The Art of War

SUNZI
c. 5th century BC (traditional)

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孫子兵法

Translated from the Classical Chinese with AI (Claude) and edited

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INTRODUCTION

The Art of War is traditionally attributed to Sunzi, "Master Sun," identified with Sun Wu, a general from the state of Qi said to have served King Helü of Wu around 500 BC. Almost nothing about him can be confirmed, and most scholars think the book took shape over the following two centuries, in the age of the Warring States, when standing armies of tens of thousands made war a full-time business of the state. Bamboo copies buried in a tomb in the second century BC and dug up in 1972 show that the thirteen chapters were already read much as we have them.

It is among the oldest books on strategy anywhere, and the most influential. Its starting point is that war is a matter of life and death for a state and must be calculated before it is fought: the best victory is the one won without fighting, by thwarting the enemy's plans and alliances; when there must be battle, the general wins by deception, speed, knowledge and positioning rather than by force. Its short, paired sentences—"know the enemy and know yourself," "all warfare is based on deception"—have been studied by generals in East Asia for two thousand years, and by business and political strategists everywhere since.

The Chinese here is the received text of the military canon (the *Seven Military Classics*) as copied for the imperial library of the Qianlong emperor in the 1780s, divided into short passages and cited by chapter and passage.

始計

Initial Assessments

	CHINESE	ENGLISH
1.1	孫子曰：兵者，國之大事，死生之地，存亡之道，不可不察也。	Sunzi said: War is a great affair of the state, a matter of life and death, the path to survival or extinction. It must be examined with care.[1]
1.2	故經之以五事，校之以計，而索其情：一曰道，二曰天，三曰地，四曰將，五曰法。	So base it on five factors, compare the two sides by calculation, and search out their true conditions. The first is the Way, the second Heaven, the third terrain, the fourth the general, the fifth method.
1.3	道者，令民與上同意，可與之死，可與之生，而不畏危也。天者，陰陽、寒暑、時制也。地者，遠近、險易、廣狹、死生也。將者，智、信、仁、勇、嚴也。法者，曲制、官道、主用也。凡此五者，將莫不聞，知之者勝，不知者不勝。	The Way is what makes the people one in purpose with those above them, so that they will die with them and live with them and not fear danger. Heaven is yin and yang, cold and heat, the order of the seasons. Terrain is far and near, rugged and level, broad and narrow, deadly and life-giving. The general is wisdom, trustworthiness, humaneness, courage, and strictness. Method means regulations: the organization of units, the ranks of officers, and the management of supplies. Every general has heard of these five. Those who know them win; those who do not know them do not win.[2]
1.4	故校之以計而索其情，曰：主孰有道？將孰有能？天地孰得？法令孰行？兵衆孰强？士卒孰練？賞罰孰明？吾以此知勝負矣。	So compare the two sides by calculation and search out their true conditions. Ask: Which ruler has the Way? Which general has ability? Which side has Heaven and terrain in its favor? Whose regulations and orders are carried out? Whose troops are stronger? Whose officers and soldiers are better trained? Whose rewards and punishments are clearer? By these I know victory and defeat.
1.5	將聽吾計，用之必勝，留之；將不聽吾計，用之必敗，去之。計利以聽，乃為之勢，以佐其外。勢者，因利而制權也。兵者，詭道也。故能而示之不能，用而示之不用，近而示之遠，遠而示之近。利而誘之，亂而取之，實而備之，强而避之，怒而撓之，卑而驕	A general who heeds my assessments and is employed will surely win: keep such a general. A general who does not heed my assessments and is employed will surely lose: dismiss such a general. Once the advantages of the assessment are heeded, create strategic power to support them

1 Sunzi means “Master Sun,” the traditional author of the book.
2 The Way (dao) here is the moral bond between ruler and people that makes them act as one.

	CHINESE	ENGLISH
	之，佚而勞之，親而離之。攻其無備，出其不意。此兵家之勝，不可先傳也。	from outside. Strategic power means following advantage to control the balance. Warfare is the way of deception. So when able, show that you are unable. When active, show that you are inactive. When near, show that you are far. When far, show that you are near. When they seek advantage, lure them. When they are in disorder, take them. When they are full, prepare for them. When they are strong, avoid them. When they are angry, provoke them. When they are humble, make them arrogant. When they are rested, tire them. When they are united, divide them. Attack where they have not prepared; strike out where they do not expect. These are the strategist's means to victory. They cannot be passed on in advance.[3]
1.6	夫未戰而廟算勝者，得算多也；未戰而廟算不勝者，得算少也。多算勝，少算不勝，而況於無算乎？吾於此觀之，勝負見矣。	Now, the side that wins in the calculations in the temple before battle has many counts in its favor. The side that does not win in the calculations in the temple before battle has few. Many counts win; few counts do not win. How much less with no counts at all! By looking at this, I can see victory and defeat.[4]

3 將 can also be read "if": "If you heed my assessments, employing me will bring victory, and I will stay."
4 War was planned in the ancestral temple, where the two sides were weighed with counting rods.

作戰

Going to War

	CHINESE	ENGLISH
2.1	孫子曰：凡用兵之法，馳車千駟，革車千乘，帶甲十萬，千里饋糧，內外之費，賓客之用，膠漆之材，車甲之奉，日費千金，然後十萬之師舉矣。	Sunzi said: As a rule, in the method of using troops there are a thousand swift four-horse chariots, a thousand leather-covered wagons, and a hundred thousand armored soldiers, with grain carried a thousand li. There are expenses at home and in the field, the costs of envoys and guests, materials such as glue and lacquer, and the upkeep of chariots and armor. These cost a thousand pieces of gold a day. Only then can an army of a hundred thousand be raised.[1]
2.2	其用戰也，勝久則鈍兵挫銳，攻城則力屈，久暴師則國用不足。	When troops are used in battle and victory is slow in coming, the troops are worn down and their edge is blunted. When they attack cities, their strength is exhausted. When the army is long exposed in the field, the state's resources will not suffice.
2.3	夫鈍兵挫銳，屈力殫貨，則諸侯乘其弊而起，雖有智者，不能善其後矣。故兵聞拙速，未覩巧之久也。夫兵久而國利者，未之有也。	When the troops are worn down and their edge blunted, their strength exhausted and their wealth spent, the other lords will exploit this weakness and rise up. Then even the wise cannot set the aftermath right. So in war we have heard of clumsy speed, but we have never seen cleverness that drags on. No state has ever gained from a drawn-out war.
2.4	故不盡知用兵之害者，則不能盡知用兵之利也。	So one who does not fully know the harm in using troops cannot fully know the benefit of using troops.
2.5	善用兵者，役不再籍，糧不三載；取用於國，因糧於敵，故軍食可足也。	Those skilled at using troops do not levy conscripts twice or ship grain three times. They take their equipment from home and their grain from the enemy. So the army's food can be sufficient.
2.6	國之貧於師者遠輸，遠輸則百姓貧；近師者貴賣，貴賣則百姓財竭，財竭則急於丘役。力屈財殫，中原內虛於家。百姓之費，十去其七；公家之費，破車罷馬，甲胄弓矢，戟楯矛櫓，丘牛大車，十去其六。	A state is impoverished by its army through long-distance transport. Long-distance transport impoverishes the common people. Near the army, goods sell dear. When goods sell dear, the people's wealth is drained. When wealth is drained, local

1 A li was roughly a third of a mile.

	CHINESE	ENGLISH
		levies grow pressing. With strength exhausted and wealth spent, the households of the heartland are emptied. Of the people's means, seven parts in ten are gone. Of the public means, six parts in ten are gone: broken chariots and worn-out horses, armor and helmets, bows and arrows, halberds and shields, spears and large shields, draft oxen and heavy wagons.
2.7	故智將務食於敵，食敵一鍾，當吾二十鍾；萁秆一石，當吾二十石。	So a wise general strives to feed off the enemy. One zhong of the enemy's food is worth twenty zhong of our own. One shi of the enemy's fodder is worth twenty shi of our own.[2]
2.8	故殺敵者，怒也；取敵之利者，貨也。車戰，得車十乘以上，賞其先得者，而更其旌旗。車雜而乘之，卒善而養之，是謂勝敵而益强。	So killing the enemy comes from anger. Taking the enemy's spoils comes from reward. In chariot fighting, when ten or more chariots are captured, reward those who captured the first, and change the chariots' flags and banners. Mix the captured chariots in with ours and ride them. Treat the captured soldiers well and care for them. This is called defeating the enemy and growing stronger.
2.9	故兵貴勝，不貴久。故知兵之將，民之司命，國家安危之主也。	So in war, value victory, not duration. So the general who knows war decides the fate of the people and is the master of the state's safety or danger.

