

Defense. Offensive war hardened, and so did its defensive counterpart. Gates were covered, first with mud and later with metal, against fire arrows. Trenches outside the gates with a suspended bridge allowed only one person at a time to enter. At intervals along the walls were shields, fire screens, and crossbows to direct fire at enemy battering rams or movable observation and attack towers. These last were called “cloud ladders” (#4:54) because they did not need a wall, they were propped, as it were, against the sky.

On the attack side, here is how a mid 03c Chín city assault was organized, and how stringently it was encouraged to succeed:

4:63 (SJS 19, excerpt, c0256). In attacking or besieging a town, the Minister of Public Works examines and estimates the size and resources of the city. The military officials assign places, dividing the area according to the number of soldiers and officers available for the attack, and sets them a timetable . . . They dig out subterranean passages and pile up fuel, then set fire to the beams . . . For every man [of the enemy] killed, remission of taxes is granted, but for every man who cannot fight to the death, ten are torn to pieces by the chariots. Those who make critical remarks are branded or their noses are sliced off beneath the city wall.

But the Micians soon found countermoves. From the defending side, poison gas was piped into the attackers’ tunnels. Houses were razed to contain fire attacks. The surrounding land was devastated to deny its use to the attacker:

4:64 (MZ 70:38, excerpt, c0242). For one hundred leagues beyond the outer wall, cut down and remove all walls, both high and low, and plants and trees both large and small. Fill in all the empty wells, so that water cannot be drawn from them. Outside, destroy all the empty buildings and chop down all the trees. Take into the city everything that could be used in attacking the city . . .

There was provision for medical leave, but also a procedure to detect fraud:

4:65 (MZ 70:25, excerpt, c0242). Let the wounded return home to heal their wound and be cared for. Provide a doctor who will give medicines . . . Have an officer go regularly to the village to see if the wound has healed . . . In the case of those who falsely wound themselves to avoid service, put the whole family to death.

And any sign of disaffection, or failure of morale, was brutally punished:

4:66 (MZ 70:11, excerpt, c0242). Extra prohibitions for a besieged city. When the enemy arrives unexpectedly, strictly order officers and people not to dare to make disturbances, gather in threes, go about together, look at each other, sit down and weep, raise their hands to touch each other, point to each other, call to each other, signal to each other . . . [Such persons] are to be executed. If the other members of the squads 伍 do not apprehend them, they too are to be executed; if they do apprehend them, they are to be pardoned . . .

Officer and citizen alike are subject to the group responsibility rule.

And thus it came about that in skill and resource, in discipline and ferocity, the attackers and the defenders in the end became virtually indistinguishable. Did it really matter, any longer, who won?

Offense. In the late 04c, the Sūndž had praised the general who preserved a conquered army to add it to his own force. This policy of appeasement and reuse (in effect, conciliating the conquered populace) was developed in the early 03c by the Wú Chǐ's emphasis on taking over intact the administrative and civil structures of the conquered states (#4:43). But as the wars went on, Chín preferred to devastate conquered cities and massacre surrendered armies (the Jàu soldiers who thus perished at Cháng-píng in 0260 numbered 400,000). This retaliation against resistance to Chín seems to have assisted, not retarded, the progress of Chín to final victory.

Nor did Chín spare its own resources. As the human cost of warfare rose, Chín proved willing to pay that cost. As supporting witness to SJS 19 (#4:63), here is a passage on generalship from the Chín portion of the Wèi Lyáudž:

4:67 (WLZ 24, excerpt, c0232). I have heard that in antiquity, those who excelled in using their troops could bear to kill half their officers and men. The next best could kill 30 percent, and the lowest, 10 percent. The awesomeness of one who could sacrifice half his troops affected all within the Four Seas . . . Thus I say that a mass of a hundred thousand that does not follow orders is not as good as ten thousand men who fight, and ten thousand men who fight are not as good as a hundred men who are truly aroused.

And Chín, in a passage already quoted, continued to hammer at its root idea: a state at war has room for nothing but farming and fighting:

4:68 (SJS 25:3, excerpt, c0236). And so my teaching is that if the people want profit, they cannot get it but by farming; if they want to avoid harm, they cannot do so but by fighting. If none of the people of the state but first engage in farming and fighting, then later they will get what they like. Thus, though the territory be small, the production will be large; though the populace be sparse, the army will be strong. If one can carry out these two principles in his own territory, then the Way of the Hegemon King lies open before him.

It did indeed. At that moment, seven states were still in contention. Hán was defeated in 0230 by a Chín army led by "Palace Official T'ng;" Chín generals Wáng Jyě 王翳 and Wáng B'vn 王贲 were prominent in what followed. Jàu was destroyed in 0228; some Jàu forces escaped to Yēn. Ngwèi fell in 0225 and Chǔ in 0224. A Chǔ remnant under Syàng Yēn regrouped south of the Hwái River; they were wiped out in 0223. Yēn, with its Jàu refugees, fell in 0222. Chí surrendered without a battle in 0221.

The Six States were no more, and all the world belonged to Chín.