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## From the Archives: Ancient Chinese Leaders on Trust

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# From the Archives

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## Ancient Chinese Leaders on Trust

King Wei asked “How can I get my people to follow orders as an ordinary matter of course? Master Sun said “Be trustworthy as a matter of course.

Sun Bin, *The Lost Art of War*, c. 350 BC, tr. Thomas Cleary

Trust is a distinguished reward for warriors.

Sun Bin, *The Lost Art of War*, c. 350 BC, tr. Thomas Cleary

For if men have a spontaneous and natural love for their general, they are quick to obey his commands, they do not distrust him, and they cooperate with him in case of danger.

Onasander, *The General, AD 58 (Aeneas Tacticus, Aclepiodotus, Onasander)*, tr. The Illinois Greek Club, 1923.

I command a great army. It is founded on trust. The minds of those who have been given permission to depart are already set on home like arrows. Their wives and children are counting the hours that they must wait for them. Although the battle before us may be fraught with danger, that trust cannot be broken.

Zhuge Liang (AD 180-234), *The Way of the General*, when urged by his officers, at the approach of an enemy army, to revoke the leave promised to a number of his troops. He personally urged the troops to go, but they refused, and the enemy suffered a decisive defeat, quoted in Bloodworth, *The Chinese Machiavelli*, 1976.

What makes soldiers in battle prefer to charge ahead rather than retreat even for survival is the benevolence of the military leadership. When soldiers know their leaders care for them as they care for their own children, then the soldiers love their leaders as they do their own fathers. This makes them willing to die in battle, to requite the benevolence of their leaders.

Liu Ji (1310-1375), *Lessons of War (Mastering the Art of War)*, tr. Thomas Cleary, 1989).