2 The zhong was a large measure of grain; the shi, a measure of weight, is here used for fodder.

謀攻

Planning the Attack

	CHINESE	ENGLISH
3.1	孫子曰：夫用兵之法，全國為上，破國次之；全軍為上，破軍次之；全旅為上，破旅次之；全卒為上，破卒次之；全伍為上，破伍次之。是故百戰百勝，非善之善者也；不戰而屈人之兵，善之善者也。	Sunzi said: In the method of using troops, taking a state whole is best; breaking it is second. Taking an army whole is best; breaking it is second. Taking a battalion whole is best; breaking it is second. Taking a company whole is best; breaking it is second. Taking a squad whole is best; breaking it is second. For this reason, a hundred victories in a hundred battles is not the best of the best. To subdue the enemy's army without fighting is the best of the best.[1]
3.2	故上兵伐謀，其次伐交，其次伐兵，其下攻城。攻城之法，為不得已。修櫓轒轀，具器械，三月而後成；距闉，又三月而後已。將不勝其忿，而蟻附之，殺士卒三分之一，而城不拔者，此攻之災也。	So the highest form of warfare is to attack the enemy's plans. Next is to attack their alliances. Next is to attack their troops. The lowest is to attack their walled cities. Attacking cities is a method used only when there is no choice. Making large shields and covered assault carts and readying siege equipment takes three months. Building earthen ramps against the walls takes another three months. If the general, unable to bear the frustration, sends the troops clambering up the walls like ants, a third of the officers and soldiers are killed and the city still is not taken. This is the disaster of attacking.
3.3	故善用兵者，屈人之兵而非戰也，拔人之城而非攻也，毀人之國而非久也，必以全爭於天下，故兵不頓而利可全，此謀攻之法也。	So those skilled at using troops subdue the enemy's army, but not by fighting. They take the enemy's cities, but not by attacking. They destroy the enemy's state, but not by a long war. They must contend for all under Heaven by keeping things whole. So the troops are not worn down and the advantage can be kept whole. This is the method of planning the attack.
3.4	故用兵之法，十則圍之，五則攻之，倍則分之，敵則能戰之，少則能守之，不若則能避之。故小敵之堅，大敵之擒也。	So in the method of using troops: with ten times their number, surround them. With five times, attack them. With double, divide them. When evenly matched, be able to fight them. When fewer, be able to defend against them. When not their equal,

1 The army, battalion, company, and squad were units of 12,500, 500, 100, and 5 men.

	CHINESE	ENGLISH
		be able to avoid them. So a small force that holds out stubbornly is captured by a large one.
3.5	夫將者，國之輔也。輔周則國必强，輔隙則國必弱。	The general is the state's support. If the support fits closely, the state will surely be strong. If the support has gaps, the state will surely be weak.
3.6	故軍之所以患於君者三：不知軍之不可以進而謂之進，不知軍之不可以退而謂之退，是謂縻軍；不知三軍之事，而同三軍之政，則軍士惑矣；不知三軍之權，而同三軍之任，則軍士疑矣。三軍既惑且疑，則諸侯之難至矣，是謂亂軍引勝。	So there are three ways the army suffers at the hands of the ruler. Not knowing that the army cannot advance and ordering it to advance; not knowing that the army cannot retreat and ordering it to retreat: this is called tethering the army. Not knowing the affairs of the army yet sharing in its administration: then the soldiers are confused. Not knowing the army's need for flexible command yet sharing in its appointments: then the soldiers are suspicious. Once the army is both confused and suspicious, trouble from the other lords arrives. This is called disordering the army and handing the enemy victory.[2]
3.7	故知勝有五：知可以與戰不可以與戰者勝，識衆寡之用者勝，上下同欲者勝，以虞待不虞者勝，將能而君不御者勝。此五者，知勝之道也。	So there are five ways to know victory. Those who know when they can fight and when they cannot will win. Those who understand how to use large and small forces will win. Those whose high and low share the same desire will win. Those who are prepared and wait for the unprepared will win. Those whose general is able and whose ruler does not hold the reins will win. These five are the way to know victory.
3.8	故曰：知彼知己，百戰不殆；不知彼而知己，一勝一負；不知彼不知己，每戰必敗。	So it is said: Know the other and know yourself, and in a hundred battles you will not be in danger. Not knowing the other but knowing yourself, you will win one and lose one. Knowing neither the other nor yourself, you will be defeated in every battle.

2 "The army" renders sanjun, "the three armies" (left, center, and right), meaning the whole force.

軍形

Disposition

	CHINESE	ENGLISH
4.1	孫子曰：昔之善戰者，先為不可勝，以待敵之可勝。不可勝在己，可勝在敵。故善戰者，能為不可勝，不能使敵之必可勝。故曰：勝可知，而不可為。	Sunzi said: Those skilled in war in ancient times first made themselves unbeatable, then waited for the enemy to become beatable. Being unbeatable lies with oneself. Being beatable lies with the enemy. So those skilled in war can make themselves unbeatable, but cannot make the enemy surely beatable. So it is said: Victory can be known, but it cannot be made.
4.2	不可勝者，守也；可勝者，攻也。守則不足，攻則有餘。善守者，藏於九地之下；善攻者，動於九天之上，故能自保而全勝也。	Being unbeatable is a matter of defense. Being beatable is a matter of attack. Defend when strength is lacking; attack when it is abundant. Those skilled in defense hide beneath the ninefold earth. Those skilled in attack move above the ninefold heavens. So they can protect themselves and win complete victory.
4.3	見勝不過衆人之所知，非善之善者也；戰勝而天下曰善，非善之善者也。故舉秋毫不為多力，見日月不為明目，聞雷霆不為聰耳。	To see a victory that is no more than what the crowd can see is not the best of the best. To win in battle and have all under Heaven say “Well done” is not the best of the best. So lifting a strand of autumn down takes no great strength. Seeing the sun and moon takes no sharp eyes. Hearing thunder takes no keen ears.
4.4	古之所謂善戰者，勝於易勝者也。故善戰者之勝也，無智名，無勇功。故其戰勝不忒。不忒者，其所措勝，勝已敗者也。故善戰者，立於不敗之地，而不失敵之敗也。是故勝兵先勝而後求戰，敗兵先戰而後求勝。善用兵者，修道而保法，故能為勝敗之政。	What the ancients called skilled in war was winning where victory was easy. So the victories of those skilled in war bring no name for wisdom and no merit for courage. So their victories in battle are without error. Being without error means that whatever they set up ensures victory: they defeat an enemy already defeated. So those skilled in war take their stand on ground where they cannot be defeated, and let no chance of the enemy’s defeat slip by. For this reason, the victorious army first wins and then seeks battle; the defeated army first fights and then seeks victory. Those skilled at using troops cultivate the Way and uphold method. So they can govern victory and defeat.
4.5		

CHINESE	ENGLISH
兵法：一曰度，二曰量，三曰數，四曰稱，五曰勝。地生度，度生量，量生數，數生稱，稱生勝。故勝兵若以鎰稱銖，敗兵若以銖稱鎰。勝者之戰，若決積水於千仞之谿者，形也。	In the method of warfare there are: first, measurement; second, quantity; third, count; fourth, weighing; fifth, victory. Terrain gives rise to measurement. Measurement gives rise to quantity. Quantity gives rise to count. Count gives rise to weighing. Weighing gives rise to victory. So the victorious army is like a yi weighed against a zhu. The defeated army is like a zhu weighed against a yi. The victor's fighting is like water stored behind a dam and cut loose into a gorge a thousand ren deep. This is disposition.[1]

1 A yi was a heavy weight and a zhu a tiny one; by common reckonings a yi equaled about 500 zhu. A ren was about the height of a man.

