

The Way of the General

Essay on Leadership and Crisis Management

Written by Zhuge Liang

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1 Translator's Introduction

Zhugè Liang, commonly known by his style, Kongming, was born around the year 180, the son of a provincial official in the later days of the Han dynasty. At that time, the dynasty was thoroughly decrepit, nearly four hundred years old and on the verge of collapse. For most of his adult life, Zhugè Liang was to play a major role in the power struggles and civil wars that followed the demise of the ancient Han.

Orphaned at an early age, he and his younger brother were taken in by an uncle, a local governor in southern China. When this uncle was replaced with another officer, he and his charges went to join an old family friend, a member of the powerful Liu clan who was currently a governor in

central China. The imperial house of Han was a branch of the greater Liu clan, which as a whole retained considerable wealth, prestige, and influence even after the passing of the Han dynasty itself.

Zhuge Liang's uncle died during his sojourn in central China. Then in his twenties, Zhuge stayed there, supporting himself by farming. According to Record of the Three Kingdoms, at this early age Zhuge Liang was aware of his own genius, but few took him seriously; he was, after all, an orphan and subsistence farmer. His fortunes took a turn, however, when the great warrior Liu Bei, founder of the kingdom of Shu in western China, garrisoned in the area where Zhuge Liang was living.

Zhuge was recommended to the warrior chief by a member of the influential Xu clan, which produced many outstanding Taoists of the early churches. According to Record of the Three Kingdoms, Zhuge's friend said to Liu Bei, "Zhuge Kongming is a dragon in repose - would you want to meet him?" Liu Bei said, "You come with him." The friend said, "It is possible to go see this man, but you cannot make him come to you. You, General, should go out of your way to look in on him."

The record states that Liu Bei finally went to see Zhuge Liang, adding that he had to go no fewer than three times before the young genius agreed to meet the warrior chieftain. When at length they were together, the record continues, Liu Bei dismissed everyone else so that he could be alone with Zhuge Liang. Then he said, "The house of Han is collapsing; treacherous officials are usurping authority; the emperor is blinded by the dust." The warrior lord went on to solicit Zhuge's advice.

Zhuge Liang told Liu Bei:

"Ever since the beginning of the current power struggle for what is left of the Han empire, many prefectures and districts have been taken over by such men. If you compare current contenders for national power, one of them - the notorious Cao Cao - was once an unknown with a small force, yet he was able to overcome another warlord with a much larger following. The reason the weaker was able to prevail over the stronger is not simply a matter of celestial timing, but also of human planning. Cao Cao now has a million followers; he controls the emperor and gives orders to the lords - he can not really be opposed."

"Another warlord, in control of the area east of the river, is already the third generation hegemon there. The territory is rugged and the people are loyal to him; the intelligent and capable serve in his employ. He would be a suitable ally, but he cannot be counted on"

“Here there is ease of communications and transport. It is a land suitable for military operations. If its ruler cannot keep it this would seem to be a boon to a general. Do you have any interest in it? To the southwest are precipitous natural barriers beyond which lie vast fertile plains. That land is called the heavenly precinct, and it is where the Han dynasty really began.”

“Now the governor of that region is ignorant and weak. To the north is the stronghold of the independent Taoist cult of Celestial Masters. The people are robust and the land is rich, but they do not know how to take care of it. Men of knowledge and ability want to find an enlightened leader.”

“General, you are a descendant of the imperial family, and are known everywhere for integrity and justice. You gather heroic men and eagerly seek the wise. If you occupy this whole region, guard the crags and defiles, establish good relations with the foreign tribes to the west and south, make friends with the warlord east of the river, and work to perfect internal organization, then when there is a upheaval in the total political situation and you mobilize your armies, the common people will surely welcome you with food and drink. If you can really do this, hegemony can be established, and the house of Han can be revived.”

Liu Bei agreed, and it turned out as planned. Zhuge became one of his top strategists since then.

The intrigues of the era of the Three Kingdoms are too complex to detail here; indeed, they fill the one hundred chapters of the massive neoclassic historical novel Tales of the Three Kingdom. Suffice it to say here that the time was one of constant turmoil, tension, and strife. In the midst of unending warfare among the three kingdoms, Zhuge Liang was appointed to positions of highest responsibility in both civil and military leadership. When Liu Bei died, his heir was still young, so Zhuge Liang also served as the de facto regent for the new king as well as a top general and strategist. He never fell in battle, but he did die on a campaign, garrisoned in the field. Carrying burdens enough to kill two men, Zhuge Liang succumbed to illness at the age of fifty-four. Immortalized in literature for his intelligence and humanity, he was greatly admired as a warrior and administrator. His last will and testament, addressed to the young ruler of Shu, illustrates the thought and character of this remarkable individual:

“It seems to me that I am a simpleton by nature. Having run into the troubles of the times, I mobilized an army on an expedition north. Before being able to achieve complete success, I unexpectedly became mortally ill, and now I am on the brink of death.”

“I humbly pray that the ruler will purify his heart, minimize his desires, restrain himself and love the common people, convey respect to the former ruler, spread humanness through the land,

promote conscientious individualists in order to get wise and good people into position of responsibility, and throw out traitors and calumniators in order to make the manners of the people more substantial.”

“I have eight hundred mulberry trees (MD: actually they are silkworm-feeding trees) and eight acres of thin fields, so my children and grandchildren are self-sufficient in food and clothing. I am abroad, without any particular accoutrements; I wear government-issue clothing and eat government-issue food, and do not have any other source of income for my personal use. When I die, do not let there be any extra cotton on the corpse, or any special burial objects, for which I would be indebted to the nation.”

