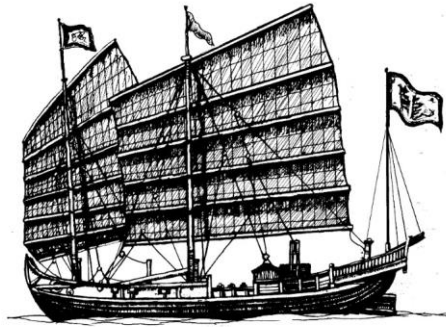


Strategy 1 -Fool the Emperor To Cross the Sea



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In conflicts that involve large numbers of people, it is possible to get the opponent to become lax in their guard.

When they are in a state of agitation and show signs of impatience, appear as if nothing is bothering you and put forth an easygoing, relaxed stance.

When you perceive that the mood has been transferred (to your opponent), you have a chance to achieve victory by making a strong attack with as much speed as possible.

Miyamoto Musashi, *The Book of Five Rings*

Moving about in the darkness and shadows, occupying isolated places, or hiding behind screens will only attract suspicious attention. To lower

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an enemy's guard you must act in the open, hiding your true intentions under the guise of common every day activities.¹

Warring States Period China

In 225 B.C. the state of *Qin*, having slowly increased its power over the past hundred years, now felt powerful enough to overcome its remaining opponents in open aggression. The most powerful of the remaining states was *Chu*.

The king of Qin sent his renowned general *Wang Jian* to attack and conquer Chu. A year earlier Qin had sent another general, *Li Xing*, who suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of Chu.

The older and more experienced general Wang Jian wasn't going to make the same mistake as his predecessor and decided against invading the country directly. Instead, he stopped just inside Qin's border with Chu and built a fortified stockade. The king of Chu called upon his allies to muster all available troops and rush them to the opposite side of the border.

Confident from their previous victory, the Chu commanders rode out each day to challenge Wang to come out and fight, but Wang ignored the taunts. Instead, Wang was observed swimming with his men in nearby rivers and lakes, or on leisurely picnics in the forest. At night there was feasting with singing and dancing. In addition, Wang focused his efforts on improving the morale and training of his troops.

¹ The origin of this strategy is said to come from an incident involving the Tang Dynasty emperor Tai Zhong. The emperor was on campaign against the Koreans. His general advised crossing the Yellow Sea to the Korean Peninsula so that they would be able to surprise the Koreans from behind their lines. The plan had only one flaw - the emperor deathly afraid of large bodies of water. The generals devised a scheme where they decorated a large ship like a country estate and had banners hung all round so that you could not see the ocean. Then they told the emperor that a local aristocrat cordially invited the emperor to dine at his estate. Once aboard, the emperor was dined and entertained throughout the night while the ship silently set sail. The next morning they arrived at their destination with the emperor none the wiser.

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After several months, the Chu army was beginning to grow weary of the game. One of the Chu commanders said, "Wang Jian has been sent to attack Chu, but it seems he is getting too old and he no longer has the heart for it. It is obvious that he has no intention of attacking, but is here merely to save face." Others agreed and many of the troops were sent back to their countries.

Wang Jian had waited behind his stockade almost an entire year before the last of the Chu troops also gave up waiting for his attack and broke camp to return to the capital. It was then that Wang ordered his men to suddenly sally forth and attack the retreating Chu. Because a retreating army is vulnerable to attack, coupled with the element of surprise, the Chu suffered severe losses and its general was slain.

The king of Chu wasn't able to reassemble all his remaining troops in time, as Wang Jian swiftly invaded and conquered the entire kingdom. Four years later the king of Qin became the first emperor of China, *Qin Shihuangdi*.

Warring States Period China

General *Li Mu* was given the command responsible for defending Yanmen against the *Xiongnu* (Nomadic horsemen that occupied the central Asian steppes to the north and west of China.) who were constantly raiding the territories.

When Li Mu first arrived at his new command, everyone expected him to begin by launching attacks on the local tribes. But he did no such thing. Instead, he focused his efforts on training and nurturing the border troops, ensuring they were well fed and paid. He further ordered that, should the Xiongnu attack, all troops were to retreat into one of the fortified towns that were scattered throughout the countryside and merely defend. Under no circumstances were they to engage the enemy.

For years, anytime a Xiongnu raiding party entered the territory they found the people and soldiers already holed-up behind defensive walls with precious little left in the countryside to plunder. Eventually the Xiongnu and even Li Mu's own soldiers thought that, though he was a virtuous commander, he was also a coward. The border troops, after years of training without engaging in battle, became restless for combat.

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When Li Mu saw the eagerness for battle amongst his troops, he decided to act. First, he sent his best troops to set up an ambush several days march away. Then he had herds of cattle and their drivers released to graze in the fields with only a few soldiers to watch over them.

When a Xiongnu raiding party happened upon the cattle, they attacked and sent the soldiers fleeing. The raiding party sent word back to their Khan that the Chinese had abandoned the country leaving herds of cattle and lightly defended villages behind.

The Khan raised a tremendous host to invade the Chinese territory. Expecting no resistance from the 'cowardly' Li Mu, they were easily led into the ambush. More than a hundred thousand Xiongnu horsemen were killed. For ten years thereafter, not a single raiding party dared cross the border.

Japanese Folk Tale

There once lived a samurai who was plagued by a large and clever rat who had the run of the house. This annoyed the samurai to no end so he went to the village to buy a cat. A street vendor sold him a cat that he said would catch the rat, and indeed the cat looked trim and fit. But the rat was even quicker than the cat and after a week with no success the samurai returned the cat. This time the vendor pulled out a large and grizzled cat and guaranteed that no rat could escape this master mouser.

The rat knew enough to stay clear of this tough alley cat, but when the cat slept, the rat ran about. Half the day the rat would hide, but the other half he again had the run of the place. The samurai brought the cat back to the vendor who shook his head in despair saying he had given the samurai his best cat and there was nothing more he could do.

Returning home with his money, the samurai happened upon a monk and sought his advice. After hearing the samurai's story the monk offered him the services of the cat that lived in the temple. The cat was old and fat and he scarcely seemed to notice when he was carried away by the doubtful samurai.

For two weeks, the cat did little more than sleep all day and night. The samurai wanted to give the cat back to the temple but the monk insisted

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he keep him a while longer assuring him the rat's days were close to an end.

The rat became accustomed to the presence of the lazy old cat and was soon up to his old tricks even, on occasion, brazenly dancing around the old cat as he slept. Then one day, as the rat went about his business without any concern, he passed close by the cat who swiftly struck out his paw and pinned the rat to the floor.

The rat died instantly.

Summary

In battle, the element of surprise is paramount. A wary opponent is unlikely to fall into the usual traps, so he must first be made to relax his vigilance. To do this one must carry on as though nothing untoward was afoot.

Once acclimatized to often repeated actions, a person no longer takes notice of them.² When the enemy ceases to pay attention to you, the time is right to attack.



² In psychology this phenomenon is known as habituation; the more often you are exposed to a stimulation, the less sensitive you become to it.