

# The Art of War's Impact on the World

Gia-Maxine. Jimenez

Junior Division

Historical Paper

Word Count: 2306

Process Paper Word Count: 379

## Process Paper

How did I choose my topic?

I have a personal theme for all my NHD projects: I want to explore my other nationalities (other than the Philippines) so I research Japanese history or Chinese for my project. I also wanted to research something I liked, like philosophy. Philosophy is something I connect to, something I want to study. So I came to the only Asian philosopher that came to mind, Sun Tzu.

How did I conduct my research?

I started researching the ways in which my topic influenced people. From there, I started looking into how it influenced them, like how Gary Gagliardi was. As I researched more, I came across a website that had information on how Sun Tzu influenced ancient China.

Why did I choose my category and how did I create my project?

I did a paper last year, but I didn't make it to regionals. I wanted to improve my writing skills so I could make up for last year, to do that I did the same process with a few changes. After I did my research, I followed my outline (the one that was in my head). It wasn't much of an effort because last year I tried to make it fancy with unique words and cool phrases, like a novel. In the process, I took out two sections of my paper's body: one didn't seem to portray my topic that well and the other-- after further research --was in debate, questioning the existence of said event.

How does my topic relate to the theme?

*The Art of War* is a form of communication, it relays strategic advice. Strategies that have helped people overcome difficulties. Some of these difficulties were more life changing than others. However, that doesn't make any less life changing. *The Art of War* can be used by anybody and can help them solve any of their problems. This can impact the reader's mind, this can make them more adaptable, even wiser. This also means that anyone, anyone at all, can become that, can become a smarter person. If this is so, if *The Art of War* can change the world for the better, then doesn't that make it as relevant as those acts of equal rights and those technological advancements?

## The Art of War's Impact on the World

Wisdom has always been shared through voices. Voices who talk about the rights of humanity, who want to stop all injustices. There are also other voices, who talk about philosophy and strategy, like the famous Sun Tzu. His voice shared the wisdom of military tactics through a book, *The Art of War*.

### Thesis

*The Art of War* has transformed people, all the people who have read it; all the readers from around the world. To win the wars we fight everyday, these people have used *The Art of War* against cancer, corporate competitors, and of course, political enemies. *The Art of War* has also shaped history: Ying Zheng used *The Art of War* to become the First Emperor of China, it's philosophy was the basis for all martial arts, and Coca-Cola and MCI (a telecommunications company) used some of it's advice for their business success. *The Art of War* deserves to be recognized in relevance to this year's NHD theme, communication in history. Because through Sun Tzu's book of strategy, then for sure the reader will completely transform.

### In the Times Before Sun Tzu

During the Spring and Autumn period, ancient China's states were at war. According to Sun Tzu, "In the operations of war, where there are in the field a thousand swift chariots... and a hundred thousand mail-clad soldiers, with provisions enough to carry them a thousand li, the... sums spent... will reach the total of a thousand ounces of silver per day... Poverty of the State exchequer causes an army to be maintained by contributions from a distance. Contributing to

maintain an army at a distance causes the people to be impoverished.” (Sun 5). This happened to the state of Qi.

From 685 - 643 BC, Duke Huan reigned over Qi. His prime minister-- Guag Zhong --wrote the early version of *Guanzi*. Guag Zhong was a genius politician, he created more state institutions, started monopolizing the salt and iron from the state, and started taxing Qi's people to fund their army. But Qi wasn't the only one who did this, “As states began to tax individual landowners, peasants worked themselves free of their masters and practiced labor-intensive agriculture for a mostly vegetarian diet.” (Science of Strategy Institute).

As the war went on, many noblemen lost their dukedoms-- these aristocrats got placed into a different class, they became an educated class called the shih. The shih were literates who obtained influence over the government and commerce through their knowledge. A famous member of the shih, was Confucius-- one of China's greatest philosophers. Sun Tzu was also part of the shih, however he chose to become a mercenary instead of a literate.

## The State of Wu: Their Journey to Dominance

In 510 BC, *The Art of War* was written. Sun Tzu's work spread, soon reaching King Helu of Wu. Wu was a minor state that was actually considered as semi barbaric to the north. King Helu requested for Sun to come to Wu and show him his military skills. To display this, King Helu asked Sun to train the court concubines to see if Sun Tzu's training methods also applied to females. Sun Tzu did as he was told.