As this testament shows, there is a strong undercurrent of Taoist thought in Zhuge Liang’s attitude toward life and work. This undercurrent is even more evident in his letter of advice to his nephew and his son. To this nephew he wrote:

“Aspirations should remain lofty and far-sighted. Look to the precedents of the wise. Detach from emotions and desires; get rid of any fixations. Elevate subtle feelings to presence of mind and sympathetic sense. Be patient in tight situations as well as easy one; eliminate all pettiness.”

“Seek knowledge be questioning widely; set aside aversion and reluctance. What loss is there in dignity, what worry is there of failure?”

“If your will is not strong, if your thought does not oppose injustice, you will fritter away your life stuck in the commonplace, silently submitting to the bonds of emotion, forever cowering before mediocrities, never escaping the downward flow.”

To his son, he gave him this advice:

“The practice of a cultivated man is to refine himself by quietude and develop virtue by frugality. With out detachment, there is no way to clarify the will; without serenity, there is no way to get far.”

“Study requires calm, talent requires study. Without study there is no way to expand talent; without calm there is no way to accomplish study.”

“If you are laze, you cannot do thorough research; if you are impulsive, you cannot govern your nature.”

“The years run off with the hours, aspirations flee with the years. Eventually one ages and collapses. What good will it do to lament over poverty ?”

Finally, Zhuge’s own motto illustrates a central quality for which he is especially honored, the

quality of sincerity. Zhuge's honesty and integrity in public and private life are legendary, and his writings on social and political organization show that he considered sincerity fundamental to success in these domains. He formulated the rule of his life in this motto:

“Opportunistic relationships can hardly be kept constant. The acquaintance of honorable people, even at a distance, does not add flowers in times of warmth and does not change its leaves in times of cold: it continues unfading through the four seasons, becomes increasingly stable as it passes through ease and danger.”

The following essays on leadership and organization are taken from a collection of works by and about Zhuge Liang, Records of the Loyal Lord of Warriors, as preserved in the Taoist canon.

2 The Way of the General

2.1 The Authority of Military Leadership

Military authority, directing the armed forces, is the matter of the authoritative power of the leading general.

If the general can hold the authority of the military and operate its power, he oversees his subordinates like a fierce tiger with wings, flying over the four seas, going into action whenever there is an encounter.

If the general loses his authority and cannot control the power, he is like a dragon cast into a lake, he may seek the freedom of the high sea, but how can he get there ?

2.2 Chasing Evils

There are five types of harm in decadence among national armed forces.

- First is the formation of factions that band together for character assassination, criticizing and vilifying the wise and the good.
- Second is luxury is uniforms.
- Third is wild tales and confabulations about the supernatural.
- Fourth is judgment based on private views, mobilizing groups for personal reasons.
- Fifth is making secret alliances with enemies, watching for where the advantage may lie.

All people like this are treacherous and immoral. You should distance yourself from them and not associate with them.

2.3 Knowing People

Nothing is harder to see into people's natures. Though good and bad are different, their conditions and appearances are not always uniform.

- There are some people who are nice enough but steal.
- Some people are outwardly respectful while inwardly making fools of everyone.
- Some people are brave on the outside yet cowardly on the inside.
- Some people do their best but are not loyal.
- Hard though it be to know people, there are ways.
- First is to question them concerning right and wrong, to observe their ideas.
- Second is to exhaust all their arguments, to see how they change.
- Third is to consult with them about strategy, to see how perceptive they are.
- Fourth is to announce that there is trouble, to see how brave they are.
- Fifth is to get them drunk, to observe their nature.
- Sixth is to present them with the prospect of gain, to see how modest they are.
- Seventh is to give them a task to do within a specific time, to see how trustworthy they are.

2.4 Types of Generals

There are nine types of generals.

- Those who guide with virtue, who treat all equally with courtesy, who know when the troops are cold and hungry, and who notice when they are weary and pained, are called humanistic generals.
- Those who do not try to avoid any task, who are not influenced by profit, who would die with honor before living in disgrace, are called dutiful generals.

- Those who are not arrogant because of their high status, who do not make much of their victories, who are wise but can humble themselves, who are strong but can be tolerant, are called courteous generals.
- Those whose extraordinary shifts are unfathomable, whose movements and responses are multifaceted, who turn disaster into fortune and seize victory from the jaws of danger, are called clever generals.
- Those who give rich rewards for going ahead and have strict penalties for retreating, whose rewards are given right away and whose penalties are the same for all ranks, even the highest, are called trustworthy generals.
- Those who go on foot or on a war horse, with the mettle to take on a hundred men, who are skilled in the use of close-range weapons, swords, and spears are called infantry generals.
- Those who face the dizzying heights and cross the dangerous defiles, who can shoot at a gallop as if in flight, who are in the vanguard when advancing and in the rear guard when withdrawing, are called cavalry generals.
- Those whose mettle makes the armies tremble and whose determination makes light of powerful enemies, who are hesitant to engage in petty fights while courageous in the midst of major battles, are called fierce generals.
- Those who consider themselves lacking when they see the wise, who go along with good advice like following a current, who are magnanimous yet able to be firm, who are uncomplicated yet have many strategies, are called great generals.

2.5 Capacities of Commanders

The capacities of commanders are not the same; some are greater, some are lesser.

