

THE WISDOM OF CHINA

SUN TZU

The Ultimate Master of War

By Xu Yuanxiang & Li Jing



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Sun Tzu—The Ultimate Master of War

Of the 4,000-odd books on military strategy produced over the course of Chinese history, *The Art of War* is almost unanimously acknowledged as the most outstanding. It was written by Sun Wu (Sun Tzu), a well-known general during the late Spring and Autumn Period, some 2,500 years ago.

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孫子

(c.545 BC-470 BC)

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Introduction

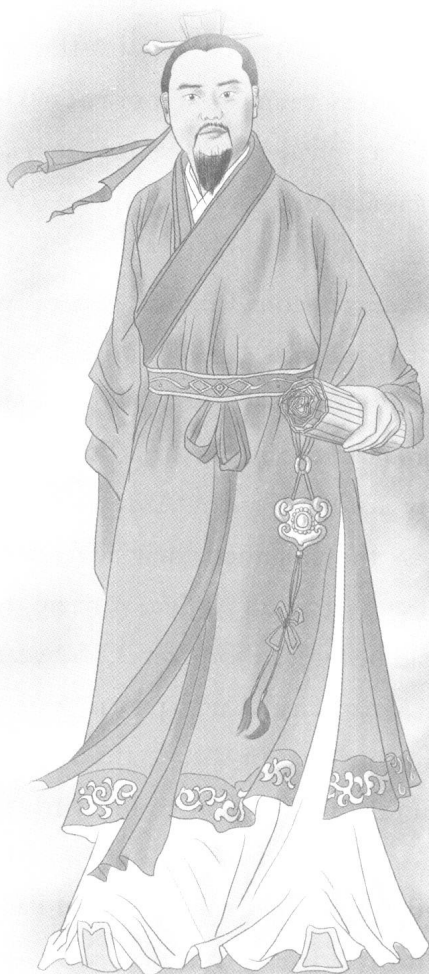
On the morning of January 17, 1991, a war broke out for petroleum in the gulf area of the Middle East. For the first time, modern theories of war involving coordinated naval, air and land forces were applied to a conflict

A war broke out for petroleum in the gulf area of the Middle East in 1991.



situation, taking place in the desert. While the world was transfixed by the power of what was termed “Operation Desert Storm”, a light-hearted report in *The Wall Street Journal* commented that, though China did not take part in the multi-national force, a mysterious Chinese general was in overall command of the war. He was Sun Tzu (c.545 BC - 470 BC). His masterpiece of military strategy, *The Art of War*, was being closely studied by the American marine corps as they planned their advances from the desert of Saudi Arabia. Amazingly, Sun Tzu had been dead for over 2,500 years.

During the European Football Championships in 2004, the host team, Portugal, against the odds finished as runners up. Football commentators agreed that the Portuguese team had been developing for a number of years and had some outstanding players playing in



Portrait of Sun Wu.

Europe's top leagues. However, more than one also commented on the influence of the book *The Art of War*. Portuguese coach Luiz Felipe Scolari, was a committed fan of the theories of Sun Tzu. He always carried the book in his pocket, and often quoted from it during team training.

The fact that a man and the book he wrote still exert such a profound influence over 2,500 years since his death surely makes us want to find out exactly what a kind of man Sun Tzu was and what exactly he wrote about. Of the 4,000-odd books on military strategy produced over the course of Chinese history, *The Art of War* is almost unanimously acknowledged as the most outstanding. It was written by Sun Wu (Sun Tzu), a well-known general during the late Spring and Autumn Period (770 BC-476 BC) some 2,500 years ago.