At first, the women laughed it off as he instructed them. According to Sun Tzu, “If words of command are not clear and distinct, if orders are not thoroughly understood, then the general

is to blame.” So he tried instructing the ladies again; they laughed it off. “But if his orders are clear, and the soldiers nevertheless disobey, then it is the fault of their officer.” (Sun Tzu)

Consequently, Sun Tzu beheaded the king’s two favorite concubines. They were replaced by new women, then they continued. Everyone was in fear, so they followed his instructions without error. Thus, Sun Tzu proved his skills-- and his seriousness as a commander --so King Helu made Sun the commander of his army.

Now back in 564 BC, the state of Sung got eleven of the other states to sign a nonaggression pact. In 506 BC-- with Sun Tzu as their commander --Wu broke the pact (though they didn’t sign it in the first place). The state of Wu only gained more power from there, “Training the world's first civilian army, Sun Wu led his forces to conquer all the larger, richer, and more technologically advanced kingdoms of the Yang-tze river valley.” (Science of Strategy Institute). However in 496 BC, King Helu and Sun Tzu died.

It’s unsure if he actually did, because even after Sun’s “death” Wu still grew in power; it's likely that they were still being assisted by Sun. So he probably faked his death, as he said, “All warfare is based on deception.” (Sun 4).

By the time it was 482 BC, Wu was the most dominant state in China. Unfortunately, they got conquered by the state of Yue in 472 BC.

## Inventing the Martial Arts

After the “death” of Sun Tzu, during the times in which Yue was fighting with Wu, *The Art of War* made its way all around China. Everyone wanted to emulate Sun Tzu’s *Art of War*. More and more armies were recruiting civilians, which “...created wide access to weapons and

martial arts training.” (Science of Strategy Institute); more and more people started using Sun’s methods of fighting-- these methods are considered as the basis of martial arts.

In Chinese, *The Art of War* is *Sunzi Bing-fa* (孫子兵法) which actually translates to *Master Sun’s Military Strategy and Tactics*. A lot of Sun’s strategies and tactics correspond to the basic concepts/teachings of martial arts; e.g. “Hence the skillful fighter puts himself into a position which makes defeat impossible, and does not miss the moment for defeating the enemy.” (Sun 10).

As said, *The Art of War* was emulated into the basis of martial arts. “Around 298 BC, the historian Zhuang Zi recorded that life in the state of [Zhao] had become prosperous because of the practice of martial arts using the sword. King Wen of [Zhao] invited more than 3,000 sword martial artists to practice against one another in his court. Zhuang Zi said that Sun Tzu’s theory had been incorporated into the martial arts techniques of both offense and defense and of both armed and unarmed combat... Sun Tzu’s methods, originally taught in the context of larger wars, were now seen as the key to individual contests.” (Science of Strategy Institute).

Sun Bing-- Sun Wu’s (first Sun Tzu) descendant --made some revisions to *The Art of War* around 350 BC, during the Warring States period, making it even more popular-- as seen with the state of Zhao. It then reached King Ying Zheng of the state of Qin; he used Sun Tzu’s tactics and became Qin Shi Huangdi in 221 BC-- which was his title as the First Emperor of China.

During Ying Zheng’s reign over all of China, he restricted *The Art of War*, only those of royal blood could read it’s tactics. It was passed down and many of the Chinese emperors added philosophies that were less cruel, less aggressive. Derived from *The Art of War*, martial arts

became known as one, The Grand Ultimate Fist; the martial art was popularized in the third century AD.

In the fifth century AD, The Grand Ultimate Fist was further added to, further evolved, by the Buddhist monks of the Shaolin Monastery (they may or may not have secretly gotten a copy from one of China's royals). This advanced version was the start of Kung-Fu. It spread throughout Asia, the martial art was adapted into many others, for various fighting styles.

## The Key to Business Success

Fast forward to the late 1900's-- *The Art of War* has already been translated into many other languages and places outside of Asia -- "In the 1960s, '70s, and '80s, Japanese businessmen began applying Sun Tzu's teachings to the country's burgeoning corporate culture, with real results." (McRobbie).