兵勢

Strategic Power

	CHINESE	ENGLISH
5.1	孫子曰：凡治衆如治寡，分數是也；鬬衆如鬬寡，形名是也；三軍之衆，可使必受敵而無敗者，奇正是也；兵之所加，如以碬投卵者，虛實是也。	Sunzi said: As a rule, governing many is like governing few: it is a matter of organization. Fighting with many is like fighting with few: it is a matter of signals. That the whole army can meet the enemy and never be defeated is a matter of the unorthodox and the orthodox. That troops strike like a whetstone thrown at an egg is a matter of empty and full.[1]
5.2	凡戰者，以正合，以奇勝。故善出奇者，無窮如天地，不竭如江海。終而復始，日月是也。死而復生，四時是也。聲不過五，五聲之變，不可勝聽也；色不過五，五色之變，不可勝觀也；味不過五，五味之變，不可勝嘗也；戰勢不過奇正，奇正之變，不可勝窮也。奇正相生，如循環之無端，孰能窮之哉？	In general, in battle, one engages with the orthodox and wins with the unorthodox. So those skilled at bringing out the unorthodox are as endless as Heaven and Earth, as unfailing as the great rivers and the sea. They end and begin again, like the sun and moon. They die and are reborn, like the four seasons. There are no more than five notes, yet the variations of the five notes cannot all be heard. There are no more than five colors, yet the variations of the five colors cannot all be seen. There are no more than five tastes, yet the variations of the five tastes cannot all be tasted. The strategic power of battle is no more than the unorthodox and the orthodox, yet the variations of the unorthodox and the orthodox cannot all be exhausted. The unorthodox and the orthodox give rise to each other, like a ring without end. Who could ever come to the end of them?
5.3	激水之疾，至於漂石者，勢也；鷙鳥之疾，至於毀折者，節也。故善戰者，其勢險，其節短。勢如彍弩，節如發機。	The swiftness of rushing water, to the point of sweeping boulders away: this is strategic power. The swiftness of a bird of prey, to the point of smashing and breaking its quarry: this is timing. So for those skilled in war, their strategic power is steep and their timing is short. Strategic power is like a crossbow fully drawn. Timing is like the trigger let go.[2]
5.4		In the tangle and swirl, they fight amid disorder yet cannot be thrown into disorder. In the churn-

1 The unorthodox and the orthodox (qi and zheng) are surprise maneuvers and direct engagement. “Signals” renders xingming, “forms and names”: flags and drums.

	CHINESE	ENGLISH
	紛紛紜紜，鬬亂而不可亂；渾渾沌沌，形圓而不可敗。亂生於治，怯生於勇，弱生於强。治亂，數也；勇怯，〔勢也；强弱，〕形也。	ing and murk, their formation is round yet they cannot be defeated. Disorder arises from order. Cowardice arises from courage. Weakness arises from strength. Order and disorder are a matter of organization. Courage and cowardice are a matter of strategic power. Strength and weakness are a matter of disposition.
5.5	故善動敵者，形之，敵必從之；予之，敵必取之。以利動之，以本待之。	So those skilled at moving the enemy show them a form, and the enemy will follow it. They offer them something, and the enemy will take it. Move them with advantage; await them with the main force.
5.6	故善戰者，求之於勢，不責之於人，故能擇人而任勢。任勢者，其戰人也，如轉木石。木石之性，安則靜，危則動，方則止，圓則行。故善戰人之勢，如轉圓石於千仞之山者，勢也。	So those skilled in war seek it in strategic power and do not demand it of individuals. So they can choose their people and rely on strategic power. Those who rely on strategic power send people into battle the way one rolls logs and stones. It is the nature of logs and stones to be still when stable and to move when on a slope, to stop when square and to roll when round. So the strategic power of those skilled at sending people into battle is like rolling round boulders down a mountain a thousand ren high. This is strategic power.

2 Strategic power (shi) is the potential energy of a situation, like a drawn crossbow.

虛實

Empty and Full

	CHINESE	ENGLISH
6.1	孫子曰：凡先處戰地而待敵者佚，後處戰地而趨戰者勞。故善戰者，致人而不致於人。	Sunzi said: As a rule, whoever occupies the battleground first and awaits the enemy is rested. Whoever occupies the battleground later and hurries into battle is weary. So those skilled in war make others come to them and are not made to come to others.
6.2	能使敵人自至者，利之也；能使敵人不得至者，害之也。故敵佚能勞之，飽能饑之，安能動之。	To be able to make the enemy come on their own is to offer them advantage. To be able to keep the enemy from coming is to threaten them with harm. So when the enemy is rested, be able to tire them. When they are well fed, be able to starve them. When they are settled, be able to move them.
6.3	出其所不趨，趨其所不意。	Go out where they do not hurry; hurry where they do not expect.
6.4	行千里而不勞者，行於無人之地也。攻而必取者，攻其所不守也；守而必固者，守其所不攻也。故善攻者，敵不知其所守；善守者，敵不知其所攻。微乎微乎！至於無形；神乎神乎！至於無聲，故能為敵之司命。	To march a thousand li without weariness is to march through land where there is no one. To attack and surely take is to attack where they do not defend. To defend and surely hold is to defend where they do not attack. So against those skilled in attack, the enemy does not know where to defend. Against those skilled in defense, the enemy does not know where to attack. Subtle, so subtle—to the point of formlessness! Divine, so divine—to the point of soundlessness! So they can decide the enemy's fate.
6.5	進而不可禦者，衝其虛也；退而不可追者，速而不可及也。故我欲戰，敵雖高壘深溝，不得不與我戰者，攻其所必救也；我不欲戰，雖畫地而守之，敵不得與我戰者，乖其所之也。	To advance where none can stop us is to strike at their empty points. To withdraw and not be pursued is to be too swift to be overtaken. So if we want battle, the enemy cannot help but fight us, even behind high ramparts and deep moats, because we attack what they must rescue. If we do not want battle, the enemy cannot fight us, even if we only draw a line on the ground and hold it, because we divert them from where they are going.[1]
6.6		

	CHINESE	ENGLISH
	故形人而我無形，則我專而敵分。我專為一，敵分為十，是以十攻其一也，則我衆敵寡。能以衆擊寡，則吾之所與戰者，約矣。吾所與戰之地不可知，不可知，則敵所備者多，敵所備者多，則吾所與戰者寡矣。故備前則後寡，備後則前寡，備左則右寡，備右則左寡，無所不備，則無所不寡。寡者，備人者也；衆者，使人備己者也。	So if we make others show their form while we have none, then we are concentrated and the enemy is divided. We are concentrated into one; the enemy is divided into ten. This is using ten to attack their one. Then we are many and the enemy few. If we can strike the few with the many, then those we fight will be limited. The ground where we will fight cannot be known. If it cannot be known, the enemy prepares in many places. If the enemy prepares in many places, those we fight will be few. So if they prepare the front, they are few at the rear. If they prepare the rear, they are few at the front. If they prepare the left, they are few on the right. If they prepare the right, they are few on the left. If there is nowhere they do not prepare, there is nowhere they are not few. To be few is to prepare against others. To be many is to make others prepare against us.
6.7	故知戰之地，知戰之日，則可千里而會戰；不知戰地，不知戰日，則左不能救右，右不能救左，前不能救後，後不能救前，而況遠者數十里，近者數里乎！以吳度之，越人之兵雖多，亦奚益於勝哉！故曰：勝可為也。敵雖衆，可使無鬬。	So if we know the ground of battle and know the day of battle, we can march a thousand li and join battle. If we do not know the ground of battle and do not know the day of battle, then the left cannot rescue the right, the right cannot rescue the left, the front cannot rescue the rear, and the rear cannot rescue the front. How much less when the farthest are tens of li away and the nearest several li! Judging by Wu, though the troops of Yue are many, what good is that to their victory? So it is said: Victory can be made. Though the enemy is many, they can be kept from fighting.[2]
6.8	故策之而知得失之計，作之而知動靜之理，形之而知死生之地，角之而知有餘不足之處。	So: assess them, and learn the calculation of gain and loss; provoke them, and learn the pattern of their movement and stillness; make them show their form, and learn the ground of death and life; probe them, and learn where they have more than enough and where not enough.
6.9	故形兵之極，至於無形。無形，則深間不能窺，智者不能謀。因形而措勝於衆，衆不能知。人皆知我所以勝之形，而莫知吾所以制勝之形。故其戰勝不復，而應形於無窮。	So the ultimate in giving troops a form is to reach formlessness. If we are formless, the deepest spies cannot peer in, and the wise cannot lay plans against us. Following the form of things, we set victory before the crowd, and the crowd cannot understand it. Everyone knows the form by which we won, but no one knows the form by which we shaped the victory. So victories in battle are not repeated; they answer to form without end.