- One who spies out treachery and disaster, who wins the allegiance of others, is the leader of ten men.
- One who rises early in the morning and retires late at night, and whose words are discreet yet perceptive, is the leader of a hundred men.
- One who is direct yet circumspect, who is brave and can fight, is the leader of a thousand men.

- One of martial bearing and fierceness of heart, who knows the hardships of others and spares people from hunger and cold, is the leader of ten thousand men.
- One who associates with the wise and promotes the able, who is careful of how he spends each day, who is sincere, trustworthy, and magnanimous, and who is guarded in times of order as well as times of disturbance, is the leader of a hundred thousand men.
- One whose humanitarian care extends to all under his command, whose trustworthiness and justice win the allegiance of neighboring nations, who understands the signs of the sky above, the patterns of the earth below, and the affairs of humanity in between, and who regards all people as his family, is a world-class leader, one who cannot be opposed.

2.6 Decadence In Generals

There are eight kinds of decadence in generalship.

- First is to be insatiably greedy.
- Second is to be jealous and envious of the wise and able.
- Third is to believe slanders and make friends with the treacherous.
- Fourth is to assess others without assessing oneself.
- Fifth is to be hesitant and indecisive.
- Sixth is to be heavily addicted to wine and sex.
- Seventh is to be a malicious liar with a cowardly heart.
- Eighth is to talk wildly, without courtesy.

2.7 Loyalty In Generals

“Weapons are instruments of ill omen”; generalship is a dangerous job. Therefore if one is inflexible there will be breakdowns, and when the job is important there will be danger.

This is why a good general does not rely or presume on strength or power. He is not pleased by favor and does not fear vilification. He does not crave whatever material goods he sees, and he does not rape whatever women he can. His only intention is to pursue the best interest of the country.

2.8 Skills of Generals

There are five skills and four desires involved in generalship. The five skills are:

1. Skill in knowing the disposition and power of enemies,
2. Skill in knowing the ways to advance and withdraw,
3. Skill in knowing how empty or how full countries are,
4. Skill in knowing nature's timing and human affairs,
5. And skill in knowing the features of terrain.

The four desires are:

1. Desire for the extraordinary and unexpected in strategy,
2. Desire for thoroughness in security,
3. Desire for calm among the masses,
4. And desire for unity of hearts and minds.

2.9 Arrogance in Generals

Generals should not be arrogant, for if they are arrogant they will become discourteous, and if they are discourteous people will become alienated from them. When people are alienated, they become rebellious.

General should not be stingy, for if they are stingy they will not reward the trustworthy, and if they do not reward the trustworthy, the soldiers will not be dedicated., the armed forces are ineffective, and if the armed forces are ineffective, the nation is empty. When the nation is empty, its opponents are full.

Confucius said, "People may have the finest talents, but if they are arrogant and stingy, their others qualities are not worthy of consideration."

2.10 Military Preparedness

Military preparedness is the greatest task of the nation. A small mistake can make a huge difference. When the force of momentum by which soldiers are killed and generals are captured can move with

sudden rapidity, should we not be wary?

Therefore when a nation is in trouble, the ruler and ministers urgently work on strategy, selecting the wise and assessing the able to delegate responsibility to them.

If you count on safety and do not think of danger, if you do not know enough to be wary when enemies arrive, this is called a sparrow nesting on a tent, a fish swimming in a cauldron - they won't last the day.

Traditions say, "Without preparation, military operation are unfeasible."

"Preparedness against the unexpected is a way of good government."

"Even bees have venom - how much the more do nations. If you are unprepared, even if there are many of you, mere numbers cannot be counted on."

A classic document says, "Only when we do our tasks are we prepared; when we are prepared, there is no trouble." Therefore the action of the military forces must have preparation.

2.11 Training

Soldiers without training cannot stand up to one out of a hundred opponents, yet they are sent out against a hundred each. This is why Confucius said, "To send people to war without teaching them is called abandoning them." It is also said, "Teach the people for the seven year, and they too can go to war."

Therefore soldiers must be taught with out fail. First train them in conduct and duty, teach them to be loyal and trustworthy, instruct them in rules and penalties, awe them with rewards and punishments. When people know enough to follow along, then train them in maneuvers.

One person can teach ten, ten people can teach a hundred, a hundred people can teach a thousand, a thousand can teach ten thousand, thus developing the armed forces. Train like this, and opponents will surely lose.

2.12 Corruption in the Armed Forces

In military operation it may happen the scouts are not careful of their signal fires or there may be mistakes in calculation and consequent delays, infractions of rules, failure to respond to the time and situation, disorder in the ranks, callous and unreasonable demand made by superiors on their subordinates, pursuit of self-interest, lack of concern for the hungry and cool, tall tales and fortune

telling, rabble rousing, confusing the officers, refusal of the mettlesome to submit to authority, contempt of superiors, or using supplies for personal enjoyment. These things corrupt the armed forces. When they are present, there is certain to be defeat.

2.13 Loyal Hearts

Those who would be military leaders must have loyal hearts, eyes and ears, claws and fangs. Without people loyal to them, they are like someone walking at night, not knowing where to step. Without eyes and ears, they are as though in the dark, not knowing how to proceed. Without claws and fangs, they are like hungry men eating poisoned food, inevitably to die. Therefore good generals always have intelligent and learned associates for their advisors, thoughtful and careful associates for their eyes and ears, brave and formidable associates for their claws and fangs.

