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The Forgotten Vocabulary of Strategy

Volume 2

The Catalogue
of Strategic Principles

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"Common sense is the most widely shared commodity in the world,

for every man is convinced that he is well supplied with it"

René Descartes (1596-1650)

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Gunter Maier was born in 1972 and studied business administration and social sciences. In his last professional position he was responsible for training and further education in an international industrial company. Inspired by his varied professional experience in adult education and the ever-increasing complexity of everyday working life, he specialised in the field of leadership development. For more than 30 years he has also been engaged in various modern and classical martial arts styles and holds various technical degrees as well as teaching and examination licences. His research approach is interdisciplinary and above all, reality oriented. In this sense he systematises and cultivates proven practical knowledge in order to make it available to modern leadership development as a holistic teaching concept.

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The Catalogue of Strategic Principles

1. Unlimited Application in Social Interaction

Before the reader starts with the last part of this handbook and intensively studies the individual principles, the scope of the overall concept should be considered once again.

The entire research process was mainly concerned with the disciplines of the military and economics, in particular with leadership training. This was due to the fact that sufficient information was available from both areas to carry out the research process. The question that now follows is to what extent this system can be transferred to other areas. The answer can only be brief and concise: This system can be used in all areas of life that are characterised by social interaction. Such areas would be education, politics, economics, sports or psychology. In all of these areas, individuals act, and to a considerable extent when pursuing goals they act on the basis of Strategic Principles.

It is irrelevant where you are on earth, it is also irrelevant in which period of time you find yourself. Yes, even the intellect of the Principle user does not matter, whether he is a child or a highly paid manager, they all work within this repertoire. This can even be observed in higher mammals, monkeys or dogs, for example. It does not even matter whether the individual is acting consciously or unconsciously. They all ultimately proceed according to the recurring success patterns with which nature apparently equips each individual. For sure nobody has a complete repertoire, but it can be assumed that simple and existential patterns are developed at the beginning of existence, and that more highly developed principles are adapted successively, if the application was crowned with success.

A fine example of such an existential pattern and its interdisciplinary application is the *Besiege* principle. Since it

is well known to everyone in the military field, it does not need to be explained in more detail. At its core, the protagonist increasingly restricts the antagonist's freedom of action until he becomes mellow, is willing to make concessions, or gives up completely. The basic prerequisites for success are persistence and sufficient resources to besiege, with the time factor playing a decisive role. The loss of the antagonist's freedom of action only gradually sets in, and this constant change has a negative effect on the antagonist's mental state. The situation becomes increasingly unbearable for him until he cannot endure it any longer. A constant increase in the pressure of the siege has the effect of optimising success, like a noose that tightens ever more around a person's neck. If we move away from the military application of principles, this pattern can also be found in small children. In *Machtspiele - die Kunst sich durchzusetzen* (power games - the art of asserting yourself), in an amusing way, the author Matthias Nöllke, describes the situation when a child wants an ice cream and annoys his parents until they capitulate and, despite all previous objections, eventually go ahead and buy the ice cream.[1] The child has successfully applied the BESIEGE Principle and achieved his goal. Every reader is sure to have observed such a situation at some point and perhaps even asked himself the question of where the child learned this strategy? The child avails of two important prerequisites, he has time and a (pronounced) will, both of which cause a child to put things to the test. For stressed parents who want to limit the candy consumption of their offspring to a healthy amount, here is a possible way out of the dilemma. Under the conditions for success there is the factor of time, the counter-principle should be oriented to this. You can rob the child of his time by dealing with other things that interest him, i.e. applying the KEEP HIM BUSY Principle. Thus you distract him. From the author's own

experience it can be confirmed that this works in the early years, but with the increasing age of the children the effect diminishes, because they get to understand the mechanism. This is where the *Flexible Action* Principle comes in.

The *Arson* Principle is another interesting example of interdisciplinary application possibilities. It is also described in the course of conflict research. Protagonists use this mechanism to carry out targeted actions of disturbance in the jurisdiction of the antagonist thus tying up his resources, since primarily he has to deal with the effects of the disturbing action. Therefore, at least for a while, he cannot focus on his intended actions. This tends to be a means used by weaker parties and is often to be found in guerrilla warfare. If we take a look into the field of behavioural biology, we also find this pattern, although it is quite highly developed. According to confirmed reports, the Australian Black Kite includes this principle in its hunting repertoire. This bird grabs a burning torch or embers from a campfire and carries it into the high grass. With this it starts a bush fire, causing its prey, animals living on the ground, to panic and become confused. It then uses this moment to catch its prey[2]. These two examples only give a small insight into the possibilities of interdisciplinary applications of the system. Once the reader has found his way around the topic, he will become aware of many other examples from his own experience. He will also be able to better understand and classify new experiences with reference to the Principles.

