

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Sun Wu and his Book

Ssu-ma Ch'ien gives the following biography of Sun Tzu:¹

Sun Tzu Wu was a native of the Ch'i State. His ART OF WAR brought him to the notice of Ho Lu,² King of Wu.

Ho Lu said to him: "I have carefully perused your 13 chapters. May I submit your theory of managing soldiers to a slight test?"

Sun Tzu replied: "You may."

Ho Lu asked: "May the test be applied to women?"

The answer was again in the affirmative, so arrangements were made to bring 180 ladies out of the Palace. Sun Tzu divided them into two companies, and placed one of the King's favorite concubines at the head of each. He then bade them all take spears in their hands, and addressed them thus: "I presume you know the difference between front and back, right hand and left hand?"

The girls replied: Yes.

Sun Tzu went on: "When I say "Eyes front," you must look straight ahead. When I say "Left turn," you must face towards your left hand. When I say "Right turn," you must face towards your right hand. When I say "About turn," you must face right round towards your back."

Again the girls assented. The words of command having been thus explained, he set up the halberds and battle-axes in order to begin the drill. Then, to the sound of drums, he gave the order "Right turn." But the girls only burst out laughing. Sun Tzu said: "If words of command are not clear and distinct, if orders are not thoroughly understood, then the general is to blame."

¹SHI CHI, ch. 65.

²He reigned from 514 to 496 B.C.

So he started drilling them again, and this time gave the order "Left turn," whereupon the girls once more burst into fits of laughter. Sun Tzu: "If words of command are not clear and distinct, if orders are not thoroughly understood, the general is to blame. But if his orders ARE clear, and the soldiers nevertheless disobey, then it is the fault of their officers."

So saying, he ordered the leaders of the two companies to be beheaded. Now the king of Wu was watching the scene from the top of a raised pavilion; and when he saw that his favorite concubines were about to be executed, he was greatly alarmed and hurriedly sent down the following message: "We are now quite satisfied as to our general's ability to handle troops. If we are bereft of these two concubines, our meat and drink will lose their savor. It is our wish that they shall not be beheaded."

Sun Tzu replied: "Having once received His Majesty's commission to be the general of his forces, there are certain commands of His Majesty which, acting in that capacity, I am unable to accept."

Accordingly, he had the two leaders beheaded, and straightway installed the pair next in order as leaders in their place. When this had been done, the drum was sounded for the drill once more; and the girls went through all the evolutions, turning to the right or to the left, marching ahead or wheeling back, kneeling or standing, with perfect accuracy and precision, not venturing to utter a sound. Then Sun Tzu sent a messenger to the King saying: "Your soldiers, Sire, are now properly drilled and disciplined, and ready for your majesty's inspection. They can be put to any use that their sovereign may desire; bid them go through fire and water, and they will not disobey."

But the King replied: "Let our general cease drilling and return to camp. As for us, we have no wish to come down and inspect the troops."

Thereupon Sun Tzu said: "The King is only fond of words, and cannot translate them into deeds."

After that, Ho Lu saw that Sun Tzu was one who knew how to handle an army, and finally appointed him general. In the west, he defeated the Ch'u State and forced his way into Ying, the capital; to the north he put fear into the States of Ch'i and Chin, and spread his fame abroad amongst the feudal princes. And Sun Tzu shared in the might of the King.

About Sun Tzu himself this is all that Ssu-ma Ch'ien has to tell us in this chapter. But he proceeds to give a biography of his descendant, Sun Pin, born about a hundred years after his famous ancestor's death, and also the outstanding military genius of his time. The historian speaks of him too as Sun Tzu, and in his preface we read: "Sun Tzu had his feet cut off and yet continued to discuss the art of war."³ It seems likely, then, that "Pin" was a nickname bestowed on him after his mutilation, unless the story was invented in order to account for the name. The crowning incident of his career, the

³SHI CHI, ch. 130.

crushing defeat of his treacherous rival P'ang Chuan, will be found briefly related in Chapter V. ss. 19, note.

To return to the elder Sun Tzu. He is mentioned in two other passages of the SHIH CHI:

In the third year of his reign [512 B.C.] Ho Lu, king of Wu, took the field with Tzu-hsu [i.e. Wu Yuan] and Po P'ei, and attacked Ch'u. He captured the town of Shu and slew the two prince's sons who had formerly been generals of Wu. He was then meditating a descent on Ying [the capital]; but the general Sun Wu said: "The army is exhausted. It is not yet possible. We must wait".... [After further successful fighting,] "in the ninth year [506 B.C.], King Ho Lu addressed Wu Tzu-hsu and Sun Wu, saying: "Formerly, you declared that it was not yet possible for us to enter Ying. Is the time ripe now?" The two men replied: "Ch'u's general Tzu-ch'ang,⁴ is grasping and covetous, and the princes of T'ang and Ts'ai both have a grudge against him. If Your Majesty has resolved to make a grand attack, you must win over T'ang and Ts'ai, and then you may succeed." Ho Lu followed this advice, [beat Ch'u in five pitched battles and marched into Ying.]⁵

This is the latest date at which anything is recorded of Sun Wu. He does not appear to have survived his patron, who died from the effects of a wound in 496.

In another chapter there occurs this passage:⁶

From this time onward, a number of famous soldiers arose, one after the other: Kao-fan,⁷ who was employed by the Chin State; Wang-tzu,⁸ in the service of Ch'i; and Sun Wu, in the service of Wu. These men developed and threw light upon the principles of war.

It is obvious enough that Ssu-ma Ch'ien at least had no doubt about the reality of Sun Wu as an historical personage; and with one exception, to be noticed presently, he is by far the most important authority on the period in question. It will not be necessary, therefore, to say much of such a work as the WU YUEH CH'UN CH'IU, which is supposed to have been written by Chao Yeh of the 1st century A.D. The attribution is somewhat doubtful; but even if it were otherwise, his account would be of little value, based as it is on the SHIH CHI and expanded with romantic details. The story of Sun Tzu will be found, for what it is worth, in chapter 2. The only new points in it worth noting are: (1) Sun Tzu was first recommended to Ho Lu by Wu Tzu-hsu. (2) He is called a native of Wu. (3) He had previously lived a retired life, and his contemporaries were unaware of his ability.

The following passage occurs in the Huai-nan Tzu: "When sovereign and ministers show perversity of mind, it is impossible even for a Sun Tzu to encounter the foe."

⁴The appellation of Nang Wa.

⁵SHI CHI, ch. 31.

⁶SHI CHI, ch. 25.

⁷The appellation of Hu Yen, mentioned in ch. 39 under the year 637.

⁸Wang-tzu Ch'eng-fu, ch. 32, year 607.

Assuming that this work is genuine (and hitherto no doubt has been cast upon it), we have here the earliest direct reference for Sun Tzu, for Huai-nan Tzu died in 122 B.C., many years before the SHIH CHI was given to the world.

Liu Hsiang (80-9 B.C.) says: "The reason why Sun Tzu at the head of 30,000 men beat Ch'u with 200,000 is that the latter were undisciplined."

