



A “Total War”? Rethinking Military Ideology in the *Book of Lord Shang*

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Abstract

The *Book of Lord Shang*, commonly identified as a major work of the so-called Legalist school, is also an important, albeit much neglected treatise in the history of Chinese military thought. Beyond specific recommendations concerning both defensive and offensive warfare, the book presents a coherent view that the state should restructure its socioeconomic and cultural policies in order to turn every man into a valiant soldier. The book epitomizes the ideology of “total war” in which the differences between civilian and military affairs are blurred. The society is profoundly militarized and the army, in turn, is profoundly bureaucratized.

This article explores military thought in the *Book of Lord Shang* and focuses on its views of mobilization, indoctrination of soldiers, military discipline, rules of military engagement, and military command. I further deal with the question of why the book’s military ideology has been all but neglected after the end of the Han dynasty.

Keywords

Book of Lord Shang – mass armies – military thought – Warring States

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The *Book of Lord Shang* (*Shangjunshu* 商君書, 4th-3rd c. BCE) is rarely identified as an important source for early Chinese military thought. Although its views of military affairs are sometimes discussed in studies of this ancient text or in surveys of early Chinese military thought, the discussion is rarely systematic, and in Western studies these views are ignored altogether.¹ At first glance this neglect seems odd. The issue of the state's military prowess dominates the *Book of Lord Shang*. Many chapters focus on military affairs either exclusively (Chapters 10-12) or overwhelmingly (19 and parts of 15), and many other chapters discuss military issues as well. In fact, terms relating to warfare such as *zhan* 戰 ("war," "warfare," "battle") and *bing* 兵 ("military," "army," "soldiers," "weapons") are among the most ubiquitous in the text.² Not incidentally, bibliographers in the Han Dynasty (漢, 206 BCE-220 CE) classified the *Book of Lord Shang* under both "Masters Literature" (*Zi* 子) and "Military Texts."³

- 1 For coverage of the military ideas in the *Book of Lord Shang* in general studies of this book, see, e.g., Tong 2013, 293-300 and Ouyang 2009, 34-57 (or, earlier, Yoshinami 1992, 255-72). For a discussion of these military ideas in general surveys of early Chinese military thought, see Fang 1992, 317-33 and Huang 2010, 222-26. For focused studies, see Hu 1980, Yang Hua 1999, and Yang Ling 2005, 34-35. Western scholars seem to ignore military thought in the *Book of Lord Shang* altogether, as is evident from the introductions to the text's translation into Western languages: Duyvendak 1963 (1928), Perelomov 1993, Lévi 2005.
- 2 The words *zhan* and *bing* are mentioned in the *Book of Lord Shang* 134 and 113 times respectively (Miao and Wu 1998). This frequency is similar to the appearance of terms such as *ren* 仁 (benevolence) and *junzi* 君子 (superior man) in a slightly shorter *Lunyu* 論語 (*Analects*), in which these terms occur 109 and 107 times respectively.
- 3 The bibliographical "Yiwen zhi" 藝文志 chapter of the *History of the Former Han Dynasty* (*Hanshu* 漢書) records the 29-chapter *Shangjun* 商君 (*Lord of Shang*) text in the Masters section under the "Legalist" (*fa jia* 法家) sub-section, and a 27-chapter *Gongsun Yang* 公孫鞅 (the original name of Shang Yang) in the Military (*bing shu* 兵書) section under the prestigious "Strategists" (*quanmou jia* 權謀家) sub-section (*Hanshu* 30: 1735 and 1757). Wang Shirun 王時潤 (1879-ca. 1937; cited in Zhang 2012, 331) explains the double recordings as Liu Xiang's 劉向 (79-8 BCE) lapse: while Liu Xiang was in charge of collating and recording the Masters' texts, the military texts were collated independently by Ren Hong 任宏 (fl. 30-10 BCE). The final catalogue *Bielu* 別錄 and its subsequent abridgment *Qilue* 七略, prepared by Liu Xiang's son Liu Xin 劉歆 (46 BCE-23 CE), contained quite a few double recordings of the texts collated by both scholars. Most of these double recordings were erased by the historian Ban Gu 班固 (32-92 CE), who incorporated *Qilue* in the bibliographical treatise of his *Hanshu*; among the books eliminated by Ban Gu from the military section, one finds texts related to *Guanzi* 管子, *Xunzi* 荀子 (named *Sun Qingzi* 孫卿子), *He Guanzi* 鶡冠子 and the like, all of which are listed separately in the "Masters" section. See Ban Gu's gloss in *Hanshu* 30: 1757. Why the double recording of Shang Yang's book has survived is not clear, but the similarity in the number of chapters suggests that both records refer to different versions of the same text and not to two different works.

There are other reasons to pay attention to the military content of the *Book of Lord Shang*. To recall, the book's putative author, Shang Yang 商鞅 (d. 338 BCE), led the Qin 秦 armies in a series of magnificent victories, especially against his former employer, the state of Wei 魏. His military achievements were well recognized by immediate posterity: in the Han Dynasty his name was mentioned along with the great military *genii* Sun Wu 孫武 (fl. ca. 500 BCE), Wu Qi 吳起 (d. 381 BCE), and Sun Bin 孫臏 (fl. ca. 350 BCE).⁴ All of these should have sufficed to place the *Book of Lord Shang* among the indispensable texts for scholars of early Chinese military thought, but this did not happen.

There are many possible explanations for scholars' reluctance to engage with the military ideas of Shang Yang and his followers who contributed to the *Book of Lord Shang*. On the most immediate level, the exclusion of Shang Yang from the list of revered military thinkers after the Han dynasty might have caused the subsequent neglect of his work by traditional and modern analysts of early Chinese military thought. To this we should add such problems as the text's bad state of preservation, e.g., its numerous cases of textual corruption and occasional lacunae, as well as the paucity of good commentaries, all of which hinder in-depth study of its content in general. This problem is most acute with regard to the three "pure military" chapters of the text (10-12), which were significantly damaged in the lengthy process of their transmission and are exceptionally challenging to modern commentators.⁵ All these, coupled with lackluster interest in the *Book of Lord Shang* in general (especially among Western scholars)⁶ help explain why its military ideas have long been neglected.

Whatever the reasons for this neglect, it is highly regrettable. The *Book of Lord Shang* is one of the very few pre-imperial texts the bulk of which was produced in the state of Qin, the ultimate unifier of the Chinese world. Its authors were probably among the group of reformers who turned the Qin

4 For Shang Yang's military exploits see *Shiji* 5: 203-4 and the *Bamboo Annals* (*Zhushu jinian* 竹書紀年) entry cited in the *Suoyin* gloss on the *Shiji* 68: 2233 n. 2. For ranking Shang Yang among the top strategists, see *Hanshu* 23: 1085.

5 The three "pure military" chapters (10-12) of the *Book of Lord Shang* are the shortest in the book, counting for between 250 and 500 characters each. Most other chapters are from 1200 to 1900 characters in length, with shorter ones counting 800 to 1000 characters. Among other military-related chapters, Chapter 19, "Within the borders" ("Jing nei" 境內), is in the worst state of preservation, which makes deciphering its content an arduous task. This bad state of preservation is reminiscent of a similar fate of the military chapters in the *Mozi* 墨子 (for which see Yates 1979).

6 For the lackluster interest of Western scholars in *Book of Lord Shang*, see Pines 2017, 251 nn. 3-4.

into an awesome superpower, and the text contains important evidence for the momentous transformation of the Chinese military from elite aristocratic armies into peasant-based mass armies. It is in light of these three reasons that I attempt here to present a systematic discussion of military thought in the *Book of Lord Shang*.

Limitations of space prevent me from systematically addressing here the textual history of the *Book of Lord Shang* and the dating of its individual chapters. Suffice it to summarize here a few points relevant to the subsequent discussion.⁷ First, the *Book of Lord Shang* is not a haphazard collection of unrelated essays, akin to e.g., *Guanzi* 管子; its chapters share common terminology and literary style and, most importantly, common fundamental ideas. This suggests that the chapters were produced by a relatively coherent group of like-minded authors.⁸ Second, it is clear that the chapters were not produced by a single author; rather, the formation of the text spanned more than a century starting from the early years of Shang Yang's reforms in Qin (ca. 359 BCE) and ending around the time of Qin unification in 221 BCE. Third, insofar as many chapters discuss ways of unifying All-under-Heaven while not a single one (with the possible exception of Chapter 26, "Fixing divisions" ["Ding fen" 定分]) evinces any knowledge of the eventual imperial unification of 221 BCE, it is plausible that most or all the chapters were composed before unification. Fourth, and most relevant to our discussion, insofar as no military chapter except for Chapter 15, "Attracting the people" ("Lai min" 徠民) refers to cavalry, it is likely that they were produced before the third century BCE, when cavalry gained importance in the Warring States, particularly Qin.⁹ Finally, Chapter 15, which is relevant to the military thought of the *Book of Lord Shang*, was produced much later than the bulk of the text, i.e. ca. 250 BCE (see below for further details). As for other military chapters, I tentatively treat them as products of the fourth century BCE.

I begin my discussion by analyzing the role of war in the book's overall ideology and then explore the authors' views of mobilization, indoctrination of soldiers, and military discipline. I will then turn to proposed rules of military engagement and ideas about the nature of military command. In the next section I hope to demonstrate how the authors' idea of "total war," in which the

7 For detailed discussion see Pines 2017, 29-54 and Pines 2016.

8 See details in Zheng 1989; cf. Yoshinami 1992.

9 The introduction of cavalry into China proper is commonly associated with the reforms of King Wuling of Zhao 趙武靈王 (r. 325-299 BCE) in 307 BCE. The story of King Wuling's reforms may be spurious, but the use of cavalry in Chinese armies is indeed unattested before ca. 300 BCE. See more in Yates 2003, 36-57.

differences between civilian and military affairs were blurred, re-conceptualized warfare; that is, society was profoundly militarized and the army, in turn, was profoundly bureaucratized. My penultimate section will focus on Chapter 15 of the *Book of Lord Shang*, in which we can discern the seeds of the future cessation of universal conscription and the turn toward professional armies in the imperial era. I will end my discussion with an exploration of the reasons for the subsequent neglect of military thought in the *Book of Lord Shang*. I argue that this neglect was not just a by-product of labeling the book as a “philosophical” rather than “military” text, but that it also reflected a more fundamental shift away from universal conscription-based armies, a turn that made much of the ideology of war in the *Book of Lord Shang* irrelevant to imperial strategists and military thinkers.

