shortly afterwards, the whole of Ch`u was conquered by Ch`in, and

the king Fu-ch`u led into captivity.]

Keep your army continually on the move,

[In order that the enemy may never know exactly where you

are. It has struck me, however, that the true reading might be

"link your army together."]

and devise unfathomable plans.

23. Throw your soldiers into positions whence there is no

escape, and they will prefer death to flight. If they will face

death, there is nothing they may not achieve.

[Chang Yu quotes his favorite Wei Liao Tzu (ch. 3): "If one

man were to run amok with a sword in the market-place, and

everybody else tried to get our of his way, I should not allow

that this man alone had courage and that all the rest were

contemptible cowards. The truth is, that a desperado and a man

who sets some value on his life do not meet on even terms."]

Officers and men alike will put forth their uttermost strength.

[Chang Yu says: "If they are in an awkward place together,

they will surely exert their united strength to get out of it."]

24. Soldiers when in desperate straits lose the sense of

fear. If there is no place of refuge, they will stand firm. If

they are in hostile country, they will show a stubborn front. If

there is no help for it, they will fight hard.

25. Thus, without waiting to be marshaled, the soldiers

will be constantly on the qui vive; without waiting to be asked,

they will do your will;

[Literally, "without asking, you will get."]

without restrictions, they will be faithful; without giving

orders, they can be trusted.

26. Prohibit the taking of omens, and do away with

superstitious doubts. Then, until death itself comes, no

calamity need be feared.

[The superstitious, "bound in to saucy doubts and fears,"

degenerate into cowards and "die many times before their deaths."

Tu Mu quotes Huang Shih-kung: "'Spells and incantations should

be strictly forbidden, and no officer allowed to inquire by

divination into the fortunes of an army, for fear the soldiers'

minds should be seriously perturbed.' The meaning is," he

continues, "that if all doubts and scruples are discarded, your

men will never falter in their resolution until they die."]

27. If our soldiers are not overburdened with money, it is

not because they have a distaste for riches; if their lives are

not unduly long, it is not because they are disinclined to

longevity.

[Chang Yu has the best note on this passage: "Wealth and

long life are things for which all men have a natural

inclination. Hence, if they burn or fling away valuables, and

sacrifice their own lives, it is not that they dislike them, but

simply that they have no choice." Sun Tzu is slyly insinuating

that, as soldiers are but human, it is for the general to see

that temptations to shirk fighting and grow rich are not thrown

in their way.]

28. On the day they are ordered out to battle, your

soldiers may weep,

[The word in the Chinese is "snivel." This is taken to

indicate more genuine grief than tears alone.]

those sitting up bedewing their garments, and those lying down

letting the tears run down their cheeks.

[Not because they are afraid, but because, as Ts`ao Kung

says, "all have embraced the firm resolution to do or die." We

may remember that the heroes of the Iliad were equally childlike

in showing their emotion. Chang Yu alludes to the mournful

parting at the I River between Ching K`o and his friends, when

the former was sent to attempt the life of the King of Ch`in

(afterwards First Emperor) in 227 B.C. The tears of all flowed

down like rain as he bade them farewell and uttered the following

lines: "The shrill blast is blowing, Chilly the burn; Your

champion is going--Not to return." [1] ]

But let them once be brought to bay, and they will display the

courage of a Chu or a Kuei.

[Chu was the personal name of Chuan Chu, a native of the Wu

State and contemporary with Sun Tzu himself, who was employed by

Kung-tzu Kuang, better known as Ho Lu Wang, to assassinate his

sovereign Wang Liao with a dagger which he secreted in the belly

of a fish served up at a banquet. He succeeded in his attempt,

but was immediately hacked to pieced by the king's bodyguard.

This was in 515 B.C. The other hero referred to, Ts`ao Kuei (or

Ts`ao Mo), performed the exploit which has made his name famous

166 years earlier, in 681 B.C. Lu had been thrice defeated by

Ch`i, and was just about to conclude a treaty surrendering a

large slice of territory, when Ts`ao Kuei suddenly seized Huan

Kung, the Duke of Ch`i, as he stood on the altar steps and held a

dagger against his chest. None of the duke's retainers dared to

move a muscle, and Ts`ao Kuei proceeded to demand full

restitution, declaring the Lu was being unjustly treated because

she was a smaller and a weaker state. Huan Kung, in peril of his

life, was obliged to consent, whereupon Ts`ao Kuei flung away his

dagger and quietly resumed his place amid the terrified

assemblage without having so much as changed color. As was to be

expected, the Duke wanted afterwards to repudiate the bargain,

but his wise old counselor Kuan Chung pointed out to him the

impolicy of breaking his word, and the upshot was that this bold

stroke regained for Lu the whole of what she had lost in three

pitched battles.]

29. The skillful tactician may be likened to the SHUAI-JAN.

Now the SHUAI-JAN is a snake that is found in the Ch`ang

mountains.

["Shuai-jan" means "suddenly" or "rapidly," and the snake in

question was doubtless so called owing to the rapidity of its

movements. Through this passage, the term in the Chinese has now

come to be used in the sense of "military maneuvers."]

Strike at its head, and you will be attacked by its tail; strike

at its tail, and you will be attacked by its head; strike at its

middle, and you will be attacked by head and tail both.

30. Asked if an army can be made to imitate the SHUAI-JAN,

[That is, as Mei Yao-ch`en says, "Is it possible to make the

front and rear of an army each swiftly responsive to attack on

the other, just as though they were part of a single living

body?"]

I should answer, Yes. For the men of Wu and the men of Yueh are

enemies;

[Cf. VI. ss. 21.]

yet if they are crossing a river in the same boat and are caught

by a storm, they will come to each other's assistance just as the

left hand helps the right.

[The meaning is: If two enemies will help each other in a

time of common peril, how much more should two parts of the same

army, bound together as they are by every tie of interest and

fellow-feeling. Yet it is notorious that many a campaign has

been ruined through lack of cooperation, especially in the case

of allied armies.]

31. Hence it is not enough to put one's trust in the

tethering of horses, and the burying of chariot wheels in the

ground

[These quaint devices to prevent one's army from running

away recall the Athenian hero Sophanes, who carried the anchor

with him at the battle of Plataea, by means of which he fastened

himself firmly to one spot. [See Herodotus, IX. 74.] It is not

enough, says Sun Tzu, to render flight impossible by such

mechanical means. You will not succeed unless your men have

tenacity and unity of purpose, and, above all, a spirit of

sympathetic cooperation. This is the lesson which can be learned

from the SHUAI-JAN.]

32. The principle on which to manage an army is to set up

one standard of courage which all must reach.

[Literally, "level the courage [of all] as though [it were

that of] one." If the ideal army is to form a single organic

whole, then it follows that the resolution and spirit of its

component parts must be of the same quality, or at any rate must

not fall below a certain standard. Wellington's seemingly

ungrateful description of his army at Waterloo as "the worst he

had ever commanded" meant no more than that it was deficient in

this important particular--unity of spirit and courage. Had he

not foreseen the Belgian defections and carefully kept those

troops in the background, he would almost certainly have lost the

day.]

33. How to make the best of both strong and weak--that is a

question involving the proper use of ground.

[Mei Yao-ch`en's paraphrase is: "The way to eliminate the

differences of strong and weak and to make both serviceable is to

utilize accidental features of the ground." Less reliable

troops, if posted in strong positions, will hold out as long as

better troops on more exposed terrain. The advantage of position

neutralizes the inferiority in stamina and courage. Col.

