

PRINCIPLES OF CONFLICT

孫子重編

◀ 本照對英中 · 譯編長子唐 ▶

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PDC



Photograph 1949

"General Tang was a regular officer in the army and air force of the Republic of China from 1924 to 1949 when he was sent to Brazil as military attache. He has been the commander of all fighting units from platoon to army and founded an air defense school in China, 1933.

He studied at Peking National Normal University, North-west Military Academy, China; University of London, England. He has written

many books in Chinese and English on war, art and history. He combines a deep knowledge of military science with philosophy and the arts and has distinguished himself as soldier, artist and author....."

—By General Thomas R. Phillips, U.S. Army Ret., military columnist, *St. Louis Post Dispatch*.

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"A former Lieutenant-General in the Army of the Republic of China, Tang Zi-chang brings to his works the accumulated insight and experiences of a life divided between the East and West.

In his Eastern-style works, Tang shows a tremendous skill and versatility—working with equal sensitivity in traditional Chinese styles and those of Japan.

Tang also reveals a mastery of the post-impressionist style; one of the finest examples being "The Sound of Rain", in which the drops create a mist that becomes almost audible."

—By Richard Simon, Art Critic, *The Sacramento Union*.



Sun Zi's Demonstration With Court-lady Troops
A Woodblock Print of The Ming Dynasty

PRINCIPLES OF CONFLICT

RECOMPILATION AND NEW ENGLISH
TRANSLATION WITH ANNOTATION
ON SUN ZI'S ART OF WAR BY

孫子重編

TANG ZI-CHANG

唐子長



PUBLISHED BY T. C. PRESS
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Books by the Author

Principles of Conflict

Poems of Tang

Wisdom of Dao



PRINCIPLES OF CONFLICT

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PREFACE

This book was first published in English by the Institute of Chinese Art, 1960, Washington D.C. under the title—The Recompile of Sun Zi's Art of War, with Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 60—16495, only few hundred copies. There were many orders could not be filled.

Recently I wrote a book — Alternatives To Nuclear War in which I quoted many principles from Sun Zi's, Art of War. Thus I revise it for publication and change its title into Principles of Conflict.

Most of Sun Zi's principles, especially the fundamental principles in maneuver of war are not only applicable for warfare—armed conflict, but for all kinds of conflicts: political, diplomatic, economic, psychological and social. It is an art for social revolution, world contest as well as individual daily struggle.

What is more, Sun Zi prefers to achieve Perfect Victory by subduing the enemy without battle, that is, to win without armed conflict. This is extremely important in the atomic age!

Tang Zi-chang, 1969.

FOREWORD

The Art of War by Sun Zi or Sun Wu, is the oldest military treatise in the world and is also the finest of all military classics. The fact that it has been preserved nearly 2500 years indicates the esteem in which it has been held during this time. The advice of Sun Zi is valid today. Written almost poetically, highly compressed so that each sentence is a jewelled aphorism, it deals almost entirely with principles.

In 514 B.C., when Sun Zi presented his treatise on the *Art of War* to King Ho Luo of the State of Wu, the Chinese organization for war was based on the use of chariots in the proportion of about one charioteer to each fifteen foot soldiers. Chariots were offensive and defensive, the offensive chariot being constructed for speed, the defensive chariot being heavily armored with leather. A portion of the foot soldiers was also armored.

During the period of Spring-Autumn (770—403 B.C.) more than 200 battles were fought between Chinese states. No fewer than 140 states were involved and more than 100 states disappeared. Warfare thus became a major preoccupation of the times. As the states grew larger, conscription was adopted and each army grew to the size of 100,000 men and 5,000 chariots. With the great distances and large numbers of men involved in the wars of the time, logistic problems were acute and they are not neglected by Sun Zi.

In the Chinese tradition generals were scholars and were respected as such. It is not surprising that Sun Zi interjects considerable philosophy into his discussion of war. "War is an aberration of Dao—the law of the universe and man," he writes: "It is vital to the state. It is a matter of life and death and the road to survival or extinction."

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"Thus, a war should be planned," Sun Zi says, "to sustain a perfect state rather than have a part ruined; to sustain a perfect army rather than have a part annihilated; to sustain a perfect unity of spirit rather than have a part demoralized; to sustain a perfect front of allies rather than have a part dismembered."

