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Ancient Chinese Warfare

by Ralph D. Sawyer

Reviewed by Dr. David Lai, Professor of Asian Security Studies Strategic Studies Institute US Army War College

Ancient Chinese Warfare is a useful book, but not one that fits the title, because it is not about ancient Chinese warfare. As you move through the lines, you will see that this study is in essence about the evolution of ancient Chinese political authority to wage war from the legendary figure of the Yellow Emperor (黄帝) to the historical founders of the Zhou Dynasty (周朝, 11th century

BCE) and the governments under their reign. More importantly, this study is about the development of ancient Chinese military institutions and structures from the defensive fortifications (walls) to the emergence of standing armies, organized military training, logistics, and the production of weapons.

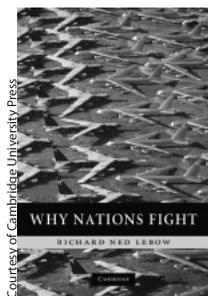
Ralph Sawyer deserves considerable praise for this achievement. Presumably through his years of hard work on ancient Chinese history and classics, especially his monumental introduction and translation of *The Seven Military Classics of Ancient China*, Sawyer has built a solid foundation for the discussion of this subject matter. Indeed, Sawyer has done an excellent job in presenting the evolution of ancient Chinese political authority and military institutions with his efforts at overcoming the confusion created by the ancient Chinese classics (discrepancies in time, place, and political and military events) and insightful interpretation of the ancient artifacts and archeological findings. Sawyer's documentation and rigor in discussion is first class.

This volume will be an important addition to the reference books on ancient Chinese political and military history. It is also useful for those who specialized in ancient Chinese political and military history. Its value, however, in the study of ancient Chinese warfare with respect to issues such as the Chinese views on the nature of war, justification for the use of force, Chinese strategies and stratagems, and the conduct of war is limited. Although many of these are the topics associated with the eras following the Zhou, namely the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods (春秋战国时期), the political and military traditions of the earlier times had considerable impact on the classical Chinese political and military thinkers such as Confucius, Lao Tzu, Sun Tzu, and many others. The significance of the political and military institutions should have been highlighted in this book.

The second half of the book is a discussion of the armaments in what the Chinese call "cold-weapon era" (冷兵器时期), prior to the invention of gunpowder and firearms). Sawyer provides an excellent documentation and examination of the weapons created and used in these ancient times. The discussion of the Shang Dynasty (商朝) martial edifice, troops, intelligence, and tactics is informative. The examination of the axes, knives, daggers, dagger-axes, swords, spears, armors, archery, chariots, horses, chariots in battle, and

logistics is valuable. However, the discussions are largely about the construction of such weapons and their characteristics. There is limited analysis of the significance of these “cold weapons” on the nature of warfare and the conduct of war (although there is discussion of the limitation of the chariots in the text). Students of war are interested in these issues because they seek to know what impact these weaponries had on later Chinese ways of thinking and conducting war. Humans do not have fangs and claws, but they have an intelligent brain and useful hands to make weapons. In so doing, humans also changed the “face of war.” For instance, with the invention of daggers, axes, and knives, warfare had become more lethal. Slings and bows allowed combatants to inflict damage to their opponents in a distance. Chariots and horses presumably made warfare mobile. Logistics supply became an important part of military conflict for defensive as well as offensive purposes. Sun Tzu’s *Art of War* has discussed the advantages and difficulties associated with military logistics. Attacking the opponent’s supply has been a classic tactic in warfare. All of these are important topics of ancient Chinese warfare.

A final note on the book is about the provision of Chinese characters. With today’s state-of-the-art word-processing capability, the author, or the publisher, should provide the Chinese characters for the special Chinese terms, names, places, and concepts in the text. When the Chinese characters are provided, it does not matter whether the author uses *pinyin* or the Wade-Giles spelling. There is no confusion in Chinese. It is correspondingly easier for the readers to understand and to find them in the original Chinese classics. Unfortunately, there are no Chinese characters in the current text.



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Why Nations Fight: Past and Future Motives For War

by Richard Ned Lebow

Reviewed by Dr. Stephen J. Blank, the Strategic Studies Institute’s expert on the Soviet bloc and the post-Soviet world

The question Lebow poses in his title is perhaps the oldest and most vexing question in the history of both international relations and its study. Perhaps this is why there have been so many continuing answers from philosophy, biology, anthropology, economics, history, and other disciplines that still strive to resolve this question. And because there are so many vintners tilling this vineyard it probably takes an intrepid man and scholar to enter into this issue and say something original. But Lebow proves that he is well equipped to do this.

Anyone writing such a book does so because he or she is obviously dissatisfied with the answers and thinking that now attaches itself to this question. Indeed, for example, a fair amount of social science literature, or perhaps more precisely literature aspiring to call itself scientific, has announced that war is