Henderson says: "With all respect to the text books, and to the

ordinary tactical teaching, I am inclined to think that the study

of ground is often overlooked, and that by no means sufficient

importance is attached to the selection of positions... and to

the immense advantages that are to be derived, whether you are

defending or attacking, from the proper utilization of natural

features." [2] ]

34. Thus the skillful general conducts his army just as

though he were leading a single man, willy-nilly, by the hand.

[Tu Mu says: "The simile has reference to the ease with

which he does it."]

35. It is the business of a general to be quiet and thus

ensure secrecy; upright and just, and thus maintain order.

36. He must be able to mystify his officers and men by

false reports and appearances,

[Literally, "to deceive their eyes and ears."]

and thus keep them in total ignorance.

[Ts`ao Kung gives us one of his excellent apophthegms: "The

troops must not be allowed to share your schemes in the

beginning; they may only rejoice with you over their happy

outcome." "To mystify, mislead, and surprise the enemy," is one

of the first principles in war, as had been frequently pointed

out. But how about the other process--the mystification of one's

own men? Those who may think that Sun Tzu is over-emphatic on

this point would do well to read Col. Henderson's remarks on

Stonewall Jackson's Valley campaign: "The infinite pains," he

says, "with which Jackson sought to conceal, even from his most

trusted staff officers, his movements, his intentions, and his

thoughts, a commander less thorough would have pronounced

useless"--etc. etc. [3] In the year 88 A.D., as we read in ch.

47 of the HOU HAN SHU, "Pan Ch`ao took the field with 25,000 men

from Khotan and other Central Asian states with the object of

crushing Yarkand. The King of Kutcha replied by dispatching his

chief commander to succor the place with an army drawn from the

kingdoms of Wen-su, Ku-mo, and Wei-t`ou, totaling 50,000 men.

Pan Ch`ao summoned his officers and also the King of Khotan to a

council of war, and said: 'Our forces are now outnumbered and

unable to make head against the enemy. The best plan, then, is

for us to separate and disperse, each in a different direction.

The King of Khotan will march away by the easterly route, and I

will then return myself towards the west. Let us wait until the

evening drum has sounded and then start.' Pan Ch`ao now secretly

released the prisoners whom he had taken alive, and the King of

Kutcha was thus informed of his plans. Much elated by the news,

the latter set off at once at the head of 10,000 horsemen to bar

Pan Ch`ao's retreat in the west, while the King of Wen-su rode

eastward with 8000 horse in order to intercept the King of

Khotan. As soon as Pan Ch`ao knew that the two chieftains had

gone, he called his divisions together, got them well in hand,

and at cock-crow hurled them against the army of Yarkand, as it

lay encamped. The barbarians, panic-stricken, fled in confusion,

and were closely pursued by Pan Ch`ao. Over 5000 heads were

brought back as trophies, besides immense spoils in the shape of

horses and cattle and valuables of every description. Yarkand

then capitulating, Kutcha and the other kingdoms drew off their

respective forces. From that time forward, Pan Ch`ao's prestige

completely overawed the countries of the west." In this case, we

see that the Chinese general not only kept his own officers in

ignorance of his real plans, but actually took the bold step of

dividing his army in order to deceive the enemy.]

37. By altering his arrangements and changing his plans,

[Wang Hsi thinks that this means not using the same

stratagem twice.]

he keeps the enemy without definite knowledge.

[Chang Yu, in a quotation from another work, says: "The

axiom, that war is based on deception, does not apply only to

deception of the enemy. You must deceive even your own soldiers.

Make them follow you, but without letting them know why."]

By shifting his camp and taking circuitous routes, he prevents

the enemy from anticipating his purpose.

38. At the critical moment, the leader of an army acts like

one who has climbed up a height and then kicks away the ladder

behind him. He carries his men deep into hostile territory

before he shows his hand.

[Literally, "releases the spring" (see V. ss. 15), that is,

takes some decisive step which makes it impossible for the army

to return--like Hsiang Yu, who sunk his ships after crossing a

river. Ch`en Hao, followed by Chia Lin, understands the words

less well as "puts forth every artifice at his command."]

39. He burns his boats and breaks his cooking-pots; like a

shepherd driving a flock of sheep, he drives his men this way and

that, and nothing knows whither he is going.

[Tu Mu says: "The army is only cognizant of orders to

advance or retreat; it is ignorant of the ulterior ends of

attacking and conquering."]

40. To muster his host and bring it into danger:--this may

be termed the business of the general.

[Sun Tzu means that after mobilization there should be no

delay in aiming a blow at the enemy's heart. Note how he returns

again and again to this point. Among the warring states of

ancient China, desertion was no doubt a much more present fear

and serious evil than it is in the armies of today.]

41. The different measures suited to the nine varieties of

ground;

[Chang Yu says: "One must not be hide-bound in interpreting

the rules for the nine varieties of ground.]

the expediency of aggressive or defensive tactics; and the

fundamental laws of human nature: these are things that must

most certainly be studied.

42. When invading hostile territory, the general principle

is, that penetrating deeply brings cohesion; penetrating but a

short way means dispersion.

[Cf. supra, ss. 20.]

43. When you leave your own country behind, and take your

army across neighborhood territory, you find yourself on critical

ground.

[This "ground" is curiously mentioned in VIII. ss. 2, but it

does not figure among the Nine Situations or the Six Calamities

in chap. X. One's first impulse would be to translate it distant

ground," but this, if we can trust the commentators, is precisely

what is not meant here. Mei Yao-ch`en says it is "a position not

far enough advanced to be called 'facile,' and not near enough to

home to be 'dispersive,' but something between the two." Wang Hsi

says: "It is ground separated from home by an interjacent state,

whose territory we have had to cross in order to reach it.

Hence, it is incumbent on us to settle our business there

quickly." He adds that this position is of rare occurrence,

which is the reason why it is not included among the Nine

Situations.]

When there are means of communication on all four sides, the

ground is one of intersecting highways.

44. When you penetrate deeply into a country, it is serious

ground. When you penetrate but a little way, it is facile

ground.

45. When you have the enemy's strongholds on your rear, and

narrow passes in front, it is hemmed-in ground. When there is no

place of refuge at all, it is desperate ground.

46. Therefore, on dispersive ground, I would inspire my men

with unity of purpose.

[This end, according to Tu Mu, is best attained by remaining

on the defensive, and avoiding battle. Cf. supra, ss. 11.]

On facile ground, I would see that there is close connection

between all parts of my army.

[As Tu Mu says, the object is to guard against two possible

contingencies: "(1) the desertion of our own troops; (2) a

sudden attack on the part of the enemy." Cf. VII. ss. 17. Mei

Yao-ch`en says: "On the march, the regiments should be in close

touch; in an encampment, there should be continuity between the

fortifications."]

47. On contentious ground, I would hurry up my rear.

[This is Ts`ao Kung's interpretation. Chang Yu adopts it,

saying: "We must quickly bring up our rear, so that head and

tail may both reach the goal." That is, they must not be allowed

to straggle up a long way apart. Mei Yao-ch`en offers another

equally plausible explanation: "Supposing the enemy has not yet

reached the coveted position, and we are behind him, we should

advance with all speed in order to dispute its possession."

Ch`en Hao, on the other hand, assuming that the enemy has had

time to select his own ground, quotes VI. ss. 1, where Sun Tzu

warns us against coming exhausted to the attack. His own idea of

the situation is rather vaguely expressed: "If there is a

favorable position lying in front of you, detach a picked body of

troops to occupy it, then if the enemy, relying on their numbers,

come up to make a fight for it, you may fall quickly on their

rear with your main body, and victory will be assured." It was

thus, he adds, that Chao She beat the army of Ch`in. (See p.

57.)]

48. On open ground, I would keep a vigilant eye on my

defenses. On ground of intersecting highways, I would

consolidate my alliances.

49. On serious ground, I would try to ensure a continuous

stream of supplies.

