

Maintaining Integrity and Virtue Keeps the Peace

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In the Xijin Dynasty (265-316), a general named Yang Gu was known for his great integrity, which won the favor of the people of his rival State, Dongwu. If he had to engage in battle with Dongwu, he would decide a date with Dongwu, and never betray that date, nor mount a surprise attack. If any of his assistants tried to provide tricky battle plans, he always treated them with very tasty wine, and made them too drunk to bring up their trickery.

If General Yang Gu's army harvested grain inside Dongwu's boundaries, they recorded the amount, and later sent an equal value of silk and cotton fabric to pay it back. When Yang Gu and his army were hunting in the area of Changjiang or Gaishui Rivers, they never crossed over the border. If Yang Gu saw injured game escaping from Dongwu's hunters to Jin's land, he would order his soldiers to send the game back. Such acts helped General

Yang Gu win the respect of the Dongwu folk who lived near the borders.

General Yang Gu's counterpart was Lu Kang from Dongwu. They often sent ambassadors to each other. Whenever Lu Kang sent wine to Yang Gu, he would drink it immediately, without any hesitation. If Lu Kang was sick, Yang Gu would send some herbal tea over, and Lu Kang would drink it immediately without hesitation. Lu Kang's servant tried to stop him, but he said, "He did not mistrust my wine, why should I doubt his herbal tea?"

Lu Kang often taught his soldiers, "If others are always doing good deeds, but we always do bad deeds, that would be the same as disintegrating our army before going to the battlefield."

An official named Sun Hao of Dongwu State heard that Lu Kang was maintaining a good relationship with Yang Gu, and sent someone over to criticize Lu Kang. Lu Kang replied, "Even interactions among individuals should be based on integrity, let alone between States!" The Xijin and Dongwu armies each watched their own boundaries and maintained a peaceful relationship.

(Story from *Zizhitongjian* - "*The Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government*," compiled by Sima Guang between the years 1067 and 1084 during the Song Dynasty, and first printed at Hangzhou City in 1086. The whole work comprises 294 chapters, and it covers the period from 403 BC to 959 AD.)