2.14 Careful Watching

The loss of an army is always caused by underestimating an opponent and thus bringing on disaster. Therefore an army goes out in an orderly manner. If order is lost, that bodes ill. There are fifteen avenues of order:

1. Thoughtfulness, using secret agents for intelligence.
2. Organization, gathering news and watching carefully.
3. Courage, not being disturbed by the number of the enemy.
4. Modesty, thinking of justice and duty when seeing the opportunity for gain.
5. Impartiality, being egalitarian in matters of rewards and punishments.
6. Forbearance, being able to bear humiliation.
7. Magnanimity, being able to accept the masses.
8. Trustworthiness, so that there can be serious cooperation.
9. Respect, honoring the wise and able.
10. Clarity of mind, not listening to slander.
11. Reason, not forgetting past experience.

12. Human kindness, taking care of the soldiers.
13. Loyalty, devoting oneself to the nation.
14. Moderation, knowing to stop when you have enough of anything.
15. Planning, assessing yourself first, and then assessing others.

2.15 Formation of Opportunity

To overcome the intelligent by folly is contrary to the natural order of things; to overcome the foolish by intelligence is in accord with the natural order. To overcome the intelligent by intelligence, however, is a matter of opportunity.

There are three avenues of opportunity: events, trends, and conditions. When opportunities occur through events but you are unable to respond, you are not smart. When opportunities become active through a trend and yet you cannot make plans, you are not wise. When opportunities emerge through conditions but you cannot act on them, you are not bold.

Those skilled in generalship always achieve their victories by taking advantage of opportunities.

2.16 Good Generalship

Good generals of ancient times had some overall principles:

1. Show people when to proceed and when to withdraw, and people will learn regulation.
2. Array them on the lines rightly and justly, and people will be orderly.
3. Show respect for them by your judgment, and people will be enthusiastic.
4. Motivate them with rewards and penalties, and people will be trusting.

Regulation, order, enthusiasm, and trust are the overall principles of generals, by which they are able to ensure victory in battle.

The mediocre are not like this: they cannot stop their troops when they retreat, they cannot control their troops when they advance, they mix up good and bad, the soldiers are not given instruction and encouragement, rewards and punishments are not fair. Because people are not trusting, the wise and the good withdraw, while flatterers are promoted. Such an army will therefore inevitably be defeated in war.

2.17 Discerning Bases

If you attack evils based on social trends, no one can rival you in dignity. If you settle victory based on the power of the people, no one can rival you in achievement.

If you can accurately discern these bases of action, and add dignity and faith to them, you can take on the most formidable opponent and prevail over the most valiant adversary.

2.18 Victory and Defeat

When the wise and talented are in the higher positions and undesirables are in low positions, the armed forces are happy. When the soldiers are scared, if they talk to each other of valiant combat, look to each other on by rewards and penalties, these are signs of certain victory.

When the armies have been shaken up several times, if the soldiers become lazy, insubordinate, untrustworthy, and unruly, if they scare each other with talk about the enemy, if they talk to each other about booty, make hints to each other of disaster and fortune, or confuse each other with their talk, these are signs of certain defeat.

2.19 Using Authority

People's lives depend on generals, as do success and failure, calamity and fortune, so if the rulership does not give them the power to reward and punish, this is like tying up a monkey and trying to make it cavort around, or like gluing someone's eyes shut and asking him to distinguish colors.

If rewards are up to powerful civilians and punishments do not come from the generals, people will seek personal profit - then who will have any interest in fighting? Even with superlative strategy and performance, self-defense would be impossible under these circumstances.

Therefore Sun Tzu the Martialist said, "When a general is in the field, there are some orders he doesn't accept from the civilian ruler." It is also said, "In the army, you hear the orders of the generals, you don't hear about command from the emperor."

2.20 Grieving for the Dead

Good general of ancient times took care of their people as one might take care of a beloved child. When there was difficulty they would face it first themselves, and when something was achieved they would defer to others. They would tearfully console the wounded and sorrowfully mourn the

dead. They would sacrifice themselves to feed the hungry and remove their own garments to clothe the cold. They honored the wise and provided for their living; they rewarded and encouraged the brave. If generals can be like this, they can take over anywhere they go.

2.21 Allies

To operate, the armed forces need allies as consultants and assistants to the leadership. Everyone looks up to those who are thoughtful and have unusual strategies beyond the ordinary ken, who are widely learned and have broad vision, and who have many skills and great talents. Such people can be made top allies.

Those who are fierce, swift, firm, and sharp are heroes of an age. Such people can be made second-ranked allies.

Those who talk a lot but not always to the point, who are slight in ability, with little that is extraordinary, are people with ordinary capabilities. They can be brought along as the lower class of allies.

2.22 Responsiveness

When you plan for difficulty in times of ease, when you do the great while it is still small, when you use rewards first and penalties later, this is refinement in use of the military.

When the troops are already on the battlefield, the cavalries are charging each other, the catapults have been set in position, and the infantries meet at close range, if you can use awesome authoritative to convey a sense of trust such that opponents surrender, this is ability in use of the military.

If you plunge into a half of arrows and rocks, facing off in a contest for victory, with winning and losing distinct, if your adversary is wounded but you die, this is inferiority in use of the military.

2.23 Taking Opportunities

The art of certain victory, the mode of harmonizing with charges, is a matter of opportunity. Who but the perspicacious can deal with it ? And of all avenues of seeing opportunity, none is greater than the unexpected.

