

Borrow a Corpse to Raise the Spirit



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Strategy 14 Borrow a Corpse to Raise the Spirit

In the spirit religion there is what is called the mystery of the spirits. The mystery is kept secret to foster religious faith. When people have faith, they and others benefit from it. In the Warriors Way, this is called strategy. Although the strategy is falsehood, when the falsehood is used in order to win without hurting people, the falsehood becomes true.

Yagyu Munenori, *Family Book On The Art Of War*

Take an institution, a technology, or a method that has been forgotten or discarded and appropriate it for your own purpose. Revive something from the past by giving it a new purpose or to reinterpret and bring to life old ideas, customs, and traditions.

Qin Dynasty China

In 212 B.C. the first emperor of China, *Qin Shihuangdi*, died while touring his empire. The emperor had always been afraid of death and

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was constantly ingesting various "immortal elixirs" provided by a host of mystic frauds and pretenders. ¹⁰ To suggest that the emperor would one day die implied that he was a fool for taking these potions, which was tantamount to treason. No one dared mention the possibility of his mortality to him and as a result, he left no instructions as to who should succeed him.

There were only two others present when he died: the chief minister *Li Si*, and the eunuch *Zhao Gao*. They plotted to keep his death a secret until they could decide for themselves whom to place on the throne.

While the emperor's eldest son Fushu was the natural choice, both men dreaded his accession as it would mean their fall from power. To rid themselves of this potential threat they sent an order signed with the name of the emperor demanding that Fushu and his loyal general, *Meng Tian*, both commit suicide.

The general suspected a plot and told the prince that he had three hundred thousand soldiers under his command and that they should march on the capital and demand an explanation from the emperor.

But Fushu was so deathly afraid of his father, who was infamous for his harshness and cruelty, that he dared not question the imperial order lest some punishment even worse than death be visited upon him. Without further inquiry he committed suicide and his loyal general soon followed suit.

Fushu's younger brother *Huhei*, who had been in on the plot to eliminate his brother, was installed on the throne under the control of *Li Si* and *Zhao Gao*. The young emperor was kept busy in the imperial harem while the two cronies took control of the government (see Chapter13).

They were so corrupt and inept that shortly thereafter the entire empire was in open revolt. Within two years, all three had been executed and the House of Qin disappeared from history.

¹⁰ Many of these potions contains strychnine and mercury and some historians believe he may have slowly poisoned himself to death.

Han Dynasty China

When the emperor *Huidi* died in 188 B.C. he left no heir. His mother, the empress Lu, bought a child several years before his death and had her daughter-in-law pretend that it was her own. To cover her tracks the empress had the boy's natural mother executed. After the emperor's death, the empress had this boy installed on the throne with herself as regent.

However, within two years the boy, after learning that his true mother had been executed, was heard to say, "*When I become emperor I will know what to do.*"

When the empress's spies reported the words spoken by the young emperor she had him murdered and another puppet set in his place.

The empress ruled a prosperous empire for eight years through the six successive child emperors that she installed on the throne before dying of a mysterious illness. Rumor said her death was the result of a curse from one of her late husband's concubines, who was horribly mutilated and tortured according to the empress's precise instructions. 11

So horrible was the punishment meted out by the empress that her true son and heir, when shown the results of her handiwork, went insane, and died a year later.

Three Kingdoms Period China

During the last stages of the crumbling Han dynasty the country was split apart by four warlord generals who had rebelled against the throne, each one seeking to found his own dynasty. The last Han emperor, *Xiandi*, was captured while on campaign against one of the four generals, but he managed to escape with a small entourage and make his way back to the war-torn capital of Luoyang.

The confused and frightened emperor was planning to hide in a ruined palace until the trouble blew over, but was discovered by spies working

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for another warlord named Cao Cao, who hurriedly marched his army to the desolate capital and captured the emperor.

Cao Cao offered the emperor his "protection" which the emperor could hardly refuse. Thereafter the emperor was kept under close guard and used only to sign proclamations drawn up by Cao Cao who thereby claimed to be acting on behalf of the Han Dynasty's true emperor.

For twenty years the emperor was used as a puppet behind which Cao Cao ruled until the emperor retired and handed over the seals of government. Cao Cao thereupon founded the short-lived Cao Wei dynasty.

To prevent any future resurrection of the Han Dynasty, Cao Cao had the retired emperor and all remaining relatives assassinated, thus bringing an end to the great Han dynasty.

Heian Period Japan

In the 11th century, the warrior monks known as Yamabushi formed large monastic communities in the mountains surrounding the capital of Kyoto.

Over time, their ranks increased and their power grew to the point that each monastery maintained a private army. From time to time, these monk armies would march into the capital to demand favors and concessions from the emperor, who by this time had become merely a figurehead. Although feared for their fighting prowess with a *Naginata*, (A halberd type weapon with a long curved blade at the end of a pole.) the monks also employed another tactic in the form of psychological warfare.

They would carry into battle a huge portable shrine, known as a *Mikoshi*. Within the shrine it was believed there lived the spirit of one of the many gods the Yamabushi worshipped. Any offense against the Mikoshi was considered an offense against the deity itself. During battle, enemy archers dared not unleash their arrows into the Yamabushi ranks for fear of striking the Mikoshi and incurring the wrath of god.

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At other times the monks would carry the Mikoshi into the town square, chant curses on the townsfolk and return to the mountains leaving the Mikoshi in the village.

The townspeople were loath to go near it believing the town and everyone in it was cursed by its presence. Only after the townsfolk had gathered together a suitable "donation" would the monks return and haul the dreaded shrine away.

Summary

Symbols, myths, institutions, and philosophies have an inherent moral and emotional power. This power can be appropriated and used to serve the goals of a higher strategy.

