

Chapter IX - The Cavalry General

Chapter IX - The Cavalry General begins with a thorough look at the tactical flexibility required in cavalry warfare. The text places strong emphasis on adjusting strategies in real time rather than following rigid doctrine. One key proposal involves changing the pace of a cavalry charge—beginning at full speed from the home base rather than waiting until mid-field. This immediate acceleration could surprise opponents and reduce exposure to counterattacks. Swift withdrawal from enemy lines was also encouraged, highlighting the importance of minimizing risk while still delivering damage. These principles rest on the idea that unpredictability often leads to tactical advantage, especially against more rigid forces.

The chapter explains that commanders who embrace innovation are more likely to succeed. Instead of relying on conventional tactics, a skilled leader must be ready to adapt based on terrain, morale, and timing. Surprise plays a significant role, and the placement of a few capable troopers during vulnerable enemy transitions is seen as an effective tactic. These troopers, positioned subtly, could disrupt enemy reformation and scatter their cohesion. Historical accounts show that small groups of cavalry, well-led and well-timed, often achieved results out of proportion to their size. The lesson is clear: quality and timing can outweigh mere numbers when precision is employed effectively. Flexibility in command becomes not just a recommendation, but a necessity in fast-moving engagements.

The author acknowledges the unpredictable nature of combat and the folly of trying to predetermine every outcome. War is fluid, and attempts to govern it entirely through fixed instructions often fail. What matters more is the consistent application of diligence in every domain—physical, strategic, and intellectual. The idea that mere knowledge isn't enough without effort underscores the value of preparation and resilience. Military effectiveness is likened to other human efforts, where success often

hinges on the discipline to apply what is known. This comparison makes the message more accessible: greatness in battle, like in life, demands ongoing work. When theory meets real-world practice, only those who persist stand a chance at mastery.

One intriguing element of the chapter is the recommendation to integrate foreign cavalymen into the ranks. This tactic is supported by historical precedent, such as the Lacedaemonians who improved their cavalry performance by enlisting outsiders. Foreign troops often bring new techniques and strong motivation, particularly when they view their service as a chance to prove loyalty or elevate status. Their inclusion can raise the overall caliber of the force and infuse it with perspectives that local riders may lack. This strategy also prevents stagnation, introducing diverse experiences into the cavalry's collective skill set. The benefits of such integration stretch beyond the battlefield, encouraging unity and exchange among different populations.

The chapter also touches on practical matters of maintaining a cavalry force, such as financing. One solution proposed is to gather resources from those exempted from service or from the wealth held by non-combatants. Such individuals, including wealthy orphans or citizens unfit for combat, are seen as logical contributors to the common defense. This approach, while pragmatic, also serves to distribute the burdens of war more evenly across the population. Another suggestion is to recruit metics, or resident aliens, into the cavalry. Their past dedication in civic matters supports the idea that they might prove equally committed in military service. If well-managed, this could significantly broaden the talent pool without straining existing citizens.

Additionally, the author explores the idea of assembling an infantry force comprised of those with deeply rooted grievances against the enemy. Passionate hatred, when harnessed carefully, could become a powerful motivator for aggressive ground support. Such troops might fight with unmatched intensity, making them useful complements to the more mobile and calculated cavalry units. The pairing of calculated cavalry maneuvers with emotionally charged infantry pressure creates a dual-pronged offensive capability. This combination could unsettle even well-organized

opponents by attacking from different fronts, both tactically and psychologically. Emotional stakes, it is argued, can be turned into military strength when properly disciplined and directed.

Finally, the chapter concludes with a reflection on divine favor as an essential aspect of warfare. Despite all tactical preparation, the unpredictability of battle requires a degree of humility. The author encourages commanders to constantly seek divine guidance—not just as superstition, but as an acknowledgement of human limitation. Signs from the gods, interpreted through traditional rituals, offer commanders reassurance and a psychological edge. Belief in divine support can uplift morale and solidify group cohesion in times of doubt. In ancient warfare, faith was often as significant as strategy. The message is not to abandon reason, but to align rational planning with reverence for forces beyond human control.

From a modern standpoint, this chapter offers timeless insights into leadership, preparation, and the balance between innovation and discipline. Its lessons transcend the battlefield, applicable in fields as diverse as business, politics, and crisis management. Success, according to the author, is found not through rigid control but through readiness, creativity, and respect for unpredictability—values as essential today as they were in antiquity.