2.24 Assessing Abilities

Those who employed warriors skillfully in ancient times assessed their abilities in order to calculate the prospects of victory or defeat:

- Who has the wise ruler?
- Who has the more intelligent generals?
- Who has the more able officers?
- Whose food supplies are most abundant?
- Whose soldiers are better trained?
- Whose legions are more orderly?
- Whose war-horses are swifter?
- Whose formation and situation are more dangerous?
- Whose clients and allies are smarter?
- Whose neighbors are more frightened?
- Whose has more food and money?
- Whose citizenry is calmer?
- When consider matters along these lines, structural strengths and weaknesses can be determined.

2.25 Facilitating Battle

A scorpion will sting because it has poison; a soldier can be brave when he can rely on his equipment. Therefore when their weapons are sharp and their armor is strong, people will readily do battle. If armor is not strong, it is the same as baring one's shoulders. If a bow cannot shoot far, it is the same as a close-range weapon. If a shot cannot hit the mark, it is the same as having no weapon. If a scout is not careful, it is the same as having no eyes. If a general is not brave in battle, it is the same as having no military leadership.

2.26 Striking Power

Skilled warriors of ancient times first found out the condition of their enemies and then made plans to deal with them. There is no doubt of success when you strike enemies under the following conditions:

- Their fighting forces are stale.
- Their supplies are exhausted.
- Their populace is full of sorrow and bitterness.
- Many people are physically ill.
- They do not plan ahead.
- Their equipment is in disrepair.
- Their soldiers are not trained.
- Reinforcement does not show up.
- Night falls when they still have a long way to go.
- Their soldiers are worn out.
- Their generals are contemptuous and their officers are inconsiderate.
- They neglect to make preparations.
- They do not form battle lines as they advance.
- When they do form battle lines, they are not stable.
- They are disorderly when they travel over rough terrain.
- There is discord between commanders and soldiers.
- They become arrogant when they win a battle.
- There is disorder in the ranks when they move their battle lines.
- The soldiers are tired and prone to upset.
- The army is supplied, but the people do not eat.
- Each man moves on his own - some go ahead, some lag behind.

- When opponents have the following qualities, however, withdraw and avoid them:
- Superiors are considerate and subordinates are obedient.
- Rewards are sure and punishments certain.
- The forces are set out in an orderly fashion.
- They give responsibility to the wise and employ the able.
- The army is courteous and mannerly.
- Their armor is strong and their weapons keen.
- They have plenty of supplies and equipment.
- Their government and education are substantial.
- They are on good terms with all of their neighbors.
- They are backed by great nations.

2.27 Psychological Configurations

Some generals are brave and think lightly of death . Some are hasty and impulsive. Some are greedy and materialistic. Some are humane but lack endurance. Some are intelligent but timid. Some are intelligent but easygoing at heart.

Those who are brave and think lightly of death are vulnerable to assault. Those who are hasty and impulsive are vulnerable to delay. Those who are greedy and materialistic are vulnerable to loss. Those who are humane but lack endurance are vulnerable to fatigue. Those who are intelligent but timid are vulnerable to pressure. Those who are intelligent but easygoing are vulnerable to sudden attack.

2.28 Orderly Troops

In military operations, order leads to victory. If rewards and penalties are unclear, if rules and regulations are unreliable, and if signals are not followed, even if you have an army of a million strong it is of no practical benefit.

An orderly army is one that is mannerly and dignified, one that cannot be withstood when it advances and cannot be pursued when it withdraws. Its movements are regulated and directed;

this gives it security and presents no danger. The troops can be massed but not scattered, can be deployed but not worn out.

2.29 Inspiring Soldiers

Honor them with titles, present them with goods, and soldiers willingly come join you. Treat them courteously, inspire them with speeches, and soldiers willingly die. Give them nourishment and rest so that they do not become weary, make the code of rules uniform, and soldiers willingly obey. Lead them into battle personally, and soldiers will be brave. Record even a little good, reward even a little merit, and soldiers will be encouraged.

2.30 Self-Exertion

Sages follow the rules of heaven; the wise obey the laws of earth; the intelligent follow precedent. Harm comes to the arrogant; calamity visits the proud. Few people trust those who talk too much; few people feel indebted to the self-serving. Rewarding the unworthy causes alienation; punishing the innocent causes resentment. Those whose appreciation or anger are unpredictable perish.

2.31 Harmonising People

Harmonizing people is essential in military operations. When people are in harmony, they will fight on their own initiative, without exhortation. If the officers and the soldiers are suspicious of one another, then warriors will not join up. If no heed is paid to the strategies of loyal, the small minded people will backbite. When the sprouts of hypocrisy arise, even if you have the wisdom of the great warrior-kings of old, you will not be able to prevail over an ordinary man, much less a whole group of them. Therefore tradition says, "A military operation is like fire; if it is not stopped, it burns itself out."

2.32 The Condition of a General

According to the code of generalship, generals do not say they are thirsty before the soldiers have drawn from the well; generals do not say they are hungry before the soldiers' food is cooked; generals do not say they are cold before the soldiers' fire are kindled; generals do not say they are hot before the soldiers' canopies are drawn. Generals do not use fans in summer, do not wear leather (or fur) in winter, do not use umbrella in the rain. They do as everyone does.

2.33 Order and Disorder

When a nation is perilous and disordered, and the people are not secure in their homes, this is because the ruler has made the mistake of neglecting to find wise people.

When the wise are disaffected, a nation is in peril; when the wise are employed, a nation is secure. When offices are chosen for persons, there is disorder; when persons are chosen for offices, there is order.