The ability to *think in patterns* ultimately enables us to reduce complexity. Real complexity cannot usually be changed because it has a preexisting framework. However, it is possible to change your mind in such a way that you can better grasp and understand this complexity. Thinking in patterns therefore means looking through glasses that separate the subordinate from the essential and the recurring. Only the essential is important when getting a

first impression of a real situation. All further information can be added successively, according to the processing capacity of the viewer. It is also not critical for the viewer to have special knowledge corresponding to the situation. The action of the individuals involved in the process is sufficient to get a first idea. Social interaction thus becomes more transparent than ever before.

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1 see Nöllke, p. 37

2 see Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger

2. The Fathers of the System of Strategic Principles

2.1 Introduction

The Catalogue of Strategic Principles represents 2500 years of strategy teaching from four different cultures. It was generated from the teachings and narratives of 12 important men in history, they are, so to speak, the fathers of the curriculum. This chapter is dedicated to these people and their writings, all of which represent their respective life's work. They will be presented in such a way so as to give the reader a sense of how the works were written and how they should be understood with respect to the Principles. In addition to their general personal information, their personal circumstances as well as their historical framework are portrayed, since these influenced what they wrote. The introduction to the Classics is in chronological order.

2.2 Sun Tsu (ca. 544 – 496 B.C.)

Sun Tsu[3] was a Chinese general and military strategist. He probably lived before the famous time of the Warring States, which began about 100 years after Sun Tsu died. Not much is really known about his life and work, at least nothing reliable[4]. He probably wrote his work *The Art of War* in the middle of his life, because according to certain sources this publication was the starting point of his career. Sun Tsu, originally from the state of Qi, was elevated to the status of a general by Ho-Lü, the king of the neighbouring state of

Wu, , as the latter was impressed by his writings and also by his demonstrations of strategic human leadership[5]. Sun Tsu successfully led several wars and battles for Ho-Lü. This version of Sun Tsu's rise to general just described is doubted by some historians, because it is not sufficiently proven, so that legitimate doubts remain. There are also indications that he lived later in the Chan Kuo period, i.e. at the time of the Warring States[6]. It is also occasionally doubted that Sun Tsu is actually the author of the text.[7]

However, the script itself is real, it has been proven to exist for more than two thousand years, although the many existing versions have been subject to influence and change over the years. However, an original text, the so-called *Linyi text*, has been preserved in its pure form. It was found in 1972 in a burial ground from the Han period (206 BC to 208 AD) and today serves as the basis for many translations[8]. The script is structured in a special way and describes the tactics of warfare in thirteen chapters. In detail, it deals with many sub-aspects, such as leading your own troops, outwitting and overcoming the opponent or, for example, preparatory warfare measures such as planning or espionage. As a rule it is usually quite easy to recognise the Strategic Principles from the short passages, as they are concrete instructions to the reader.

The work is written very pragmatically and you can see that the author must have been an experienced warrior, of whatever rank, with pronounced analytical skills, because he examines all facets of warfare in great detail. The book is to be regarded as a compilation of pure practical knowledge and knowledge of how to succeed. Regardless of the exact dates of Sun Tsu's life, it can be said that this was a long period of social and political instability, which experience has shown is always accompanied by a brutalisation of society, unscrupulousness and the removal of any moral restraints. Looting campaigns, breach of contract,

assassinations, kidnappings, etc. were the order of the day, and every means was used as long as it showed promise [9]. The high quality of the work is also derived from this context. It was a time of the class of wandering state theorists and war theoreticians who advised the princes and lords in their affairs. If their advice proved to be profitable, they were richly rewarded, if the opposite occurred, they were often cut up, boiled or killed in other brutal ways[10]. From these circumstances it can be deduced that only the brightest of these theorists survived in the end, and only their writings were then passed on. This can be seen as a bizarre selection process in which tried and tested strategy knowledge survived and useless theory along with its creators were automatically weeded out.

