

## Preface

It is 1941. Destroyer Captain Hara Tameichi has just learned of Japan's decision to attack America at Pearl Harbor. Stunned, he goes to his cabin and takes the *Sūndž* off the shelf, noting that Chapter 1 emphasizes the dire nature of war, and that the end of Chapter 3 urges that knowledge of one's own and the enemy's capacity is essential to success in military operations:

*. . . This advice, sound as it is, failed to provide any solace. I decided that the book was too philosophical, and tossed it aside. Its words of wisdom were probably appropriate for a monarch or a commander-in-chief, but not for a low-level officer like me. My glumness continued.*

Thus with Oriental indirectness does Captain Hara suggest that his country is violating the master rule of the book "that has been the Bible of Oriental warriors for some 2,500 years." In the years following, every lesser rule in that book would also be broken by Japanese naval strategists and commanders, and some also (though, as it turned out, not as many) by their American opponents. The record, if not a happy one, is instructive in its way for the modern reader.

As early as the mid 03rd century, the *Sūndž* was paired with the *Wú Chǐ* or *Wúdž* ("Master *Wú*") as recognized military classics. Neither of these texts is a single treatise, both were written in installments over a period of time. To give a better impression of early military expertise than can be conveyed by the *Sūndž* alone, we include the *Wúdž*. Two other military texts followed, and the Legalists, in both *Chí* and *Chín*, were creating the resource bureaucracy which alone could support the modern army. We briefly sample this material as well, to better suggest the range and tendency of early Chinese military thinking.

The Chinese title of the *Sūndž* is *Sūndž Bīngfǎ* 孫子兵法. "*Bīngfǎ*" is now familiar in English as "Art of War," but *fǎ* is the usual Chinese word for "law," and it was in the 04th century that the Chinese were becoming interested in the laws of nature, such as the astronomical regularities which allowed prediction of eclipses. In the *Sūndž* and its successors, we see an attempt to discern similar regularities in warfare. Gradually, the focus of the military writers turns from details (how to cross a swamp) to unifying concepts (the theory of position). The move is from specifics to underlying principles.

As for "laws of war" in its modern sense, there was nothing of the sort. Victorious armies took their own advice about massacring surrendered soldiers – as *Ngwèi* did not, but as *Chín* increasingly did.

Our translations are arranged in order of composition, since only thus do such inconsistencies stand revealed as historical developments – the evolution of military thought and practice from the mid 04th century to the late 03rd, leading to the unified *Chín* Empire of 0221. For the larger historical context, we recommend our survey volume, *The Emergence of China*.

**Conventions.** Keyword citations are expanded in the Works Cited section at the end of the book. “0312” is “312 BC,” a universal convention that works also in French and German, as the well-intentioned “BCE” does not; “04th century” may be abbreviated as “04c” and so on. “Circa” dates (such as c0348) are best-guess positions within a system of relative dates. Chinese words are spelled in the Common Alphabetic system, with “consonants as in English, vowels as in Italian,” plus these further conventions: -æ as in “cat,” -v [compare the linguist’s inverted  $\Lambda$ ] as in “gut,” -r as in “fur,” -z as in “adz,” -yw (after l or n, simply -w) for “umlaut u.” The four tones are hīgh, rīsing, lōw, fālling. A table comparing CA with two other romanization systems begins at p241. Pronunciations are based on modern standard Chinese, but initial ng- has been restored to distinguish a few words such as the states Wèi 衛 and Ngwèi 魏, both now pronounced as “Wèi.” Note also the early *state* of Hán (rising tone) and the later Hán *Dynasty* (falling tone).

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**Dedication.** This book is dedicated to the Táng military specialist Dù Mù. Reflecting on one battle lost by the first Sūndž commentator, the general and dynastic founder Tsāu Tsāu, when his rival Jōu Yw sent fireships against Tsāu Tsāu’s fleet at Red Cliff, thus letting him keep his wives of the Chyáu family, who would otherwise have been taken to Tsāu Tsāu’s palace, the Bronze Bird, Dù Mù wrote:

A broken halberd in the sand,  
unrusted even now,  
The name of a former dynasty  
can still be read somehow;  
Had not the breezes from the east  
favored Master Jōu,  
The Bronze Bird might have held, all spring,  
the two Princesses Chyáu

In his own Sūndž commentary, Dù Mù often gave examples from later battles. Similarly, in our commentary, we have sometimes suggested parallels in later military situations with which our readers may be familiar: Caesar in Gaul, Napoleon, the American Civil War, and Commander Hara’s World War 2.

In one way or another, we hope that our work will be of use to our readers, in whatever turbulent present they may find themselves.

E Bruce Brooks  
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