Teng Ming-shih informs us that the surname "Sun" was bestowed on Sun Wu's grandfather by Duke Ching of Ch'i [547-490 B.C.]. Sun Wu's father Sun P'ing, rose to be a Minister of State in Ch'i, and Sun Wu himself, whose style was Ch'ang-ch'ing, fled to Wu on account of the rebellion which was being fomented by the kindred of T'ien Pao. He had three sons, of whom the second, named Ming, was the father of Sun Pin. According to this account then, Pin was the grandson of Wu, which, considering that Sun Pin's victory over Wei was gained in 341 B.C., may be dismissed as chronological impossible. Whence these data were obtained by Teng Ming-shih I do not know, but of course no reliance whatever can be placed in them.

An interesting document which has survived from the close of the Han period is the short preface written by the Great Ts'ao Ts'ao, or Wei Wu Ti, for his edition of Sun Tzu. I shall give it in full:

I have heard that the ancients used bows and arrows to their advantage.⁹ The SHU CHU mentions "the army" among the "eight objects of government." The I CHING says: "'army' indicates firmness and justice; the experienced leader will have good fortune." The SHIH CHING says: "The King rose majestic in his wrath, and he marshaled his troops." The Yellow Emperor, T'ang the Completer and Wu Wang all used spears and battle-axes in order to succor their generation. The SSU-MA FA says: "If one man slay another of set purpose, he himself may rightfully be slain." He who relies solely on warlike measures shall be exterminated; he who relies solely on peaceful measures shall perish. Instances of this are Fu Ch'ai¹⁰ on the one hand and Yen Wang on the other. ¹¹ In military matters, the Sage's rule is normally to keep the peace, and to move his forces only when occasion requires. He will not use armed force unless driven to it by necessity.

Many books have I read on the subject of war and fighting; but the work composed by Sun Wu is the profoundest of them all. [Sun Tzu was a native of the Ch'i state, his personal name was Wu. He wrote the ART OF WAR in 13 chapters for Ho Lu, King of Wu. Its principles were tested on women, and he was subsequently made a general. He led an army westwards, crushed the Ch'u state and entered Ying the capital. In the north, he kept Ch'i and Chin in awe. A hundred years and more after his

⁹"They attached strings to wood to make bows, and sharpened wood to make arrows. The use of bows and arrows is to keep the Empire in awe."

¹⁰The son and successor of Ho Lu. He was finally defeated and overthrown by Kou chien, King of Yueh, in 473 B.C. See post.

¹¹King Yen of Hsu, a fabulous being, of whom Sun Hsing-yen says in his preface: "His humanity brought him to destruction."

time, Sun Pin lived. He was a descendant of Wu.] ¹² In his treatment of deliberation and planning, the importance of rapidity in taking the field, ¹³ clearness of conception, and depth of design, Sun Tzu stands beyond the reach of carping criticism. My contemporaries, however, have failed to grasp the full meaning of his instructions, and while putting into practice the smaller details in which his work abounds, they have overlooked its essential purport. That is the motive which has led me to outline a rough explanation of the whole.

One thing to be noticed in the above is the explicit statement that the 13 chapters were specially composed for King Ho Lu. This is supported by the internal evidence of I. ss. 15, in which it seems clear that some ruler is addressed.

In the bibliographic section of the HAN SHU, there is an entry which has given rise to much discussion: "The works of Sun Tzu of Wu in 82 P'IEN (or chapters), with diagrams in 9 CHUAN." It is evident that this cannot be merely the 13 chapters known to Ssu-ma Ch'ien, or those we possess today. Chang Shou-chieh refers to an edition of Sun Tzu's ART OF WAR of which the "13 chapters" formed the first CHUAN, adding that there were two other CHUAN besides. This has brought forth a theory, that the bulk of these 82 chapters consisted of other writings of Sun Tzu – we should call them apocryphal – similar to the WEN TA, of which a specimen dealing with the Nine Situations¹⁴ is preserved in the T'UNG TIEN, and another in Ho Shin's commentary. It is suggested that before his interview with Ho Lu, Sun Tzu had only written the 13 chapters, but afterwards composed a sort of exegesis in the form of question and answer between himself and the King. Pi I-hsun, the author of the SUN TZU HSU LU, backs this up with a quotation from the WU YUEH CH'UN CH'IU: "The King of Wu summoned Sun Tzu, and asked him questions about the art of war. Each time he set forth a chapter of his work, the King could not find words enough to praise him." As he points out, if the whole work was expounded on the same scale as in the above-mentioned fragments, the total number of chapters could not fail to be considerable. Then the numerous other treatises attributed to Sun Tzu might be included. The fact that the HAN CHIH mentions no work of Sun Tzu except the 82 P'IEN, whereas the Sui and T'ang bibliographies give the titles of others in addition to the "13 chapters," is good proof, Pi I-hsun thinks, that all of these were contained in the 82 P'IEN. Without pinning our faith to the accuracy of details supplied by the WU YUEH CH'UN CH'IU, or admitting the genuineness of any of the treatises cited by Pi I-hsun, we may see in this theory a probable solution of the mystery. Between Ssu-ma Ch'ien and Pan Ku there was plenty of time for a luxuriant crop of forgeries to have grown up under the magic name of Sun Tzu, and the 82 P'IEN may very well represent a collected edition of these lumped together with the original work. It is also possible, though less likely, that some of them existed in the time of the earlier historian and were purposely ignored by him.¹⁵

¹²The passage I have put in brackets is omitted in the T'U SHU, and may be an interpolation. It was known, however to Chang Shou-chieh of the T'ang dynasty, and appears in the T'AI P'ING YU LAN.

¹³Ts'ao Kung seems to be thinking of the first part of chap. II, perhaps especially of ss. 8.

¹⁴See chap. XI.

¹⁵On the other hand, it is noteworthy that WU TZU, which is not in 6 chapters, has 48 assigned to it in the HAN CHIH. Likewise, the CHUNG YUNG is credited with 49 chapters, though now only in one only. In

Tu Mu's conjecture seems to be based on a passage which states: "Wei Wu Ti strung together Sun Wu's Art of War," which in turn may have resulted from a misunderstanding of the final words of Ts'ao King's preface. This, as Sun Hsing-yen points out, is only a modest way of saying that he made an explanatory paraphrase, or in other words, wrote a commentary on it. On the whole, this theory has met with very little acceptance. Thus, the SSU K'U CH'UAN SHU says: "The mention of the 13 chapters in the SHIH CHI shows that they were in existence before the HAN CHIH, and that latter accretions are not to be considered part of the original work. Tu Mu's assertion can certainly not be taken as proof."

There is every reason to suppose, then, that the 13 chapters existed in the time of Ssu-ma Ch'ien practically as we have them now. That the work was then well known he tells us in so many words. "Sun Tzu's 13 Chapters and Wu Ch'i's Art of War are the two books that people commonly refer to on the subject of military matters. Both of them are widely distributed, so I will not discuss them here." But as we go further back, serious difficulties begin to arise. The salient fact which has to be faced is that the TSO CHUAN, the greatest contemporary record, makes no mention whatsoever of Sun Wu, either as a general or as a writer. It is natural, in view of this awkward circumstance, that many scholars should not only cast doubt on the story of Sun Wu as given in the SHIH CHI, but even show themselves frankly skeptical as to the existence of the man at all. The most powerful presentment of this side of the case is to be found in the following disposition by Yeh Shui-hsin:¹⁶

It is stated in Ssu-ma Ch'ien's history that Sun Wu was a native of the Ch'i State, and employed by Wu; and that in the reign of Ho Lu he crushed Ch'u, entered Ying, and was a great general. But in Tso's Commentary no Sun Wu appears at all. It is true that Tso's Commentary need not contain absolutely everything that other histories contain. But Tso has not omitted to mention vulgar plebeians and hireling ruffians such as Ying K'ao-shu,¹⁷ Ts'ao Kuei,¹⁸ Chu Chih-wu and Chuan She-chu¹⁹. In the case of Sun Wu, whose fame and achievements were so brilliant, the omission is much more glaring. Again, details are given, in their due order, about his contemporaries Wu Yuan and the Minister P'ei.²⁰ Is it credible that Sun Wu alone should have been passed over?