The Wall Street Journal was inspired by Japan. They adapted *The Art of War* in the '80s as books written for the business world. (These books also had a version for business women, *The Art of War for Women*.) However, it seems that they weren't as successful as Japan.

Back in 1987, The New York Times wrote an article about Wall Street's involvement with Sun Tzu. Here, Andrew Feinberg comments on Douglas Ramsey's *The Corporate Warriors*-- one of Wall Street's books:

"WHILE this breezy and generally entertaining chronicle of six corporate battles of the 1970's and 80's is not subtitled "In Search of Expedience," its amoral tinge can be disturbing. Perhaps this is inevitable when an author seeks, as Douglas K. Ramsey does, to apply the principles of warfare to modern business management. Still, it is jolting to realize that once a

reader has mastered the finer points of "Iacocca" and become a gifted one-minute manager, the next item on the agenda is total war against the competition.

Mr. Ramsey, a business correspondent for NBC News, got the idea for this militaristic view of commerce while working in Japan for The Economist. Most Japanese managers he knew could quote from "The Art of War" by the ancient Chinese philosopher Sun Tzu, and Mr. Ramsey sought to understand the value that executives found in those teachings. What, he wondered, was strategy like before strategic planning?

From military experts such as Karl von Clausewitz, Machiavelli and Sun Tzu, Mr. Ramsey culls nine key points for corporate generals...

Strangely, most of the business leaders analyzed in "The Corporate Warriors" have recently suffered blows to their reputations. Among Mr. Ramsey's heroes are Donald Burr, the founder - and destroyer - of People Express; Roger Smith, the chairman of General Motors; Ted Turner, the media mogul; and William McGowan, the head of MCI, the telecommunications company. Only Bob Guccione of Penthouse magazine and Roberto Goizueta of Coca-Cola are still riding high. Unfortunately, Mr. Ramsey ignores the failings of his business paragons.

Nonetheless, the military perspective that he employs provides some enlightenment. After decades of watching Pepsi narrow Coke's lead in the soft-drink market, Coca-Cola finally realized that perpetual defense does not work... Bob Guccione did not take on Playboy in the United States until he had gained sufficient strength abroad to be confident of victory. During his initial success in England, in fact, he tried to prevent copies of Penthouse from reaching America, correctly reasoning that any premature sallies would only help the enemy. Ted Turner, on the other hand, is portrayed as a skilled guerrilla fighter, winning battles that opponents only belatedly discover are worth fighting. One of his greatest weapons may be his buffoonery, for he

has been consistently underestimated by his competitors. As for Donald Burr, Mr. Ramsey surprisingly overlooks the real militaristic messages of Mr. Burr's ultimate failure. People Express abandoned some of the strategies that had made it successful, and it never got to know its enemies. By deciding to attack American Airlines and United Airlines in the vital and hugely profitable Chicago market, Mr. Burr invited retaliation he could not withstand.” (Feinberg).

Even though they weren't as successful, the corporate leaders from *The Corporate Warriors* had some success at least.

## Impact on Gary Gagliardi

Author, Gary Gagliardi, has written many adaptations of *The Art of War*-- most being business related. Gary's adaptations also have some other variety: politics, terrorism, parenting, and love.

Around the late 2000s, he was diagnosed with cancer. Luckily for him, he was prepared. Using Sun Tzu's tactics and advice, he took immediate action:

“My response to diagnosis consciously followed the four steps of the progress cycle - listen, aim, move, and claim.

**Listen:** I knew I had to learn as much about my type cancer and possible courses of treatment. I used the web to find out everything that I could about the type of cancer I had, its treatment, and my choices regarding physicians in my area.

**Aim:** There were two schools of treatment for my cancer. In choosing my course of treatment, I choose the one which was very painful and debilitating but which had a higher success rate. I chose the doctor in our area that was the most experienced in that treatment.

People have a choice of doctors, but don't get the best because they don't think it is their place to choose. This is a fatal mistake.

**Move:** I moved instantly, getting two operations within a week of being diagnosed. I started radiation as soon as I recovered from surgery. I took the maximum dose of radiation, which happens to be extremely painful for my cancer.