A War-Monger’s Text?

The *Book of Lord Shang* is a very peculiar text, in terms not only of its content but also of its argumentation, which I have elsewhere labeled “abusive rhetoric.”¹⁰ Some of the text’s chapters, including the earliest ones, make a series of radical claims that probably appalled most of the Warring States period audience as much as they appall many contemporary readers. Among these highly controversial statements, war-related ones occupy a pride of place. War is proclaimed not just a necessity—an idea that was shared by the majority of early Chinese thinkers—but also a must, the singularly important and desirable occupation of the polity, its *raison d’être*. This “war-monger” attitude distinguishes the *Book of Lord Shang* from any major contemporaneous text.

The book’s argumentation in favor of war can be divided into two major lines. First and least controversial is the emphasis on the inevitability of war. In Chapter 7 (“Opening the blocked,” “Kai sai” 開塞, one of the most philosophically sophisticated treatises in the text) the authors explain that reliance on power in domestic and foreign affairs emerged due to the increasing complexity of human society.¹¹ Peaceful and moral methods of rule might have been good in the past but are not implementable in the present. The authors summarize:

10 See Pines 2012.

11 For the philosophy of history in this chapter, see Pines 2013, 31-35.

武王逆取而貴順，爭天下而上讓；其取之以力，持之以義。今世強國事兼并，弱國務力守；上不及虞夏之時，而下不修湯武。湯武塞，故萬乘莫不戰，千乘莫不守。此道之塞久矣，而世主莫之能開也，故三代不四。

King Wu seized [power] by rebellion but valued compliance; he fought for All-under-Heaven but elevated yielding; he seized [the world] by force but held it by righteousness.¹² Nowadays, strong states engage in conquests and annexations while the weak are committed to forceful defense. Above they do not reach the times of Yu [Shun] and Xia, and below they do not embrace [the ways of Kings] Tang and Wu.¹³ [The ways of] Tang and Wu are blocked; hence every state of ten thousand chariots is engaged in war and every state of one thousand chariots is engaged in defense. These ways have been blocked for a long time, but contemporary rulers have been unable to discard them; hence, the Three Dynasties lack a fourth one. (7.3)¹⁴

The paragons of the past were able to apply both martial and civilian means of rule or even uniformly focus on the latter, but nowadays this is no longer possible. War is ubiquitous, and commitment to warfare should be of primary importance for an ambitious ruler who plans to establish the “fourth” dynasty, namely unifying “All-under-Heaven” (in other words, the whole world) under his aegis. This unification was a common desideratum of competing thinkers.¹⁵ Yet Shang Yang distinguished himself from others by stating most blatantly that unification is attainable exclusively through military means:

12 Recall that King Wu of Zhou 周武王 (r. ca. 1046-1042 BCE) led the rebellious forces that overthrew the Shang 商 dynasty (ca. 1600-1046 BCE) and that after the overthrow was complete, he became the legitimate ruler of All-under-Heaven.

13 Xia 夏 is a semi-legendary dynasty that allegedly succeeded the rule of the sage Thearch Shun 舜, whose surname was Yu 虞 (not to be confused with the Yu the Great 大禹, the legendary founder of the Xia). Kings Tang 湯 and Wu 武 were the founders of the Shang and Zhou (1046-256 BCE) dynasties respectively. “Above” refers to high antiquity, “below” to events of the more recent past.

14 *Shangjunshu* (hereafter SJS), “Kai sai” II.7: 54-56. The number in brackets after each translation refers to the chapter and section in Pines 2017. References are provided to the most available (even if not the most accurate) edition by Jiang Lihong of the *Book of Lord Shang* (Jiang 1996, abbreviated as SJS). Two other editions (Gao Heng 1974 and the indispensable Zhang Jue 2012) have been consulted throughout, and the suggestions of earlier commentators are referred to through one of those editions.

15 See Pines 2000.

名尊地廣以至於王者，何故？{戰勝者也。}¹⁶名卑地削以至於亡者，何故？戰罷（敗）¹⁷者也。不勝而王，不敗而亡者，自古及今，未嘗有也。

When the name is honored and territories are extensive to the point that you become the [True] Monarch, why is that? {It is because of victory in war.} When the name is disdained and the territory is dismembered to the point of perishing, why is that? It is because of defeat in war. From ancient times until today it has never happened that one became Monarch without victories or perished without defeats. (18.3)¹⁸

War is the only means of becoming the True Monarch, the ultimate goal of Shang Yang's political recommendations. The concept of the True Monarch evolved in the mid Warring States period as an ideal of the future unifier of All-under-Heaven. In distinction from the current self-proclaimed kings (*wang* 王) of regional states and from the shadowy figure of the Zhou king, the True Monarch is defined by the singularity of his rule: he should be the exclusive sovereign of the entire subcelestial realm. The concept of the True Monarch is distinguished from that of a regular "king" by the usage of the term *wang* as a verb ("to act as [or become] a [true] monarch"), the topicalization *wang zhe* 王者, the notion of the Monarch's Way (*wang dao* 王道), and the like; in the *Book of Lord Shang* the verbal usage of the term *wang* prevails. In Confucian discourse (most notably in such texts as *Mengzi* 孟子 and *Xunzi* 荀子), the True Monarch was commonly viewed as a superbly moral individual; it is his moral and intellectual superiority and adherence to righteous warfare that should allow him to unify the divided realm and bring peace to his subjects. This idea is echoed even in certain military texts such as *The Monarch's Army* (*Wang bing* 王兵) manuscript from the Han tomb in Yinqueshan, Linyi County 臨沂銀雀山 (Shandong).¹⁹ In contrast to this moralizing discourse, the *Book of Lord*

16 The addition in figure brackets follows Yu Yue's 俞樾 (1821-1907) suggestion (Zhang 2012, 212). Here and elsewhere figure brackets stand for the text that is missing from current recensions but is restored on the basis of other scholars' suggestions.

17 Emending *ba* 罷 to *bai* 敗, following Jiang 1996, 108.

18 SJS, "Hua ce" IV.18: 108.

19 See *Yinqueshan* 1985, 135-37, where the essence of the usage of the army is "punishing the violent and attacking those who lack the Way" (誅暴亂，伐無道; slip 852, p. 135). For a classical exposition of the view that the morally driven soldiers of the True Monarch are irresistible, see the "Yi bing" 議兵 ("A debate on military affairs") chapter of the *Xunzi*.

Shang argues that it is resoluteness and full commitment to war that will turn a ruler into the True Monarch.²⁰

Aside from facilitating the ultimate goal of unification, warfare is considered in the *Book of Lord Shang* as the necessary means for protecting the ruler and the state. In the violent competition with rival Warring States, warfare is the only means of survival. In some chapters warfare figures as the singularly important factor behind the state's success and failure, whereas elsewhere it is paired with agriculture, with which it is said to form an organic whole, the One (*yi* 壹). Both are mutually connected exploits of the state, and both are crucial for its survival: "The means by which the state prospers are agriculture and warfare" 國之所以興者，農戰也 (3.1).²¹ These statements probably irritated thinkers who emphasized the ruler's morality and employment of worthy advisors as more fundamental routes to prosperity, but they were not too controversial; after all, even a most idealist thinker could not ignore the fact that in the age of war by all against all, a powerful army and adequate supplies were necessary for the state's success. Yet Shang Yang (or other contributors to "his" book) goes a step further in extolling warfare. In Chapter 4, "Eliminating the strong" ("Qu qiang" 去強), one of the book's ideological centerpieces,²² the thinker explains:

國強而不戰，毒輸於內，禮樂蝨官生，必削；國遂戰，毒輸於敵，國無禮樂蝨官，必強。

When a powerful state is not engaged in warfare, poison infiltrates its intestines: rites, music, and parasitic affairs are born; [the state] will surely be dismembered. When the state wages war, poison infiltrates the enemy. The state lacks rites, music, and parasitic affairs: it will surely be strong. (4.2)²³

20 Note that the trope of becoming a True Monarch is presented in the early chapters of the *Book of Lord Shang* but is absent from the chapters composed after 325 BCE, when Lord (later King) Huiwen of Qin 秦惠文王 (r. 337-311 BCE) adopted the royal title. Perhaps after that date it was no longer politically advisable to emphasize the ruler's need to become a True Monarch, which would imply that his current title was fraudulent (Pines 2012, 84).

21 SJS, "Nong zhan" 農戰 1.3: 20.

22 For the special position of this chapter, see Pines 2012, 84-85.

23 SJS, "Qu qiang" 1.4: 29.

This statement is echoed in parallel in Chapter 13, "Making orders strict" ("Jin ling" 靳令):

國貧而務戰，毒生於敵，無六蝨，必強。國富而不戰，偷生於內，有六蝨，必弱。

When a poor state engages in war, poison infiltrates its enemy; it has no six parasites and will surely be strong. When a rich state makes no war, carelessness is born in its intestines; it has the six parasites and will surely be weakened. (13.2)²⁴

Both statements represent the second, and highly controversial line of pro-war argumentation in the *Book of Lord Shang*. Rather than highlighting war's role in ensuring the country's security, they emphasize its cultural impact. Warfare is presented as the best remedy against "poison" and the "six parasites," which are identified in both chapters as dimensions of traditional culture (e.g. [*Canons of*] *Poems and Documents*, rites, and music) and moral values (e.g. benevolence and uprightness, goodness and self-cultivation, filiality and fraternal duties).²⁵ This evocation of war as a means of repressing traditional values is highly provocative, and it is doubtful that it could endear warfare to the conservative segments of the educated elite. Given the fact that in Chapter 4 the statement cited above is preceded by another even more notorious recommendation for the army to perform whatever the enemy "dares not" or "is ashamed" of (see below), the reader's sense of alienation from the text may further increase.