Over the centuries, his work spread beyond the borders of China. There are Japanese, Byzantine and Arabic writings which are verifiably based on the ideas of Sun Tsu[11]. The contemporary significance of the art of war around the globe is great. Thus, extensive Anglo-Saxon economic literature is based on the teachings of this Classic in which the aim is to transfer the principles of warfare to processes of the economy. In China itself Sun Tsu is regarded as the ancestor of the previously described supra-planning[12] (Vol. 1), whereby here the principles of warfare are also transferred to the leadership of government.

2.3 Thucydides (ca. 450 - ca. 400 BC)

Thucydides was an Athenian strategist and historian who lived between 450 and 400 B.C., exact dates are not known. He came from a well-off background and dedicated his work to objective analysis, illustrating the nature of man and the motives of human action, and the effects of these up to the political level. His work *The Peloponnesian War* presents a comprehensive historical monograph on the war between

the two great powers of Athens and Sparta (434-404 BC) in eight volumes, including accompanying events. In great detail and with much objectivity he describes the string of events that took place up to 411/10. This is all the more astonishing as he himself was not impartial as a politician and commander of the Athens War Party. Herodotus (ca. 490/480 - 424 BC), whom Thucydides knew personally and from whom he learned a lot, is often referred to as the "father of historiography". While Herodotus' form of presentation – first and foremost he wrote about the Persian wars - is rather anecdotal, but also tries to represent different opinions, it is more typical of Thucydides to present backgrounds, motives, points of view and starting points of the acting parties in detailed speeches, which he cleverly inserted into a story. The ancient reader was well aware that the speeches had not been made literally, but could have been so made according to the state of knowledge at the time[13]. In doing so, he presents cause-and-effect relationships in the same way as the underlying motives of the participants and their means of achieving their goals. Two principles of order are pursued, one chronological and one didactic. The purpose is to provide the reader with an understanding of causal relationships[14]. According to a deeper didactic goal of Thucydides, the reader should be enabled to recognise objective truths which lie at the intersection of subjective opinions. In his time the many speeches and counter-speeches[15] were a proven and also common stylistic means. Just think of Plato's famous "Apology (defensive speech) of Socrates", which was probably not delivered literally [16], but very succinctly represents the foundations of Socrates' philosophy as well as the course of its process.

In contrast to the writings of other Classics, here the Strategic Principles do not emerge as recommendations for action, but are rather evident or derivable from the

described actions of the parties involved. Not every strategic action was promising, often the conditions for success were unfavourable, or in the course of the strategic interaction the respective achievement of objectives was thwarted. All these contexts and connections are described and thus give a comprehensive picture of the situation. The war itself was characterised by a high degree of complexity, because the two main parties, Athens and Sparta, had each become regional superpowers and were in numerous alliances with other city states, whereby these alliance constellations changed several times due to the strategic actions of the main parties. In contrast to the time of the Warring States in China, from a moral perspective, the work of Thucydides can be interpreted to include facts that prove the existence of moral forces. Although the narratives repeatedly portray unscrupulousness, breach of contract and deceit, etc., there are also descriptions of the fact that the extreme means were not always used when, for example, those defeated were spared. This is probably due to the fact that the democratic society of the time and its ideas of civilisation, at least in Athens, exerted a restricting influence on people's actions. Unfortunately, the work is incomplete and the reason for this is unknown. However, it was continued by Xenophon (ca. 430/425 - 355 B.C.) in his historical work "*Hellenica*", in which he continues to relay Greek history from 411 to 361[17]. How much he refers to Thucydides can be deduced from the fact that his Hellenica does not have a customary introduction of that time, but tersely starts with "*metà dè taûta - here after*...". This shows how well known the work of Thucydides must have been at that time. In "*Anabasis*" Xenophon describes the return of 10000 Greek mercenaries from the Persian Empire, after their employer fell in a victorious battle. The information contained in the work concerning the fundamental weakness of the Persian Empire is said to have inspired

Alexander the Great to attack the Persians, whereby in at least one case, he also practically used a concrete trick of Xenophon to cross a river. However, Xenophon was not a philosopher of history like Thucydides, although he - like Plato - was also a pupil of Socrates. Unlike Thucydides, Xenophon was thus not a real source of Strategic Principles.