1 Empty and full (xu and shi) are weak and strong points, the subject of this chapter.
2 Wu and Yue were rival states in the southeast; Sunzi is said to have served Wu. Most other editions read 以吾度之, “as I reckon it.”

	CHINESE	ENGLISH
6.10	夫兵形象水，水之形，避高而趨下；兵之形，避實而擊虛。水因地而制流，兵因敵而制勝。故兵無常勢，水無常形，能因敵變化而取勝者，謂之神。	The army's form is like water. The form of water is to avoid the high and rush to the low; the form of the army is to avoid the full and strike the empty. Water follows the ground to determine its flow; the army follows the enemy to determine its victory. So the army has no constant strategic power, and water has no constant form. One who can change and transform according to the enemy and so seize victory is called divine.
6.11	故五行無常勝，四時無常位，日有短長，月有死生。	So of the five phases, none always prevails; of the four seasons, none keeps a constant place; the days are short and long; the moon dies and comes to life.[3]

3 The five phases (wood, fire, earth, metal, water) each overcome another in an endless cycle.

軍爭

The Contest for Advantage

	CHINESE	ENGLISH
7.1	孫子曰：凡用兵之法，將受命於君，合軍聚衆，交和而舍，莫難於軍爭。軍爭之難者，以迂為直，以患為利。故迂其途，而誘之以利，後人發，先人至，此知迂直之計者也。	Sunzi said: As a rule, in the method of using troops, the general takes orders from the ruler, assembles the army, gathers the troops, and makes camp facing the enemy. Nothing is harder than the contest for advantage. What is hard in the contest for advantage is to make the roundabout direct and to make adversity an advantage. So make your route roundabout and lure them with advantage; set out after others, arrive before others. This is knowing the calculation of the roundabout and the direct.
7.2	故軍爭為利，衆爭為危。舉軍而爭利，則不及；委軍而爭利，則輜重捐。是故卷甲而趨，日夜不處，倍道兼行，百里而爭利，則擒三將軍，勁者先，疲者後，其法十一而至；五十里而爭利，則蹶上將軍，其法半至；三十里而爭利，則三分之二至。是故軍無輜重則亡，無糧食則亡，無委積則亡。	So the contest of an army brings advantage; the contest of a crowd brings danger. If you move the whole army to contest for advantage, you will not arrive in time; if you leave part of the army behind to contest for advantage, the baggage trains will be lost. For this reason, if you roll up your armor and hurry, not stopping day or night, marching double distance at double pace, and contest for advantage a hundred li away, the generals of all three armies will be captured: the vigorous go first, the exhausted lag behind, and as a rule one in ten will arrive. At fifty li, the general of the forward army will fall, and as a rule half will arrive. At thirty li, two-thirds will arrive. For this reason an army without baggage trains perishes; without grain and food it perishes; without stores it perishes.[1]
7.3	故不知諸侯之謀者，不能豫交；不知山林、險阻、沮澤之形者，不能行軍；不用鄉導者，不能得地利。	So one who does not know the plans of the other lords cannot form alliances in advance; one who does not know the form of mountains and forests, precipices and defiles, marshes and wetlands cannot march an army; one who does not use local guides cannot gain the advantages of the ground.
7.4	故兵以詐立，以利動，以分合為變者也。故其疾如風，其徐如林，侵掠如火，不動如山，難知如陰，動	So war is founded on deceit, moves by advantage, and makes its changes by dividing and combining. So the army is swift as the wind, steady as the forest; raiding like fire, unmoving as the moun-

1 Other editions read “the contest for advantage brings danger”; this text instead contrasts an organized army with a mere crowd.

	CHINESE	ENGLISH
	如雷震。掠鄉分衆，廓地分利，懸權而動。先知迂直之計者勝，此軍爭之法也。	tain; hard to know as darkness, moving like a thunderclap. When plundering the countryside, divide your troops; when expanding territory, divide the gains; weigh things on the scales, then move. The one who first knows the calculation of the roundabout and the direct wins. This is the method of the contest for advantage.
7.5	《軍政》曰：「言不相聞，故為之金鼓；視不相見，故為之旌旗。」夫金鼓旌旗者，所以一人之耳目也。人既專一，則勇者不得獨進，怯者不得獨退，此用衆之法也。故夜戰多火鼓，晝戰多旌旗，所以變人之耳目也。	The *Military Administration* says: "Because spoken words cannot be heard, gongs and drums were made; because sight cannot reach, banners and flags were made." Gongs and drums, banners and flags are the means of unifying people's ears and eyes. Once people are united as one, the brave cannot go forward on their own, nor the timid fall back on their own. This is the method of using large numbers. So in night battles, use many fires and drums; in day battles, use many banners and flags. These are the means of changing what people hear and see.[2]
7.6	三軍可奪氣，將軍可奪心。是故朝氣銳，晝氣惰，暮氣歸。善用兵者，避其銳氣，擊其惰歸，此治氣者也；以治待亂，以靜待譁，此治心者也；以近待遠，以佚待勞，以飽待饑，此治力者也；無邀正正之旗，無擊堂堂之陣，此治變者也。	The spirit of the whole army can be taken from it; the heart of the general can be taken too. For this reason, spirit is sharp in the morning, slack by midday, and bent on home by evening. Those skilled at using troops avoid the enemy's sharp spirit and strike when it is slack and bent on home: this is managing spirit. With order, await disorder; with calm, await clamor: this is managing the heart. From nearby, await those from afar; at ease, await the weary; well fed, await the hungry: this is managing strength. Do not intercept banners in tight, orderly ranks; do not attack formations drawn up in imposing array: this is managing change.
7.7	故用兵之法，高陵勿向，背丘勿逆，佯北勿從，銳卒勿攻，餌兵勿食，歸師勿遏，圍師必闕，窮寇勿追，此用兵之法也。	So in the method of using troops: do not go up against an enemy on high hills; do not meet head-on an enemy with a hill at its back; do not follow a feigned retreat; do not attack crack troops; do not take the bait of decoy troops; do not block an army returning home; to an encircled army you must leave an opening; do not pursue a desperate enemy. This is the method of using troops.

2 The *Military Administration* is a lost book on warfare older than Sunzi.

九變

The Nine Variations

	CHINESE	ENGLISH
8.1	孫子曰：凡用兵之法，將受命於君，合軍聚衆。圮地無舍，衢地合交，絶地無留，圍地則謀，死地則戰。途有所不由，軍有所不擊，城有所不攻，地有所不爭，君命有所不受。故將通於九變之利者，知用兵矣；將不通於九變之利，雖知地形，不能得地之利矣；治兵不通九變之術，雖知五利，不能得人之用矣。	Sunzi said: As a rule, in the method of using troops, the general takes orders from the ruler, assembles the army, and gathers the troops. On broken ground, do not camp; on crossroads ground, join with allies; on cut-off ground, do not linger; on enclosed ground, make plans; on deadly ground, fight. There are roads one does not take, armies one does not strike, cities one does not attack, ground one does not contest, and commands of the ruler one does not accept. So a general who has mastered the advantages of the nine variations knows how to use troops. A general who has not mastered the advantages of the nine variations, even knowing the form of the terrain, cannot gain the advantages of the ground. One who directs troops without mastering the techniques of the nine variations, even knowing the five advantages, cannot get the full use of people.[1]
8.2	是故智者之慮，必雜於利害，雜於利而務可信也，雜於害而患可解也。是故屈諸侯者以害，役諸侯者以業，趨諸侯者以利。	For this reason the deliberations of the wise always mix advantage and harm. When advantage is mixed in, the task can be relied on; when harm is mixed in, trouble can be dispelled. For this reason, bend the other lords with harm; keep them busy with tasks; set them rushing with advantage.
8.3	故用兵之法，無恃其不來，恃吾有以待之；無恃其不攻，恃吾有所不可攻也。	So in the method of using troops: do not rely on their not coming, but on our having the means to await them; do not rely on their not attacking, but on our being impossible to attack.
8.4	故將有五危：必死，可殺；必生，可虜；忿速，可侮；廉潔，可辱；愛民，可煩。凡此五者，將之過也，用兵之災也。覆軍殺將，必以五危，不可不察也。	So a general has five dangers. Set on dying: can be killed. Set on living: can be captured. Quick to anger: can be taunted. Scrupulous about purity: can be disgraced. Loving the people: can be worn down. These five are faults in a general and disasters in using troops. When the army is wiped out and the general killed, the cause is always the five dangers. They must be examined with care.