One could easily use the passages discussed above to label Shang Yang as a notorious war-monger, and indeed many traditional and modern scholars have done so. Yet the situation is far more complex. As I have shown elsewhere, the abusive pronouncements scattered in Chapter 4 of the *Book of Lord Shang* and in some of the related chapters (e.g., Chapter 13) are moderated in other parts of the book and cannot be equated with the text's overall message.²⁶ Having appalled their audience, the authors turn elsewhere to much more moderate argumentation, most notably through their repeated reminder that

24 SJS, "Jin ling" III.13: 78.

25 There are different accounts of the "six parasites" (*liu shi* 六蝨) in the *Book of Lord Shang*. The most exhaustive list is in 13.4 (SJS, "Jin ling" III.13: 80). For an alternative version that applies the term "parasites" not to traditional moral and cultural values but rather to laxity and excesses, see 4.2 and the internal exegesis in 20.8 (SJS, "Qu qiang" II.4: 28 and "Ruo min" 弱民 v.20: 124-25).

26 See Pines 2012, 96-102.

the ultimate goal of war is, after all, peace—peace that would ensue after the extermination of the enemies and the unification of the subcelestial realm. Chapter 18, “Charting the policies” (“Hua ce” 畫策), summarizes this as follows:

故以戰去戰，雖戰可也；以殺去殺，雖殺可也；以刑去刑，雖重刑可也。

Therefore, in order to eradicate war with war, even waging war is permissible; to eradicate murder with murder, even murder is permissible; to eradicate punishments with punishments, even punishing heavily is permissible. (18.1)²⁷

Neither war nor harsh punishments are the ultimate goals of the state. Rather, these are the necessary means of attaining an altogether moral goal of a unified and well-ordered realm in which coercion is no longer needed, “utmost virtue is restored” 至德復立 (7.5), and the way of “benevolence and righteousness” is applied “in All under Heaven” 述仁義於天下 (13.6).²⁸ Taken from this perspective, the difference between the *Book of Lord Shang* and most other contemporaneous texts is not the ultimate ideal of a society free of violence, but rather the former’s candor as to the means needed to attain this blessed end.

Making Soldiers Fight: The Problem of the People’s Army

The *Book of Lord Shang* was composed during one of the most consequential transformations in Chinese military history, when aristocratic chariot-based armies were replaced with mass infantry armies based on peasant conscripts; in these new armies chariots (and later cavalry) played an auxiliary role.²⁹ Among the major problems of the new armies was training and disciplining the conscripts and making them fight valiantly, and this is one of the central topics in the *Book of Lord Shang*. The authors’ solution to the conscripts’ problem is comprehensive: only the profound restructuring of social, economic, administrative, and cultural policies would enable the ruler to uniformly direct

27 SJS, “Hua ce” IV.18: 107.

28 SJS, “Kai sai” II.7: 57 and “Jin ling” III.13: 82.

29 See Lewis 1990, 54–67 and Yang Kuan 1998, 303–17. The size of the armies and their composition (i.e. the preponderance of infantry) is reflected in a series of speeches in the *Stratagems of the Warring States* (*Zhanguo ce* 戰國策), which survey the military forces of major Warring States-period states. For a convenient summary, see Yang Kuan 1998, 310.

the population at the One, viz. the mutually reinforcing pursuits of agriculture and warfare. Practically, this meant the employment of a series of positive and negative incentives (rewards and punishments) that would cause the people to engage in these two crucial (even if normally not very attractive) occupations. The authors clarify:

夫治國者能盡地力而致民死者，名與利交至。民之性，饑而求食，勞而求佚，苦則索樂，辱則求榮，此民之情也。……故曰名利之所湊，則民道之。

The ability of the well-governed state to fully utilize its land resources and to cause the people to die [for its sake] is due to the name (i.e., repute) and benefit that it brings [to the people]. The nature of the people is to seek food when they are hungry, to seek respite when they are belabored, to seek joy when they are embittered, and to seek glory when they are humiliated: this is the people's disposition. . . . Hence it is said: wherever name and benefit meet, the people will go in this direction. (6.4)³⁰

夫農，民之所苦；而戰，民之所危也。犯其所苦，行其所危者，計也。故民生則計利，死則慮名。名利之所出，不可不審也。利出於地，則民盡力；名出於戰，則民致死。

Farming is what the people consider bitter; war is what the people consider dangerous. Yet they brave what they consider bitter and perform what they consider dangerous: this is because of calculations [of name and benefit]. Thus, in [ordinary] life, the people calculate benefits; [facing] death they think of name (repute). One cannot but investigate whence name and benefit come. When benefits come from land, the people fully utilize their strength; when name comes from war, the people are ready to die. (6.5)³¹

The authors state their views with utmost clarity. Two major factors influencing human behavior are the quest for riches and name (*ming* 名, referring here and throughout the text both to repute and to social status). If the state creates a situation in which military exploits would be the major (or, in some chapters, the only) avenue to status enhancement, the people will readily sacrifice themselves. Therefore, “the way of using soldiers is to commit oneself to unifying rewards” 用兵之道，務在一賞 (6.3), and “Bestowing rewards and having the

30 SJS, “Suan di” 11.6: 45.

31 SJS, “Suan di” 11.6: 46.

army strong' refers to ranks and emoluments. Ranks and emoluments are the essence of the army" 行賞而兵強者，爵祿之謂也；爵祿者，兵之實也 (9.1).³² Elsewhere, the authors explain their point in full:

聖人之為國也：壹賞，壹刑，壹教。壹賞則兵無敵。．．．．．所謂壹賞者，利祿官爵，搏出於兵，無有異施也。夫固知愚，貴賤，勇怯，賢不肖，皆盡其胸臆之知，竭其股肱之力，出死而為上用也。天下豪傑賢良從之如流水。是故兵無敵，而令行於天下。

When the sage rules the state, he unifies rewards, unifies punishments, and unifies teaching. When rewards are unified, the army has no rivals. (17.1) . . . What is called "unifying rewards" means that benefits, emoluments, official position, and rank uniformly derive from military [attainments], and that there are no other ways to dispense them. Therefore, the knowledgeable and the ignorant, the noble and the base, the courageous and cowards, the worthy and unworthy all fully utilize their innermost wisdom and fully exhaust the power of their limbs, going forth to die in the service of their superiors. The bravos and the worthies from All-under-Heaven will follow [the ruler] just as water flows downward. Hence, his troops will have no rivals and his orders will be implemented throughout All-under-Heaven (17.2).³³

This statement inevitably simplifies military affairs and reduces them to the single problem of the soldiers' motivation to fight. This problem is further reduced to the policy of rewarding meritorious soldiers and officers with enhancement of their socioeconomic status. This idea stands behind the creation of the system of ranks of merit, which was instituted by Shang Yang in the state of Qin and which is discussed in Chapter 19 of the *Book of Lord Shang* (see below). That this system created strong motivation for Qin soldiers to fight is undeniable, but it was not the only means employed by the state under Shang Yang's aegis in order to facilitate military exploits. No less important was the system of negative incentives, for example the resolute and inevitable punishment of battlefield deserters. The *Book of Lord Shang* clarifies:

民勇者，戰勝；民不勇者，戰敗。能壹民於戰者，民勇；不能壹民於戰者，民不勇。．．．．．入其國，觀其治，民用者強。奚以知民之見用者也？民之見戰也，如餓狼之見肉，則民用矣。凡戰者，民之所惡也；能使民樂戰者，

32 SJS, "Suan di" II.6: 44; SJS, "Cuo fa" III.9: 63.

33 SJS, "Shang xing" 賞刑 IV.17: 96-97.

王。強國之民，父遺其子，兄遺其弟，妻遺其夫，皆曰：「不得，無返。」又曰：「失法離令，若死我死。鄉治之，行間無所逃，遷徙無所入。」行間之治，連{之}³⁴以五，辨之以章，束之以令，拙無所處，罷(敗)³⁵無所生。是以三軍之眾，從令如流，死而不旋踵。

When the people are brave, war ends in victory; when the people are not brave, war ends in defeat. When one is able to unify the people at war, they are brave; when he is unable to unify the people at war, they are not brave. . . . When you enter a state and observe its governance, you know that he whose people are usable is powerful. How can I know that the people are usable? When the people look at war as a hungry wolf looks at meat, the people are usable.

As for war, it is something the people hate. He who is able to make the people delight in war is the [True] Monarch. Among the people of a powerful state, fathers send off their sons, elder brothers send off their younger brothers, wives send off their husbands, and all say: "Do not come back without achievements!" They also say, "If you violate the [military] law and disobey orders, you will die and I shall die. Under the canton's control,³⁶ there is no place to flee from the army ranks, and migrants³⁷ can find no refuge."

To order the army ranks, link them into five-men squads, distinguish them with badges, and bind them with orders. Then there will be no place to flee³⁸ and defeat will never ensue. Thus, the multitudes of the three armies follow the orders as [water] flows [downwards], and even facing death they will not turn back. (18.3)³⁹

The discussion here becomes much more sophisticated. Rewards—even if handsome—are insufficient to create a powerful army. Equally necessary are strict military discipline and a rule of terror against deserters and others who disobey orders. The inevitability of punishment—attained in part thanks to complete registration of the population that makes fleeing government control

34 Adding *zhi* 之 following Qian Xizuo 錢熙祚 (fl. 1839; Zhang 2012, 213 n. 11).

35 Reading *ba* 罷 as *bai* 敗 following Gao 1974, 139.

36 A canton (*xiang* 鄉) was a sub-county unit. For its administration, see Bu 2006.

37 *Qianxi* 遷徙 here clearly refers to migrants who would never find refuge elsewhere because they were registered under the canton's jurisdiction. This means that escaping from the army's ranks was not a viable option for a soldier eager to avoid punishment.