**Claim:** In the years since, I have accepted my status and the disabilities from my course of treatment. I live with a certain level of discomfort. Since my treatment destroyed my saliva glands (and taste buds), I have to give myself fluoride treatments every day to maintain my teeth. However, for me, the bottom line is that I survived.” (Gagliardi).

His recovery inspired him to write *The Golden Key to Strategy*, so that everyone could be prepared in any situation.

## Strategy is for Everything

Considered as a military tactic classic, Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* has proven that it can be used anywhere, by anyone, in any situation. Even in the most basic: “If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles.” (Sun 8), from prey to predator; “Hold out baits to entice the enemy. Feign disorder, and crush him.” (Sun 4), predator to hunter; “In the practice of war, the best thing of all is to take the enemy's country whole and intact; to shatter and destroy it is not so good.” (Sun 7), and hunter to trapper. At the end, you acquire food and you gain a trump card, knowledge. This is how one transforms completely.

## Annotated Bibliography

### (Primary Source)

Sun Tzu. "The Art of War (Without Commentary)." Translated by Lionel Giles. *The Art of War and Other Classics of Eastern Philosophy*, Canterbury Classics, 2016, pp. 3-36.

This section is my primary source. It helped me get the complete context of my topic. So that I could further imagine what it was like to live the time of Sun Tzu.

### (Secondary Sources)

Science of Strategy Institute. "Martial Arts and Sun Tzu." *Science of Strategy*, <https://scienceofstrategy.org/main/content/martial-arts-and-sun-tzu>. Accessed 17 January 2021.

This informative page gave me information that seemed to be hidden (well to me at least). I studied Ying Zheng last year, yet I never came across anything about him using *The Art of War*. Also, I never thought about the similarities of Sun's philosophies to the philosophies of martial arts.

Gagliardi, Gary. "Strategy and Cancer." *Gary Gagliardi*, 4 February 2009, <http://www.garygagliardi.com/content/strategy-and-cancer>.

Gary's blog post made me see how strategy could be used from a different perspective. That it could be used to fight illnesses. That it can be applied in our day to day lives.

Science of Strategy Institute. “Before and After: the Effect of Sun Tzu's strategy on Chinese history.” *Science of Strategy*,

<https://scienceofstrategy.org/main/content/and-after-effect-sun-tzus-strategy-chinese-history>.

Accessed 17 January 2021.

This is another page that gave me information on Sun Tzu’s impact on ancient China. It gave a comparison of how China was before *The Art of War*. It also gave me more information than any other source I found-- most of my sources actually came from this website; they’re just different pages/articles.

Science of Strategy Institute. “Man of Mystery: Sun Tzu's Life or What We Think We Know.”

*Science of Strategy*,

<https://scienceofstrategy.org/main/content/man-mystery-sun-tzus-life-or-what-we-think-we-know>.

Accessed 17 January 2021.

A little more of Sun Tzu’s background came to light from reading this webpage. Even though it was limited, I found out about his background; that he was a literate who became a general instead. That part of his story was inspirational to me.

Science of Strategy Institute. “A Life in Context: Major Events in China Before, During, and After His Life.” *Science of Strategy*,

<https://scienceofstrategy.org/main/content/timeline-sun-tzus-era>. Accessed 17 January 2021.

This timeline was a reference for the date of events featured in my paper. It gave me a wide range of dates and context. Like the backstory of the state of Wu and how they went from a minor state to the most dominant state in the peak of their time.

McRobbie, Linda R. "9 Ways the Art of War Conquered the World." *Mental Floss*, 4 May 2015, <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/63366/9-ways-art-war-conquered-world>.

Linda's article was my first source. A lot of my key points in my paper came from this article. It lead me to my other sources as well; Gary Gagliardi, the Science of Strategy Institute and Wall Street Journal's news article of how the business world was influenced by *The Art of War*.

Feinberg, Andrew. "Sun Tzu on Wall St." *The New York Times*, 12 April 1987, p. 30, <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/04/12/books/sun-tzu-on-wall-st.html>.

Wall Street Journal's article was one of my most important sources I used in my research. The information in the article contributed to my paper by giving variety. A variety in time periods and a variety in situations where *The Art of War* could be used.