Due to the few facts that are available about the development of Thucydides, it is known that he first held a strategic post in Athens [18]. However, during the war, for some reason, he was punished with a long banishment. It can be assumed that this circumstance led him to his objective description of the war, since he was no longer bound to any particular party to the war. Over the years he must have gathered the many details in his descriptions through countless conversations with eyewitnesses of all warring parties, otherwise the creation of his writings and thus his immense collection of material simply cannot be explained[19]. This represents a masterpiece of scientific research and analysis, for in the following two and a half millennia hardly any work on war research has been published that combines this objective perspective with such remarkable precision, although the authenticity of some parts of the work is doubted by historians.[20]

2.4 Kautilya (ca. 350 - ca. 283 BC)

The third Classic in chronological order is the Old Indian Arthashastra. This book, written in Sanskrit, was known in India for centuries, but not freely available. It was not until 1909 that it was published in its complete form. It is a textbook about the ancient Indian state theory and was obviously written for King Chandragupta Maurya (ca. 300 B.C.), founder of the Maurya Empire, which in its heyday covered almost the whole subcontinent. It is an extremely pragmatic textbook which, in 15 volumes, gives the ruler a

multitude of instruments with which to control and dominate his empire and his subjects. It is arranged thematically and deals with topics of diplomacy, warfare, customs and taxation, the legal system or espionage, for example.

Although these methods of exercising power seem to know no moral limits, the ruler is advised to govern with wise insight and to protect the weaker [21]. From today's point of view this is a contradiction. The Strategic Principles are clearly written as recommendations for action. They are very concrete and their application usually refers to specific situations. For example, there are detailed instructions for action on treason or assassination, as well as further instructions to cover up illegal or defamatory acts. In particular, the poisoning of adversaries is brought up several times, and is described under the aspects of concealed doctrines. Many of the Strategic Principles of the *Arthashastras* are morally reprehensible, even despicable from a modern-day point of view. Basically there is absolute rationalism of purpose and every means is used if it serves to achieve goals. From reading the *Arthashastra* itself, you can also find things out about the social conditions in India at that time. Pleasure and entertainment were obviously strongly anchored in people's everyday lives, countless passages in Scripture touch on these aspects. Thus prostitution was omnipresent, even the state was involved and strived for control of it or instrumentalised it. Excessive celebrations, circus events, etc. also often represented the framework conditions for the application of the Strategic Principles. One basic impression is obvious when you read them: it was a time when nobody could be trusted, both within your own society and beyond, as can be seen in the contributions regarding espionage and diplomacy.

The official author of the work is Kautilya [22]. He is said to have been a minister under King Chandragupta and also the king's close advisor. The book is ascribed to Kautilya, but

when reading it, it becomes clear that another author must also have contributed, because passages of dialogue crop up again and again in which another person replies to Kautilya or contradicts him. However, it is not clear who this person was or when the comments were added and just as little is known about the life and work of Kautilya.

2.5 Lucius Annaeus Seneca (ca. 1 BC - 65 AD)

Seneca was a Roman philosopher and follower of the Stoic school of thought, the teaching of which was founded in Athens in around 300 BC. Stoic thought specifically presented a holistic view of the world and demanded the individual accept his place in it, fulfil his role using emotional self-control, serenity and wisdom and finally achieve happiness. These teachings are therefore also to be regarded as an aid in life[23]. Seneca's most important function was to educate and advise Emperor Nero. Although the Spanish-born son of a Roman landowner [24] made a remarkable career, he later had to accept significant setbacks. On the one hand, in the year 41 he was accused of participating in an intrigue and was banished to Corsica for a long period of time, on the other hand, his most famous pupil - Emperor Nero - forced him to commit suicide after the character of the young emperor showed more and more dark sides[25] in the course of the years of his reign. Seneca lived in an epoch in which you were never sure you would survive. Conspiracies, intrigues, assassinations etc. were omnipresent. Ethics and morality were permanently the subject of the teachings of the numerous philosophers, but little could be felt of them in everyday social and political life.