38 Following Gao 1974, 139 n. 25, I read *zhuo* 拙 as *jue* 蹇 (to flee).

39 SJS, "Hua ce" IV.18: 108.

extremely difficult—is the guarantee of compliance. Then the combination of positive and negative incentives brings about profound internalization of military values or, in other words, the militarization of culture. Soldiers will fight to the death not out of abstract commitment to ruler and state. They may even remain hateful of war, but they will know that war is their only chance not just to survive but to benefit.

This full acceptance of war by the population is the major desideratum of the authors. While they call this indoctrination by a “Confucian” term, *jiao* 教 (“teaching” or “instruction”),⁴⁰ they are not concerned with creating a militaristic ideology. There is neither adoration of martial spirit akin, e.g., to the Roman “*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*” (“It is sweet and glorious to die for the Motherland”) nor dehumanization of the enemy nor identification of martiality with masculinity. Instead of brainwashing the people to sacrifice themselves for the state out of some abstract commitment, the authors believe that the people should be directed to do so due to their intrinsic and immutable selfishness. Suffice it to clarify substantial gains and losses from engagement in war or evading it: then the people will comply with the state’s demands out of sheer self-interest. Chapter 17, “Rewards and punishments” (“*Shang xing*” 賞刑), explains what “unification of teaching” means: “the gates of riches and nobility are exclusively in the field of war” 然富貴之門，要在戰而已矣 (17.4). This is enough to create the needed mental effect:

是父兄、昆弟、知識、婚姻、合同者，皆曰：「務之所加，存戰而已矣。」夫故當壯者務於戰，老弱者務於守；死者不悔，生者務勸。此臣之所謂壹教也。民之欲富貴也，共闔棺而後止。而富貴之門，必出於兵。是故民間戰而相賀也；起居飲食所歌謠者，戰也。

Therefore, fathers and elder brothers, minor brothers, acquaintances, relatives by marriage, and colleagues all say, “What we should be devoted to is only war and that is all.” Hence, the able-bodied are devoted to war, the elderly and infirm are devoted to defense, the dead have nothing to regret, and the living are ever more devoted and encouraged. This is what I, your minister, call “unification of teaching.”

The people’s desire for riches and nobility stops only when their coffin is sealed. [Entering] the gates of riches and nobility must be through military [service]. Therefore, when they hear about war, the people

40 *Jiao* is, of course, a term with multi-faceted usage not limited to Confucian discourse, but in the context of the *Book of Lord Shang* it is frequently used in a quasi-Confucian style to describe the dissemination of proper values to the populace.

congratulate each other; whenever they move or rest, drink or eat, they sing and chant only about war. (17.4)⁴¹

The above quotations allow us to understand better the juxtaposition of war with traditional culture and moral values, as discussed in the previous section. Shang Yang and his followers view war as a total experience, the single most powerful factor in society. When every peasant becomes a soldier and distinctions between army and society are blurred, war becomes the foundation of sociopolitical organization and an important cultural phenomenon. Anything that hinders the state's total commitment to war, such as the traditional practices of promoting the learned people who have no military merits or disseminating ideologies that are incompatible with assertive military policies, should be discarded. War becomes everything; it is the basis of the entire social order.

Going to War: The Military Chapters

The three military chapters (10-12) of the *Book of Lord Shang* present in a relatively systematic way (given their badly damaged condition) the authors' major ideas about the interrelation between the military and the political spheres and about waging war. Scholars frequently treat the three chapters as being authored by the same person or at the same time, but this may not be the case. The first two chapters bear strong resemblance to the rest of the *Book of Lord Shang* in terms of their ideas and their vocabulary, and both clearly analyze war through the prism of the overall political and economical prowess of the state. Chapter 12, "Military defense" ("Bing shou" 兵守), is different. Evidently composed outside the state of Qin, it deals—uncharacteristically for the *Book of Lord Shang*—exclusively with defensive warfare. If, as many scholars speculate, this chapter were created by Shang Yang during an early stage of his career when he was serving in the state of Wei, it may be one of the earlier military treatises of the Warring States period (see more below).⁴² Yet even if it does not belong to Shang Yang's milieu, this chapter is indicative of the increased militarization of society during the Warring States period and, as such, sheds light on one of the major phenomena that shaped the military thought of the *Book of Lord Shang*.

41 SJS, "Shang xing" IV.17: 105.

42 For different opinions, see Zheng 1989, 75-82; Yoshinami 1992, 256-58; and Tong 2013, 151-54.

Chapters 10-11 both start with the assertion that the outcome of war is not decided on the battlefield alone. For instance, Chapter 11, “Establishing the roots” (“Li ben” 立本), explains:

凡用兵，勝有三等：若兵未起而錯法，錯法而俗成，{俗成}⁴³而用具。此三者必行於境內，而後兵可出也。

In general, when one employs an army, there are three stages to victory. If the army has still not been raised, laws should be enforced; when laws are enforced, they become customs; [when they become customs], equipment is ready.⁴⁴ These three should be implemented within the borders, and only then can the army be dispatched on a mission. (11.1)⁴⁵

Military undertakings require first adjusting sociopolitical regulations (“laws”) to direct the population to warfare, then attaining full internalization of the military ethos (“accomplishing customs,” as specified in the previous section), and then achieving the proper economic foundation for waging war. The chapter specifies:

治行則貨積，貨積則賞能重矣。賞壹則爵尊，爵尊則賞能利矣。．．．．．是以強者必治，治者必強；富者必治，治者必富；強者必富，富者必強。故曰治強之道三，論其本也。

When orderly rule is implemented, resources are accumulated; when resources are accumulated, rewards can be bountiful. When rewards are unified, ranks are respected; when ranks are respected, rewards can bring benefit. . . . Hence, the strong must be ruled well, and the well-ruled will surely be strong; the rich must be ruled well, and the well-ruled will surely be rich; the strong must be rich, and the rich will surely be strong.

43 Duplicating 俗成 following Sun Yirang's 孫怡讓 (1848-1908) suggestion (Zhang 2012, 142).

44 The relation between laws and the people's customs is a recurrent topic in the *Book of Lord Shang*. In establishing laws the ruler is supposed to take the people's customs into account (6.9, 8.3), but laws are also supposed to alter these customs (8.1): after laws are internalized they change the people's mood, especially their attitude toward war (11.2, 17.4, 18.3). Here the text possibly hints at new customs of commitment to war and agriculture (as in 8.1). Hence, when laws become customs the equipment (or more broadly, supplies) is ready.

45 SJS, “Li ben” III.11: 70-71.

Thus it is said: there is a threefold way of being strong and well-ruled; here I discuss its roots. (11.2)⁴⁶

The economic prowess of the state is needed not just for adequate provisions and equipment for the army but also for handsome rewards to encourage the people to fight. The economy, military success, and proper political management are intertwined and are inseparable; as the text clarifies repeatedly, without full coffers (or, more precisely, full granaries) one cannot wage war.

Chapter 10, "Methods of war" ("Zhan fa" 戰法) similarly starts with asserting the priority of "proper government" (*zheng* 政) as the key to victory. In this case this refers to directing the people to war rather than to private feuds so that "they have no selfish thoughts and are thinking only of their superiors" 無以私意，以上為意 (10.1).⁴⁷ Then the chapter moves on to concrete recommendations:

兵起而程敵：政不若者，勿與戰；食不若者，勿與久；敵眾勿為客，敵盡不如，擊之勿疑。故曰兵大律在謹。論敵察眾，則勝負可先知也。

When you raise an army, assess the enemy. If your government is not equal to his, do not fight him. If your provisions are not equal to his, do not engage him in a protracted [campaign]. When the enemy's forces are numerous, do not attack.⁴⁸ When he is exhausted and is not equal to you, strike him without hesitation. Hence it is said: Prudence is the greatest law of the military. Evaluate the enemy and investigate whose forces are more numerous—then it will be possible to predict victory and defeat. (10.3)⁴⁹

The discussion here moves from the general level of the state's war readiness to practical recommendations for military engagement. Many of its statements, like others scattered throughout the chapter, unmistakably resemble the *Sunzi* 孫子: The need to assess relative advantages and disadvantages of the enemy and of one's own side can be read as direct elucidation of the famous maxim "know the enemy and know the self, and you will not be imperiled in

46 SJS, "Li ben" III.11: 72.

47 SJS, "Zhan fa" III.10: 69.

48 Literally, do not become a "guest."

49 SJS, "Zhan fa" III.10: 68-69.

a hundred battles” 知彼知己，百戰不殆。⁵⁰ Also, flexibility on the battlefield and the need to adapt one’s tactic to the enemy’s situation are a commonplace in the *Sunzi*, and the parallels continue in the next section:

王者之兵，勝而不驕，敗而不怨。勝而不驕者，術明也；敗而不怨者，知所失也。

The soldiers of the True Monarch are neither boastful in victory nor resentful in defeat. To remain not boastful after victory is due to clarity of technique; to remain not resentful after defeat is due to understanding what was inadequate. (10.4)⁵¹

Being boastful or resentful or, more broadly, following one’s sentiments rather than careful calculations are identified in the *Sunzi* as one of the major mistakes of a military commander.⁵² In the *Book of Lord Shang*, in contrast, the focus is on the soldiers, whose morale appears to be the crucial element in the army’s success. As for the commander, his role in the outcome of the battle appears less essential than in the *Sunzi*, as the next section makes clear:

若兵敵強弱，⁵³將賢則勝，將不如則敗。若其政出廟算者，將賢亦勝，將不如亦勝。政久持勝術者，必強至王。若民服而聽上，則國富而兵勝，行是，必久王。

When the soldiers’ strengths and weaknesses are comparable, then if the commander is worthy, one will win; if the commander is inferior, one will lose. If the decisions are based on calculations made in the ancestral temple, then one will win under a worthy commander and also under an inferior commander. He whose government relies for a long time on victorious techniques will surely be strong enough to become the [True] Monarch. If the people are submissive and heed their superiors, then the

50 *Wu Sunzi*, “Mou gong” 謀攻 3: 48. For the trope of the military leader’s prescience, see Galvany 2015.