1 The nine variations and the five advantages are not spelled out; commentators count the items in this passage in different ways.

行軍

Moving the Army

	CHINESE	ENGLISH
9.1	孫子曰：凡處軍相敵，絶山依谷，視生處高，戰隆無登，此處山之軍也。絶水必遠水，客絶水而來，勿迎之於水内，令半渡而擊之，利；欲戰者，無附水而迎客，視生處高，無迎水流，此處水上之軍也。絶斥澤，唯亟去勿留，若交軍於斥澤之中，必依水草，而背衆樹，此處斥澤之軍也。平陸處易，右背高，前死後生，此處平陸之軍也。凡此四軍之利，黄帝之所以勝四帝也。	Sunzi said: As a rule, in positioning the army and observing the enemy: cross mountains keeping close to valleys; face the side of life and occupy high ground; when the fighting is on the heights, do not climb up to it. This is positioning an army in the mountains. Having crossed water, be sure to move well away from it. When an invader crosses water to come at you, do not meet them in the water; strike when half have crossed: that is advantageous. If you want to fight, do not meet the invader close by the water; face the side of life and occupy high ground; do not face into the current. This is positioning an army near water. When crossing salt marshes, simply leave quickly and do not linger. If you meet the enemy in the middle of salt marshes, you must stay by water and grass and keep woods at your back. This is positioning an army in salt marshes. On level plains, occupy easy ground, with high ground on your right and at your back, death in front and life behind. This is positioning an army on level plains. The advantages of these four ways of positioning an army are how the Yellow Emperor defeated the four emperors.[1]
9.2	凡軍好高而惡下，貴陽而賤陰，養生處實，軍無百疾，是謂必勝。丘陵隄防，必處其陽，而右背之，此兵之利，地之助也。上雨，水沫至，欲涉者，待其定也。	As a rule, an army likes the high and dislikes the low, values the sunny side and scorns the shady side. Nurture life, occupy solid ground, and the army will be free of the hundred illnesses: this is called certain victory. On hills, mounds, dikes, and embankments, you must occupy the sunny side, keeping them on your right and at your back. This is an advantage to the troops and help from the ground. When it has rained upstream and foam comes down, those who want to ford should wait until it settles.
9.3	凡地有絶澗，天井、天牢、天羅、天陷、天隙，必亟去之，勿近也。吾遠之，敵近之；吾迎之，敵背之。	As a rule, where the ground has steep gorges with torrents, Heaven's Wells, Heaven's Prisons, Heav-

1 The Yellow Emperor is a legendary ruler of high antiquity, said to have defeated the rulers of the four directions.

	CHINESE	ENGLISH
	軍旁有險阻、潢井、林木、蒹葭翳薈者，必謹覆索之，此伏姦之所也。	en's Nets, Heaven's Pits, and Heaven's Cracks, you must leave quickly and not go near. We keep far from them, and let the enemy be near them; we face them, and let the enemy have them at its back. When beside the army there are precipices and defiles, ponds and hollows, woods and trees, or reeds and rushes with dense cover, you must search them carefully and repeatedly: these are places where ambushers and spies hide.[2]

READING THE ENEMY

A catalog of signs, from dust and birds to speech and punishments, and what each reveals about the enemy.

	CHINESE	ENGLISH
9.4	近而靜者，恃其險也；遠而挑戰者，欲人之進也；其所居易者，利也；衆樹動者，來也；衆草多障者，疑也；鳥起者，伏也；獸駭者，覆也；塵高而銳者，車來也；卑而廣者，徒來也；散而條達者，樵採也；少而往來者，營軍也；辭卑而益備者，進也；辭强而進驅者，退也；輕車先出，居其側者，陣也；無約而請和者，謀也；奔走而陳兵者，期也；半進半退者，誘也；仗而立者，饑也；汲而先飲者，渴也；見利而不知進者，勞也；鳥集者，虛也；夜呼者，恐也；軍擾者，將不重也；旌旗動者，亂也；吏怒者，倦也；殺馬食肉者，軍無糧也；懸甀不返其舍者，窮寇也；諄諄翕翕，徐與人言者，失衆也；數賞者，窘也；數罰者，困也；先暴而後畏其衆者，不精之至也；來委謝者，欲休息也。兵怒而相迎，久而不合，又不相去，必謹察之。	Near yet quiet: they are relying on their strong position. Far off yet provoking battle: they want the other side to advance. Camped on easy ground: it is to their advantage. Many trees moving: they are coming. Many screens in the grass: they mean to mislead. Birds rising: an ambush. Animals startled: a surprise attack. Dust high and sharp: chariots are coming. Low and broad: infantry is coming. Scattered and in streaks: they are gathering firewood. Sparse and moving to and fro: they are making camp. Humble words but increased preparations: they will advance. Strong words and driving forward: they will retreat. Light chariots coming out first and taking position on the flanks: they are forming up. Asking for peace without any agreement: a plot. Running about and setting out troops: the appointed time has come. Half advancing, half retreating: a lure. Leaning on their weapons as they stand: they are hungry. Drawing water and drinking first: they are thirsty. Seeing advantage but not advancing: they are exhausted. Birds gathering: the camp is empty. Shouting at night: they are afraid. The army in turmoil: the general lacks gravity. Banners and flags shifting: disorder. Officers angry: they are weary. Killing horses to eat the meat: the army has no grain. Hanging up their pots and not returning to their quarters: a desperate enemy. Murmuring and whispering, speaking to people slowly: the general has lost the troops. Frequent rewards: they are in straits. Frequent punishments: they are in distress. Harsh at first and then afraid of the troops:

2 These "Heaven's" names describe natural traps: deep hollows, closed-in valleys, tangled thickets, sinking ground, and narrow clefts.

	CHINESE	ENGLISH
		utterly inept. Envoys coming with gifts and apologies: they want a respite. When troops come at you in anger but for a long time neither engage nor withdraw, you must watch them with great care.
9.5	兵非貴益多，惟無武進，足以併力、料敵、取人而已。夫惟無慮而易敵者，必擒於人。	In war, more is not better. Only do not advance on force alone; it is enough to concentrate your strength, size up the enemy, and win people over. It is only the one who lacks forethought and takes the enemy lightly who will surely be captured by others.
9.6	卒未親附而罰之，則不服，不服則難用也。卒已親附而罰不行，則不可用也。故令之以文，齊之以武，是謂必取。令素行以教其民，則民服；令不素行以教其民，則民不服。令素行者，與衆相得也。	If the soldiers are punished before they have bonded with you, they will not comply, and if they do not comply, they are hard to use. If they have bonded with you and punishments are not carried out, they cannot be used. So command them with civility and bring them into line with martial discipline: this is called certain success. If commands are consistently carried out in training the people, the people comply; if commands are not consistently carried out in training the people, the people do not comply. When commands are consistently carried out, leader and troops are in accord.

