

One who is good at marshalling troops does so by putting the enemy in the unfathomable situation of fighting with shadows. He assumes no posture and reveals no shape so that there is nothing he cannot achieve. He reveals no shape and shows no move so that there is no change he cannot make. This is the supreme art of war.

Book of Master Guan (Guan Zi), Chapter Seventeen.

Yin refers to the unpredictable way. Use yang, which other people do not recognize as yang, so that the yang has also the attributes of yin. Use yin, which other people do not recognize as yin, so that the yin has also the attributes of yang. A good war strategist either practices yin under the cover of yang or uses yin to supplement yang. The essence of the method lies in seizing opportunity to make extraordinary moves, such as a surprise attack or an ambush; the enemy will surely be subdued in the end. Who can say that yin (secret) ruses cannot overcome yang (animate) spirit?

Master Jie's Canon of War (Jie Zi Bing Jing), Tome One

A good defender hides under nine layers of earth;
a good attacker moves above nine layers of heaven.

Thus he is able to both preserve himself and achieve a complete victory.

Wang Xi's Note: A defender perceives no chance for attack. He conceals his shape and remains quiet so that the enemy cannot detect him. An attacker perceives a chance for attack. He moves from afar in a fabulous speed and takes the enemy by surprise so that it has no time to get ready for defense.

An of War (Sun Zi Bing Fa), Chapter Four.

Superb military maneuvers leave no trace. When leaving no trace, they cannot even be detected by deepprobing spies nor can be counteracted by persons of wisdom.

Ibid., Chapter Six.

Zhao She Rescues Yuyu

Zhao She was a low-ranking official with the Section for Cultivated Fields in the state of Zhao. On one occasion, Lord Pingyuan's family refused to pay land tax. Zhao She, dealing with the case according to the law, had nine stewards of Lord Pingyuan executed. Thereupon the lord burst into a fury. He was about to send his guards to kill Zhao She when the latter

called on him in person. He pleaded with the lord, “Your Lordship enjoys the high status of a noble scion in Zhao. If you allow your house servants to infringe upon public interests, the law will be undermined. If the law grows ineffective, the state will be weakened. If the state becomes weak, the neighboring powers will attack us. If Zhao is attacked and subdued, how will you be able to retain your position and wealth?”

Greatly impressed by Zhao She’s argument, Lord Pingyuan discerned that he was a worthy man of honesty and wisdom and recommended him to the king. Thus Zhao She was put in charge of the state treasury. He proved his worth at his new position; before long, taxes were being collected in a well-organized and fair manner. As a result, the people of Zhao prospered and the state treasury and barns were filled to the brim. Naturally, the king included Zhao She among his most trusted courtiers.

The state of Zhao bordered on the powerful Qin to the west. In its military policy, Zhao had to give priority to checking Qin’s eastward expansion. Thus a sort of alliance was established among Zhao, Hann, and Wei, the three neighboring states to the east of Qin.

In 269 B.C. the Qin army, under the command of General Hu Shang, invaded Hann and made camp at



Yuyu (modern Heshun County in Shanxi Province). The King of Zhao sent for General-in-Chief Lian Po and asked, "Is it possible for us to rescue Hann?"

The old general replied, "The road is too long and dangerous." Another general, Yue Sheng, gave a similar answer. Then the king summoned Zhao She and asked his opinion. "The way is far and narrow," said Zhao. "If a battle takes place, it will be like two rats fighting in a small hole° the braver will turn out the victor." Satisfied, the king commanded Zhao She to lead troops to rescue Hann.

When the army had barely gone thirty *li* from the capital city of Handan, Zhao She issued orders to halt and make camp. He also sternly forbade the soldiers to make any comment on the plan of battle, announcing, "Anyone who disobeys the order will be punished with death."

A band of the Qin troops, dispatched by Hu Shang to check the advance of reinforcements from Zhao, were stationed west of Wu'an, over a hundred *li* to the south of Yuyu. There they practiced military exercises to the accompaniment of drums and battle cries, creating such a clamor as to shake the roofs of the surrounding houses. A scout of the Zhao army came to Zhao She and urged him to make haste to