2.34 Observant Government

An observant and perceptive government is one that looks at subtle phenomena and listens to small voices. When phenomena are subtle they are not seen, and when voices are small they are not heard; therefore an enlightened leader looks closely at the subtle and listens for the importance of the small voice.

This harmonizes the outside with the inside, and harmonizes the inside with the outside; so the Way of government involves the effort to see and hear much.

Thus when you are alert to what the people in the lower echelons have to say, and take it into consideration, so that your plan include the rank and file, then all people are your eyes and a multitude of voices helps your ears. This is the reason for the classic saying, "A sage has no constant mind - the people are the sage's mind."

2.35 Rulers and Ministers

For rulers, generosity to subordinates is benevolence; for ministers, service of the government is duty. No one should serve the government with duplicity; ministers should not be given dubious policies.

When both superiors and subordinates are given to courtesy, then the people are easy to employ. When superiors and subordinates are in harmony, then the Way of rulers and ministers is fulfilled: rulers employ their ministers courteously, while ministers work for the rulers loyally; rulers plan the government policies, while ministers plan their implantation.

2.36 Knowledgeable Rule

Rulers are considered knowledgeable according to how much they have seen, and are considered capable according to how much they have heard.

Everyone knows the saying that an intelligent ruler is constant through the day and night, discharging the affairs of office by day and attending to personal matters at night. Yet there may be grievances that do not get a hearing, and there may be loyal people promoting good who are not trusted.

If grievances are not heard, the best cannot be straightened. If promotion of good is not accepted, the loyal are not trusted and the treacherous enter with their schemes.

This is the meaning of the proverb in the ancient “Classic of Documents”: “Heaven sees through the seeing of my people, heaven hears through the hearing of my people.”

2.37 Not Knowing

Confucius said that an enlightened ruler does not worry about people not knowing him, he worries about not knowing people. He worries not about outsiders not knowing insiders, but about insiders not knowing outsiders. He worries not about subordinates not knowing superiors, but about superiors not knowing subordinates. He worries not about the lower classes not knowing the upper classes, but about the upper classes not knowing the lower classes.

2.38 Adjudication

When rulers adjudicate criminal cases and execute punishments, they worry that they may be unclear. The innocent may be punished while the guilty may be released. The powerfuls may arrogate to themselves alone the right to speak, while the powerless may have their rights infringed upon by those who bear grudges against them. Honesty may be distorted; those who are wronged may not get a chance to express themselves. The trustworthy may be suspected; the loyal may be attacked. These are all perversions, problems causing disaster and violence, aberrations causing calamity and chaos.

2.39 Disturbance and Security

It is said that when officials are severe in everything, no one knows where it will end. If they feed off the people so severely that people are hungry and impoverished, this produces disturbances and rebellion.

Encourage people in productive work, don't deprive them of their time. Lighten their taxes, don't exhaust their resources. In this way the country is made wealthy and families secure.

2.40 Appointments

The official policy of making appointments should be to promote the upright and place them over the crooked. Governing a country is like governing the body. The way to govern the body is to nurture the spirit; the way to govern a country is to promote the wise. Life is sought by nurturing the spirit; stability is sought by promoting the wise.

So public servants are to a nation as pillars are to a house; the pillars should not be slender; public servants should not be weak. When the pillars are slender the house collapses; when the public servants are weak the nation crumbles. Therefore the way to govern a nation is to promote the upright over the crooked; then the nation is secure.

2.41 Pillars of State

For strong pillars you need straight trees; for wise public servants you need upright people. Straight trees are found in remote forests; upright people come from the humble masses. Therefore when rulers are going to make appointments they need to look in obscure places.

Sometimes there are disenfranchised people with something of value in them; sometimes there are people with extraordinary talent who go unrecognized. Sometimes there are paragons of virtue who are not promoted by their hometown; sometimes there are people who live in obscurity on purpose.

Sometimes there are people who are dutiful and righteous for purely philosophical or religious reasons. Sometimes there are loyal people who are straightforward with rulers but are slandered by cliques. Ancient kings are known to have hired unknowns and nobodies, finding in them the human qualities whereby they were able to bring peace.

2.42 Evaluation and Dismissal

The official policy of evaluation and dismissal should be to promote the good and dismiss the bad. An enlightened leadership is aware of good and bad throughout the realm. not daring to overlook even minor officials and commoners, employing the wise and good, and dismissing the greedy and weak-minded.

With enlightened leadership and good citizens, projects get accomplished, the nation is orderly, and the wise gather like rain; this is the way to promote the good and dismiss the bad, setting forth what is acceptable and what is blameworthy. Therefore a policy of evaluation and dismissal means effort to know what hurts the people.

2.43 What Hurts the People

There are five things that hurt the people:

1. There are local officials who use public office for personal benefit, taking improper advantage of their authority, holding weapons in one hand and people's livelihood in the other, corrupting their offices, and bleeding the people.
2. There are cases where serious offenses are given light penalties; there is inequality before the law, and the innocents are subjected to punishment, even execution. Sometimes serious crimes are pardoned, the strong are supported, and the weak are oppressed. Harsh penalties are applied, unjustly torturing people to get at facts.
3. Sometimes there are officials who condone crime and vice, punishing those who protest against this, cutting off the avenue of appeal and hiding the truth, plundering and ruining lives, unjust and arbitrary.
4. Sometimes there are senior officials who repeatedly change department heads so as to monopolize the government administration, favoring their friends and relatives while treating those they dislike with unjust harshness, oppressive in their actions, prejudiced and unruly. They also use taxation to reap profit, enriching themselves and their families by exactions and fraud.
5. Sometimes local officials extensively tailor awards and fines, welfare projects, and general expenditures, arbitrarily determining prices and measures, with the result that people lose their jobs.