In point of literary style, Sun Tzu's work belongs to the same school as KUAN TZU,²¹ LIU T'AO,²² and the YUEH YU²³ and may have been the production of some private scholar living towards the end of the "Spring

the case of very short works, one is tempted to think that P'EN might simply mean "leaves."

¹⁶Yeh Shih of the Sung dynasty [1151-1223].

¹⁷He hardly deserves to be bracketed with assassins.

¹⁸See Chapter 7, ss. 27 and Chapter 11, ss. 28.

¹⁹See Chapter 11, ss. 28. Chuan Chu is the abbreviated form of his name.

²⁰I.e. Po P'ei. See ante.

²¹The nucleus of this work is probably genuine, though large additions have been made by later hands. Kuan chung died in 645 B.C.

²²See *infra*, beginning of INTRODUCTION.

²³I do not know what this work, unless it be the last chapter of another work. Why that chapter should be singled out, however, is not clear.

and Autumn" or the beginning of the "Warring States" period.²⁴ The story that his precepts were actually applied by the Wu State, is merely the outcome of big talk on the part of his followers.

From the flourishing period of the Chou dynasty²⁵ down to the time of the "Spring and Autumn," all military commanders were statesmen as well, and the class of professional generals, for conducting external campaigns, did not then exist. It was not until the period of the "Six States"²⁶ that this custom changed. Now although Wu was an uncivilized State, it is conceivable that Tso should have left unrecorded the fact that Sun Wu was a great general and yet held no civil office? What we are told, therefore, about Jang-chu²⁷ and Sun Wu, is not authentic matter, but the reckless fabrication of theorizing pundits. The story of Ho Lu's experiment on the women, in particular, is utterly preposterous and incredible.

Yeh Shui-hsin represents Ssu-ma Ch'ien as having said that Sun Wu crushed Ch'u and entered Ying. This is not quite correct. No doubt the impression left on the reader's mind is that he at least shared in these exploits. The fact may or may not be significant; but it is nowhere explicitly stated in the SHIH CHI either that Sun Tzu was general on the occasion of the taking of Ying, or that he even went there at all. Moreover, as we know that Wu Yuan and Po P'ei both took part in the expedition, and also that its success was largely due to the dash and enterprise of Fu Kai, Ho Lu's younger brother, it is not easy to see how yet another general could have played a very prominent part in the same campaign.

Ch'en Chen-sun of the Sung dynasty has the note:

Military writers look upon Sun Wu as the father of their art. But the fact that he does not appear in the TSO CHUAN, although he is said to have served under Ho Lu King of Wu, makes it uncertain what period he really belonged to.

He also says:

The works of Sun Wu and Wu Ch'i may be of genuine antiquity.

It is noticeable that both Yeh Shui-hsin and Ch'en Chen-sun, while rejecting the personality of Sun Wu as he figures in Ssu-ma Ch'ien's history, are inclined to accept the date traditionally assigned to the work which passes under his name. The author of the HSU LU fails to appreciate this distinction, and consequently his bitter attack on Ch'en Chen-sun really misses its mark. He makes one of two points, however, which certainly tell in favor of the high antiquity of our "13 chapters." "Sun Tzu," he says,

²⁴ About 480 B.C.

²⁵ That is, I suppose, the age of Wu Wang and Chou Kung.

²⁶ In the 3rd century B.C.

²⁷ Ssu-ma Jang-chu, whose family name was T'ien, lived in the latter half of the 6th century B.C., and is also believed to have written a work on war. See SHIH CHI, ch. 64, and *infra* at the beginning of the INTRODUCTION.

"must have lived in the age of Ching Wang [519-476], because he is frequently plagiarized in subsequent works of the Chou, Ch'in and Han dynasties." The two most shameless offenders in this respect are Wu Ch'i and Huai-nan Tzu, both of them important historical personages in their day. The former lived only a century after the alleged date of Sun Tzu, and his death is known to have taken place in 381 B.C. It was to him, according to Liu Hsiang, that Tseng Shen delivered the TSO CHUAN, which had been entrusted to him by its author.²⁸ Now the fact that quotations from the ART OF WAR, acknowledged or otherwise, are to be found in so many authors of different epochs, establishes a very strong anterior to them all, – in other words, that Sun Tzu's treatise was already in existence towards the end of the 5th century B.C. Further proof of Sun Tzu's antiquity is furnished by the archaic or wholly obsolete meanings attaching to a number of the words he uses. A list of these, which might perhaps be extended, is given in the HSU LU; and though some of the interpretations are doubtful, the main argument is hardly affected thereby. Again, it must not be forgotten that Yeh Shui-hsin, a scholar and critic of the first rank, deliberately pronounces the style of the 13 chapters to belong to the early part of the fifth century. Seeing that he is actually engaged in an attempt to disprove the existence of Sun Wu himself, we may be sure that he would not have hesitated to assign the work to a later date had he not honestly believed the contrary. And it is precisely on such a point that the judgment of an educated Chinaman will carry most weight. Other internal evidence is not far to seek. Thus in XIII. ss. 1, there is an unmistakable allusion to the ancient system of land-tenure which had already passed away by the time of Mencius, who was anxious to see it revived in a modified form.²⁹ The only warfare Sun Tzu knows is that carried on between the various feudal princes, in which armored chariots play a large part. Their use seems to have entirely died out before the end of the Chou dynasty. He speaks as a man of Wu, a state which ceased to exist as early as 473 B.C. On this I shall touch presently.

But once refer the work to the 5th century or earlier, and the chances of its being other than a bona fide production are sensibly diminished. The great age of forgeries did not come until long after. That it should have been forged in the period immediately following 473 is particularly unlikely, for no one, as a rule, hastens to identify himself with a lost cause. As for Yeh Shui-hsin's theory, that the author was a literary recluse, that seems to me quite untenable. If one thing is more apparent than another after reading the maxims of Sun Tzu, it is that their essence has been distilled from a large store of personal observation and experience. They reflect the mind not only of a born strategist, gifted with a rare faculty of generalization, but also of a practical soldier closely acquainted with the military conditions of his time. To say nothing of the fact that these sayings have been accepted and endorsed by all the greatest captains of Chinese history, they offer a combination of freshness and sincerity, acuteness and common sense, which quite excludes the idea that they were artificially concocted in the study. If we admit, then, that the 13 chapters were the genuine production of a military man living towards the end of the "CH'UN CH'IU" period, are we not bound, in spite of the silence of the TSO CHUAN, to accept Ssu-ma Ch'ien's account in its entirety? In view of his high repute as a sober historian, must we not hesitate to assume

²⁸See Legge's Classics, vol. V, Prolegomena p. 27. Legge thinks that the TSO CHUAN must have been written in the 5th century, but not before 424 B.C.