地形

Forms of Terrain

	CHINESE	ENGLISH
10.1	孫子曰：地形有通者、有掛者、有支者、有隘者、有險者、有遠者。我可以往，彼可以來，曰通。通形者，先居高陽，利糧道，以戰則利。可以往，難以返，曰掛。掛形者，敵無備，出而勝之；敵若有備，出而不勝，難以返，不利。我出而不利，彼出而不利，曰支。支形者，敵雖利我，我無出也，引而去之，令敵半出而擊之，利。隘形者，我先居之，必盈之以待敵。若敵先居之，盈而勿從，不盈而從之。險形者，我先居之，必居高陽以待敵；若敵先居之，引而去之，勿從也。遠形者，勢均，難以挑戰，戰而不利。凡此六者，地之道也，將之至任，不可不察也。	Sunzi said: Among the forms of terrain there are the accessible, the snaring, the stalemated, the narrow, the precipitous, and the distant. Where we can go and they can come: this is called accessible. On accessible terrain, be first to occupy the high and sunny side, and keep the supply routes secure; then fighting is advantageous. Where you can go but it is hard to return: this is called snaring. On snaring terrain, if the enemy is unprepared, go out and defeat them; if the enemy is prepared and you go out and do not win, it is hard to return: not advantageous. Where going out is not advantageous for us and going out is not advantageous for them: this is called stalemated. On stalemated terrain, even if the enemy offers us an advantage, we do not go out; we lead our troops away, and when half the enemy has come out, we strike: advantageous. On narrow terrain, if we occupy it first, we must man it fully and await the enemy. If the enemy occupies it first and has manned it fully, do not follow them in; if it is not fully manned, follow them in. On precipitous terrain, if we occupy it first, we must occupy the high and sunny side and await the enemy; if the enemy occupies it first, lead the troops away and do not follow them. On distant terrain, when strategic power is equal, it is hard to provoke battle, and fighting is not advantageous. These six are the way of the ground; they are the general's utmost responsibility and must be examined with care.

SIX WAYS AN ARMY FAILS

Flight, slackness, foundering, disintegration, disorder and rout, each traced to a fault of the general.

	CHINESE	ENGLISH
10.2	故兵有走者、有弛者、有陷者、有崩者、有亂者、有北者。凡此六者，非天地之災，將之過也。夫勢均，以一擊十，曰走；卒强吏弱，曰弛；吏强卒弱，曰陷；大吏怒而不服，遇敵懟而自戰，將不知其能，曰	So armies suffer flight, slackness, foundering, disintegration, disorder, and rout. These six are not disasters from Heaven and Earth but faults of the general. When strategic power is equal and one strikes ten: this is called flight. When the soldiers

	CHINESE	ENGLISH
	崩；將弱不嚴，教道不明，吏卒無常，陳兵縱橫，曰亂；將不能料敵，以少合衆，以弱擊强，兵無選鋒，曰北。凡此六者，敗之道也，將之至任，不可不察也。	are strong and the officers weak: this is called slackness. When the officers are strong and the soldiers weak: this is called foundering. When the senior officers are angry and insubordinate, meet the enemy and fight on their own out of resentment, and the general does not know their abilities: this is called disintegration. When the general is weak and not strict, instruction and guidance are unclear, officers and soldiers have no constancy, and the troops are deployed every which way: this is called disorder. When the general cannot size up the enemy, engages many with few, strikes the strong with the weak, and the army has no picked vanguard: this is called rout. These six are the way of defeat; they are the general's utmost responsibility and must be examined with care.
10.3	夫地形者，兵之助也。料敵制勝，計險阨遠近，上將之道也。知此而用戰者必勝，不知此而用戰者必敗。故戰道必勝，主曰無戰，必戰可也；戰道不勝，主曰必戰，無戰可也。故進不求名，退不避罪，惟民是保，而利於主，國之寶也。	The form of the terrain is an aid to the army. To size up the enemy and shape victory, to calculate dangers and defiles, the distant and the near: this is the way of the superior general. One who knows this and fights will surely win; one who does not know this and fights will surely lose. So if the way of battle points to certain victory, even if the ruler says, "Do not fight," it is right to fight. If the way of battle does not point to victory, even if the ruler says, "You must fight," it is right not to fight. So a general who advances not to win a name and retreats not to escape punishment, who seeks only to protect the people and to serve the ruler's interest, is the treasure of the state.
10.4	視卒如嬰兒，故可與之赴深谿；視卒如愛子，故可與之俱死。愛而不能令，厚而不能使，亂而不能治，譬如驕子，不可用也。	Look on your soldiers as babies, and they will go with you into deep ravines; look on them as your beloved children, and they will die at your side. Loving them but unable to command them, generous to them but unable to employ them, seeing their disorder but unable to bring them to order—they are like pampered children and cannot be used.
10.5	知吾卒之可以擊，而不知敵之不可擊，勝之半也；知敵之可擊，而不知吾卒之不可以擊，勝之半也；知敵之可擊，知吾卒之可以擊，而不知地形之不可以戰，勝之半也。故知兵者，動而不迷，舉而不窮。故曰：知彼知己，勝乃不殆；知天知地，勝乃可全。	To know that our soldiers can strike, but not know that the enemy cannot be struck, is half of victory. To know that the enemy can be struck, but not know that our soldiers cannot strike, is half of victory. To know that the enemy can be struck and that our soldiers can strike, but not know that the form of the terrain does not allow battle, is half of victory. So those who know war move without confusion and act without coming to a dead end. So it is said: Know the other and know yourself,

CHINESE	ENGLISH
	and victory will not be in danger; know Heaven and know the ground, and victory can be complete.

九地

The Nine Kinds of Ground

	CHINESE	ENGLISH
11.1	孫子曰：用兵之法，有散地，有輕地，有爭地，有交地，有衢地，有重地，有圮地，有圍地，有死地。諸侯自戰其地者，為散地；入人之地而不深者，為輕地；我得亦利，彼得亦利者，為爭地；我可以往，彼可以來者，為交地；諸侯之地三屬，先至而得天下之衆者，為衢地；入人之地深，背城邑多者，為重地；山林、險阻、沮澤，凡難行之道者，為圮地；所由入者隘，所從歸者迂，彼寡可以擊吾之衆者，為圍地；疾戰則存，不疾戰則亡者，為死地。是故散地則無戰，輕地則無止，爭地則無攻，交地則無絶，衢地則合交，重地則掠，圮地則行，圍地則謀，死地則戰。	Sunzi said: In the method of using troops, there is scattering ground, there is light ground, there is contested ground, there is connecting ground, there is crossroads ground, there is heavy ground, there is broken ground, there is enclosed ground, there is deadly ground. When the lords fight in their own territory, it is scattering ground. When one enters others' territory but not deeply, it is light ground. Where it is advantageous for us to take it and advantageous for them to take it, it is contested ground. Where we can go and they can come, it is connecting ground. Where the territories of three lords meet, and whoever arrives first wins the multitudes of all under Heaven, it is crossroads ground. When one has entered deep into others' territory, with many walled cities and towns at one's back, it is heavy ground. Mountains and forests, precipices and defiles, marshes and wetlands—all roads hard to travel—are broken ground. Where the way in is narrow and the way back is roundabout, so that their few can strike our many, it is enclosed ground. Where those who fight quickly survive and those who do not fight quickly perish, it is deadly ground. For this reason, on scattering ground, do not fight; on light ground, do not stop; on contested ground, do not attack; on connecting ground, do not be cut off; on crossroads ground, join with allies; on heavy ground, plunder; on broken ground, keep moving; on enclosed ground, make plans; on deadly ground, fight.
11.2	古之所謂善用兵者，能使敵人前後不相及，衆寡不相恃，貴賤不相救，上下不相收，卒離而不集，兵合而不齊。合於利而動，不合於利而止。	Those the ancients called skilled at using troops could keep the enemy's front and rear from reaching each other, the many and the few from relying on each other, the noble and the humble from rescuing each other, those above and those below from holding together. The enemy's soldiers scattered and did not gather; when the troops came together, they were not in order. They

