



反間計

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Strategy 33 The Strategy Of Sowing Discord

Reduce the effectiveness of your enemy by inflicting discord among them.

Sun Zi, *The Art of War*

Plans and projects for harming the enemy are not confined to any one method. Sometimes entice his wise and virtuous men away so that he has no counselors. Or send treacherous people to his country to wreck his administration. Sometimes use cunning deceptions to alienate his ministers from the sovereign. Or send skilled craftsmen to encourage the people to exhaust their wealth. Or present him with licentious musicians and dancers to change his customs. Or give him beautiful women to bewilder him.

Jia Lin

Undermine your enemy's ability to fight by secretly causing discord between him and his friends, allies, advisors, family, commanders, soldiers, and population. While he is preoccupied settling internal disputes, his ability to attack or defend is compromised.'

Warring States Period China

Towards the end of the Warring States period, as the smaller kingdoms fell prey to the larger, the kingdom of Qin had become the single most powerful state. Qin posed the greatest threat to the other surviving kingdoms, which sought to form an alliance to stem Qin's growing power. The various commanders of the empire gathered in the formerly powerful state of Zhou to plan an attack on Qin.

King *Chao Xiong* of Qin was concerned about the gathering of warlords when his minister, Marquis Ying, said, *"Allow me to get rid of them. Qin has no quarrel with these 'commanders of the empire.' They gather now to make plans for an attack against Qin simply because each seeks wealth and fame for himself.*

Look at your own hounds-some are sleeping, some are up, some walk about and others are simply standing where they are. But throw a bone to them and they will all be on their feet in an instant, snapping at each other. Why? You have given them a reason to fight each other."

The king understood and asked the minister to continue.

Minister Ying called in another official and said, *"We must dispatch Tang Chu complete with musicians and five thousand in gold to set up quarters in Wu An. There he will send out a proclamation addressed to all military commanders saying that whoever wishes to defect to Qin will be given a sumptuous banquet and generous gifts of money. But those who conspire against Qin will receive nothing."*

Minister Ying turned to Tang Chu and said, *"In order to succeed you must not care where the money goes, but insure that you distribute all of it. Once the money is gone we will send another five thousand Taels!"*

A few days after Tang Chu left with the gold, he sent a report saying that he was able to distribute only three thousand pieces of gold before all the commanders of the empire took to fighting amongst themselves to see who would claim the greater reward.

Needless to say they were unable to cooperate and no alliance against Qin was formed. For the next thirty years Qin continue to sow discord between the remaining states. Their constant bickering and infighting prevented them from ever uniting against their common enemy. Qin conquered them one by one until none remained.

Three Kingdoms Period China

Cao Cao, the warlord of Wei, was on campaign against a rival commander *Zhou Yu*. Cao Cao won several battles and chased his enemy south into an area of rivers, lakes, and marshes. Coming from the northern plains of Wei, Cao's troops were unaccustomed to naval combat and suffered their first defeat at the hands of Zhou. Cao Cao made camp beside the river and began constructing an armada while retraining his troops in naval tactics.

To this end, he hired the services of two renowned naval commanders who came from the south. During this time, one of Cao Cao's advisors, *Jiang Kan*, offered another plan.

Since Jiang was a former friend of Zhou Yu, he would go to try and talk him into surrendering and joining with Wei. Cao Cao agreed to the plan and Jiang was given a small boat and an oarsman to paddle him up river to Zhou Yu's camp. Zhou Yu guessed right away Jiang's real purpose and played in turn the tactic of the "doomed spy." 24 Zhou Yu treated Jian like a long lost brother and arranged a celebration of food and wine.

During the feasting, Zhou Yu slipped out and gave instructions to his attendants to forge two letters and place them on his desk. During the

24 According to Sun Zi's Art of War, a "doomed spy" is a enemy spy whom you allow to watch staged events so that they will convincingly file a false report. After the ruse is discovered, the spy is usually executed for incompetence, hence the term "doomed".

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

festivities, Jiang tried to persuade Zhou Yu to join forces with him, but Zhou Yu feigned drunkenness to avoid the subject.

Later Zhou Yu invited his friend to share his quarters, and shortly after retiring he pretended to pass out.

For a while, Jiang also pretended to sleep, but after making sure his host was asleep, Jiang silently crept about the room to see what he could find. He discovered the two letters and was intrigued to read about a plan to betray Cao Cao in the next battle. More shocking was that the letters were signed by Wei's new naval commanders. Jiang quickly hid the letters in his robe.

Early the next morning he made his apologies and left before Zhou Yu awoke. When he arrived back at Cao Cao's camp, he reported that his mission had been a failure, but it was not a complete loss since he had some intelligence concerning a plot to stage a palace coup.

He then produced the forged letters. After reading the documents Cao Cao had the two naval commanders executed.

In this way, Zhou Yu removed Cao Cao's two best assets in naval warfare. When Cao Cao launched a naval attack months later he suffered a terrible defeat and barely escaped with his life (see Chapter 34)

Six Dynasties Period China

During the later Wei dynasty, the emperor *Tai Wu* led a hundred thousand troops against the Song general *Zang Zhi*. The emperor, with his superior forces, chased general Zhang to the city of Yu where he was cornered. The city was strongly fortified, and so the emperor planned to surround it and starve the defenders into surrender.

Feeling confident of his position, the emperor sent a cart carrying a large jar of wine to the city gate with the message asking for the traditional exchange of wine before commencing his siege of the city.

Zang Zhi, knowing that he needed to fight a decisive battle quickly or suffer defeat, saw this as an opportunity. He sent some soldiers to

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gratefully accept the jar of wine and in turn deliver another large jar sealed with the wine maker's stamp.

When a cup of this wine was poured for the emperor, it was discovered to be urine. This caused the emperor a humiliating loss of face before his own troops, and, in a rage, he ordered an immediate assault on the city. The defenders were well prepared and the bodies of the slain imperial troops piled up nearly to the top of the ramparts. In his haste and anger, the emperor lost half his forces.

Summary

A person's ability to function effectively is dependent on being in harmony with one's environment. By disrupting your enemy's environment, you disrupt his harmony, thus interfering with his ability to attack or defend.