²⁹See MENCIUS III. 1. iii. 13-20.

that the records he drew upon for Sun Wu's biography were false and untrustworthy? The answer, I fear, must be in the negative. There is still one grave, if not fatal, objection to the chronology involved in the story as told in the SHIH CHI, which, so far as I am aware, nobody has yet pointed out. There are two passages in Sun Tzu in which he alludes to contemporary affairs. The first in VI. ss. 21:

Though according to my estimate the soldiers of Yueh exceed our own in number, that shall advantage them nothing in the matter of victory. I say then that victory can be achieved.

The other is in XI. ss. 30:

Asked if an army can be made to imitate the SHUAI-JAN, I should answer, Yes. For the men of Wu and the men of Yueh are enemies; yet if they are crossing a river in the same boat and are caught by a storm, they will come to each other's assistance just as the left hand helps the right.

These two paragraphs are extremely valuable as evidence of the date of composition. They assign the work to the period of the struggle between Wu and Yueh. So much has been observed by Pi I-hsun. But what has hitherto escaped notice is that they also seriously impair the credibility of Ssu-ma Ch'ien's narrative. As we have seen above, the first positive date given in connection with Sun Wu is 512 B.C. He is then spoken of as a general, acting as confidential adviser to Ho Lu, so that his alleged introduction to that monarch had already taken place, and of course the 13 chapters must have been written earlier still. But at that time, and for several years after, down to the capture of Ying in 506, Ch'u and not Yueh, was the great hereditary enemy of Wu. The two states, Ch'u and Wu, had been constantly at war for over half a century,³⁰ whereas the first war between Wu and Yueh was waged only in 510,³¹ and even then was no more than a short interlude sandwiched in the midst of the fierce struggle with Ch'u. Now Ch'u is not mentioned in the 13 chapters at all. The natural inference is that they were written at a time when Yueh had become the prime antagonist of Wu, that is, after Ch'u had suffered the great humiliation of 506. At this point, a table of dates may be found useful.

³⁰When Wu first appears in the CH'UN CH'IU in 584, it is already at variance with its powerful neighbor. The CH'UN CH'IU first mentions Yueh in 537, the TSO CHUAN in 601.

³¹This is explicitly stated in the TSO CHUAN, XXXII, 2.

B.C.	
514	Accession of Ho Lu.
512	Ho Lu attacks Ch'u, but is dissuaded from entering Ying, the capital. SHI CHI m
511	Another attack on Ch'u.
510	Wu makes a successful attack on Yueh. This is the first war between
508 or 509	Ch'u invades Wu, but is signally defeated at Yu-chang
506	Ho Lu attacks Ch'u with the aid of T'ang and Ts'ai. Decisive battle of Po-chu, and capture of Yi
505	Yueh makes a raid on Wu in the absence of its army. Wu is beaten by Ch'in
504	Ho Lu sends Fu Ch'ai to attack Ch'u.
497	Kou Chien becomes King of Yueh.
496	Wu attacks Yueh, but is defeated by Kou Chien at Tsui-li. Ho Lu
494	Fu Ch'ai defeats Kou Chien in the great battle of Fuchaio, and enters th
485 or 484	Kou Chien renders homage to Wu. Death of Wu Tzu-hs
482	Kou Chien invades Wu in the absence of Fu Ch'ai.
478 to 476	Further attacks by Yueh on Wu.
475	Kou Chien lays siege to the capital of Wu.
473	Final defeat and extinction of Wu.

The sentence quoted above from VI. ss. 21 hardly strikes me as one that could have been written in the full flush of victory. It seems rather to imply that, for the moment at least, the tide had turned against Wu, and that she was getting the worst of the struggle. Hence we may conclude that our treatise was not in existence in 505, before which date Yueh does not appear to have scored any notable success against Wu. Ho Lu died in 496, so that if the book was written for him, it must have been during the period 505-496, when there was a lull in the hostilities, Wu having presumably exhausted by its supreme effort against Ch'u. On the other hand, if we choose to disregard the tradition connecting Sun Wu's name with Ho Lu, it might equally well have seen the light between 496 and 494, or possibly in the period 482-473, when Yueh was once again becoming a very serious menace.³² We may feel fairly certain that the author, whoever he may have been, was not a man of any great eminence in his own day. On this point the negative testimony of the TSO CHUAN far outweighs any shred of authority still attaching to the SHIH CHI, if once its other facts are discredited. Sun Hsing-yen, however, makes a feeble attempt to explain the omission of his name from the great commentary. It was Wu Tzu-hsu, he says, who got all the credit of Sun Wu's exploits, because the latter (being an alien) was not rewarded with an office in the State.

How then did the Sun Tzu legend originate? It may be that the growing celebrity of the book imparted by degrees a kind of factitious renown to its author. It was felt to be only right and proper that one so well versed in the science of war should have solid achievements to his credit as well. Now the capture of Ying was undoubtedly the greatest feat of arms in Ho Lu's reign; it made a deep and lasting impression on all the surrounding states, and raised Wu to the short-lived zenith of her power. Hence, what more natural, as time went on, than that the acknowledged master of strategy, Sun Wu, should be popularly identified with that campaign, at first perhaps only in the sense that his brain conceived and planned it; afterwards, that it was actually carried out by him

³²There is this to be said for the later period, that the feud would tend to grow more bitter after each encounter, and thus more fully justify the language used in XI. ss. 30.

in conjunction with Wu Yuan,³³ Po P'ei and Fu Kai?

It is obvious that any attempt to reconstruct even the outline of Sun Tzu's life must be based almost wholly on conjecture. With this necessary proviso, I should say that he probably entered the service of Wu about the time of Ho Lu's accession, and gathered experience, though only in the capacity of a subordinate officer, during the intense military activity which marked the first half of the prince's reign.³⁴ If he rose to be a general at all, he certainly was never on an equal footing with the three above mentioned. He was doubtless present at the investment and occupation of Ying, and witnessed Wu's sudden collapse in the following year. Yueh's attack at this critical juncture, when her rival was embarrassed on every side, seems to have convinced him that this upstart kingdom was the great enemy against whom every effort would henceforth have to be directed. Sun Wu was thus a well-seasoned warrior when he sat down to write his famous book, which according to my reckoning must have appeared towards the end, rather than the beginning of Ho Lu's reign. The story of the women may possibly have grown out of some real incident occurring about the same time. As we hear no more of Sun Wu after this from any source, he is hardly likely to have survived his patron or to have taken part in the death-struggle with Yueh, which began with the disaster at Tsuli.

If these inferences are approximately correct, there is a certain irony in the fate which decreed that China's most illustrious man of peace should be contemporary with her greatest writer on war.

1.2 The Text of Sun Tzu

I have found it difficult to glean much about the history of Sun Tzu's text. The quotations that occur in early authors go to show that the "13 chapters" of which Ssu-ma Ch'ien speaks were essentially the same as those now extant. We have his word for it that they were widely circulated in his day, and can only regret that he refrained from discussing them on that account. Sun Hsing-yen says in his preface:

During the Ch'in and Han dynasties Sun Tzu's ART OF WAR was in general use amongst military commanders, but they seem to have treated it as a work of mysterious import, and were unwilling to expound it for the benefit of posterity. Thus it came about that Wei Wu was the first to write a commentary on it.