	CHINESE	ENGLISH
		moved when it accorded with advantage and stopped when it did not.
11.3	敢問：「敵衆整而將來，待之若何？」曰：「先奪其所愛，則聽矣。」兵之情主速，乘人之不及，由不虞之道，攻其所不戒也。	May I ask: "If the enemy comes in great numbers and good order, how should we meet them?" Answer: "First seize what they love most, and they will listen." It is the nature of war that speed governs everything. Exploit what others cannot reach in time, travel by routes they have not anticipated, and strike where they have set no watch.
11.4	凡為客之道，深入則專，主人不克。掠於饒野，三軍足食。謹養而勿勞，并氣積力，運兵計謀，為不可測。投之無所往，死且不北。死焉不得，士人盡力。兵卒甚陷則不懼，無所往則固，入深則拘，不得已則鬬。是故其兵不修而戒，不求而得，不約而親，不令而信。禁祥去疑，至死無所之。吾士無餘財，非惡貨也；無餘命，非惡壽也。令發之日，士卒坐者涕沾襟，偃卧者涕交頤。投之無所往，則諸、劌之勇也。	As a rule, this is the way of an invading army: go in deep, and the troops are united, and the defenders cannot overcome them. Plunder the rich countryside, and the whole army has enough to eat. Take care to nourish them and do not wear them out. Unite their spirit and build up their strength. Move the troops and lay plans so that you cannot be fathomed. Throw them where there is nowhere to go, and they will die before they run. When death is the price, what will they not accomplish? Officers and soldiers will give everything they have. When soldiers are deeply trapped, they do not fear. When there is nowhere to go, they hold firm. When they are deep inside, they hold together. When there is no choice, they fight. For this reason the troops are on guard without being drilled, deliver without being asked, are loyal without being pledged, and are faithful without being ordered. Ban omen-reading and dispel doubts, and until death they will go nowhere else. If our officers keep no wealth to spare, it is not because they scorn riches; if they keep no life to spare, it is not because they scorn long life. On the day the orders go out, those soldiers who are sitting wet their collars with tears, and those lying flat have tears meeting under their chins. Throw them where there is nowhere to go, and they will have the courage of Zhuan Zhu and Cao Gui.[1]
11.5	故善用兵者，譬如率然。率然者，常山之蛇也。擊其首則尾至，擊其尾則首至，擊其中則首尾俱至。	So those skilled at using troops are like the Shuairan. The Shuairan is a snake of Mount Chang. Strike its head, and its tail comes. Strike its tail, and its head comes. Strike its middle, and head and tail both come.[2]
11.6		May I ask: "Can troops be made like the Shuairan?" Answer: "They can. The people of Wu and the

1 Zhuan Zhu and Cao Gui were legendary daredevils: Zhuan Zhu assassinated King Liao of Wu in 515 BC, and Cao Gui held Duke Huan of Qi at knifepoint to win back lost land.

	CHINESE	ENGLISH
	敢問：「可使如率然乎？」曰：「可。夫吳人與越人相惡也，當其同舟濟而遇風，其相救也，如左右手。」是故方馬埋輪，未足恃也；齊勇若一，政之道也；剛柔皆得，地之理也。故善用兵者，攜手若使一人，不得已也。	people of Yue hate each other. But put them in one boat crossing a river when a gale blows up, and they will save each other like left hand and right." For this reason, tying the horses together and burying the chariot wheels is not enough to rely on. To make them brave as one is the way of governing them. To make good use of both the hard and the soft is the principle of terrain. So those skilled at using troops make the army link hands and move like one person, because it has no choice.
11.7	將軍之事，靜以幽，正以治。能愚士卒之耳目，使之無知；易其事，革其謀，使人無識；易其居，迂其途，使人不得慮。帥與之期，若登高而去其梯；帥與之深入諸侯之地，而發其機，若驅羣羊。驅而往，驅而來，莫知所之。聚三軍之衆，投之于險，此將軍之事也。九地之變，屈伸之利，人情之理，不可不察也。	The business of the general is to be calm and inscrutable, upright and disciplined. The general can keep the eyes and ears of the officers and soldiers in the dark, so that they know nothing. The general changes the undertakings and revises the plans, so that no one grasps them. The general moves the camp and winds the route, so that no one can work out the intent. When the commander sets the decisive moment for them, it is like sending them up high and removing the ladder. When the commander leads them deep into the lands of the other lords and releases the trigger, it is like herding a flock of sheep: driven this way, driven that way, no one knows where they are going. To gather the whole army and throw it into danger—this is the business of the general. The variations of the nine grounds, the advantages of drawing in and stretching out, the patterns of human feeling—these must be examined with care.

THE NINE GROUNDS AGAIN

The kinds of ground are defined once more, with what the general will do on each.

	CHINESE	ENGLISH
11.8	凡為客之道，深則專，淺則散。去國越境而師者，絕地也；四通者，衢地也；入深者，重地也；入淺者，輕地也；背固前隘者，圍地也；無所往者，死地也。是故散地，吾將一其志；輕地，吾將使之屬；爭地，吾將趨其後；交地，吾將謹其守；衢地，吾將固其結；重地，吾將繼其食；圮地，吾將進其途；圍地，吾將塞其闕；死地，吾將示之以不活。故兵之情：圍則禦，不得已則鬬，過則從。	As a rule, this is the way of an invading army: deep in, the troops are united; shallow in, they scatter. Leaving your state and crossing the border with an army—this is cut-off ground. Open on all four sides—this is crossroads ground. Deep inside—this is heavy ground. Shallow inside—this is light ground. Strongholds behind and narrows in front—this is enclosed ground. Nowhere to go—this is deadly ground. For this reason, on scattering ground, I will unify their will. On light ground, I will keep them connected. On contested ground, I

2 Mount Chang is Mount Heng, a sacred peak renamed to avoid a Han emperor's personal name. The snake's name, Shuairan, means "sudden" or "swift."

	CHINESE	ENGLISH
		will press my rear units forward. On connecting ground, I will guard with care. On crossroads ground, I will strengthen my alliances. On heavy ground, I will keep the food coming. On broken ground, I will advance along the route. On enclosed ground, I will block the gaps. On deadly ground, I will show them there is no living through it. So the nature of troops is this: when surrounded, they resist; when there is no choice, they fight; when pushed past the limit, they obey.
11.9	是故不知諸侯之謀者，不能豫交；不知山林、險阻、沮澤之形者，不能行軍；不用鄉導者，不能得地利。四五者一不知，非霸王之兵也。夫霸王之兵，伐大國，則其衆不得聚；威加於敵，則其交不得合。是故不爭天下之交，不養天下之權，信己之私，威加於敵，故其城可拔，其國可隳。施無法之賞，懸無政之令。犯三軍之衆，若使一人。犯之以事，勿告以言；犯之以利，勿告以害。投之亡地然後存，陷之死地然後生。夫衆陷於害，然後能為勝敗。	For this reason, one who does not know the plans of the other lords cannot form alliances in advance; one who does not know the form of mountains and forests, precipices and defiles, marshes and wetlands cannot march an army; one who does not use local guides cannot gain the advantages of the ground. An army ignorant of even one of these four or five things is not the army of a hegemon or a king. When the army of a hegemon or a king attacks a great state, that state cannot gather its forces. When its might is brought to bear on the enemy, the enemy's alliances cannot come together. For this reason it does not contend for alliances with all under Heaven, nor build up power in all under Heaven. It relies on its own resources and brings its might to bear on the enemy. So the enemy's cities can be taken and the enemy's state overthrown. Bestow rewards beyond the regulations; issue orders beyond the usual rules. Put the whole army to work as if employing one person. Set them to work with tasks; do not explain in words. Set them to work with advantages; do not tell them of the harm. Throw them into ground of ruin, and then they survive; sink them into deadly ground, and then they live. Only when the troops have fallen into harm can they decide victory and defeat.
11.10	夫為兵之事，在順詳敵之意，并力一向，千里殺將，是謂巧能成事。	The business of waging war lies in going along with the enemy's intentions and studying them with care. Concentrate your strength in one direction, and a thousand li away you kill their general. This is called achieving things by skill.
11.11	是故政舉之日，夷關折符，無通其使；厲於廊廟之上，以誅其事。敵人開闔，必亟入之，先其所愛，微與之期，踐墨隨敵，以決戰事。是故始如處女，敵人開户；後如脫兔，敵不及拒。	For this reason, on the day the campaign is launched, close the passes, snap the tallies, and allow no envoys through. In the halls of the temple, be rigorous, so as to bring the matter to its end. If the enemy leaves an opening, you must get in quickly. Make what they love your first target, and

CHINESE	ENGLISH
	quietly fix the time to meet them. Keep to the carpenter's ink line yet follow the enemy, so as to settle the battle. For this reason, at first be like a maiden, and the enemy will open the door; afterward be like a running hare, and the enemy will have no time to resist.

