



## CHAPTER 8

# Nine<sup>1</sup> Varieties<sup>2</sup>

*This chapter addresses the question of responding deftly to contingencies and advises awareness of both the advantages and the disadvantages of any action that might be contemplated. The principle of preparedness is proposed as the surest way to avoid disaster.*

Master Sun said,

The method of waging war is ordinarily that the general receives a mandate from the ruler, then assembles the army and brings together the masses. He does not encamp on unfavorable terrain; he joins with allies at terrain having a crossroads; he does not linger on forsaken terrain; he devises plans to extricate his forces from surrounded terrain; if he finds himself on desperate terrain he does battle.

There are paths that he does not take; there are armies that he does not strike; there are cities that he does not attack; there are terrains that he does not contest; there are ruler's orders that he does not accept.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore,

the general who is versed in the advantages<sup>4</sup> of the nine varieties of terrain<sup>5</sup> knows how to wage war; the general who is not versed in the advantages of the nine varieties, although he may know the types of terrain, cannot gain the advantages of the terrain. If one prosecutes war without knowing the techniques of the nine varieties, although one may know the five advantages,<sup>6</sup> one will not be able to gain the use of one's men.

For this reason,

in his considerations, he who is wise must pay attention both to advantage and to disadvantage. By paying attention to advantage, his affairs will proceed with assurance; by paying attention to disadvantage, his troubles will be resolved.

For this reason,

that which causes the feudal lords to submit is disadvantage; that which causes the feudal lords to serve is encumbrance; that which causes the feudal lords to give allegiance is advantage.

Therefore,

the method of waging war is not to rely upon the enemy's not coming, but to rely upon my waiting in readiness for him; it is not to rely upon the enemy's not attacking, but to rely upon making myself invulnerable to attack.

Therefore,

there are five fatal flaws in a general: recklessness, for he may be killed by the enemy; timidity, for he may be captured by the enemy; irascibility, for he may be provoked by the enemy; incorruptibility, for he may be insulted by the enemy; solicitousness, for he may be made anxious by the enemy. In all of these respects, if a general overdoes them, it will be disastrous for waging war. The overthrow of an enemy and the killing of a general are the inevitable consequences of these five fatal flaws. They cannot be left unexamined.<sup>7</sup>