These five things are harmful to the people, and anyone who does any of these should be dismissed from the office.

2.44 Military Actions

“Weapon are instruments of ill omen, to be used only when it is unavoidable.” The proper course of military action is to establish strategy first, and then carry it out. Monitor the environment, observe the minds of the masses, practice the use of military equipment, clarify the principles of reward and punishment, watch the schemes of enemies, note the perils of the roads, distinguish safe and dangerous places, find out the conditions of the parties involved, and recognize when to proceed and when to withdraw. Follow the timing of opportunities, set up preparations for defense, strengthen your striking power, improve the abilities of your soldiers, map out decisive strategies, and consider life and death issues. Only after doing appointing military leaders and extending the power to capture enemies. This is the overall scheme of things in military matters.

2.45 Rewards and Penalties

A policy of rewards and penalties means rewarding the good and penalizing wrongdoers. Rewarding the good is to promote achievement; penalizing wrongdoers is to prevent treachery.

It is imperative that rewards and punishments be fair and impartial. When they know rewards are to be given, courageous warriors know what they are dying for; when they know penalties are to be applied, villains know what to fear.

Therefore, rewards should not be given without reason, and penalties should not be applied arbitrary. If rewards are given for no reason, those who have worked hard in public service will be resentful; if penalties are applied arbitrary, upright people will be bitter.

2.46 Clarity and Consistency

Generals hold authority over life and death. If they allow those who should live to be killed, or allow those who should be killed to live, or if they get angry without discernible reason, or their punishments and rewards are not clear, or commands are inconsistent, or they carry their private over into public life, this is dangerous for the nation.

If their punishment and rewards are not clear, their directives will not always be followed. If they allow those who should be killed to live, treachery will not be prevented. If they allow those

who should live to be killed, soldiers will defect. If they get angry without discernible reason, their authority will not be effective. If their rewards and punishments are not clear, the lower echelons will not be encouraged to achieve. If politics are inappropriate, orders will not be obeyed. If private affairs are carried over into public life, people will be of two minds.

If treachery is not prevented, it is impossible to last long. If soldiers defect, the ranks will be decimated. If authority is ineffective, the troops will not rise up in the face of the enemy. If the lower echelons are not encouraged to achieve, the upper echelons have no strong support. If orders are not obeyed, affairs will be chaotic. If people are of two minds, the country will be in danger.

2.47 Pleasure and Displeasure

Displeasure should not lead you to harm people who have done no wrong; pleasure should not lead you to go along with those who deserve to be executed.

Pleasure should not induce you to forgive those who have done wrong; displeasure should not induce you to execute the innocent.

Pleasure and displeasure should not be arbitrary; personal prejudices ignore worthy people. A general should not start a battle out of personal displeasure; it is imperative to go by the collective will. If he does go into battle because of personal displeasure, it will certainly result in defeat.

2.48 Culture and the Military

Culture takes precedence; the military comes after. If you put victory first, you will surely get beaten later; if you start out with anger, you will surely regret it later. One day's anger can destroy your whole life. Therefore a superior man is stern but not ferocious; he may get angry, but not furious; he may worry, but does not fear; he may rejoice, but not overjoyed.

2.49 Organisation

A policy to quell disorder involves minimizing offices and combining duties, getting rid of embellishment in favor of substance.

First organize directives, then organize penalties. First organize the near at hand, then organize the far removed. First organize the inner, then organize the outer. First organize the basic, then organize the derivative. First organize the strong, then organize the weak. First organize the great,

then organize the small. First organize yourself, then organize others.

2.50 Instruction and Direction

A policy of instruction and direction means those above educate those below, not saying anything that is unlawful and not doing anything that is immoral, for what is done by those above is observed by those below.

To indulge oneself yet instruct others is contrary to proper government; to correct oneself and then teach others is in accord with proper government. Therefore true leaders first rectify themselves and only after that do they promulgate their directives. If they are not upright themselves, their directives will not be followed, resulting in disorder.

Therefore the Way of leadership puts education and direction before punishment. To send people to war without education is tantamount to throwing them away.

2.51 Thought and Consideration

A policy of thought and consideration means giving thought to what is near at hand and considering what is remote. As it is said, "If people do not consider what is remote, they will have trouble near at hand." Therefore "educated people think without leaving their positions." Thinking means correct strategy, consideration mean thinking of plans for eventualities. One is not to plan policy when it is not one's place to do so, or consider the scheme of things that are none of one's business.

Major affairs arise in difficulty, minor affairs arise in ease. Therefore if you want to think of the advantages in a situation, it is imperative to consider the harm; if you want to think about success, it is imperative to consider failure.

Danger arises in safety, destruction arises in survival. Harm arises in advantage, chaos arises in order. Enlightened people know the obvious when they see the subtle, know the end when they see the beginning; thus there is no way for disaster to happen. This is due to thoughtful consideration.

2.52 Strength in Generals

Generals have five strengths and eight evils.

The five strengths are: noble behavior that can inspire the common people, social virtues that can elevate their reputations, trustworthiness and dutifulness in personal relationships, universal

love encompassing all the people, and powerful action to succeed in their tasks.

The eight evils are: inability to assess right and wrong when formulating strategy, inability to delegate authority to the wise and the goods in times of order, inability to mete out just punishments for incidents of disorder, inability to help the poor in times of plenty, insufficient intelligence to guard against threats before they have taken shape, insufficient thought to prevent subtle dangers, inability to express what is known intuitively, and inability to avoid criticism in defeat.