As we have already seen, there is no reasonable ground to suppose that Ts'ao Kung tampered with the text. But the text itself is often so obscure, and the number of editions which appeared from that time onward so great, especially during the T'ang and Sung dynasties, that it would be surprising if numerous corruptions had not managed

³³With Wu Yuan himself the case is just the reverse: – a spurious treatise on war has been fathered on him simply because he was a great general. Here we have an obvious inducement to forgery. Sun Wu, on the other hand, cannot have been widely known to fame in the 5th century.

³⁴From TSO CHUAN: "From the date of King Chao's accession [515] there was no year in which Ch'u was not attacked by Wu."

to creep in. Towards the middle of the Sung period, by which time all the chief commentaries on Sun Tzu were in existence, a certain Chi T'ien-pao published a work in 15 CHUAN entitled "Sun Tzu with the collected commentaries of ten writers." There was another text, with variant readings put forward by Chu Fu of Ta-hsing, which also had supporters among the scholars of that period; but in the Ming editions, Sun Hsing-yen tells us, these readings were for some reason or other no longer put into circulation. Thus, until the end of the 18th century, the text in sole possession of the field was one derived from Chi T'ien-pao's edition, although no actual copy of that important work was known to have survived. That, therefore, is the text of Sun Tzu which appears in the War section of the great Imperial encyclopedia printed in 1726, the KU CHIN T'U SHU CHI CH'ENG. Another copy at my disposal of what is practically the same text, with slight variations, is that contained in the "Eleven philosophers of the Chou and Ch'in dynasties" [1758]. And the Chinese printed in Capt. Calthrop's first edition is evidently a similar version which has filtered through Japanese channels. So things remained until Sun Hsing-yen [1752-1818], a distinguished antiquarian and classical scholar, who claimed to be an actual descendant of Sun Wu,³⁵ accidentally discovered a copy of Chi T'ien-pao's long-lost work, when on a visit to the library of the Hua-yin temple.³⁶ Appended to it was the I SHUO of Cheng Yu-Hsien, mentioned in the T'UNG CHIH, and also believed to have perished. This is what Sun Hsing-yen designates as the "original edition (or text)" – a rather misleading name, for it cannot by any means claim to set before us the text of Sun Tzu in its pristine purity. Chi T'ien-pao was a careless compiler, and appears to have been content to reproduce the somewhat debased version current in his day, without troubling to collate it with the earliest editions then available. Fortunately, two versions of Sun Tzu, even older than the newly discovered work, were still extant, one buried in the T'UNG TIEN, Tu Yu's great treatise on the Constitution, the other similarly enshrined in the T'AI P'ING YU LAN encyclopedia. In both the complete text is to be found, though split up into fragments, intermixed with other matter, and scattered piecemeal over a number of different sections. Considering that the YU LAN takes us back to the year 983, and the T'UNG TIEN about 200 years further still, to the middle of the T'ang dynasty, the value of these early transcripts of Sun Tzu can hardly be overestimated. Yet the idea of utilizing them does not seem to have occurred to anyone until Sun Hsing-yen, acting under Government instructions, undertook a thorough recension of the text. This is his own account:

Because of the numerous mistakes in the text of Sun Tzu which his editors had handed down, the Government ordered that the ancient edition [of Chi T'ien-pao] should be used, and that the text should be revised and corrected throughout. It happened that Wu Nien-hu, the Governor Pi Kua, and Hsi, a graduate of the second degree, had all devoted themselves to

³⁵Preface ad fin: "My family comes from Lo-an, and we are really descended from Sun Tzu. I am ashamed to say that I only read my ancestor's work from a literary point of view, without comprehending the military technique. So long have we been enjoying the blessings of peace!"

³⁶Hoa-yin is about 14 miles from T'ung-kuan on the eastern border of Shensi. The temple in question is still visited by those about the ascent of the Western Sacred Mountain. It is mentioned in a text as being "situated five LI east of the district city of Hua-yin. The temple contains the Hua-shan tablet inscribed by the T'ang Emperor Hsuan Tsung [713-755]."

this study, probably surpassing me therein. Accordingly, I have had the whole work cut on blocks as a textbook for military men.

The three individuals here referred to had evidently been occupied on the text of Sun Tzu prior to Sun Hsing-yen's commission, but we are left in doubt as to the work they really accomplished. At any rate, the new edition, when ultimately produced, appeared in the names of Sun Hsing-yen and only one co-editor Wu Jen-shi. They took the "original edition" as their basis, and by careful comparison with older versions, as well as the extant commentaries and other sources of information such as the *I SHUO*, succeeded in restoring a very large number of doubtful passages, and turned out, on the whole, what must be accepted as the closes approximation we are ever likely to get to Sun Tzu's original work. This is what will hereafter be denominated the "standard text."

The copy which I have used belongs to a reissue dated 1877. it is in 6 PEN, forming part of a well-printed set of 23 early philosophical works in 83 PEN.³⁷ It opens with a preface by Sun Hsing-yen (largely quoted in this introduction), vindicating the traditional view of Sun Tzu's life and performances, and summing up in remarkably concise fashion the evidence in its favor. This is followed by Ts'ao Kung's preface to his edition, and the biography of Sun Tzu from the *SHIH CHI*, both translated above. Then come, firstly, Cheng Yu-hsien's *I SHUO*,³⁸ with author's preface, and next, a short miscellany of historical and bibliographical information entitled *SUN TZU HSU LU*, compiled by Pi I-hsun. As regards the body of the work, each separate sentence is followed by a note on the text, if required, and then by the various commentaries appertaining to it, arranged in chronological order. These we shall now proceed to discuss briefly, one by one.

1.3 The Commentators

Sun Tzu can boast an exceptionally long distinguished roll of commentators, which would do honor to any classic. Ou-yang Hsiu remarks on this fact, though he wrote before the tale was complete, and rather ingeniously explains it by saying that the artifices of war, being inexhaustible, must therefore be susceptible of treatment in a great variety of ways.

1. TS'AO TS'AO or Ts'ao Kung, afterwards known as Wei Wu Ti [A.D. 155-220]. There is hardly any room for doubt that the earliest commentary on Sun Tzu actually came from the pen of this extraordinary man, whose biography in the *SAN KUO CHIH* reads like a romance. One of the greatest military geniuses that the world has seen, and Napoleonic in the scale of his operations, he was especially famed for the marvelous rapidity of his marches, which has found expression in the line "Talk of Ts'ao Ts'ao, and Ts'ao Ts'ao will appear." Ou-yang Hsiu says of him that he was a great captain who "measured his strength against Tung Cho, Lu Pu and the two Yuan, father and son, and vanquished

³⁷See my "Catalogue of Chinese Books" (Luzac & Co., 1908), no. 40.

