借 刀 殺 人

Jiè Dāo Shā Rén

**Strategy 3
Kill With a Borrowed Sword**

*If you are limited in your own strength, then borrow the
strength of the enemy. If you cannot neutralize an enemy,
borrow an enemy's knife to do so. If you have no generals,
borrow those of the enemy.*

Sun Zi, *The Art of War*

When you do not have the means to attack your enemy directly, then
attack using the strength of another. Trick an ally into attacking him,
bribe an official to turn traitor, or use the enemy's own strength against
him.

Spring And Autumn Period China

The duke of Zheng wanted to invade the state of *Kuai*. To prepare for
his invasion he first sent out spies to find out who were the most
capable military advisors at the Kuai court.

Once he had a list of names, the duke had a rumour spread among his troops saying that victory was assured since he had Kuai's best generals secretly on his side.

He also had a decree drawn up promising these generals that, once he had conquered Kuai, they would all be richly rewarded with titles and territories. To back up his promise he had the decree enshrined in a local temple were everyone could see it.

Naturally the king of Kuai had spies in Zheng's army and they reported the names of the alleged treacherous generals to the king. Believing his trusted advisors were preparing to betray him, the king of Kuai had them all executed.

When the duke of Zheng heard of the executions, he launched his attack. The king of Kuai became alarmed at the sudden invasion of his territory and called his army staff together to mount a counter attack.

But the recent executions had eliminated all his capable leaders. The remaining junior officers were inexperienced and unsure of how to respond. Their hesitation cost the king his throne, and his head.

Warring States Period China

Chang Tuo defected from Western Zhou and went to Eastern Zhou where he revealed all of Western Zhou's state secrets. Eastern Zhou rejoiced while Western Zhou was furious.

Minister Feng Chu said to the king of Western Zhou, "*I can assassinate that man if your highness will give me thirty catties of gold."*

The king consented and the next day Feng Chu sent an agent to the Eastern Zhou court bearing the gold and a letter addressed to Chang Tuo.

The letter read, "*This is to remind Chang Tuo that you must complete your mission as soon as possible, for the longer the delay the more likely you will be found out*."

However, before the first agent departed, Feng Chu sent another agent to the Eastern Zhou border guards informing them that a spy would be crossing the border that night.

When the first agent arrived at the border he was stopped and searched. The border guards found the gold and the letter to Chang Tuo and turned them over to their court officials. Shortly afterwards Chang Tuo was executed.

Chinese Folk Tale

One day a fox was wandering through the woods preoccupied in thought when he was suddenly surprised by a tiger who seemed intent on eating him. It being too late to run away, the fox had to think quickly.

Nonchalantly he asked, "*Tiger why are you here, are you not afraid of me?*"

"*Why should I be afraid of you?*" asked the tiger.

"*Because I am the king of the jungle,*" said the fox.

"*Ridiculous!*" replied the Tiger. "*I am king of the jungle.*"

"*Well if you don't believe me I'll prove it. Just follow me as I walk about the jungle and see for yourself if the other animals do not run away at my approach.*"

The tiger agreed and so the fox set off with the tiger following closely behind. As the other animals spotted the fox they also saw the tiger and they ran away.

After a while the fox turned to the tiger and said, "*See how they scatter when I approach. Do you believe me now?*"

"*It seems I was wrong,*" said the perplexed Tiger, and he sulked away into the jungle.

Summary

To succeed in any endeavour one must be frugal in expending one's resources. Where possible, use trickery and deception to appropriate the strength of others while conserving your own.