51 SJS, “Zhan fa” 111.10: 69.

52 See, e.g., *Sunzi*, “Huo gong” 火攻 (*Wu Sunzi* 12: 120).

53 The translation is based on the rearrangement proposed by Tao Hongqing 陶鴻慶 (1859-1918): 兵強弱敵 (Gao 1974, 94).

state is rich and the army victorious; he who implements this for long⁵⁴ will surely become the Monarch. (10.5)⁵⁵

The parallel with the *Sunzi*—namely the need to prepare the victory at the ancestral temple (i.e., through strategic planning)⁵⁶—is obvious, but the difference is also striking. In the *Sunzi*, the commander is the single most important component of the army. His qualities will determine the outcome of the battle, and he should be autonomous even from the ruler when on the march.⁵⁷ In the *Book of Lord Shang*, the commander is important only when the armies are matched in their strength, but if the campaign is carefully planned, any commander would attain victory. This dismissal of the commander's role is not incidental. For Shang Yang and the other contributors to the book that bears his name, power should forever rest in the ruler's hands; a commander is just another official, and his individual qualities are of secondary importance. Surely the idea of a commander's autonomy on the battlefield would not be tolerated in the *Book of Lord Shang*. This does not mean, of course, that the commander is an insignificant person; the chapter ends with a brief discussion of his impact on the campaign:

其過失：無敵，深入，備（背）⁵⁸險絕塞，民倦且饑渴，而復遇疾，此敗道也。故將使民者，乘良馬者，不可不齊也。

His [i.e. the commander's] mistakes: Facing no enemy he penetrates deeply, leaving behind narrow passes and fortifications that can cut off his retreat. His people are exhausted and suffer from hunger and thirst while the route of retreat is full of danger: this is the way of defeat. Hence, the commander should lead his people [as if] he mounts a good horse: he cannot but be balanced.⁵⁹ (10.6)⁶⁰

54 Following Sun Yirang's reading, with 行是，必久王 as 行是久，必王 (Zhang 2012, 159).

55 SJS, "Zhan fa" III.10: 69-70.

56 For the role of *miaosuan* 廟算, or calculations done in ancestral temples, see McNeal 2012, 117-22 and cf. Galvany 2015, 3-5.

57 See *Sunzi*, "Shi ji" 始計; "Mou gong" (*Wu Sunzi* 1: 30; 3: 48).

58 Following Sun Yirang, I read *xie* 偕 as miswritten for *bei* 背, which stands for *bei* 背 leaving behind (Zhang 2012, 140 n. 3).

59 Reading *qi* 齊 as *ji* 劑 (to be balanced), following Gao 1974, 95 n. 21.

60 SJS, "Zhan fa" III.10: 70.

Here the relative importance of the commander is reasserted, albeit in a negative way: his ineptitude may cause military disaster. The discussion of different terrains is much shorter and shallower than in the *Sunzi*, and the advantages of fighting in the “terrain of death” 死地 are not discussed.⁶¹ Whether or not the “Methods of war” chapter polemicizes with the *Sunzi* or some other unknown parallel military text cannot be determined with certainty, but the combination of fairly similar statements with clearly pronounced differences in emphases allows this speculation.

The last of the “military” chapters, Chapter 12 (“Military defense”), exposes a different strand of military thought than the two previous chapters. It starts with enumerating the difficulty of the state that has to combat enemies on the four frontiers:

四戰之國貴守戰；負海之國貴攻戰。四戰之國，好舉興兵以距四鄰者，國危。四鄰之國一興事，而已四興軍，故曰國危。四戰之國，不能以萬室之邑舍鉅萬之軍者，其國危。故曰：四戰之國，務在守戰。

The state that has to fight on four fronts values defensive warfare; the state that borders the sea values offensive warfare. If the state that has to fight on four fronts is fond of raising troops to repel the four neighbors, it will be imperiled. The four neighbors raise an army for just one campaign while you have to raise four armies [to repel them]; hence you are called the imperiled state. If the state that has to fight on four fronts is unable to utilize a ten-thousand-families settlement to repel a ten-thousand-strong army, this state is imperiled. Hence it is said that the state that has to fight on four fronts should commit itself to defensive warfare. (12.1)⁶²

The geographical situation depicted here clearly does not fit the fourth century BCE state of Qin: first, it was not surrounded by equally powerful enemies on the four sides, and second, it did not neighbor a country that “bordered a sea.” Among the major powers of the Warring States period, only Han 韓 and Wei 魏 had to face powerful foes from the four sides, and only Wei faced a menace by a country protected from its rear by the sea, i.e., the state of Qi 齊. It is likely, then, that if the chapter were produced by Shang Yang or a member of his circle, it would have been produced in Wei prior to Shang Yang’s departure from that state to Qin ca. 360 BCE. Of course this may be mere conjecture, but as I

61 For the latter, see *Sunzi*, “Jiu bian” 九變, “Jiu di” 九地 (*Wu Sunzi* 8: 87; 11: 107).

62 SJS, “Bing shou” III.12: 72-73.

will show below, there are further indicators of the relative earliness of this chapter.

The authors propose that the state surrounded by enemies should compensate for its strategic vulnerability with the ability to fully utilize its human resources. This utilization in which every settlement can match an enemy's army is depicted in detail in the last section of the chapter:

守城之道，盛力也。故曰(有)⁶³客，治簿檄，三軍之多，分以客之候車之數。三軍：壯男為一軍，壯女為一軍，男女之老弱者為一軍，此之謂三軍也。壯男之軍，使盛食厲兵，陳而待敵。壯女之軍，使盛食負壘，陳而待令。客至而作土以為險阻及耕（柞）⁶⁴格阱，發梁徹屋，給徒，徙之；不給而燬之，使客無得以助攻備。老弱之軍，使牧牛馬羊彘；草水之可食者，收而食之，以獲其壯男女之食。而慎使三軍無相過。壯男過壯女之軍，則男貴女，而姦民有從謀而國亡；喜與其恐，有蚤聞，勇民不戰。壯男壯女過老弱之軍，則老使壯悲，弱使強憐，悲憐在心，則使勇民更慮，而怯民不戰。故曰慎使三軍無相過，此盛力之道。

The way of defending a fortress is accumulating power. When there is an invader, put military registers in order and divide the multitudes of the three armies according to the number of the invader's observation chariots. The three armies are first, the army of adult men; second, the army of adult women; third, the army of the elderly and infirm.⁶⁵ These are called "the three armies." For the army of adult men: issue ample provisions and sharp weapons and array them to await the enemy. For the army of adult women, issue ample provisions and baskets to carry earth, and array them to await orders. When the invaders arrive, have them create earthen obstructions and dig traps; have them release the bridges⁶⁶

63 Changing 曰 to 有, following Zhu Shizhe's 朱師轍 (1878-1969) suggestion (Zhang 2012, 149).

64 Emending 耕 to 柞, following Sun Yirang's suggestion (Zhang 2012, 149).

65 Infirm (*ruo* 弱) may refer to the people below a fixed height; I am grateful to Robin D. S. Yates for this suggestion.

66 The technology of "releasing the bridges" 發梁 is explained by Yates (1994, 364-70) as referring to "releasable bridges," the term employed in the military chapters of the *Mozhi*. These bridges were constructed over a trench or ditch filled with sharp stakes. As Yates explains,

"The bridge had some kind of trigger mechanism, possibly related to that of a cross-bow, or consisting of a simpler mechanism: underneath may have been a pole which was inserted into a hole at the defenders' end and held in position by a pin running through it at right angles. When the trigger or pin was pulled, the bridge rotated, depositing all who stood on it into the ditch, where they would be impaled by the stakes, and captured,

and destroy the houses [in the countryside]; have them transfer whatever is transferrable [into the fortress] and burn the rest, so that the invader will get nothing to support his assault. For the army of the elderly and the infirm, have them pasture oxen, horses, sheep, and pigs. Feed them with whatever is edible of grass and trees so as to save provisions for adult men and women.

You must be cautious to prevent contact between the three armies. If the adult men come into contact with the army of adult women, the men will value the women, treacherous people will use contact for their intrigues, and the state will perish. They [i.e., the men and women] will be pleased to stay together and be fearful of fighting early; hence the brave people will not fight. If the adult men and women come into contact with the army of the elderly and infirm, then the elderly will cause the adults to be sad and the infirm will cause the strong to be sorrowful; with sadness and sorrow in their hearts, the brave people will become anxious, while the meek people will not fight. Hence it is said: You must be cautious to prevent contact between the three armies. This is the way of accumulating power. (12.3)⁶⁷

This is a fascinating testimony of how warfare started encompassing the entire population. In the preceding Springs-and-Autumns period (Chunqiu 春秋, 770-453 BCE) we do have evidence from the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳 for massive participation of so-called “capital dwellers” (*guoren* 國人) in the defense of their cities, but there is no evidence for the mobilization of women, the elderly, and the infirm.⁶⁸ In the late Warring States period, we have in contrast a well-organized system of full incorporation of the non-combatant population in defensive activities. This system as depicted in the defensive chapters of the *Mozi* 墨子 appears incomparably more sophisticated than the rudimentary mobilization of everyone in the “Military defense” chapter of the *Book of*

or suffer a slow and painful death. The idea was to try to entice elements of the enemy onto the bridge by engaging them beyond, pretending to be defeated, and fleeing across the bridge. When the enemy pursued, the bridge was ‘fired’ or released, and the leaders unceremoniously revolved into the trench. Their fellows, horrified at the fate of their brave comrades, would abandon the siege in fright; or so the Mohists hoped.” (Yates 1994, 364-65).

I am indebted to Robin D. S. Yates for his explanation of this terminology.

67 SJS, “Bing shou” III.12: 74-75.

68 The *Zuo zhuan* abounds in depictions of battles and sieges during the Springs-and-Autumns period; in it civilian populations are presented as victims, not as combatants. For “capital dwellers” see Pines 2009, 191-97.