In strategic studies, Seneca is not one of the main authors, as he did not deal with warfare, but with issues of governance and social interaction. Not all of his writings are

known or preserved, but four major works, *To Helvia - On Consolation, On Mercy, On the Happy Life and On Tranquillity of Mind,* provide a valuable basis for identifying Strategic Principles. However, he left behind considerably more writings, making him one of the greatest Latin stylists. The four writings mentioned above mainly contain principles of self-direction and precaution, which he formulated based on his analyses of the social world at that time. The principles, however, are not presented as concrete recommendations for action, rather they have to be derived from the philosophical thoughts and descriptions. The reason for this is the form of literary presentation. The four writings are in the form of *Moral Letters*, in which Seneca communicates with an imaginary interlocutor[26]. Who this interlocutor was and whether he really was the actual addressee of the thoughts is unclear. In view of the circumstances of life at that time, especially the uncertainties, it can be assumed that the form of the Moral Letter to an imaginary communication partner was chosen for reasons of security. It represents a coding of the messages, the transfer is more subliminal. Just what objective was pursued with the letters is also unclear, although assumptions can be made. *On Mercy* seems to be specifically addressed to Emperor Nero[27]. As the title expresses, Seneca pleads in an impressive, almost unrealistic way against severity and punishment [28]. The impression is created that Seneca had recognised the cruel potential of his student and tried to make him lenient by adopting a opposing position. Thus the identification of Strategic Principles in Seneca's writings is difficult, since the original sense must be queried again and again. According to the research logic (part 4.5) several passages were not used because of their several possible interpretations. Nonetheless, Seneca made a valuable contribution to this research.

2.6 Ibn Zafar (1104 - ca. 1170)

Muhammad ibn ` Abd Allah ibn Zafar, in short Ibn Zafar, is an Arab representative of the mirrors for princes genre. He is virtually unknown in the Western world, although his major work *sulwan al-muta* (Consolidation for the Ruler during the Hostility of Subjects) is an extremely well thought-out and rounded textbook for prospective princes. The work was lost for a long time and was rediscovered in 1851 by the Italian, Michele Armani. The underlying English translation also dates from this period. The work was apparently written for two addressees. Thus it is assumed that the first version was written for an unknown prince in Syria who was expecting a revolution. The second version was dedicated to Abu l-Qasim, a Muslim prince in Sicily[29]. Many of his other writings have been lost.

  Ibn Zafar was born in Sicily, which was under Norman rule at the end of the 11th century. This was preceded by periods of partly anarchic circumstances in which Arab tribes had warred against each other. Under the Normans a coexistence of the different ethnic groups built up in Sicily: Normans, autochthonous Romans, Greeks and Arabs. The later Hohenstaufen Emperor Frederick II, who was born and raised in Sicily about a hundred years later, corresponded with Arab scholars and was called the "Sultan of Lucera" because of his Arab bodyguards. There were many friendly relationships between members of the Orient and the Occident - especially in the economic and scientific fields. Nevertheless, political tensions were omnipresent[30]. This was probably the reason why Ibn Zafar spent his life in various places in the Muslim world, including in exile in Syria. Ibn Zafar's view of mankind was shaped by the circumstances of his time. It was based on the assumption that evil is generally anchored in the nature of man, and that nothing can be done about this.[31] The *sulwan al-muta*

is based on a lot of pragmatism and historical understanding [32], because Ibn Zafar analysed historical material of six past civilisations, the Persian, the early Indian, Hellenistic and Jewish civilisations, as well as Christian and Muslim-Arab history, and placed this in context to the challenges of his time. The aim of his teachings was to create an ideal ruler who would meet both secular and spiritual demands.

To achieve this goal, he created an exceptional textbook both in terms of its structure and its contents. It is divided into five main chapters, each representing desirable virtues. Within these chapters, different literary forms are concealed; he uses fables and narratives, emphasises maxims and interweaves them with one another, so that an entertaining read is created, which, however, still follows a clear concept. The Strategic Principles are cleverly interwoven, but clearly visible. They correspond to the *hila* concept, which, according to its underlying meaning, comprises stratagems and tricks. They should be applied when it even seems it is possible to achieve goals without violence.[33]

What is remarkable is Ibn Zafar's moral position, which exerts a great deal of influence on the *sulwan al-muta*. In his opinion and in his teaching, the ruler must exercise power to ensure justice. He can only do this by being virtuous, which in turn legitimises his power.[34] Moral aspects, as well as the combination of virtue and strategy, are therefore addressed again and again in the chapters, whereby the *sulwan al-muta* differs clearly from the other strategy Classics.