³⁸This is a discussion of 29 difficult passages in Sun Tzu.

them all; whereupon he divided the Empire of Han with Wu and Shu, and made himself king. It is recorded that whenever a council of war was held by Wei on the eve of a far-reaching campaign, he had all his calculations ready; those generals who made use of them did not lose one battle in ten; those who ran counter to them in any particular saw their armies incontinently beaten and put to flight." Ts'ao Kung's notes on Sun Tzu, models of austere brevity, are so thoroughly characteristic of the stern commander known to history, that it is hard indeed to conceive of them as the work of a mere LITTERATEUR. Sometimes, indeed, owing to extreme compression, they are scarcely intelligible and stand no less in need of a commentary than the text itself.³⁹

2. MENG SHIH. The commentary which has come down to us under this name is comparatively meager, and nothing about the author is known. Even his personal name has not been recorded. Chi T'ien-pao's edition places him after Chia Lin, and Ch'ao Kung-wu also assigns him to the T'ang dynasty,⁴⁰ but this is a mistake. In Sun Hsing-yen's preface, he appears as Meng Shih of the Liang dynasty [502-557]. Others would identify him with Meng K'ang of the 3rd century. He is named in one work as the last of the "Five Commentators," the others being Wei Wu Ti, Tu Mu, Ch'en Hao and Chia Lin.
3. LI CH'UAN of the 8th century was a well-known writer on military tactics. One of his works has been in constant use down to the present day. The T'UNG CHIH mentions "Lives of famous generals from the Chou to the T'ang dynasty" as written by him.⁴¹ According to Ch'ao Kung-wu and the T'EN-I-KO catalogue, he followed a variant of the text of Sun Tzu which differs considerably from those now extant. His notes are mostly short and to the point, and he frequently illustrates his remarks by anecdotes from Chinese history.
4. TU YU (died 812) did not publish a separate commentary on Sun Tzu, his notes being taken from the T'UNG TIEN, the encyclopedic treatise on the Constitution which was his life-work. They are largely repetitions of Ts'ao Kung and Meng Shih, besides which it is believed that he drew on the ancient commentaries of Wang Ling and others. Owing to the peculiar arrangement of T'UNG TIEN, he has to explain each passage on its merits, apart from the context, and sometimes his own explanation does not agree with that of Ts'ao Kung, whom he always quotes first. Though not strictly to be reckoned as one of the "Ten Commentators," he was added to their number by Chi T'ien-pao, being wrongly placed after his grandson Tu Mu.
5. TU MU (803-852) is perhaps the best known as a poet – a bright star even in the glorious galaxy of the T'ang period. We learn from Ch'ao Kung-wu that although he had no practical experience of war, he was extremely fond of discussing the subject, and was moreover well read in the military history of the

³⁹Cf. Catalogue of the library of Fan family at Ningpo: "His commentary is frequently obscure; it furnishes a clue, but does not fully develop the meaning."

⁴⁰WEN HSIEN T'UNG K'AO, ch. 221.

⁴¹It is interesting to note that M. Pelliot has recently discovered chapters 1, 4 and 5 of this lost work in the "Grottoes of the Thousand Buddhas." See B.E.F.E.O., t. VIII, nos. 3-4, p. 525.

CH'UN CH'IU and CHAN KUO eras. His notes, therefore, are well worth attention. They are very copious, and replete with historical parallels. The gist of Sun Tzu's work is thus summarized by him: "Practice benevolence and justice, but on the other hand make full use of artifice and measures of expediency." He further declared that all the military triumphs and disasters of the thousand years which had elapsed since Sun Tzu's death would, upon examination, be found to uphold and corroborate, in every particular, the maxims contained in his book. Tu Mu's somewhat spiteful charge against Ts'ao Kung has already been considered elsewhere.

6. CH'EN HAO appears to have been a contemporary of Tu Mu. Ch'ao Kung-wu says that he was impelled to write a new commentary on Sun Tzu because Ts'ao Kung's on the one hand was too obscure and subtle, and that of Tu Mu on the other too long-winded and diffuse. Ou-yang Hsiu, writing in the middle of the 11th century, calls Ts'ao Kung, Tu Mu and Ch'en Hao the three chief commentators on Sun Tzu, and observes that Ch'en Hao is continually attacking Tu Mu's shortcomings. His commentary, though not lacking in merit, must rank below those of his predecessors.
7. CHIA LIN is known to have lived under the T'ang dynasty, for his commentary on Sun Tzu is mentioned in the T'ang Shu and was afterwards republished by Chi Hsieh of the same dynasty together with those of Meng Shih and Tu Yu. It is of somewhat scanty texture, and in point of quality, too, perhaps the least valuable of the eleven.
8. MEI YAO-CH'EN (1002-1060), commonly known by his "style" as Mei Sheng-yu, was, like Tu Mu, a poet of distinction. His commentary was published with a laudatory preface by the great Ou-yang Hsiu, from which we may cull the following:

Later scholars have misread Sun Tzu, distorting his words and trying to make them square with their own one-sided views. Thus, though commentators have not been lacking, only a few have proved equal to the task. My friend Sheng-yu has not fallen into this mistake. In attempting to provide a critical commentary for Sun Tzu's work, he does not lose sight of the fact that these sayings were intended for states engaged in internecine warfare; that the author is not concerned with the military conditions prevailing under the sovereigns of the three ancient dynasties,⁴² nor with the nine punitive measures prescribed to the Minister of War.⁴³ Again, Sun Wu loved brevity of diction, but his meaning is always deep. Whether the subject be marching an army, or handling soldiers, or estimating the enemy, or controlling the forces of victory, it is always systematically treated; the sayings are bound together in strict logical sequence, though this has been obscured by commentators who have probably failed to grasp their meaning. In his

⁴²The Hsia, the Shang and the Chou. Although the last-named was nominally existent in Sun Tzu's day, it retained hardly a vestige of power, and the old military organization had practically gone by the board. I can suggest no other explanation of the passage.

⁴³See CHOU LI, xxix. 6-10.

own commentary, Mei Sheng-yu has brushed aside all the obstinate prejudices of these critics, and has tried to bring out the true meaning of Sun Tzu himself. In this way, the clouds of confusion have been dispersed and the sayings made clear. I am convinced that the present work deserves to be handed down side by side with the three great commentaries; and for a great deal that they find in the sayings, coming generations will have constant reason to thank my friend Sheng-yu.

Making some allowance for the exuberance of friendship, I am inclined to endorse this favorable judgment, and would certainly place him above Ch'en Hao in order of merit.

