



## 調虎離山

Diào Hǔ Lí Shān

### Strategy 15 Lure the Tiger Down the Mountain

*With regard to heights, if you occupy them before the enemy you can wait for the enemy to climb up. But if he has occupied them before you, do not follow but retreat and try to entice him out.*

Sun Zi, The Art of War

Never directly attack a well-entrenched opponent. Instead lure him away from his stronghold and separate him from his source of strength.

#### Three Kingdoms Period China

In the year A.D. 199 *Sun Ce* had consolidated his newly conquered territories in the south and his next goal was the prosperous area of *Lujiang* to the north. However, *Lujiang* had a professional army and was well defended. In addition it also had the advantage of terrain, being accessible only through a couple of easily defended passes.

## The Thirty-Six Strategies of Ancient China - S. H. Verstappen

Sun Ce's advisors cautioned against moving directly against such a well-entrenched and powerful state so they devised another scheme.

Sun Ce sent an emissary laden with gifts and a letter to the king of Lujiang, Liu Xun. The letter praised the king's military skills and begged for his assistance.

Sun Ce wrote, *"For years the state of Shangliao has invaded my territory unhindered and carried away booty, yet we are too weak to launch a retaliatory raid. If Your Majesty would attack Shangliao we would give assistance and you could annex the state for yourself."*

Flattered and covetous of increasing his domains, the king of Lujiang disregarded the advice of his counselors and attacked the state of Shangliao. Several weeks later, while the king of Lujiang was busy laying siege to Shangliao's capital, Sun Ce attacked the almost undefended Lujiang and easily seized the capital.

Without the expected support from Sun Ce, The king of Lujiang failed to take the capital of Shangliao and he returned only to find his own capital already in enemy hands. Sun Ce now had the advantage of the Lujiang terrain and the former king could do nothing but flee with his army.

### **Han Dynasty China**

The first Han emperor, *Gaozu*, wishing to destroy the growing menace of the Xiongnu tribes that had been raiding his northern territories, sent spies to report on their condition. Forewarned, the Xiongnu carefully concealed their able-bodied men and well-fed horses and allowed only old men and emaciated cattle to be seen wandering the countryside.

When the spies returned they all recommended an immediate attack on the Xiongnu since it seemed obvious that they were poor and starving.

However, one of the councillors, *Lou Qing*, became suspicious saying, *"When two countries go to war they are naturally inclined to make ostentatious displays of strength. Yet our spies see only old men and deprivation. This is surely a deception on the enemy's part to lure us into a trap, and it would be unwise to attack."*

## Lure the Tiger Down the Mountain

The emperor however disregarded his advice and as predicted they were trapped in the city of Pingcheng.

The emperor and his army barely escaped after employing an unorthodox strategy of their own (see Chapter 31)

### **Yuan Dynasty China**

Lure the Tiger Down the Mountain was a favorite strategy for the Mongol armies since their superior cavalry was better suited to attacking field troops than laying siege to fortified positions.

A special unit of the Mongol cavalry known as the Mangudai would charge the enemy's front lines and then, apparently beaten back, they would feign a disorderly retreat. Deceived into believing that they were winning, the opposing army would leave their positions and give chase.

Once the pursuers had been drawn out into a long thin line the Mongols would quickly reorganize into two divisions that would split apart in opposite directions and circle back to attack the center of the line of pursuing soldiers.

After destroying the center and separating the enemy's forces they could easily overcome the remaining forces up and down the line.

### **Summary**

It is a rule in warfare to avoid attacking what is hard. When an opponent has the advantage of terrain, defensive works, or home territory, then he is in a position of strength. Through trickery and deception he must be lured away from his advantageous position. Once out in the open he will expose weaknesses that can then be attacked.