[The commentators take this as referring to forage and

plunder, not, as one might expect, to an unbroken communication

with a home base.]

On difficult ground, I would keep pushing on along the road.

50. On hemmed-in ground, I would block any way of retreat.

[Meng Shih says: "To make it seem that I meant to defend

the position, whereas my real intention is to burst suddenly

through the enemy's lines." Mei Yao-ch`en says: "in order to

make my soldiers fight with desperation." Wang Hsi says,

"fearing lest my men be tempted to run away." Tu Mu points out

that this is the converse of VII. ss. 36, where it is the enemy

who is surrounded. In 532 A.D., Kao Huan, afterwards Emperor and

canonized as Shen-wu, was surrounded by a great army under Erh-

chu Chao and others. His own force was comparatively small,

consisting only of 2000 horse and something under 30,000 foot.

The lines of investment had not been drawn very closely together,

gaps being left at certain points. But Kao Huan, instead of

trying to escape, actually made a shift to block all the

remaining outlets himself by driving into them a number of oxen

and donkeys roped together. As soon as his officers and men saw

that there was nothing for it but to conquer or die, their

spirits rose to an extraordinary pitch of exaltation, and they

charged with such desperate ferocity that the opposing ranks

broke and crumbled under their onslaught.]

On desperate ground, I would proclaim to my soldiers the

hopelessness of saving their lives.

Tu Yu says: "Burn your baggage and impedimenta, throw away

your stores and provisions, choke up the wells, destroy your

cooking-stoves, and make it plain to your men that they cannot

survive, but must fight to the death." Mei Yao-ch`en says: "The

only chance of life lies in giving up all hope of it." This

concludes what Sun Tzu has to say about "grounds" and the

"variations" corresponding to them. Reviewing the passages which

bear on this important subject, we cannot fail to be struck by

the desultory and unmethodical fashion in which it is treated.

Sun Tzu begins abruptly in VIII. ss. 2 to enumerate "variations"

before touching on "grounds" at all, but only mentions five,

namely nos. 7, 5, 8 and 9 of the subsequent list, and one that is

not included in it. A few varieties of ground are dealt with in

the earlier portion of chap. IX, and then chap. X sets forth six

new grounds, with six variations of plan to match. None of these

is mentioned again, though the first is hardly to be

distinguished from ground no. 4 in the next chapter. At last, in

chap. XI, we come to the Nine Grounds par excellence, immediately

followed by the variations. This takes us down to ss. 14. In

SS. 43-45, fresh definitions are provided for nos. 5, 6, 2, 8 and

9 (in the order given), as well as for the tenth ground noticed

in chap. VIII; and finally, the nine variations are enumerated

once more from beginning to end, all, with the exception of 5, 6

and 7, being different from those previously given. Though it is

impossible to account for the present state of Sun Tzu's text, a

few suggestive facts maybe brought into prominence: (1) Chap.

VIII, according to the title, should deal with nine variations,

whereas only five appear. (2) It is an abnormally short chapter.

(3) Chap. XI is entitled The Nine Grounds. Several of these are

defined twice over, besides which there are two distinct lists of

the corresponding variations. (4) The length of the chapter is

disproportionate, being double that of any other except IX. I do

not propose to draw any inferences from these facts, beyond the

general conclusion that Sun Tzu's work cannot have come down to

us in the shape in which it left his hands: chap. VIII is

obviously defective and probably out of place, while XI seems to

contain matter that has either been added by a later hand or

ought to appear elsewhere.]

51. For it is the soldier's disposition to offer an

obstinate resistance when surrounded, to fight hard when he

cannot help himself, and to obey promptly when he has fallen into

danger.

[Chang Yu alludes to the conduct of Pan Ch`ao's devoted

followers in 73 A.D. The story runs thus in the HOU HAN SHU, ch.

47: "When Pan Ch`ao arrived at Shan-shan, Kuang, the King of the

country, received him at first with great politeness and respect;

but shortly afterwards his behavior underwent a sudden change,

and he became remiss and negligent. Pan Ch`ao spoke about this

to the officers of his suite: 'Have you noticed,' he said, 'that

Kuang's polite intentions are on the wane? This must signify

that envoys have come from the Northern barbarians, and that

consequently he is in a state of indecision, not knowing with

which side to throw in his lot. That surely is the reason. The

truly wise man, we are told, can perceive things before they have

come to pass; how much more, then, those that are already

manifest!' Thereupon he called one of the natives who had been

assigned to his service, and set a trap for him, saying: 'Where

are those envoys from the Hsiung-nu who arrived some day ago?'

The man was so taken aback that between surprise and fear he

presently blurted out the whole truth. Pan Ch`ao, keeping his

informant carefully under lock and key, then summoned a general

gathering of his officers, thirty-six in all, and began drinking

with them. When the wine had mounted into their heads a little,

he tried to rouse their spirit still further by addressing them

thus: 'Gentlemen, here we are in the heart of an isolated

region, anxious to achieve riches and honor by some great

exploit. Now it happens that an ambassador from the Hsiung-no

arrived in this kingdom only a few days ago, and the result is

that the respectful courtesy extended towards us by our royal

host has disappeared. Should this envoy prevail upon him to

seize our party and hand us over to the Hsiung-no, our bones will

become food for the wolves of the desert. What are we to do?'

With one accord, the officers replied: 'Standing as we do in

peril of our lives, we will follow our commander through life and

death.' For the sequel of this adventure, see chap. XII. ss. 1,

note.]

52. We cannot enter into alliance with neighboring princes

until we are acquainted with their designs. We are not fit to

lead an army on the march unless we are familiar with the face of

the country--its mountains and forests, its pitfalls and

precipices, its marshes and swamps. We shall be unable to turn

natural advantages to account unless we make use of local guides.

[These three sentences are repeated from VII. SS. 12-14 --

in order to emphasize their importance, the commentators seem to

think. I prefer to regard them as interpolated here in order to

form an antecedent to the following words. With regard to local

guides, Sun Tzu might have added that there is always the risk of

going wrong, either through their treachery or some

misunderstanding such as Livy records (XXII. 13): Hannibal, we

are told, ordered a guide to lead him into the neighborhood of

Casinum, where there was an important pass to be occupied; but

his Carthaginian accent, unsuited to the pronunciation of Latin

names, caused the guide to understand Casilinum instead of

Casinum, and turning from his proper route, he took the army in

that direction, the mistake not being discovered until they had

almost arrived.]

53. To be ignored of any one of the following four or five

principles does not befit a warlike prince.

54. When a warlike prince attacks a powerful state, his

generalship shows itself in preventing the concentration of the

enemy's forces. He overawes his opponents, and their allies are

prevented from joining against him.

[Mei Tao-ch`en constructs one of the chains of reasoning

that are so much affected by the Chinese: "In attacking a

powerful state, if you can divide her forces, you will have a

superiority in strength; if you have a superiority in strength,

you will overawe the enemy; if you overawe the enemy, the

neighboring states will be frightened; and if the neighboring

states are frightened, the enemy's allies will be prevented from

joining her." The following gives a stronger meaning: "If the

great state has once been defeated (before she has had time to

summon her allies), then the lesser states will hold aloof and

refrain from massing their forces." Ch`en Hao and Chang Yu take

the sentence in quite another way. The former says: "Powerful

though a prince may be, if he attacks a large state, he will be

unable to raise enough troops, and must rely to some extent on

external aid; if he dispenses with this, and with overweening

confidence in his own strength, simply tries to intimidate the

enemy, he will surely be defeated." Chang Yu puts his view thus:

"If we recklessly attack a large state, our own people will be

discontented and hang back. But if (as will then be the case)

our display of military force is inferior by half to that of the

enemy, the other chieftains will take fright and refuse to join

us."]

