

CHAPTER
4
Section 4

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 worth 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-

ness a king standing all alone in his own court. “I have the temerity to feel fear for your majesty. And what I fear is that in the country of Ch'in, many generations hence, the rulers will no longer be descendants of yours. “Your servant has heard that the awesome presence of great rulers in the past held their ministers in check at home and spread their control abroad over the land. Their government was neither troubled nor seditious and their deputies trod a straight path, fearing to do otherwise. But today the deputies of Jang-hou split the lords among themselves, and tallies given by his hand are recognized all over the land. He arrogates the power of a great state to muster troops and attack the lords, but the profits from his victories and gains all return to his own fief of T'ao, the spoils enter the treasuries of the Queen Mother and revenues from within your borders find their way to Lord Hua-yang. Surely what used to be called ‘the road to danger and destruction for state and ruler’ begins here. “If three honored persons can drain the state to secure themselves, can the king's power be absolute? Will all commands originate with him? In truth, your majesty, only one in every three actually does.”

from J.I. Crump, trans., Chan-Kuo Ts'e, “Intrigues of the Warring States.” Reprinted in Cyril Birch, ed., Anthology of Chinese Literature: From Early Times to the Fourteenth Century (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 39–40.

Discussion Questions

1. **Determining Main Ideas** According to Ying-hou, what is wrong with the way that King Chao rules Ch'in?
2. **Summarizing** What examples does Ying-hou use to strengthen his argument against the way King Chao rules?
3. **Drawing Conclusions** What advice do you think Ying-hou might give to the king about governing Ch'in more effectively?