9. WANG HSI, also of the Sung dynasty, is decidedly original in some of his interpretations, but much less judicious than Mei Yao-ch'en, and on the whole not a very trustworthy guide. He is fond of comparing his own commentary with that of Ts'ao Kung, but the comparison is not often flattering to him. We learn from Ch'ao Kung-wu that Wang Hsi revised the ancient text of Sun Tzu, filling up lacunae and correcting mistakes.⁴⁴
10. HO YEN-HSI of the Sung dynasty. The personal name of this commentator is given as above by Cheng Ch'iao in the TUNG CHIH, written about the middle of the twelfth century, but he appears simply as Ho Shih in the YU HAI, and Ma Tuan-lin quotes Ch'ao Kung-wu as saying that his personal name is unknown. There seems to be no reason to doubt Cheng Ch'iao's statement, otherwise I should have been inclined to hazard a guess and identify him with one Ho Ch'u-fei, the author of a short treatise on war, who lived in the latter part of the 11th century. Ho Shih's commentary, in the words of the T'IEN-I-KO catalogue, "contains helpful additions" here and there, but is chiefly remarkable for the copious extracts taken, in adapted form, from the dynastic histories and other sources.
11. CHANG YU. The list closes with a commentator of no great originality perhaps, but gifted with admirable powers of lucid exposition. His commentator is based on that of Ts'ao Kung, whose terse sentences he contrives to expand and develop in masterly fashion. Without Chang Yu, it is safe to say that much of Ts'ao Kung's commentary would have remained cloaked in its pristine obscurity and therefore valueless. His work is not mentioned in the Sung history, the T'UNG K'AO, or the YU HAI, but it finds a niche in the T'UNG CHIH, which also names him as the author of the "Lives of Famous Generals."⁴⁵
It is rather remarkable that the last-named four should all have flourished within so short a space of time. Ch'ao Kung-wu accounts for it by saying: "During the early years of the Sung dynasty the Empire enjoyed a long spell of peace, and men ceased to practice the art of war. but when [Chao] Yuan-hao's rebellion came [1038-42] and the frontier generals were defeated time after time, the Court made strenuous inquiry for men skilled in war, and military topics became the

⁴⁴T'UNG K'AO, ch. 221.

⁴⁵This appears to be still extant. See Wylie's "Notes," p. 91 (new edition).

vogue amongst all the high officials. Hence it is that the commentators of Sun Tzu in our dynasty belong mainly to that period.⁴⁶

Besides these eleven commentators, there are several others whose work has not come down to us. The SUI SHU mentions four, namely Wang Ling (often quoted by Tu Yu as Wang Tzu); Chang Tzu-shang; Chia Hsu of Wei;⁴⁷ and Shen Yu of Wu. The T'ANG SHU adds Sun Hao, and the T'UNG CHIH Hsiao Chi, while the T'U SHU mentions a Ming commentator, Huang Jun-yu. It is possible that some of these may have been merely collectors and editors of other commentaries, like Chi T'ien-pao and Chi Hsieh, mentioned above.

1.4 Appreciations of Sun Tzu

Sun Tzu has exercised a potent fascination over the minds of some of China's greatest men. Among the famous generals who are known to have studied his pages with enthusiasm may be mentioned Han Hsin (d. 196 B.C.),⁴⁸ Feng I (d. 34 A.D.),⁴⁹ Lu Meng (d. 219),⁵⁰ and Yo Fei (1103-1141).⁵¹ The opinion of Ts'ao Kung, who disputes with Han Hsin the highest place in Chinese military annals, has already been recorded.⁵² Still more remarkable, in one way, is the testimony of purely literary men, such as Su Hsun (the father of Su Tung-p'o), who wrote several essays on military topics, all of which owe their chief inspiration to Sun Tzu. The following short passage by him is preserved in the YU HAI:⁵³

Sun Wu's saying, that in war one cannot make certain of conquering,⁵⁴ is very different indeed from what other books tell us.⁵⁵ Wu Ch'i was a man of the same stamp as Sun Wu: they both wrote books on war, and they are linked together in popular speech as "Sun and Wu." But Wu Ch'i's remarks on war are less weighty, his rules are rougher and more crudely stated, and there is not the same unity of plan as in Sun Tzu's work, where the style is terse, but the meaning fully brought out.

The following is an extract from the "Impartial Judgments in the Garden of Literature" by Cheng Hou:

⁴⁶T'UNG K'AO, loc. cit.

⁴⁷A notable person in his day. His biography is given in the SAN KUO CHIH, ch. 10.

⁴⁸See XI. ss. 58, note.

⁴⁹HOU HAN SHU, ch. 17 ad init.

⁵⁰SAN KUO CHIH, ch. 54.

⁵¹SUNG SHIH, ch. 365 ad init.

⁵²The few Europeans who have yet had an opportunity of acquainting themselves with Sun Tzu are not behindhand in their praise. In this connection, I may perhaps be excused for quoting from a letter from Lord Roberts, to whom the sheets of the present work were submitted previous to publication: "Many of Sun Wu's maxims are perfectly applicable to the present day, and no. 11 [in Chapter VIII] is one that the people of this country would do well to take to heart."

⁵³Ch. 140.

⁵⁴See IV. ss. 3.

⁵⁵The allusion may be to Mencius VI. 2. ix. 2.

Sun Tzu's 13 chapters are not only the staple and base of all military men's training, but also compel the most careful attention of scholars and men of letters. His sayings are terse yet elegant, simple yet profound, perspicuous and eminently practical. Such works as the LUN YU, the I CHING and the great Commentary,⁵⁶ as well as the writings of Mencius, Hsun K'uang and Yang Chu, all fall below the level of Sun Tzu.

Chu Hsi, commenting on this, fully admits the first part of the criticism, although he dislikes the audacious comparison with the venerated classical works. Language of this sort, he says, "encourages a ruler's bent towards unrelenting warfare and reckless militarism."

1.5 Apologies for War

Accustomed as we are to think of China as the greatest peace-loving nation on earth, we are in some danger of forgetting that her experience of war in all its phases has also been such as no modern State can parallel. Her long military annals stretch back to a point at which they are lost in the mists of time. She had built the Great Wall and was maintaining a huge standing army along her frontier centuries before the first Roman legionary was seen on the Danube. What with the perpetual collisions of the ancient feudal States, the grim conflicts with Huns, Turks and other invaders after the centralization of government, the terrific upheavals which accompanied the overthrow of so many dynasties, besides the countless rebellions and minor disturbances that have flamed up and flickered out again one by one, it is hardly too much to say that the clash of arms has never ceased to resound in one portion or another of the Empire.

No less remarkable is the succession of illustrious captains to whom China can point with pride. As in all countries, the greatest are fond of emerging at the most fateful crises of her history. Thus, Po Ch'i stands out conspicuous in the period when Ch'in was entering upon her final struggle with the remaining independent states. The stormy years which followed the break-up of the Ch'in dynasty are illuminated by the transcendent genius of Han Hsin. When the House of Han in turn is tottering to its fall, the great and baleful figure of Ts'ao Ts'ao dominates the scene. And in the establishment of the T'ang dynasty, one of the mightiest tasks achieved by man, the superhuman energy of Li Shih-min (afterwards the Emperor T'ai Tsung) was seconded by the brilliant strategy of Li Ching. None of these generals need fear comparison with the greatest names in the military history of Europe.

In spite of all this, the great body of Chinese sentiment, from Lao Tzu downwards, and especially as reflected in the standard literature of Confucianism, has been consistently pacific and intensely opposed to militarism in any form. It is such an uncommon thing to find any of the literati defending warfare on principle, that I have thought it worth while to collect and translate a few passages in which the unorthodox view is upheld. The following, by Ssu-ma Ch'ien, shows that for all his ardent admiration of Confucius, he was yet no advocate of peace at any price:

⁵⁶The TSO CHUAN.