2.7 Niccolo Machiavelli (1469 -1527)

Machiavelli, who was born in Florence, also lived in a period of political unrest and uncertainty. The Florentine Republic had failed, foreign powers were constantly on the move

around the country, and the Franco-Spanish power struggle had also become established in the Italian territories[35]. In this environment Machiavelli was entrusted with various political and military positions and was quite successful to start with. After the Medici seized power, he was accused of conspiring against them and subsequently arrested and tortured.[36] After his release he retired to a country estate and dedicated the last 14 years of his life to writing. His intention was always to save Italy, i.e. to provide the country with a stable political order.[37] Since he himself was no longer given any political responsibility, he focussed on writing doctrines aimed at the one strong ruler [38] who would restore Italy to order. First the writings were addressed to Giuliano de Medici, later Machiavelli decided to dedicate his work to Lorenzo di Medici, who became king of Florence in 1513[39].

His methodology was new at the time, because he meticulously analysed the political events of his time and those of the past and drew logical conclusions from them. As a result, he created outspoken pragmatic texts with concrete recommendations for the prince. His main work, *Il Principe* (the prince), was exposed to the strongest of criticism from the Catholic Church only shortly after his death, and called Machiavelli the "teacher of evil"[40]. The Florentine had oriented his reflections toward political reality and not toward ideals. Accordingly the explanations about the means and methods, which Machiavelli recommended to the prince, were also shocking. Basically, there were no limits to his actions when it came to preserving the power of the prince[41], which had top priority. His maxims are therefore free of moral, social and religious concerns [42]. According to this understanding, religion was only an instrument of the state.[43] In addition the prince need not necessarily avail of virtues, it is sufficient if he gives the impression he has some. The Strategic Principles are hidden

behind the means and instruments that the Florentine recommends are applied in each respective context. He therefore tends to describe principles of the categories security, deception and external control. Principles of self-control, however, are basically not to be found. This raises the question of Machiavelli's far sightedness. Short-term successes can be achieved by the means he recommended, but whether these are also sustainable and thus stability can be created, is doubtful. Other Classics have given this issue some far-reaching thought.

Il Principe is one of the most important and best-known works in Classical strategy literature, although it has been controversially discussed, even up to the current day. The concept of Machiavellianism and the negative connotations associated with it also result from this controversy. It goes back to the political theories of this Italian and describes his endeavour to preserve power by using any means, regardless of justice and morality.

2.8 The 36 Stratagems (published around 1500)

The 36 Chinese stratagems hold a special position among the Classics. On the one hand, their author is unknown, on the other hand, in their original version they are very concise, in total they consist of only 138 Chinese characters[44]. In this context it should be considered that Chinese proverbs generally only consist of a few characters and can often only be understood if you know a story related to them. The proverb 走马观花- "zǒu (go) - mǎ (horse) - guān (watching) - huā (flower)", for example, literally means "riding a horse looking at a flower". It makes no sense without the story that goes with it. Its background is the story of a young and handsome man, who wanted to marry a beautiful woman, but was unfortunately handicapped. Therefore he asked a friend for help. By

chance, at the same time a young, eligible lady contacted the latter, who had an ugly nose as her only flaw, but still wanted a handsome husband. The marriage broker set the two up by telling the man to ride a horse past the young woman's house and the woman to wait in front of her house smelling a flower. There was a happy ending to the story[45]. It becomes obvious that the meaning of the proverb cannot be understood without knowing the story.

In this situation you can imagine that the 36 stratagems on their own are anything but clear. However, it should be noted that versatile ancient Chinese literature is available so that interpretations can be made. However, all of this has been published in recent times and are interpretations of more recent authors, so that the actual thoughts of the historical authors are de facto unknown. Nevertheless, they demonstrate the first successful systematic approach. The first known printed version dates from 1600 and was rediscovered in a shop in 1941. The stratagems themselves are said to have been written down by a deceitful general named Tan Daoji of the Song Dynasty, although this is not certain. They are more likely to be wisdoms of war, matured over the centuries, which were only systematised 500 years ago[46].

These wisdoms of war are philosophically cultivated and are largely not restricted to a war context.[47] According to our Western understanding, among other things, stratagem means ploy [48]. Thus the strategems represent a catalogue of ploys. According to Chinese understanding, as was also the case in the Western past [49], the expression also means wisdom [50] and thus the person, who applies the ploys or merely detects them, is admired. Finally, they are written for everyone, because their application is possible in almost all everyday situations as well as in business life, and they help to create a more successful life. However, the catalogue of 36 stratagems is not complete, the fact that there is a