Lord Shang.⁶⁹ The "Military defense" chapter does envision mobilizing everybody, but its recommendations remain somewhat immature. (For instance, will it be possible to prevent contact between the three armies within the tiny space of a defended fortress?) It is likely that the chapter reflects early experiments with complete mobilization of the entire populace to defend the fortress and that it is datable to the early Warring States period.

To annul the assailants' superiority, defenders have to mobilize everybody—men and women, elderly and the infirm—and make them "ready to die."⁷⁰ The total mobilization in turn requires complete registration of the populace (which in due time became one of the hallmarks of Shang Yang's reforms in the state of Qin); hence, putting in order military registers is the first step toward organizing defense. The incorporation of even the elderly and the infirm, not to say women, into the military is indicative of the coming age of total war, the age in which a conflict involves the entire populace and not just regular soldiers.

The *Book of Lord Shang* contains only one additional brief reference to the mobilization of non-combatants for defensive tasks: Chapter 17.4 cited above mentions *en passant* that "the able-bodied are devoted to war; the elderly and infirm are devoted to defense." Yet insofar as the rest of the *Book of Lord Shang* does not discuss defensive warfare at all, it does not mention again military functions of women, the elderly, and the infirm. As is fitting to Shang Yang's own career—which was marked by aggressive warfare—the text focuses on *offensive* rather than *defensive* war. It is to this topic, specifically to the chapter "Within the borders," that we shall now turn.

Militarization of Society and Bureaucratization of the Military

Chapter 19, "Within the borders" ("Jing nei" 境内), is singularly important for understanding the military thought of the *Book of Lord Shang*. In this chapter the authors present their vision of the complete integration of society and army and the impact of this integration on military undertakings. The precise dating of the chapter is disputable, but it is clear that it reflects Qin's political structure

69 For the *Mozi*, see *Mozi chengshou* and the discussion in Yates 1979, 583-85.

70 As the chapter explains elsewhere, "In protecting a walled settlement, it is best to use the force of the going-to-die people to fight the force of the going-to-live invader" 守有城之邑，不如以死人之力，與客生力戰。(SJS, "Bing shou" 111.12: 74.) The idea is that the defenders will fight to death, while the invader's soldiers hope to survive and are less ready to sacrifice themselves.

from the aftermath of Shang Yang's reforms, which means that at the very least it could not have come from the early stage of his career.⁷¹ In what follows I focus on two major peculiarities of this chapter's approach to war: the idea of a fully militarized society and the parallel concept of a bureaucratized military.

The "Within the borders" chapter presents most coherently the system of rewards and punishments connected to military performance and explicates in full how the rewards are to influence one's social position. It specifies:

軍爵自一級已下至小夫，命曰校、徒、操，出公爵。自二級已上至不更，命曰卒。其戰也，五人來(束)⁷²簿為伍。一人羽而輕其四人，能人得一首，則復。⁷³五{十}⁷⁴人一屯長，百人一將。其戰，百將屯長不得斬首；得三十三首以上，盈論，百將屯長賜爵一級。

Military ranks of the first rank and below, down to unranked inferiors, are called *xiao*, *tu*, and *cao*: they are outside the common rank system.⁷⁵ Those of the second rank and upward to *bugeng* (fourth rank) are called soldiers.⁷⁶ In battle, five men are organized into a squad and are registered accordingly. When one squad member flees, the other four members are punished; if they are able to attain one head [of an enemy],

71 Chapter 19 is the earliest known exposition of the system of ranks of merit promulgated by Shang Yang (see discussions in Moriya 2010 and Du 1985; for a broader perspective see Zhu 2008. Many insightful observations about the system's functioning are scattered throughout Barbieri-Low and Yates 2015; see especially pp. 872-76 and pp. 437-38 n. 130 for further references to relevant secondary studies). Since the list of ranks in this chapter is shorter than in the Han period accounts, it is likely that it was penned at a relatively early stage of Shang Yang's reforms. A crucial issue relating to the chapter's dating is whether or not its last section refers to a General Inspector 正御史 or to a Royal Inspector 王御史. (Different recensions use either 正 or 王; see also the note 95 below). In the second case, the use of the term "Royal" (王) would unequivocally indicate composition after 325 BCE, when Lord (King) Huiwen of Qin adopted the royal title.

72 Reading 來 as 束, following Sun Yirang (Zhang 2012, 226).

73 Following Sun Yirang's suggestion, seventeen characters from this section are transposed to section 19.6.

74 For adding 十 and turning 5 into 50, I follow Li 1991, 27-28.

75 The punctuation of this section and its precise meaning is highly contestable; my translation relies heavily on Li 1991, 27. The exact positions of *xiao* 校, *tu* 徒, and *cao* 操 are not verifiable, but it is likely that they refer to infantrymen. (For a view that they were minor officers, see Tong 2012.)

76 Li Ling (1991) suggests that judging from the original meaning of the rank titles, the soldiers of ranks 2 to 4 were not pure infantrymen but the auxiliaries of chariot-fighters.

the punishment is revoked.⁷⁷ For every fifty men there is a platoon leader; for every hundred men, a centurion. In battle, centurions and platoon leaders are not allowed to cut off heads [individually]; when [the battalion?] gets thirty three heads and above, they have fulfilled the quota, and the platoon leaders and centurions are granted one rank. (19.3)⁷⁸

The battle becomes a somewhat mechanical matter; it is regularized, the tasks are clearly defined, and one's demotion or promotion is intrinsically linked to performance. The mention of a "quota" of severed heads recurs throughout the chapter, e.g.:

能攻城圍邑斬首八千已上，則盈論；野戰斬首二千，則盈論。吏自操及校以上，大將盡賞行間之吏也。

In attacking a besieged fortress, [an army] that is able to cut eight thousand heads and above has fulfilled the quota. In a battle in an open field, [an army] that is able to cut two thousand heads and above has fulfilled the quota. As for personnel⁷⁹ from the rank of *cao* and *xiao* and above, the generalissimo rewards all personnel from the army's ranks. (19.5)⁸⁰

77 I follow Gao Heng (1974, 237-38) in reading *yu* 羽 as miswritten for *zhao* 兆, which stands for *tao* 逃 (fleeing). However, I reject the common interpretation of *qing* 輕 as standing for *jing* 頸 (execution by cutting the throat). I follow Zhang Jue (2012, 226 n. 6), who argues that the squad members whose fellows fled should be punished not by execution but by reduction of their ranks; alternatively it may refer to another form of punishment, but surely not to execution. Zhang is correct that otherwise it would be impossible to understand how punishments are "revoked" in cases of successful captures of enemies' heads.

78 SJS, "Jing nei" v.19: 114-15. Gao 1974, 147-48 punctuates the last sentence differently, dividing between 不得 and 斬首; i.e., if the commanders failed, they should be executed. I reject this because 斬首 appears in the chapter uniformly as referring to cutting off the enemy's heads, and in any case it is unreasonable that commanders of all lower ranks would be executed for failure in battle. For the regulation that medium-ranked nobles (ranks 5 to 9, presumably the ranks of centurions and platoon leaders mentioned in the text) are not to be allowed to cut off enemy heads, see *Miscellaneous Excerpts from Qin Law* from Shuihudi Tomb 11, Hulswé 1985, C5, 105.

79 *Li* 吏 normally should refer in the military context to officers, but in this case it may be a term for most of the soldiers as well, since it includes the lowest ranks. As well, it might stand here as a loan for *shi* 士.

80 SJS, "Jing nei" v.19: 116. I follow Jiang Lihong's parsing of the last sentence (Jiang 1996, 116).

These are the opening phrases of a lengthy section that explains how each rank holder is rewarded. This section is actually the earliest depiction of the Qin system of ranks of merit introduced by Shang Yang.⁸¹ It is worth noting the assignment of different quotas for severed heads when conquering a fortress and when battling in the open field; presumably, after the besieged fortress was occupied and the enemy combatants had nowhere to flee, beheading was the norm. Did it create incentives to behead uninvolved civilians instead of enemy soldiers? One suspects that the answer is positive, but it also seems that the authors were aware of this gruesome possibility and tried to check it:

以戰故，暴首三，乃校三日，將軍以不疑致士大夫勞爵。{夫勞爵，其縣過三日，有不致士大夫勞爵，能（罷）}⁸²其縣四尉，皆由丞尉。能得甲首一者，賞爵一級，益田一頃，益宅九畝。級除庶子一人，乃得人（入）⁸³兵官之吏。

After the battle, when [severed] heads are exposed,⁸⁴ they are checked for three days; if the general has no doubts, he delivers ranks of merit to soldiers and officers.⁸⁵ As for delivering ranks of merit, if this was not done after the heads were hung for three days, the four sub-commandants of the county should be dismissed,⁸⁶ while the county's assistant

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- 81 The system was fully functional in the state of Qin, as suggested by frequent reference to ranks in unearthed Qin documents (e.g., in household registers, for which see Hsing 2014, 155-65). It is exposed in full in the *Statutes and Ordinances of the Second Year* 二年律令 from Tomb 247, Zhangjiashan 張家山, Hubei (*Zhangjiashan* 2006, 59-61; Barbieri-Low and Yates 2015, 791-93).
- 82 Following Sun Yirang, the seventeen characters in the figure brackets are transferred here from their misplaced location at the third section of this chapter. For reading *neng* 能 as *ba* 罷, I also follow Sun Yirang (Zhang 2012, 232).
- 83 Emending *ren* 人 to *ru* 入, following Wang Shirun (Zhang 2012, 233).
- 84 Following Jiang Lihong (1996, 119), I believe that the character *san* 三 after “heads” is redundant.
- 85 *Shi dafu* 士大夫 here refers to holders of the lowest four ranks (equivalent to *shi*, the lower segment of traditional nobility) and of the next six ranks (equivalent to *dafu*, i.e. medium-level nobles).
- 86 Normally, Qin counties had one commandant (*wei* 尉) who is duly mentioned in the next sentence, so clearly the four *wei* here were his subordinates. One of the military chapters of the *Mozi* mentions a *wei* as a low-level military man cum police official, akin to what was later known as Constable (*tingzhang* 亭長) (*Mozi chengshou* 52.47: 19 [“Bei cheng men” 備城門]), but in this case the number “four” is inexplicable because there were surely more than four constables in a county. I prefer to render “four *wei*” as “four sub-commandants.”