"To fight a hundred battles and win them all is not the perfect strategy of war," Sun Zi says. "The perfect strategy consists in subduing the enemy without battle. Therefore, the first order in the conduct of war is to win by policy, the next is to win by diplomacy, the last is to win by military force. The best is to win the enemy's mind and the worst is to assault a fortified city."

The present translation of *Sun Zi* is completely new and has been made from the Chinese text *The Recompilation of Sun Zi*, which was based on the extant Chinese edition known as "*Sun Zi with Ten Commentaries*." The translator is the compiler himself, Zi-chang Tang, former Lieutenant General of the Army of the Republic of China, who has taken a few more expressive words and phrases from earlier editions going back to 88 B.C.

General Tang has divided his work into three parts. In the Appendix I—he gives the translation in the order, which he says had become disordered over twenty centuries, of the current Chinese text.

In Book One he has rearranged the text in a consistent order so that the various topics, such as the plan of war, the strategy of war, the policy of war, operations, tactics are each dealt with separately in one place. This constitutes a great improvement over all previous Chinese editions and foreign translations.

Book Two is an extended and valuable annotations on *Sun Zi* and on Chinese warfare and history in ancient times. It shows

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the entwinement of Chinese culture and military art and the relationship of Chinese soldiers and philosophers.

This is only the second translation of *Sun Zi* from Chinese into English in the U.S.A., although numerous translations have been made into Japanese, French, German and Russian. The only other available translation in English was made by Lionel Giles in London in 1910. It is available in an edition edited by me, and published by the Military Service Publishing Company, Harrisburg, Pa., 1944.

General Tang was a regular officer in the army and air force of the Republic of China from 1924 to 1949 when he was sent to Brazil as military attache. He has been the commander of all fighting units from platoon to army and founded an Air Defense School in China; 1933. He studied at Peking National Normal University, North-west Military Academy, China; University of London, England. He has written many books on war and art.

He combines a deep knowledge of military science with philosophy and the arts and has distinguished himself as soldier, artist and author. His new translation of the *Art of War* will be welcomed by all who have become familiar with the great military classic and attract new admirers and students of the distilled wisdom of China that has survived 2500 years.

Thomas R. Phillips
Brig. General U.S. Army, Ret.
1960, Washington D.C.

INTRODUCTION

Wisdom comes from the ancients. It was developed by perfect system of thinking and proved by constant use. Through countless generations of holding fast to this system of thinking and method of conduct they approached perfect knowledge, that is, Dao 道 or Perfect Harmony — the ability to select perfect means to attain perfect ends, instead of “trial-and-error.”

Sun Zi's Art of War was written from this perfect knowledge. Even though he discovered that war itself was an aberration of Dao, his means of war — Perfect Strategy — and ends of war — Perfect Victory — were based on Dao. Through twenty-five centuries his principles have been thoroughly tested in China.

Chinese soldiers conducting wars against foreign aggression have held it a matter of virtue to follow the teachings of Sun Zi, and the Chinese people conducting revolutionary warfare have fought successfully by adopting *Sun Zi* as their guide. Modern history affords ample proof that the words of Sun Zi are not only for one time but for all ages.

The First World War convinced military students that Sun Zi's principles were practicable for aircraft and chemical warfare. During the Second World War his principles were found even more applicable to total warfare, blitzkrieg, the use of spies, and the quiet but more decisive wars of subversion, liberation, and revolution. Even the most difficult problems of today in the use of nuclear-rocket warfare are foreshadowed.

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Within six years after the Second World War, the USSR had published two translations of *Sun Zi*. The first was published by the USSR Academy of Science, in 1950. The translator, N. I. Konrad, said in the introduction that *Sun Zi* is the most complete treatise on war ever written. He wrote: "This teaching would never have outlived its period had it not also contained other features, which guided those who conducted, and continue to conduct, a struggle against aggressors."

