PRIMARY SOURCE from Intrigues of the Warring States

This selection is from an anonymous work called Chan Kuo Ts’e (Intrigues of the Warring States). Probably written in the early part of the second century B.C., the Chan Kuo Ts’e relates the history and fables of the latter Zhou Dynasty and offers a wealth of advice on the way states should be governed. The problems described in this excerpt led to the decline of the Zhou Dynasty and to the rise of new political ideas and philosophies. How does Ying-hou think that King Chao should govern Ch’in?

"Your majesty has doubtless heard about the Spirit of the Grove in the country of Hanker?" Ying-hou asked King Chao of Ch’in.
"There lived in Hanker an extremely rash youth who got the Sacred Grove to gamble with him. ‘If I beat you,’ said the boy, ‘you must lend me your genie for three days. If I lose to you, you may do as you please with me.’ So saying, he cast the dice for the Grove with his left hand and for himself with his right. The Grove lost and lent the boy his genie for three days. But when the Grove went back to get his Spirit, he was turned away. Five days later the Grove began to rot and in seven it had died.

"The country of Ch’in is your majesty’s Grove and power is its genie: is it not a course fraught with danger to lend it to others? Now I have never heard of a finger being greater than an arm nor of an arm being greater than a leg, but if such should exist it could only indicate a serious disease! A hundred men scrambling to fetch a gourd by cart will accomplish less than one man holding it in his hand and walking purposefully. For if the hundred actually managed to get it aboard their wagon you may be quite sure that the gourd would be split asunder when it arrived. Today the country of Ch’in is used by Lord Hua-yang, by Jang-hou, by the Queen Mother and by your majesty. If it is not to become a gourd with which any may dip his water this should stop. For you may be quite sure that when a country does become a gourd for all to dip with, it too will be split asunder.

"I have heard it said, ‘when the fruit is heavy the bough is strained, when the bough is strained the trunk is harmed; when a capital is great it endangers the state, when a minister is strong he menaces his king.’ Yet in your city today every man worthy more than a peck of grain is the minister’s man—this includes your majesty’s lieutenants, chancellors, and even personal attendants. Even in times of peace this should not happen, but should there ever be trouble, then I would certainly wit-