火攻

Fire Attacks

	CHINESE	ENGLISH
12.1	孫子曰：凡火攻有五：一曰火人，二曰火積，三曰火輜，四曰火庫，五曰火隊。行火必有因，烟火必素具。發火有時，起火有日。時者，天之燥也。日者，月在箕、壁、翼、軫也。凡此四宿者，風起之日也。	Sunzi said: In general, fire attacks are of five kinds. The first is burning people. The second is burning stores. The third is burning baggage trains. The fourth is burning arsenals. The fifth is burning supply lines. Using fire requires the right means, and the materials for fire must always be at hand. Setting fires has its season; starting them has its days. The season: when the air is dry. The days: when the moon is in the lodges Ji, Bi, Yi and Zhen. These four lodges bring days when the wind gets up.[1]
12.2	凡火攻，必因五火之變而應之：火發於內，即早應之於外；火發而其兵靜者，待而勿攻，極其火力，可從而從之，不可從則止；火可發於外，無待於內，以時發之；火發上風，無攻下風；晝風久，夜風止。	In general, in fire attacks, you must respond to the five variations of fire. When fire starts within their camp, answer it early from outside. If fire starts but their troops keep quiet, hold back and do not attack. Let the fire reach its full force; follow up if you can, and stop if you cannot. When fire can be started from outside, do not wait for it inside; start it at the right time. When fire is started upwind, do not attack from downwind. By day the wind blows long; at night it stops.
12.3	凡軍必知五火之變，以數守之。故以火佐攻者明，以水佐攻者强。水可以絶，不可以奪。	Every army must know the five variations of fire and watch for the right days by calculation. So those who back an attack with fire are clear-sighted; those who back an attack with water are strong. Water can cut off, but it cannot seize.
12.4	夫戰勝攻取，而不修其功者凶，命曰「費留」。故曰：明主慮之，良將修之。非利不動，非得不用，非危不戰。主不可以怒而興師，將不可以愠而致戰。合於利而動，不合於利而止。怒可以復喜，愠可以復悅，亡國不可以復存，死者不可以復生。故曰：明主愼之，良將警之，此安國全軍之道也。	To win battles and take what you attack, yet not secure the achievement, is disastrous. This is called "wasteful delay." So it is said: The enlightened ruler considers it; the good general carries it through. Without advantage, do not move. Without gain, do not deploy. Without danger, do not fight. The ruler must not raise an army out of anger; the general must not join battle out of resentment. Move when it accords with advantage; stop when it does not. Anger can turn back into

1 The meaning of 隊 is disputed; "supply lines" is one reading, "formations" another. Ji, Bi, Yi and Zhen are lunar lodges, the constellations through which the moon passes.

CHINESE	ENGLISH
	joy; resentment can turn back into pleasure. But a state that perishes cannot be brought back into being, and the dead cannot live again. So it is said: The enlightened ruler is careful about this; the good general is wary of it. This is the way to keep the state safe and the army whole.[2]

2 “Wasteful delay” (fei liu) is obscure: it may mean squandering resources by lingering, or failing to reward those who earned it.

用間

Using Spies

	CHINESE	ENGLISH
13.1	孫子曰：凡興師十萬，出征千里，百姓之費，公家之奉，日費千金，內外騷動，怠於道路，不得操事者，七十萬家。相守數年，以爭一日之勝，而愛爵祿百金，不知敵之情者，不仁之至也，非人之將也，非主之佐也，非勝之主也。故明君賢將，所以動而勝人，成功出於衆者，先知也。先知者，不可取於鬼神，不可象於事，不可驗於度，必取於人而知敵之情者也。	Sunzi said: As a rule, when you raise an army of a hundred thousand and march a thousand li, the expenses of the people and the outlays of the state come to a thousand pieces of gold a day. There is upheaval at home and abroad; people are worn out on the roads; and seven hundred thousand households cannot attend to their work. The two sides hold out against each other for years, all to fight over a single day's victory. To begrudge ranks, salaries and a hundred pieces of gold, and so not know the enemy's situation, is inhumanity at its worst. Such a one is not a general for the people, not a helper to the ruler, not the one who commands victory. So what lets the enlightened ruler and the worthy general move and overcome others, with achievements that stand out above the crowd, is foreknowledge. Foreknowledge cannot be obtained from ghosts and spirits, cannot be inferred from comparable events, cannot be verified by measurement. It must come from people—from those who know the enemy's situation.
13.2	故用間有五：有鄉間，有內間，有反間，有死間，有生間。五間俱起，莫知其道，是謂「神紀」，人君之寶也。	So there are five kinds of spies to use: there are local spies, there are inside spies, there are double agents, there are expendable spies, there are returning spies. When all five are set in motion together and no one knows their workings, this is called "the divine thread." It is the treasure of the ruler.[1]
13.3	鄉間者，因其鄉人而用之；內間者，因其官人而用之；反間者，因其敵間而用之；死間者，為誑事於外，令吾間知之，而傳於敵國也；生間者，反報也。	Local spies: we use the people of the enemy's localities. Inside spies: we use the enemy's officials. Double agents: we use the enemy's own spies. Expendable spies: we create false information outside, let our spies know it, and have them pass it to the enemy state. Returning spies: they come back to report.
13.4	故三軍之事，莫親於間，賞莫厚於間，事莫密於間，非聖智不能用間，非仁義不能使間，非微妙不能得間	So in all the affairs of the army, none are closer to the general than the spies, no rewards are richer than those for spies, no matters are more secret

	CHINESE	ENGLISH
	之實。微哉！微哉！無所不用間也。間事未發而先聞者，聞與所告者皆死。	than those of spies. Without sagely wisdom, one cannot use spies. Without humaneness and righteousness, one cannot direct spies. Without subtlety, one cannot get the truth from spies. Subtle indeed! Subtle indeed! There is nothing for which spies are not used. If a spy's mission is heard of before it is launched, the one who heard of it and those who were told are all put to death.
13.5	凡軍之所欲擊，城之所欲攻，人之所欲殺，必先知其守將、左右、謁者、門者、舍人之姓名，令吾間必索知之。必索敵間之來間我者，因而利之，導而舍之，故反間可得而使也；因是而知之，故鄉間、內間可得而使也；因是而知之，故死間為誑事，可使告敵；因是而知之，故生間可使如期。五間之事，主必知之，知之必在反間，故反間不可不厚也。	As a rule, for an army you wish to strike, a city you wish to attack, a person you wish to kill, you must first know the names of the commanding general, the attendants, the ushers, the gatekeepers and the retainers. Have our spies seek them out and learn them. You must seek out the enemy agents sent to spy on us, profit them, lead them on and give them quarters; so double agents can be obtained and used. Through this we know, so local spies and inside spies can be obtained and used. Through this we know, so expendable spies can carry false information and be made to tell the enemy. Through this we know, so returning spies can be made to return as planned. The ruler must know the affairs of the five kinds of spies. Knowing them depends on the double agent. So the double agent must be treated generously.
13.6	昔殷之興也，伊摯在夏；周之興也，呂牙在商。故明君賢將，能以上智為間者，必成大功。此兵之要，三軍之所恃而動也。	In the past, when Yin rose, Yi Zhi was in Xia. When Zhou rose, Lü Ya was in Shang. So the enlightened ruler and the worthy general who can make people of superior intelligence their spies will surely achieve great things. This is the essence of warfare, what the whole army relies on in every move.[2]

1 "The divine thread" (shenji): ji is the main thread that holds a skein together, here an unseen web that ties all the information together.
2 Yi Zhi (Yi Yin) served the Xia before helping found the Yin (Shang) dynasty; Lü Ya (Jiang Ziya) lived under the Shang before helping the Zhou overthrow it.