magistrate and commandant should be fined.⁸⁷ He who is able to attain one head of an armored soldier should be promoted one rank; his field should be increased by one *qing* and his house plot by nine *mu*.⁸⁸ For every rank he is granted the right⁸⁹ for one retainer and is then allowed to become a military or civilian official.⁹⁰ (19.6)⁹¹

Exposing severed heads and checking them for three days was presumably done not only out of humanitarian concern over innocent people being massacred, but also to prevent inflation of ranks bestowed. After all, compensation for success on the battlefield was too expensive to be dispensed lightly. The text specifies the singular importance of military rewards for Qin's social and administrative structure. Granting the reward is performed jointly by military and civilian authorities (presumably the general had to report to the county authorities, who then had the duty to reward the soldiers), which suggests minimization of distinctions between the military and civilian hierarchy; indeed, in the state "organized for war"⁹² such distinctions would have been negligible. The administrators' failure to reward deserving soldiers is severely punished; this is yet another indication of the overall importance of military rewards in Qin social life. Speaking in terms of the ranks' social impact, the text is also very specific: granting a rank was not a hollow honor but entitled the owner to manifold social and economic benefits, such as a bestowal of public fields and an increase in one's house plot; eventually it granted the right to join officialdom. Elsewhere (19.7-19.8) the chapter specifies further legal and sumptuary privileges of the rank holders. This elaborate system of rewards allows us to conclude that advancement through the ranks indeed could have become the prime stimulus for Qin soldiers to go to the battlefield.

Militarization of the administrative apparatus and of society as a whole was accompanied by the profound bureaucratization of the army, as is fully indicated in the next section:

87 Reading *zi* 訾 as *zi* 贄 (to fine).

88 One *qing* 頃 equals one hundred *mu* 畝 or 4.6 hectares (Hulsewé 1985, 19). The section speaks of allocation of public fields to meritorious soldiers.

89 Following Gao 1974, 152 n. 49, I read *chu* 除 as referring to appointment.

90 The term *li* 吏 could refer in different contexts—including in different parts of the *Book of Lord Shang*—either to officials as a whole, or to lower officials, or just to clerks (see Liu 2014, 167). Here it refers either to low-rank officials or clerks.

91 SJS, "Jing nei" v.19: 119.

92 Expression borrowed from Lewis 2007, 30.

其攻城圍邑也，國司空訾其城之廣厚之數；國尉分地以徒校分積尺而攻之。為期曰：「先已者，當為最啟；後已者，訾為最殿；再訾則廢。」內（穴）⁹³通則積薪，積薪則燔柱。陷隊之士，面十八人。陷隊之士知疾鬥，不得斬首；隊五人（入），則陷隊之士，人賜爵一級，死則一人後。不能死之，千人環，規諫、黥劓於城下。國尉分地，以中卒隨之。將軍為木壹（臺）⁹⁴，與國正監，與王（正？）⁹⁵御史，參望之。其先入者，舉為最啟；其後入者，舉為最殿。其陷隊也，盡其幾者；幾者不足，乃以欲級益之。

When a fortress is attacked or a settlement is encircled, the state minister of works examines the breadth and the width of the wall and the state commandant divides *xiao* and *tu* soldiers for every square foot and orders [them] to attack. He fixes the time and says, "Those who are the first to succeed will be considered the best of the vanguard; those who are the last will be censured as the worst of the rear; and those who are twice censured will be dismissed."

They dig tunnels [beneath the walls] and pile firewood; when firewood is piled, it is burned. At every side of the wall eighteen sappers should be placed. The sappers fight valiantly but are not permitted to cut off heads; if five members of the team succeed in penetrating [the fortress], then every sapper is rewarded one rank;⁹⁶ if he dies, it is transferred to one of his heirs. If [the sappers] are afraid of death, a thousand people gather around them; they are admonished⁹⁷ and then punished beneath the walls by tattooing and cutting off of their noses.

The commandant of the state divides areas [for attack] and assaults them with the troops of the central army. The general creates a wooden platform and observes the operation together with the Chief Supervisor and General (Royal?) Inspector. Those who are the first to break into [the

93 Reading *nei* 內 as miswritten for *xue* 穴, following Sun Yirang. (Zhang 2012, 236 n. 5).

94 Reading *yi* 壹 as *tai* 臺 following Tao Hongqing (Zhang 2012, 237 n. 16).

95 The 1793 recension collated by Yan Wanli 嚴萬里 (aka Yan Kejun 嚴可均, 1762-1843), the earliest and most authoritative collated edition, has *zheng* 正 here while most others have *wang* 王. (Zhang 2012, 235 n. 5) Both terms are acceptable, but the choice has far-reaching implications for the text's dating, as explained in note 71 above.

96 Here I follow Duyvendak's identification (1963 [1928], 301) of *xiandui* 陷隊 as sappers and not crack troops, as proposed by Zhu Shizhe (Gao 1974, 153 n. 62) and Zhang Jue (Zhang 2012, 236 n. 7). The small number of the unit suggests that these were indeed sappers. In this sentence I also adopt the substitution of the character *ru* 入 for *ren* 人.

97 The term "admonition" (*guijian* 規諫) is normally used to admonish one's superiors, but here it evidently refers to the public admonition of the sappers before the punishments were applied.

fortress] are designated the best of the vanguard; those who are the last to enter are designated the worst of the rear. As for the sappers, their ranks are fully filled by volunteers;⁹⁸ if there are not enough volunteers, they are supplemented by those who want promotions. (19.9)⁹⁹

This is a fascinating account that differs tremendously from the "Military defense" chapter discussed in the previous section. War is exclusively offensive. The success of the offense depends both on numbers (whether the assaulters have enough soldiers to assign them to every square foot of an enemy's wall) and on turning individual soldiers into valiant fighters ready to sacrifice themselves. Predictably, their fighting spirit can be maintained only through the system of rewards and punishments, and this system indeed becomes a singularly important means of maintaining the offensive. Absent are flexibility and calculation of relative strengths and weaknesses of the parties, so prominent in the "Methods of war" chapter. Instead, we have a bureaucratic procedure with officers (from both the military and civilian arms of the government) meticulously assigning duties to every unit and then assessing performance. The general sitting on the observation platform appears more concerned with calculating rewards and punishments than with managing purely military aspects of the assault.

The profound bureaucratization of the army may create an impression of a mechanistic view of warfare, but this is not the case. Crack troops, identified here tentatively as "sappers," were staffed by volunteers apparently willing to brave death for the prospect of higher rewards than those distributed to average soldiers. If the identification of the sappers as volunteers is correct, then it can testify to the success of Shang Yang's reforms: at least some Qin soldiers were indeed ready to brave death in exchange for a handsome reward. And as in other parts of the book, there are no spiritual incentives for the warriors: killing and being killed is just a routine procedure in advancing up the social ladder.

Seeds of Change: Differentiating between Soldiers and Tillers

Chapter 15, "Attracting the people" ("Lai min" 徠民), is one of the latest in the *Book of Lord Shang* and one of the most easily datable texts in the entire corpus

98 Gao 1974, 239 reads *ji* 幾 as *qi* 祈, meaning "to request" or "to volunteer." Zhang 2012, 237 n. 20 suggests substituting *ji* 冀 (to aspire), which preserves the same meaning.

99 SJS, "Jing nei" v.19: 120-21.

of pre-Qin philosophical literature. Judging from the events it mentions (e.g., the Changping 長平 campaign of 262-260 BCE) and from what it *does not* mention (i.e., Qin's unstoppable expansion from the early 230s BCE), it should have been produced in between these dates.

The chapter's authors try to resolve a paradox: Why, despite its successive victories over the eastern neighbors, especially Wei 魏, Han 韓, and Zhao 趙, is Qin not able to finally overpower these states? This question became particularly acute in the aftermath of the Changping campaign, arguably the largest military encounter of the Warring States period. The two most powerful states of their age, Qin and Zhao, committed most of their human and material resources to what was supposed to become their decisive encounter in the hilly terrain of southern Shanxi. After two years of standoff in fortified camps, Qin lured the Zhao forces to launch an attack that ended in disaster. The Zhao troops were cut into two, and subsequently their lines of supply were cut off. The starved Zhao forces had to surrender. Triumphant, Qin general Bai Qi 白起 (d. 257 BCE) ordered the massacre of the surrendered Zhao soldiers; reportedly over 400,000 were killed. Zhao faced imminent annihilation, but Qin was too depleted of human and material resources to launch an effective follow-up campaign. Indeed, its assault on the Zhao capital of Handan 邯鄲 in 259-257 BCE ended in defeat, and the goal of final subjugation of All-under-Heaven appeared as elusive as ever.¹⁰⁰ It is against this backdrop that the author of the chapter proposes his idea: to overpower its adversaries, Qin should first improve the demographic balance with its rivals.

The chapter's author proposes a series of policies aiming at attracting immigrants from the neighboring rival states of Wei and Han, which suffered from so much overpopulation that "more than half of [their people] have to dwell in caves dug along the river and pond banks" 人之復陰陽澤水者過半 (15.2).¹⁰¹ He recommends that the immigrants be "exempted from taxes for three generations and not be liable for military service" 復之三世，無知軍事 in addition to being allowed ten years of free exploitation of "mountains, hills, and swamps" (15.3).¹⁰² This lenient treatment of immigrants contrasts sharply with the insistence in earlier chapters, such as Chapter 6, on turning every subject into tiller *and* soldier.¹⁰³ Yet the advantages of this retreat from earlier policies are easily demonstrable:

100 Yang Kuan 1998, 412-19.

101 SJS, "Lai min" 1V.15: 88. *Yin-yang* 陰陽 refers here to the sunny and shady banks of a river.

102 SJS, "Lai min" 1V.15: 90.

103 For perceptive if at times speculative comparisons between Chapters 6 and 15 of the *Book of Lord Shang*, see Yoshinami 1985.