55. Hence he does not strive to ally himself with all and

sundry, nor does he foster the power of other states. He carries

out his own secret designs, keeping his antagonists in awe.

[The train of thought, as said by Li Ch`uan, appears to be

this: Secure against a combination of his enemies, "he can

afford to reject entangling alliances and simply pursue his own

secret designs, his prestige enable him to dispense with external

friendships."]

Thus he is able to capture their cities and overthrow their

kingdoms.

[This paragraph, though written many years before the Ch`in

State became a serious menace, is not a bad summary of the policy

by which the famous Six Chancellors gradually paved the way for

her final triumph under Shih Huang Ti. Chang Yu, following up

his previous note, thinks that Sun Tzu is condemning this

attitude of cold-blooded selfishness and haughty isolation.]

56. Bestow rewards without regard to rule,

[Wu Tzu (ch. 3) less wisely says: "Let advance be richly

rewarded and retreat be heavily punished."]

issue orders

[Literally, "hang" or post up."]

without regard to previous arrangements;

["In order to prevent treachery," says Wang Hsi. The

general meaning is made clear by Ts`ao Kung's quotation from the

SSU-MA FA: "Give instructions only on sighting the enemy; give

rewards when you see deserving deeds." Ts`ao Kung's paraphrase:

"The final instructions you give to your army should not

correspond with those that have been previously posted up."

Chang Yu simplifies this into "your arrangements should not be

divulged beforehand." And Chia Lin says: "there should be no

fixity in your rules and arrangements." Not only is there danger

in letting your plans be known, but war often necessitates the

entire reversal of them at the last moment.]

and you will be able to handle a whole army as though you had to

do with but a single man.

[Cf. supra, ss. 34.]

57. Confront your soldiers with the deed itself; never let

them know your design.

[Literally, "do not tell them words;" i.e. do not give your

reasons for any order. Lord Mansfield once told a junior

colleague to "give no reasons" for his decisions, and the maxim

is even more applicable to a general than to a judge.]

When the outlook is bright, bring it before their eyes; but tell

them nothing when the situation is gloomy.

58. Place your army in deadly peril, and it will survive;

plunge it into desperate straits, and it will come off in safety.

[These words of Sun Tzu were once quoted by Han Hsin in

explanation of the tactics he employed in one of his most

brilliant battles, already alluded to on p. 28. In 204 B.C., he

was sent against the army of Chao, and halted ten miles from the

mouth of the Ching-hsing pass, where the enemy had mustered in

full force. Here, at midnight, he detached a body of 2000 light

cavalry, every man of which was furnished with a red flag. Their

instructions were to make their way through narrow defiles and

keep a secret watch on the enemy. "When the men of Chao see me

in full flight," Han Hsin said, "they will abandon their

fortifications and give chase. This must be the sign for you to

rush in, pluck down the Chao standards and set up the red banners

of Han in their stead." Turning then to his other officers, he

remarked: "Our adversary holds a strong position, and is not

likely to come out and attack us until he sees the standard and

drums of the commander-in-chief, for fear I should turn back and

escape through the mountains." So saying, he first of all sent

out a division consisting of 10,000 men, and ordered them to form

in line of battle with their backs to the River Ti. Seeing this

maneuver, the whole army of Chao broke into loud laughter. By

this time it was broad daylight, and Han Hsin, displaying the

generalissimo's flag, marched out of the pass with drums beating,

and was immediately engaged by the enemy. A great battle

followed, lasting for some time; until at length Han Hsin and his

colleague Chang Ni, leaving drums and banner on the field, fled

to the division on the river bank, where another fierce battle

was raging. The enemy rushed out to pursue them and to secure

the trophies, thus denuding their ramparts of men; but the two

generals succeeded in joining the other army, which was fighting

with the utmost desperation. The time had now come for the 2000

horsemen to play their part. As soon as they saw the men of Chao

following up their advantage, they galloped behind the deserted

walls, tore up the enemy's flags and replaced them by those of

Han. When the Chao army looked back from the pursuit, the sight

of these red flags struck them with terror. Convinced that the

Hans had got in and overpowered their king, they broke up in wild

disorder, every effort of their leader to stay the panic being in

vain. Then the Han army fell on them from both sides and

completed the rout, killing a number and capturing the rest,

amongst whom was King Ya himself.... After the battle, some of

Han Hsin's officers came to him and said: "In the ART OF WAR we

are told to have a hill or tumulus on the right rear, and a river

or marsh on the left front. [This appears to be a blend of Sun

Tzu and T`ai Kung. See IX ss. 9, and note.] You, on the

contrary, ordered us to draw up our troops with the river at our

back. Under these conditions, how did you manage to gain the

victory?" The general replied: "I fear you gentlemen have not

studied the Art of War with sufficient care. Is it not written

there: 'Plunge your army into desperate straits and it will come

off in safety; place it in deadly peril and it will survive'?

Had I taken the usual course, I should never have been able to

bring my colleague round. What says the Military Classic--'Swoop

down on the market-place and drive the men off to fight.' [This

passage does not occur in the present text of Sun Tzu.] If I had

not placed my troops in a position where they were obliged to

fight for their lives, but had allowed each man to follow his own

discretion, there would have been a general debandade, and it

would have been impossible to do anything with them." The

officers admitted the force of his argument, and said: "These

are higher tactics than we should have been capable of." [See

CH`IEN HAN SHU, ch. 34, ff. 4, 5.] ]

59. For it is precisely when a force has fallen into harm's

way that is capable of striking a blow for victory.

[Danger has a bracing effect.]

60. Success in warfare is gained by carefully accommodating

ourselves to the enemy's purpose.

[Ts`ao Kung says: "Feign stupidity"--by an appearance of

yielding and falling in with the enemy's wishes. Chang Yu's note

makes the meaning clear: "If the enemy shows an inclination to

advance, lure him on to do so; if he is anxious to retreat, delay

on purpose that he may carry out his intention." The object is

to make him remiss and contemptuous before we deliver our

attack.]

61. By persistently hanging on the enemy's flank,

[I understand the first four words to mean "accompanying the

enemy in one direction." Ts`ao Kung says: "unite the soldiers

and make for the enemy." But such a violent displacement of

characters is quite indefensible.]

we shall succeed in the long run

[Literally, "after a thousand LI."]

in killing the commander-in-chief.

[Always a great point with the Chinese.]

62. This is called ability to accomplish a thing by sheer

cunning.

63. On the day that you take up your command, block the

frontier passes, destroy the official tallies,

[These were tablets of bamboo or wood, one half of which was

issued as a permit or passport by the official in charge of a

gate. Cf. the "border-warden" of LUN YU III. 24, who may have

had similar duties. When this half was returned to him, within a

fixed period, he was authorized to open the gate and let the

traveler through.]

and stop the passage of all emissaries.

[Either to or from the enemy's country.]

64. Be stern in the council-chamber,

[Show no weakness, and insist on your plans being ratified

by the sovereign.]

so that you may control the situation.

[Mei Yao-ch`en understands the whole sentence to mean: Take

the strictest precautions to ensure secrecy in your

deliberations.]

65. If the enemy leaves a door open, you must rush in.

66. Forestall your opponent by seizing what he holds dear,

[Cf. supra, ss. 18.]

and subtly contrive to time his arrival on the ground.