2.53 Sending Out the Armed Forces

In ancient times, when a nation was in trouble, the ruler would select a wise man and have him fast for three days in quiet seclusion before going to the gate of the national shrine, where he would stand facing south. He then took a high courtier to present a ceremonial axe to the ruler, who in turn would pass it by the handle to the general, saying:

- “The military leadership settles matters outside the borders,” and also directing him in these terms:
- “Where you see the enemy to be empty, proceed; where you see the enemy to be full, stop.
- “Do not look down on others because of your elevated rank.
- “Do not oppose the common consensus with personal opinions.
- “Do not turn from the loyal and trustworthy through the artifices of the skilled but treacherous.
- “Do not sit down before the soldiers sit; do not eat before the soldiers eat.
- “Bear the same cold and heat the soldiers do; share their toil as well as their case.
- “Experience sweetness and bitterness just as the soldiers do; take the same risks that they do.
- “Then the soldiers will exert themselves to the utmost, and it will be possible to destroy enemies.”

Having accepted these words, the general led the armed forces out through the city’s gate of ill omen.

The ruler, seeing the general off, knelt and said,

- “Advance and retreat are a matter of timing - military affairs are not directed by the ruler but by the general.” Therefore
- “There is no heaven above, no earth below, no adversary ahead, and no ruler behind.”

Thus the intelligent think because of this; the mettlesome fight because of this.

2.54 Selection on Abilities

In military action, there are men who like to fight and enjoy battle, singlehandedly taking on powerful opponents; gather them into one squad and call them “the warriors who repay the nation.”

There are mettlesome men with ability and strength, courage and speed; gather them into a squad and call them “the warriors who crash the battle lines.”

There are those who are light of foot, good walkers and runners; gather them into a squad called “the warriors who capture the flag.”

There are those who can shoot on horseback, swift as flight, hitting the mark every times; gather them into one squad and call them “the galloping warriors.”

There are archers whose aim is accurate and deadly; gather them into one squad and call them “the warriors of the fighting edge.”

There are those who can shoot heavy crossbows and catapults accurately at great distances; gather them into one squad and call them “the warriors who crush the enemy’s edge.”

These six kinds of skilled warriors should be employed according to their particular skills.

2.55 The Use of Knowledge

Generalship requires one to follow nature, depend on timing, and rely on people in order to achieve victory.

Therefore, if nature works but the timing doesn’t work, and yet people act, this is called opposing the time.

If the timing works but nature isn’t cooperating, and still people act, this is called opposing nature.

If timing and nature both work, but people do not act, this is called opposing people. Those who know do not oppose nature, do not know oppose the time, and do not know oppose people.

2.56 Not Setting Up Battle Lines

In ancient times, those who governed well did not arm, and those who were armed well did not set up battle lines. Those who set up battle lines well did not fight, those who fought well did not lose, and those who lost well did not perish.

The government of the sages of old was such that people were comfortable in their homes and enjoyed their works, living to old age without ever attacking one another. “Those who govern well do not arm.”

When King Shun (reigned 2255-2207 BCE) organized rules and penalties for wrongdoing, he accordingly created knights, or warriors. But people did not violate the rules, and no penalties were enforced. “Those who arm well do not set up battle lines.”

Later, King Yu (reigned 2205-2197 BCE) made a punitive expedition against the Miao tribes, but all he did was demonstrate the martial art and culture arts, and the Miao people became more civilized. “Those who set up battle lines well do not fight.”

King Tang (reigned 1766-1753 BCE) and King Wu (reigned 1766-1753 BCE) and King Wu (reigned 1134-1115) pledged armies for one military operation, by which the whole land was decisively pacified. “Those who fight well do not lose.”

When King Zhao and Chu (reigned 515-488) ran into the disaster, he fled to Qin for help and ultimately was able to get his kingdom back. “Those who lose well do not perish.”

2.57 Sincerity in Generals

An ancient document says: “Those who are contemptuous of cultured people have no way to win people’s hearts completely; those who are contemptuous of common people have no way to get people to work as hard as they can.”

- For military operations it is essential to strive to win the hearts of heroes, to make the rules of rewards and punishments strict, to include both cultural and martial arts, and to combine both hard and soft techniques.
- Enjoy the amenities and music; familiarize yourself with poetry and prose. Put humanity and justice before wit and bravery.
- In stillness be as quiet as a fish in the deep, in action be as swift as an otter. Dissolve enemies’ collusion; break down their strengths. Dazzle people with your banners; alert people with

cymbals and drums.

- Withdraw like a mountain in movement, advance like a rainstorm. Strike and crush with shattering force; go into battle like a tiger.
- Press enemies and contain them; lure and entice them. Confuse them and seize them; be humble to make them proud. Be familiar yet distant; weaken them by lending strength.
- Give security to those in danger; gladden those in fear. If people oppose you, take what they say to heart; if people have grudges, let them express themselves.
- Restrain the strong, sustain the weak. Get to know those with plans; cover up any slander. When there is booty, distribute it.
- Do not count on your strength and take an opponent lightly. Do not be conceited about your abilities and think little of subordinates.
- Do not let personal favor congeal into authority.
- Plan before acting. Fight only when you know you can win.
- Do not keep the spoils of war for your own possession and use.
- If generals can be like this, people will be willing to fight when they give the orders, and the enemy will be defeated before any blood is shed.

THE END