The second edition was translated from a Chinese edition and published in 1956 by the Military Press of the Ministry of Defense in Moscow. The translator, Lt. Col. E. I. Sidozenko, wrote: "The high culture of ancient China called forth a highly developed military art. At the time when Europe possessed no systematized knowledge of warfare, Chinese generals had formulated principles of war. From several sources we learn that by 1200 B.C., China had attained supremacy in military science.* By the end of the sixth century B.C., the Chinese general, Sun Wu, wrote a treatise on military science giving evidence of the advanced ideas of that time in the field of military activities. The leader of the Communist Party, Mao Tse-tung, in his work, *Problems in the Strategy of the Revolutionary War in China*, called Sun Zi 'the great military theoretician of old China'. Undoubtedly, the treatise of Chinese military theoretician deserves much attention from students of military science."

Brigadier General T. R. Phillips (U.S. Army) has said in his introduction to *Sun Zi*: "Written about 500 B.C., *The Art of War* by Sun Zi is the oldest military treatise in the world. Highly compressed, it is devoted to principles and still retains

* He refers to the war books written by the Grand Duke Lu Ya at the beginning of the Zhou dynasty, 1122 B.C.

much of its original authoritative merit to the military student able to adapt its principles to modern warfare. It even now, twenty-five centuries after its preparation, is a valuable guide for the conduct of war. Although the chariot has gone and weapons have changed, this ancient master holds his own, since he deals with fundamentals and with the influence of politics and human nature on military operations. He shows in a striking way how unchanging these principles are."

In the preface to his work, *Strategy*, published in 1954, the English military writer, B. H. Liddell Hart, devoted two full pages to maxims of war. Among the worldwide masters of war whose words he quotes, *Sun Zi* represents over eighty per cent of the total.

When I was in London in 1929, studying military science under Major General Sir F. Maurice, this English scholar-soldier told me: "Sun Zi wrote a very profound book. Even though it is not well organized, it is a treasury of strategy. It is written in the style of poetry."

I answered: "If you could read the book in Chinese, you would find it even more poetic. Its crystallized concepts, balanced sentences, and rhythmic words make it easy to remember. It was written with the economy of words that is characteristic of Chinese literature at its best."

With reference to the criticism on the poorly organized text, I explained that the disordered nature of the aphorisms was due to no fault of the author because the original order was lost and has never been restored by latter scholars. The book was written in 514 B.C., and pen and ink were perfected in 220 B.C., and after the invention of paper in A.D. 105, full 300 years elapsed before it was generally used for books; and so between the period when *Sun Zi* was written and the period

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when paper was generally used for books, some 900 years had intervened during which all writing was transmitted on separate tablets of bamboo or wood, held together by hemp thread.* Even a small volume such as the book of Sun Zi, containing not more than 5600 characters, comprised a good cart-load of tablets which, when once broken, would disarrange the order of the contents. Some day I would rearrange it.

Not until after the Sino-Japanese War (1931-45), when I was teaching in the War College at Nanking, did I have time to restore the current text in a logical order. Only recently have I set myself the difficult task of putting it into English. Owing to the multiple meanings of ancient Chinese characters and specification of subsequent military terms, the same word, for example, “bing” 兵 in *Sun Zi*, has been interpreted in many ways—war, conflict, warfare, campaign, battle, strategy, operations, tactics, combat, fighting, maneuver, troops, arms, forces, weapons, armament, military affairs, etc. Indeed, to translate *Sun Zi*, not only a professional knowledge of modern warfare is needed but also a profound understanding of ancient Chinese.

The Chinese language is a highly developed and concise language. It implies more than it says. It radiates because the Chinese way of thinking is from all angles, not from an isolated point of view or to the extreme end of a line. This is one reason why Sun Zi could write such an immortal work. There are other reasons: his talent, experience, family tradition, and cultural heritage. Thus an annotation on *Sun Zi* was necessary to reveal the man, his work, and cultural background.

It is beyond my scope or purpose to collate or compare the different Chinese editions of *Sun Zi* over thousands of years, or

* See Illustration 2, page 17.

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to correct the various translations in the major languages of the world.

My sincere hope in the face of the urgent needs of the present time is that this work may in a humble way induce the leaders of our turbulent world to follow the teachings of Sun Zi, to let him guide them from mutual destruction to Perfect Victory, to put their trust not in trial-and-error of nuclear-rocket weapons but in Perfect Strategy based on thousands of years of war experience and human wisdom.

Z. C. Tang, 1960.