[Ch`en Hao`s explanation: "If I manage to seize a favorable

position, but the enemy does not appear on the scene, the

advantage thus obtained cannot be turned to any practical

account. He who intends therefore, to occupy a position of

importance to the enemy, must begin by making an artful

appointment, so to speak, with his antagonist, and cajole him

into going there as well." Mei Yao-ch`en explains that this

"artful appointment" is to be made through the medium of the

enemy's own spies, who will carry back just the amount of

information that we choose to give them. Then, having cunningly

disclosed our intentions, "we must manage, though starting after

the enemy, to arrive before him (VII. ss. 4). We must start

after him in order to ensure his marching thither; we must arrive

before him in order to capture the place without trouble. Taken

thus, the present passage lends some support to Mei Yao-ch`en's

interpretation of ss. 47.]

67. Walk in the path defined by rule,

[Chia Lin says: "Victory is the only thing that matters,

and this cannot be achieved by adhering to conventional canons."

It is unfortunate that this variant rests on very slight

authority, for the sense yielded is certainly much more

satisfactory. Napoleon, as we know, according to the veterans of

the old school whom he defeated, won his battles by violating

every accepted canon of warfare.]

and accommodate yourself to the enemy until you can fight a

decisive battle.

[Tu Mu says: "Conform to the enemy's tactics until a

favorable opportunity offers; then come forth and engage in a

battle that shall prove decisive."]

68. At first, then, exhibit the coyness of a maiden, until

the enemy gives you an opening; afterwards emulate the rapidity

of a running hare, and it will be too late for the enemy to

oppose you.

[As the hare is noted for its extreme timidity, the

comparison hardly appears felicitous. But of course Sun Tzu was

thinking only of its speed. The words have been taken to mean:

You must flee from the enemy as quickly as an escaping hare; but

this is rightly rejected by Tu Mu.]

[1] Giles' Biographical Dictionary, no. 399.

[2] "The Science of War," p. 333.

[3] "Stonewall Jackson," vol. I, p. 421.

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XII. THE ATTACK BY FIRE

[Rather more than half the chapter (SS. 1-13) is devoted to

the subject of fire, after which the author branches off into

other topics.]

1. Sun Tzu said: There are five ways of attacking with

fire. The first is to burn soldiers in their camp;

[So Tu Mu. Li Ch`uan says: "Set fire to the camp, and kill

the soldiers" (when they try to escape from the flames). Pan

Ch`ao, sent on a diplomatic mission to the King of Shan-shan [see

XI. ss. 51, note], found himself placed in extreme peril by the

unexpected arrival of an envoy from the Hsiung-nu [the mortal

enemies of the Chinese]. In consultation with his officers, he

exclaimed: "Never venture, never win! [1] The only course open

to us now is to make an assault by fire on the barbarians under

cover of night, when they will not be able to discern our

numbers. Profiting by their panic, we shall exterminate them

completely; this will cool the King's courage and cover us with

glory, besides ensuring the success of our mission.' the

officers all replied that it would be necessary to discuss the

matter first with the Intendant. Pan Ch`ao then fell into a

passion: 'It is today,' he cried, 'that our fortunes must be

decided! The Intendant is only a humdrum civilian, who on

hearing of our project will certainly be afraid, and everything

will be brought to light. An inglorious death is no worthy fate

for valiant warriors.' All then agreed to do as he wished.

Accordingly, as soon as night came on, he and his little band

quickly made their way to the barbarian camp. A strong gale was

blowing at the time. Pan Ch`ao ordered ten of the party to take

drums and hide behind the enemy's barracks, it being arranged

that when they saw flames shoot up, they should begin drumming

and yelling with all their might. The rest of his men, armed

with bows and crossbows, he posted in ambuscade at the gate of

the camp. He then set fire to the place from the windward side,

whereupon a deafening noise of drums and shouting arose on the

front and rear of the Hsiung-nu, who rushed out pell-mell in

frantic disorder. Pan Ch`ao slew three of them with his own

hand, while his companions cut off the heads of the envoy and

thirty of his suite. The remainder, more than a hundred in all,

perished in the flames. On the following day, Pan Ch`ao,

divining his thoughts, said with uplifted hand: 'Although you

did not go with us last night, I should not think, Sir, of taking

sole credit for our exploit.' This satisfied Kuo Hsun, and Pan

Ch`ao, having sent for Kuang, King of Shan-shan, showed him the

head of the barbarian envoy. The whole kingdom was seized with

fear and trembling, which Pan Ch`ao took steps to allay by

issuing a public proclamation. Then, taking the king's sons as

hostage, he returned to make his report to Tou Ku." HOU HAN SHU,

ch. 47, ff. 1, 2.] ]

the second is to burn stores;

[Tu Mu says: "Provisions, fuel and fodder." In order to

subdue the rebellious population of Kiangnan, Kao Keng

recommended Wen Ti of the Sui dynasty to make periodical raids

and burn their stores of grain, a policy which in the long run

proved entirely successful.]

the third is to burn baggage trains;

[An example given is the destruction of Yuan Shao`s wagons

and impedimenta by Ts`ao Ts`ao in 200 A.D.]

the fourth is to burn arsenals and magazines;

[Tu Mu says that the things contained in "arsenals" and

"magazines" are the same. He specifies weapons and other

implements, bullion and clothing. Cf. VII. ss. 11.]

the fifth is to hurl dropping fire amongst the enemy.

[Tu Yu says in the T`UNG TIEN: "To drop fire into the

enemy's camp. The method by which this may be done is to set the

tips of arrows alight by dipping them into a brazier, and then

shoot them from powerful crossbows into the enemy's lines."]

2. In order to carry out an attack, we must have means

available.

[T`sao Kung thinks that "traitors in the enemy's camp" are

referred to. But Ch`en Hao is more likely to be right in saying:

"We must have favorable circumstances in general, not merely

traitors to help us." Chia Lin says: "We must avail ourselves

of wind and dry weather."]

the material for raising fire should always be kept in readiness.

[Tu Mu suggests as material for making fire: "dry vegetable

matter, reeds, brushwood, straw, grease, oil, etc." Here we have

the material cause. Chang Yu says: "vessels for hoarding fire,

stuff for lighting fires."]

3. There is a proper season for making attacks with fire,

and special days for starting a conflagration.

4. The proper season is when the weather is very dry; the

special days are those when the moon is in the constellations of

the Sieve, the Wall, the Wing or the Cross-bar;

[These are, respectively, the 7th, 14th, 27th, and 28th of

the Twenty-eight Stellar Mansions, corresponding roughly to

Sagittarius, Pegasus, Crater and Corvus.]

for these four are all days of rising wind.

5. In attacking with fire, one should be prepared to meet

five possible developments:

6. (1) When fire breaks out inside to enemy's camp, respond

at once with an attack from without.

7. (2) If there is an outbreak of fire, but the enemy's

soldiers remain quiet, bide your time and do not attack.

[The prime object of attacking with fire is to throw the

enemy into confusion. If this effect is not produced, it means

that the enemy is ready to receive us. Hence the necessity for

caution.]

8. (3) When the force of the flames has reached its height,

follow it up with an attack, if that is practicable; if not, stay

where you are.

[Ts`ao Kung says: "If you see a possible way, advance; but

if you find the difficulties too great, retire."]

9. (4) If it is possible to make an assault with fire from

without, do not wait for it to break out within, but deliver your

attack at a favorable moment.