夫秦之所患者，興兵而伐，則國家貧；安居而農，則敵得休息，此王所不能兩成也。故三（四）世戰勝，而天下不服。今以故秦事敵，而使新民作本，兵雖百宿於外，境內不失須臾之時。此富強兩成之效也。臣之所謂兵者，非謂悉興盡起也；論境內所能給軍卒車騎，令故秦民事兵，新民給芻食。天下有不服之國，則王以此春圍其農，夏食其食，秋取其刈，冬陳其寶。以大武搖其本，以廣文安其嗣。

What worries Qin is that when it raises armies and attacks [the enemy], the state will be impoverished, while when it resides in peace, focusing on agriculture, the enemy will gain a respite. Therefore, Your Majesty cannot attain both [military success and wealth] at the same time. Hence, although [Qin] has been victorious for four generations,¹⁰⁴ All-under-Heaven has not yet submitted. Now let the old Qin [people] engage the enemy and the new people¹⁰⁵ deal with the fundamental [occupation]; then even if the army remains outside the borders for a hundred days, not a moment of seasonal work is lost within the borders. This is the desired result of attaining both: [being] rich and strong.

What I, your subject, call "the military," does not refer to complete mobilization and universal conscription. What I mean is that within the borders you are able to provide enough for the army—its soldiers, chariots and cavalry.¹⁰⁶ Let the old Qin people serve in the army and the new people provide fodder and provisions. As for those states in All-under-Heaven that are not submissive: Your Majesty should "in spring encircle their farmlands, in summer eat their provisions, in autumn seize whatever they have reaped, in winter expose their stores."¹⁰⁷ Use the "Great Martial" to shake their foundations; use the "Broad Civilian"¹⁰⁸ to pacify their descendants.¹⁰⁹

104 Most current recensions have "three" rather than "four" here, but the latter is perhaps more accurate because it fits the mention of "four generations" of Qin victories earlier in the chapter's text. In any case, the reference is primarily to Qin victories since the early third century BCE.

105 "Old Qin people" were Qin natives, while "new people" were immigrants from elsewhere.

106 This is the only reference to cavalry in the entire *Book of Lord Shang*.

107 This appears to be a direct quotation from the "Da wu" 大武 ("The Great Martial") chapter of *Yi Zhou shu* 逸周書 (*Lost Documents of Zhou*) (*Yi Zhou shu* 2.8: 122); translation follows McNeal 2012, 113.

108 The "Great Martial" is the chapter of the *Yi Zhou shu* cited above; it is likely that "Broad Civilian" refers to another text that is currently lost.

109 SJS, "Lai min" IV.15: 92.

There are two noteworthy recommendations here. First and most significant is the authors' willingness to deviate from traditional Qin policies adopted in Shang Yang's era and to free part of the population (viz. the immigrants) from all-important military service. Should this proposal have been adopted (regrettably, we know too little about its implementation, aside from the indisputable fact that Qin did attract a lot of immigrants),¹¹⁰ it would effectively have meant dividing the Qin population into two groups: a privileged segment involved in military service and eligible for promotions on the basis of military merit and another segment of pure peasants who would be allowed to benefit from the soil but not advance much socially. From the purely military view, this arrangement seems doubly advantageous. On the one hand, the immigrants' labor could have compensated the country for the loss of income from military conscripts during the prolonged campaigns of the late Warring States period; on the other hand, the commanders could have been relieved of employing foreign-born soldiers whose loyalty to the state of Qin was doubtful. Yet what of the cherished idea of turning the entire population into tillers cum soldiers, the hallmark of Shang Yang's reforms?

The seeds of retreat from Shang Yang's policies of universal conscription in the "Attracting the people" chapter seem to reflect a new situation on the eve of the imperial unification. As Qin territories expanded, reaching "five times one thousand *li* squared" 方千里者五 (15.1),¹¹¹ even performing garrison duties (*shu* 戍) on the distant frontiers could have become a huge liability in terms of time needed to get to the garrison and back. Moreover, prolonged campaigns such as Changping required ad hoc mobilization of conscripts for "one hundred days" and more, jeopardizing agricultural production.¹¹² Against this backdrop we may understand why some Qin strategists deemed universal military service as no longer desirable: dividing the population into two separate groups of soldiers and tillers could be more beneficial. Late in the Warring States period seeds were sown for the future transition from mass conscription to a professionalized military.¹¹³

110 For archeological evidence of immigration from eastern states to Qin, see, e.g., Chen 2009.

111 SJS, "Lai min" IV.15: 87. This territory of approximately 800,000 square km may have truly reflected the extent of Qin's rule on the eve of its final wars of unification.

112 For garrison service, see Barbieri-Low and Yates 2015, 891 n. 13; Sun 2016, 290-300. For the manpower shortage during prolonged campaigns, see ad hoc measures adopted by King Zhaoxiang of Qin 秦昭襄王 (r. 306-251 BCE) to mobilize everybody above 15 at the final stage of the Changping campaign (*Shiji* 73: 2334). For Qin's prolonged campaigns of the late Warring States period, see Miyake 2015.

113 This impact of territorial expansion on the need to replace conscripts with permanent garrisons staffed by professionals is a recurrent pattern in Chinese military history, as

Let us go to the second point of the above strategy: the recommendation to wage wars of attrition against Wei and Han. The authors cite the "The Great Martial" ("Da wu" 大武) chapter of *Yi Zhou shu* 逸周書: "In spring encircle their farmlands, in summer eat their provisions, in autumn seize whatever they have reaped, and in winter expose their stores." While this formulaic recommendation may not look particularly impressive, it reveals yet another aspect of the total war of that era. Undermining the enemy's agricultural production undoubtedly weakened their resolve to fight, but the damage to the non-combatant population was probably far more devastating. If the warfare of the Warring States period indeed involved this deliberate destruction of food supplies, its human costs become more apparent. These costs may in turn explain why the quest for unity and ensuing peace became the singularly pronounced common goal of the Warring States-period thinkers.¹¹⁴ And it was Shang Yang and his followers, the co-authors of the *Book of Lord Shang*, who provided the most compelling answers not about *why*, but about *how* the entire subcelestial realm should be unified.

Epilogue: Total War

The military thought of the *Book of Lord Shang* is sometimes reduced to one of its most appalling statements: "He whose army performs whatever the enemy does not dare to perform is strong; he who in [military] affairs elevates whatever the enemy is ashamed of doing benefits." 兵行敵所不敢行，強；事興敵所羞為，利 (4.1).¹¹⁵ This recommendation might have given rise to stories of Shang Yang's dirty tricks on the battlefield as narrated in the *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (*Spring and Autumn Annals of Mr. Lü*), among others.¹¹⁶ It also contributed considerably to the shaping of Shang Yang's image and of "his" book as not just blatantly militaristic, but also somewhat primitive in its commitment to victory at any price.

The above discussion does not whitewash Shang Yang's militarism, but it suffices to demonstrate the text's sophistication and its placement of warfare into a new conceptual framework. In an age when everybody was involved

is evident, e.g., from the Han case (Lewis 2000) as well as from the transformation from *fubing* 府兵 conscripts to professional armies during the mid-Tang 唐 (618-907) period. (See Graff 2002, 205-26.)

114 Pines 2000.

115 SJS, "Qu qiang" 1.4: 27.

116 *Lüshi chunqiu*, 22.2: 1491-92 ("Wu yi" 無義).

in war—whether as conscripts, last-ditch defenders of besieged fortresses, or victims of massacres, of forced relocations of the enemy's population, or simply of the systematic destruction of civilian infrastructure by the enemy's armies—old values of chivalry, of limitation on the scope of conflicts, and of the undesirability of excessive violence were obsolete. The authors of the *Book of Lord Shang* took war as a given reality, and rather than finding moral justifications for it or condemning its cruelty, they focused on a practical issue: how to turn the entire state into an efficient war machine. The solution was a bold experiment in social engineering: by profoundly restructuring the entire social system and by turning military attainments into the major means of social advancement, Shang Yang and his followers succeeded in reinvigorating the Qin armies and thereby creating one of the most formidable military machines in China's long history.

A reader of the *Book of Lord Shang* is not expected to ponder over the price of war. Severed heads are part of the army's quota; execution of deserters and mutilation of the meek are regular legal and administrative procedures; the mobilization of the old and infirm is a routine act, and compassion toward them is mentioned only as a menace to the normal functioning of the army. Violence and cruelty are legitimated by the mere fact of their quotidian nature, and they are as indispensable as taxation and legal punishments. As such, Shang Yang's ideology may sound more fitting for the first half of the twentieth century than for any other period in human history. This distinguishes Shang Yang from other military thinkers of his age and of later periods. While other thinkers, most notably the authors of the *Sunzi*, shared the understanding of the *Book of Lord Shang* that war is not decided on the battlefield alone, to my knowledge no single text went to the logical conclusions of the *Book of Lord Shang*: in an age that demands full commitment to military victory, only the complete mobilization of human and economic resources for the sake of war can lead to the desirable outcome. Administrative, social, economic, and educational policies—indeed every imaginable aspect of the state's experience—should be subordinated to military needs.

In retrospect, this peculiar attitude toward war, rather than the text's immorality, explains why the military ideology of the *Book of Lord Shang* was eventually cast into oblivion. With the establishment of the unified empire, there was no longer justification for the comprehensive mobilization of human and economic resources in war, since external enemies, powerful as they were, may have been less threatening than the rival states of the Warring States era. The system of ranks of merit underwent gradual atrophy under the Han dynasty, and later a variety of military, economic, and political conditions required

abolition of universal conscription altogether.¹¹⁷ These changes made the *Book of Lord Shang* somewhat irrelevant to military strategists. Parallel to these developments, and perhaps unrelated to them, the *Book of Lord Shang* also lost its classification as a military treatise and became identified as a Masters' text, so that it was no longer consulted or commented upon by military specialists. Luckily for China, the vision of turning the state into a war machine was never fully resurrected, thus allowing Shang Yang's brilliant if frightening ideas to be buried underneath the dust of scholarly indifference.

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