

1



PRELIMINARY RECKONING

COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL

☯ THE ART OF WAR ☯

The words of Sun the Master:

To all nations War is a great matter.
Upon the army death or life depend: it is
the means of the existence or destruction
of the State.

Therefore it must be diligently studied.

Now, in war, besides stratagem and
the situation, there are five indispensable
matters. The first is called The Way¹;
the second, Heaven; the third Earth; the
fourth, the Leader; the fifth, Law.

The Way or the proper conduct of man.
If the ruling authority be upright, the
people are united: fearless of danger, their
lives are at the service of their Lord.²

¹ The five virtues of humanity, righteousness, propriety, wisdom
and faith are known as The Way.

² *Their ruler or sovereign.*

PRELIMINARY RECKONING

Heaven. Yin and Yang³; heat and cold; time and season.

Earth. Distance; nature; extent; strategic position.

The Leader. Intelligence; truth; benevolence; courage and strictness.

Law. Partition and ordering of troops.

These things must be known by the leader: to know them is to conquer; to know them not is to be defeated.

Further, with regard to these and the following seven matters, the condition of the enemy must be compared with our own.

The seven matters are:

The virtue of the prince; the ability of the general; natural advantages; the

³The Yin and Yang are the two principles into which natural phenomena are divided in Chinese philosophy. Yin is the masculine, active, or light principle, and Yang is the feminine, passive, or dark principle. In this connection, day and night, rain, mist and wind are designated.



discipline of the armies; the strength of the soldiers; training of the soldiers; justice both in reward and punishment.

Knowing these things, I can foretell the victor.

If a general under me fight according to my plans, he always conquers, and I continue to employ him; if he differ from my plans, he will be defeated and dismissed from my service.

Therefore, with regard to the foregoing, considering that with us lies the advantage, and the generals agreeing, we create a situation which promises victory; but as the moment and method cannot be fixed beforehand, the plan must be modified according to circumstances.

War is a thing of pretence: therefore, when capable of action, we pretend disability; when near to the enemy, we pretend to be far; when far away, we pretend to be near.

PRELIMINARY RECKONING

Allure the enemy by giving him a small advantage. Confuse and capture him. If there be defects, give an appearance of perfection, and awe the enemy. Pretend to be strong, and so cause the enemy to avoid you. Make him angry, and confuse his plans. Pretend to be inferior, and cause him to despise you. If he have superabundance of strength, tire him out; if united, make divisions in his camp. Attack weak points, and appear in unexpected places.

These are the secrets of the successful strategist, therefore they must not be made known beforehand.

At the reckoning in the Sanctuary before fighting, victory is to the side that excels in the foregoing matters. They that have many of these will conquer; they that have few will not conquer; hopeless, indeed, are they that have none.

If the condition of both sides with regard to these matters be known, I can foretell the victor.