[Tu Mu says that the previous paragraphs had reference to

the fire breaking out (either accidentally, we may suppose, or by

the agency of incendiaries) inside the enemy's camp. "But," he

continues, "if the enemy is settled in a waste place littered

with quantities of grass, or if he has pitched his camp in a

position which can be burnt out, we must carry our fire against

him at any seasonable opportunity, and not await on in hopes of

an outbreak occurring within, for fear our opponents should

themselves burn up the surrounding vegetation, and thus render

our own attempts fruitless." The famous Li Ling once baffled the

leader of the Hsiung-nu in this way. The latter, taking

advantage of a favorable wind, tried to set fire to the Chinese

general's camp, but found that every scrap of combustible

vegetation in the neighborhood had already been burnt down. On

the other hand, Po-ts`ai, a general of the Yellow Turban rebels,

was badly defeated in 184 A.D. through his neglect of this simple

precaution. "At the head of a large army he was besieging

Ch`ang-she, which was held by Huang-fu Sung. The garrison was

very small, and a general feeling of nervousness pervaded the

ranks; so Huang-fu Sung called his officers together and said:

"In war, there are various indirect methods of attack, and

numbers do not count for everything. [The commentator here

quotes Sun Tzu, V. SS. 5, 6 and 10.] Now the rebels have pitched

their camp in the midst of thick grass which will easily burn

when the wind blows. If we set fire to it at night, they will be

thrown into a panic, and we can make a sortie and attack them on

all sides at once, thus emulating the achievement of T`ien Tan.'

[See p. 90.] That same evening, a strong breeze sprang up; so

Huang-fu Sung instructed his soldiers to bind reeds together into

torches and mount guard on the city walls, after which he sent

out a band of daring men, who stealthily made their way through

the lines and started the fire with loud shouts and yells.

Simultaneously, a glare of light shot up from the city walls, and

Huang-fu Sung, sounding his drums, led a rapid charge, which

threw the rebels into confusion and put them to headlong flight."

[HOU HAN SHU, ch. 71.] ]

10. (5) When you start a fire, be to windward of it. Do

not attack from the leeward.

[Chang Yu, following Tu Yu, says: "When you make a fire,

the enemy will retreat away from it; if you oppose his retreat

and attack him then, he will fight desperately, which will not

conduce to your success." A rather more obvious explanation is

given by Tu Mu: "If the wind is in the east, begin burning to

the east of the enemy, and follow up the attack yourself from

that side. If you start the fire on the east side, and then

attack from the west, you will suffer in the same way as your

enemy."]

11. A wind that rises in the daytime lasts long, but a

night breeze soon falls.

[Cf. Lao Tzu's saying: "A violent wind does not last the

space of a morning." (TAO TE CHING, chap. 23.) Mei Yao-ch`en

and Wang Hsi say: "A day breeze dies down at nightfall, and a

night breeze at daybreak. This is what happens as a general

rule." The phenomenon observed may be correct enough, but how

this sense is to be obtained is not apparent.]

12. In every army, the five developments connected with

fire must be known, the movements of the stars calculated, and a

watch kept for the proper days.

[Tu Mu says: "We must make calculations as to the paths of

the stars, and watch for the days on which wind will rise,

before making our attack with fire." Chang Yu seems to interpret

the text differently: "We must not only know how to assail our

opponents with fire, but also be on our guard against similar

attacks from them."]

13. Hence those who use fire as an aid to the attack show

intelligence; those who use water as an aid to the attack gain an

accession of strength.

14. By means of water, an enemy may be intercepted, but not

robbed of all his belongings.

[Ts`ao Kung's note is: "We can merely obstruct the enemy's

road or divide his army, but not sweep away all his accumulated

stores." Water can do useful service, but it lacks the terrible

destructive power of fire. This is the reason, Chang Yu

concludes, why the former is dismissed in a couple of sentences,

whereas the attack by fire is discussed in detail. Wu Tzu (ch.

4) speaks thus of the two elements: "If an army is encamped on

low-lying marshy ground, from which the water cannot run off, and

where the rainfall is heavy, it may be submerged by a flood. If

an army is encamped in wild marsh lands thickly overgrown with

weeds and brambles, and visited by frequent gales, it may be

exterminated by fire."]

15. Unhappy is the fate of one who tries to win his battles

and succeed in his attacks without cultivating the spirit of

enterprise; for the result is waste of time and general

stagnation.

[This is one of the most perplexing passages in Sun Tzu.

Ts`ao Kung says: "Rewards for good service should not be

deferred a single day." And Tu Mu: "If you do not take

opportunity to advance and reward the deserving, your

subordinates will not carry out your commands, and disaster will

ensue." For several reasons, however, and in spite of the

formidable array of scholars on the other side, I prefer the

interpretation suggested by Mei Yao-ch`en alone, whose words I

will quote: "Those who want to make sure of succeeding in their

battles and assaults must seize the favorable moments when they

come and not shrink on occasion from heroic measures: that is to

say, they must resort to such means of attack of fire, water and

the like. What they must not do, and what will prove fatal, is

to sit still and simply hold to the advantages they have got."]

16. Hence the saying: The enlightened ruler lays his plans

well ahead; the good general cultivates his resources.

[Tu Mu quotes the following from the SAN LUEH, ch. 2: "The

warlike prince controls his soldiers by his authority, kits them

together by good faith, and by rewards makes them serviceable.

If faith decays, there will be disruption; if rewards are

deficient, commands will not be respected."]

17. Move not unless you see an advantage; use not your

troops unless there is something to be gained; fight not unless

the position is critical.

[Sun Tzu may at times appear to be over-cautious, but he

never goes so far in that direction as the remarkable passage in

the TAO TE CHING, ch. 69. "I dare not take the initiative, but

prefer to act on the defensive; I dare not advance an inch, but

prefer to retreat a foot."]

18. No ruler should put troops into the field merely to

gratify his own spleen; no general should fight a battle simply

out of pique.

19. If it is to your advantage, make a forward move; if

not, stay where you are.

[This is repeated from XI. ss. 17. Here I feel convinced

that it is an interpolation, for it is evident that ss. 20 ought

to follow immediately on ss. 18.]

20. Anger may in time change to gladness; vexation may be

succeeded by content.

21. But a kingdom that has once been destroyed can never

come again into being;

[The Wu State was destined to be a melancholy example of

this saying.]

nor can the dead ever be brought back to life.

22. Hence the enlightened ruler is heedful, and the good

general full of caution. This is the way to keep a country at

peace and an army intact.

[1] "Unless you enter the tiger's lair, you cannot get hold of

the tiger's cubs."

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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.

[Cf. II. ss. ss. 1, 13, 14.]

There will be commotion at home and abroad, and men will drop

down exhausted on the highways.

[Cf. TAO TE CHING, ch. 30: "Where troops have been

quartered, brambles and thorns spring up. Chang Yu has the note:

"We may be reminded of the saying: 'On serious ground, gather in

plunder.' Why then should carriage and transportation cause

exhaustion on the highways?--The answer is, that not victuals

alone, but all sorts of munitions of war have to be conveyed to

the army. Besides, the injunction to 'forage on the enemy' only

means that when an army is deeply engaged in hostile territory,

scarcity of food must be provided against. Hence, without being

solely dependent on the enemy for corn, we must forage in order

that there may be an uninterrupted flow of supplies. Then,

again, there are places like salt deserts where provisions being

unobtainable, supplies from home cannot be dispensed with."]

As many as seven hundred thousand families will be impeded in

their labor.

[Mei Yao-ch`en says: "Men will be lacking at the plough-

tail." The allusion is to the system of dividing land into nine

parts, each consisting of about 15 acres, the plot in the center

being cultivated on behalf of the State by the tenants of the

other eight. It was here also, so Tu Mu tells us, that their

cottages were built and a well sunk, to be used by all in common.

[See II. ss. 12, note.] In time of war, one of the families had

to serve in the army, while the other seven contributed to its

support. Thus, by a levy of 100,000 men (reckoning one able-

bodied soldier to each family) the husbandry of 700,000 families

would be affected.]

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,

["For spies" is of course the meaning, though it would spoil

the effect of this curiously elaborate exordium if spies were

actually mentioned at this point.]

is the height of inhumanity.