Military weapons are the means used by the Sage to punish violence and cruelty, to give peace to troublous times, to remove difficulties and dangers, and to succor those who are in peril. Every animal with blood in its veins and horns on its head will fight when it is attacked. How much more so will man, who carries in his breast the faculties of love and hatred, joy and anger! When he is pleased, a feeling of affection springs up within him; when angry, his poisoned sting is brought into play. That is the natural law which governs his being.... What then shall be said of those scholars of our time, blind to all great issues, and without any appreciation of relative values, who can only bark out their stale formulas about "virtue" and "civilization," condemning the use of military weapons? They will surely bring our country to impotence and dishonor and the loss of her rightful heritage; or, at the very least, they will bring about invasion and rebellion, sacrifice of territory and general enfeeblement. Yet they obstinately refuse to modify the position they have taken up. The truth is that, just as in the family the teacher must not spare the rod, and punishments cannot be dispensed with in the State, so military chastisement can never be allowed to fall into abeyance in the Empire. All one can say is that this power will be exercised wisely by some, foolishly by others, and that among those who bear arms some will be loyal and others rebellious.⁵⁷

The next piece is taken from Tu Mu's preface to his commentary on Sun Tzu:

War may be defined as punishment, which is one of the functions of government. It was the profession of Chung Yu and Jan Ch'iu, both disciples of Confucius. Nowadays, the holding of trials and hearing of litigation, the imprisonment of offenders and their execution by flogging in the marketplace, are all done by officials. But the wielding of huge armies, the throwing down of fortified cities, the hauling of women and children into captivity, and the beheading of traitors – this is also work which is done by officials. The objects of the rack and of military weapons are essentially the same. There is no intrinsic difference between the punishment of flogging and cutting off heads in war. For the lesser infractions of law, which are easily dealt with, only a small amount of force need be employed: hence the use of military weapons and wholesale decapitation. In both cases, however, the end in view is to get rid of wicked people, and to give comfort and relief to the good....

Chi-sun asked Jan Yu, saying: "Have you, Sir, acquired your military aptitude by study, or is it innate?" Jan Yu replied: "It has been acquired by study."⁵⁸ "How can that be so," said Chi-sun, "seeing that you are a disciple of Confucius?" "It is a fact," replied Jan Yu; "I was taught by Confucius. It is fitting that the great Sage should exercise both civil and military functions, though to be sure my instruction in the art of fighting has not yet gone very far."

⁵⁷SHIH CHI, ch. 25, fol. I.

⁵⁸Cf. SHIH CHI, ch 47.

Now, who the author was of this rigid distinction between the "civil" and the "military," and the limitation of each to a separate sphere of action, or in what year of which dynasty it was first introduced, is more than I can say. But, at any rate, it has come about that the members of the governing class are quite afraid of enlarging on military topics, or do so only in a shamefaced manner. If any are bold enough to discuss the subject, they are at once set down as eccentric individuals of coarse and brutal propensities. This is an extraordinary instance in which, through sheer lack of reasoning, men unhappily lose sight of fundamental principles.

When the Duke of Chou was minister under Ch'eng Wang, he regulated ceremonies and made music, and venerated the arts of scholarship and learning; yet when the barbarians of the River Huai revolted,⁵⁹ he sallied forth and chastised them. When Confucius held office under the Duke of Lu, and a meeting was convened at Chia-ku,⁶⁰ he said: "If pacific negotiations are in progress, warlike preparations should have been made beforehand." He rebuked and shamed the Marquis of Ch'i, who cowered under him and dared not proceed to violence. How can it be said that these two great Sages had no knowledge of military matters?

We have seen that the great Chu Hsi held Sun Tzu in high esteem. He also appeals to the authority of the Classics:

Our Master Confucius, answering Duke Ling of Wei, said: "I have never studied matters connected with armies and battalions."⁶¹ Replying to K'ung Wen-tzu, he said: I have not been instructed about buff-coats and weapons." But if we turn to the meeting at Chia-ku, we find that he used armed force against the men of Lai, so that the marquis of Ch'i was overawed. Again, when the inhabitants of Pi revolted, he ordered his officers to attack them, whereupon they were defeated and fled in confusion. He once uttered the words: "If I fight, I conquer."⁶² And Jan Yu also said: "The Sage exercises both civil and military functions."⁶³ Can it be a fact that Confucius never studied or received instruction in the art of war? We can only say that he did not specially choose matters connected with armies and fighting to be the subject of his teaching.

Sun Hsing-yen, the editor of Sun Tzu, writes in similar strain:

Confucius said: "I am unversed in military matters."⁶⁴ He also said: "If I fight, I conquer." Confucius ordered ceremonies and regulated music. Now war constitutes one of the five classes of State ceremonial,⁶⁵ and

⁵⁹See SHU CHING, preface ss. 55.

⁶⁰See SHIH CHI, ch. 47.

⁶¹Lun Yu, XV. 1.

⁶²I failed to trace this utterance.

⁶³Supra.

⁶⁴Supra.

⁶⁵The other four being worship, mourning, entertainment of guests, and festive rites. See SHU CHING, ii. 1. III. 8, and CHOU LI, IX. fol. 49.

must not be treated as an independent branch of study. Hence, the words "I am unversed in" must be taken to mean that there are things which even an inspired Teacher does not know. Those who have to lead an army and devise stratagems, must learn the art of war. But if one can command the services of a good general like Sun Tzu, who was employed by Wu Tzu-hsu, there is no need to learn it oneself. Hence the remark added by Confucius: "If I fight, I conquer."

The men of the present day, however, willfully interpret these words of Confucius in their narrowest sense, as though he meant that books on the art of war were not worth reading. With blind persistency, they adduce the example of Chao Kua, who pored over his father's books to no purpose,⁶⁶ as a proof that all military theory is useless. Again, seeing that books on war have to do with such things as opportunism in designing plans, and the conversion of spies, they hold that the art is immoral and unworthy of a sage. These people ignore the fact that the studies of our scholars and the civil administration of our officials also require steady application and practice before efficiency is reached. The ancients were particularly chary of allowing mere novices to botch their work.⁶⁷ Weapons are baneful⁶⁸ and fighting perilous; and useless unless a general is in constant practice, he ought not to hazard other men's lives in battle.⁶⁹ Hence it is essential that Sun Tzu's 13 chapters should be studied.

Hsiang Liang used to instruct his nephew Chi⁷⁰ in the art of war. Chi got a rough idea of the art in its general bearings, but would not pursue his studies to their proper outcome, the consequence being that he was finally defeated and overthrown. He did not realize that the tricks and artifices of war are beyond verbal computation. Duke Hsiang of Sung and King Yen of Hsu were brought to destruction by their misplaced humanity. The treacherous and underhand nature of war necessitates the use of guile and stratagem suited to the occasion. There is a case on record of Confucius himself having violated an extorted oath,⁷¹ and also of his having left the Sung State in disguise.⁷² Can we then recklessly arraign Sun Tzu for disregarding truth and honesty?

⁶⁶See XIII. ss. 11, note.

⁶⁷This is a rather obscure allusion to the TSO CHUAN, where Tzu-ch'an says: "If you have a piece of beautiful brocade, you will not employ a mere learner to make it up."

⁶⁸Cf. TAO TE CHING, ch. 31.

⁶⁹Sun Hsing-yen might have quoted Confucius again. See LUN YU, XIII. 29, 30.

⁷⁰Better known as Hsiang Yu [233-202 B.C.].

⁷¹SHIH CHI, ch. 47.

⁷²SHIH CHI, ch. 38.