[Sun Tzu's agreement is certainly ingenious. He begins by

adverting to the frightful misery and vast expenditure of blood

and treasure which war always brings in its train. Now, unless

you are kept informed of the enemy's condition, and are ready to

strike at the right moment, a war may drag on for years. The

only way to get this information is to employ spies, and it is

impossible to obtain trustworthy spies unless they are properly

paid for their services. But it is surely false economy to

grudge a comparatively trifling amount for this purpose, when

every day that the war lasts eats up an incalculably greater sum.

This grievous burden falls on the shoulders of the poor, and

hence Sun Tzu concludes that to neglect the use of spies is

nothing less than a crime against humanity.]

3. One who acts thus is no leader of men, no present help

to his sovereign, no master of victory.

[This idea, that the true object of war is peace, has its

root in the national temperament of the Chinese. Even so far

back as 597 B.C., these memorable words were uttered by Prince

Chuang of the Ch`u State: "The [Chinese] character for 'prowess'

is made up of [the characters for] 'to stay' and 'a spear'

(cessation of hostilities). Military prowess is seen in the

repression of cruelty, the calling in of weapons, the

preservation of the appointment of Heaven, the firm establishment

of merit, the bestowal of happiness on the people, putting

harmony between the princes, the diffusion of wealth."]

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.

[That is, knowledge of the enemy's dispositions, and what he

means to do.]

5. Now this foreknowledge cannot be elicited from spirits;

it cannot be obtained inductively from experience,

[Tu Mu's note is: "[knowledge of the enemy] cannot be

gained by reasoning from other analogous cases."]

nor by any deductive calculation.

[Li Ch`uan says: "Quantities like length, breadth,

distance and magnitude, are susceptible of exact mathematical

determination; human actions cannot be so calculated."]

6. Knowledge of the enemy's dispositions can only be

obtained from other men.

[Mei Yao-ch`en has rather an interesting note: "Knowledge

of the spirit-world is to be obtained by divination; information

in natural science may be sought by inductive reasoning; the laws

of the universe can be verified by mathematical calculation: but

the dispositions of an enemy are ascertainable through spies and

spies alone."]

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.

[Cromwell, one of the greatest and most practical of all

cavalry leaders, had officers styled 'scout masters,' whose

business it was to collect all possible information regarding the

enemy, through scouts and spies, etc., and much of his success in

war was traceable to the previous knowledge of the enemy's moves

thus gained." [1] ]

9. Having LOCAL SPIES means employing the services of the

inhabitants of a district.

[Tu Mu says: "In the enemy's country, win people over by

kind treatment, and use them as spies."]

10. Having INWARD SPIES, making use of officials of the

enemy.

[Tu Mu enumerates the following classes as likely to do good

service in this respect: "Worthy men who have been degraded from

office, criminals who have undergone punishment; also, favorite

concubines who are greedy for gold, men who are aggrieved at

being in subordinate positions, or who have been passed over in

the distribution of posts, others who are anxious that their side

should be defeated in order that they may have a chance of

displaying their ability and talents, fickle turncoats who always

want to have a foot in each boat. Officials of these several

kinds," he continues, "should be secretly approached and bound to

one's interests by means of rich presents. In this way you will

be able to find out the state of affairs in the enemy's country,

ascertain the plans that are being formed against you, and

moreover disturb the harmony and create a breach between the

sovereign and his ministers." The necessity for extreme caution,

however, in dealing with "inward spies," appears from an

historical incident related by Ho Shih: "Lo Shang, Governor of

I-Chou, sent his general Wei Po to attack the rebel Li Hsiung of

Shu in his stronghold at P`i. After each side had experienced a

number of victories and defeats, Li Hsiung had recourse to the

services of a certain P`o-t`ai, a native of Wu-tu. He began to

have him whipped until the blood came, and then sent him off to

Lo Shang, whom he was to delude by offering to cooperate with him

from inside the city, and to give a fire signal at the right

moment for making a general assault. Lo Shang, confiding in

these promises, march out all his best troops, and placed Wei Po

and others at their head with orders to attack at P`o-t`ai's

bidding. Meanwhile, Li Hsiung's general, Li Hsiang, had prepared

an ambuscade on their line of march; and P`o-t`ai, having reared

long scaling-ladders against the city walls, now lighted the

beacon-fire. Wei Po's men raced up on seeing the signal and

began climbing the ladders as fast as they could, while others

were drawn up by ropes lowered from above. More than a hundred

of Lo Shang's soldiers entered the city in this way, every one of

whom was forthwith beheaded. Li Hsiung then charged with all his

forces, both inside and outside the city, and routed the enemy

completely." [This happened in 303 A.D. I do not know where Ho

Shih got the story from. It is not given in the biography of Li

Hsiung or that of his father Li T`e, CHIN SHU, ch. 120, 121.]

11. Having CONVERTED SPIES, getting hold of the enemy's

spies and using them for our own purposes.

[By means of heavy bribes and liberal promises detaching

them from the enemy's service, and inducing them to carry back

false information as well as to spy in turn on their own

countrymen. On the other hand, Hsiao Shih-hsien says that we

pretend not to have detected him, but contrive to let him carry

away a false impression of what is going on. Several of the

commentators accept this as an alternative definition; but that

it is not what Sun Tzu meant is conclusively proved by his

subsequent remarks about treating the converted spy generously

(ss. 21 sqq.). Ho Shih notes three occasions on which converted

spies were used with conspicuous success: (1) by T`ien Tan in

his defense of Chi-mo (see supra, p. 90); (2) by Chao She on his

march to O-yu (see p. 57); and by the wily Fan Chu in 260 B.C.,

when Lien P`o was conducting a defensive campaign against Ch`in.

The King of Chao strongly disapproved of Lien P`o's cautious and

dilatory methods, which had been unable to avert a series of

minor disasters, and therefore lent a ready ear to the reports of

his spies, who had secretly gone over to the enemy and were

already in Fan Chu's pay. They said: "The only thing which

causes Ch`in anxiety is lest Chao Kua should be made general.

Lien P`o they consider an easy opponent, who is sure to be

vanquished in the long run." Now this Chao Kua was a sun of the

famous Chao She. From his boyhood, he had been wholly engrossed

in the study of war and military matters, until at last he came

to believe that there was no commander in the whole Empire who

could stand against him. His father was much disquieted by this

overweening conceit, and the flippancy with which he spoke of

such a serious thing as war, and solemnly declared that if ever

Kua was appointed general, he would bring ruin on the armies of

Chao. This was the man who, in spite of earnest protests from

his own mother and the veteran statesman Lin Hsiang-ju, was now

sent to succeed Lien P`o. Needless to say, he proved no match

for the redoubtable Po Ch`i and the great military power of

Ch`in. He fell into a trap by which his army was divided into

two and his communications cut; and after a desperate resistance

lasting 46 days, during which the famished soldiers devoured one

another, he was himself killed by an arrow, and his whole force,

amounting, it is said, to 400,000 men, ruthlessly put to the

sword.]

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.

[Tu Yu gives the best exposition of the meaning: "We

ostentatiously do thing calculated to deceive our own spies, who

must be led to believe that they have been unwittingly disclosed.

Then, when these spies are captured in the enemy's lines, they

will make an entirely false report, and the enemy will take

measures accordingly, only to find that we do something quite

different. The spies will thereupon be put to death." As an

example of doomed spies, Ho Shih mentions the prisoners released

by Pan Ch`ao in his campaign against Yarkand. (See p. 132.) He

also refers to T`ang Chien, who in 630 A.D. was sent by T`ai

Tsung to lull the Turkish Kahn Chieh-li into fancied security,

until Li Ching was able to deliver a crushing blow against him.

Chang Yu says that the Turks revenged themselves by killing T`ang

Chien, but this is a mistake, for we read in both the old and the

New T`ang History (ch. 58, fol. 2 and ch. 89, fol. 8

respectively) that he escaped and lived on until 656. Li I-chi

played a somewhat similar part in 203 B.C., when sent by the King

of Han to open peaceful negotiations with Ch`i. He has certainly

more claim to be described a "doomed spy", for the king of Ch`i,

being subsequently attacked without warning by Han Hsin, and

infuriated by what he considered the treachery of Li I-chi,

ordered the unfortunate envoy to be boiled alive.]

13. SURVIVING SPIES, finally, are those who bring back news

from the enemy's camp.

[This is the ordinary class of spies, properly so called,

forming a regular part of the army. Tu Mu says: "Your surviving

spy must be a man of keen intellect, though in outward appearance

a fool; of shabby exterior, but with a will of iron. He must be

active, robust, endowed with physical strength and courage;

thoroughly accustomed to all sorts of dirty work, able to endure

hunger and cold, and to put up with shame and ignominy." Ho Shih

tells the following story of Ta`hsi Wu of the Sui dynasty: "When

he was governor of Eastern Ch`in, Shen-wu of Ch`i made a hostile

movement upon Sha-yuan. The Emperor T`ai Tsu [? Kao Tsu] sent

Ta-hsi Wu to spy upon the enemy. He was accompanied by two other

men. All three were on horseback and wore the enemy's uniform.

When it was dark, they dismounted a few hundred feet away from

the enemy's camp and stealthily crept up to listen, until they

succeeded in catching the passwords used in the army. Then they

got on their horses again and boldly passed through the camp

under the guise of night-watchmen; and more than once, happening

to come across a soldier who was committing some breach of

discipline, they actually stopped to give the culprit a sound

cudgeling! Thus they managed to return with the fullest possible

information about the enemy's dispositions, and received warm

commendation from the Emperor, who in consequence of their report

was able to inflict a severe defeat on his adversary."]

14. Hence it is that which none in the whole army are more

intimate relations to be maintained than with spies.

[Tu Mu and Mei Yao-ch`en point out that the spy is

privileged to enter even the general's private sleeping-tent.]

None should be more liberally rewarded. In no other business

should greater secrecy be preserved.

[Tu Mu gives a graphic touch: all communication with spies

should be carried "mouth-to-ear." The following remarks on spies

may be quoted from Turenne, who made perhaps larger use of them

than any previous commander: "Spies are attached to those who

give them most, he who pays them ill is never served. They

should never be known to anybody; nor should they know one

another. When they propose anything very material, secure their

persons, or have in your possession their wives and children as

hostages for their fidelity. Never communicate anything to them

but what is absolutely necessary that they should know. [2] ]

15. Spies cannot be usefully employed without a certain

intuitive sagacity.

[Mei Yao-ch`en says: "In order to use them, one must know

fact from falsehood, and be able to discriminate between honesty

and double-dealing." Wang Hsi in a different interpretation

thinks more along the lines of "intuitive perception" and

"practical intelligence." Tu Mu strangely refers these

attributes to the spies themselves: "Before using spies we must

assure ourselves as to their integrity of character and the

extent of their experience and skill." But he continues: "A

brazen face and a crafty disposition are more dangerous than

mountains or rivers; it takes a man of genius to penetrate such."

So that we are left in some doubt as to his real opinion on the

passage."]

16. They cannot be properly managed without benevolence and

straightforwardness.

[Chang Yu says: "When you have attracted them by

substantial offers, you must treat them with absolute sincerity;

then they will work for you with all their might."]

17. Without subtle ingenuity of mind, one cannot make

certain of the truth of their reports.

[Mei Yao-ch`en says: "Be on your guard against the

possibility of spies going over to the service of the enemy."]

18. Be subtle! be subtle! and use your spies for every kind

of business.

[Cf. VI. ss. 9.]

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.

[Word for word, the translation here is: "If spy matters

are heard before [our plans] are carried out," etc. Sun Tzu's

main point in this passage is: Whereas you kill the spy himself

"as a punishment for letting out the secret," the object of

killing the other man is only, as Ch`en Hao puts it, "to stop his

mouth" and prevent news leaking any further. If it had already

been repeated to others, this object would not be gained. Either

way, Sun Tzu lays himself open to the charge of inhumanity,

though Tu Mu tries to defend him by saying that the man deserves

to be put to death, for the spy would certainly not have told the

secret unless the other had been at pains to worm it out of

him."]

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,

[Literally "visitors", is equivalent, as Tu Yu says, to

"those whose duty it is to keep the general supplied with

information," which naturally necessitates frequent interviews

with him.]

and door-keepers and sentries of the general in command. Our

spies must be commissioned to ascertain these.

[As the first step, no doubt towards finding out if any of

these important functionaries can be won over by bribery.]

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.

[Tu Yu says: "through conversion of the enemy's spies we

learn the enemy's condition." And Chang Yu says: "We must tempt

the converted spy into our service, because it is he that knows

which of the local inhabitants are greedy of gain, and which of

the officials are open to corruption."]

23. It is owing to his information, again, that we can

cause the doomed spy to carry false tidings to the enemy.

[Chang Yu says, "because the converted spy knows how the

enemy can best be deceived."]

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.

[As explained in ss. 22-24. He not only brings information

himself, but makes it possible to use the other kinds of spy to

advantage.]

Hence it is essential that the converted spy be treated with the

utmost liberality.

26. Of old, the rise of the Yin dynasty

[Sun Tzu means the Shang dynasty, founded in 1766 B.C. Its

name was changed to Yin by P`an Keng in 1401.

was due to I Chih

[Better known as I Yin, the famous general and statesman

who took part in Ch`eng T`ang's campaign against Chieh Kuei.]

who had served under the Hsia. Likewise, the rise of the Chou

dynasty was due to Lu Ya

[Lu Shang rose to high office under the tyrant Chou Hsin,

whom he afterwards helped to overthrow. Popularly known as T`ai

Kung, a title bestowed on him by Wen Wang, he is said to have

composed a treatise on war, erroneously identified with the

LIU T`AO.]

who had served under the Yin.

[There is less precision in the Chinese than I have thought

it well to introduce into my translation, and the commentaries on

the passage are by no means explicit. But, having regard to the

context, we can hardly doubt that Sun Tzu is holding up I Chih

and Lu Ya as illustrious examples of the converted spy, or

something closely analogous. His suggestion is, that the Hsia

and Yin dynasties were upset owing to the intimate knowledge of

their weaknesses and shortcoming which these former ministers

were able to impart to the other side. Mei Yao-ch`en appears to

resent any such aspersion on these historic names: "I Yin and Lu

Ya," he says, "were not rebels against the Government. Hsia

could not employ the former, hence Yin employed him. Yin could

not employ the latter, hence Hou employed him. Their great

achievements were all for the good of the people." Ho Shih is

also indignant: "How should two divinely inspired men such as I

and Lu have acted as common spies? Sun Tzu's mention of them

simply means that the proper use of the five classes of spies is

a matter which requires men of the highest mental caliber like I

and Lu, whose wisdom and capacity qualified them for the task.

The above words only emphasize this point." Ho Shih believes

then that the two heroes are mentioned on account of their

supposed skill in the use of spies. But this is very weak.]

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.

[Tu Mu closes with a note of warning: "Just as water, which

carries a boat from bank to bank, may also be the means of

sinking it, so reliance on spies, while production of great

results, is oft-times the cause of utter destruction."]

Spies are a most important element in water, because on them

depends an army's ability to move.

[Chia Lin says that an army without spies is like a man with

ears or eyes.]

[1] "Aids to Scouting," p. 2.

[2] "Marshal Turenne," p. 311.