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(lín) The Forest

From the beginning, good fortune. Persistence is effective. When you arrive at the eighth month, there will be misfortune.

- Nine in the first place: The prohibited forest: persistence brings good fortune.
- Nine in the second place: The prohibited forest. Good fortune, nothing that is ineffectual.
- Six in the third place: The sweet forest: not having a destination is effective. Already worried over it, but no blame.
- Six in the fourth place: Nearing the forest: no blame.
- Six in the fifth place: Knowing the forest: what is suitable for a great ruler. Good fortune.
- Six at the top: Thick forest, good fortune without blame.

Image

Over the lake there is earth: the forest. You should be inexhaustible in the sincerity of your thoughts and limitless in offering protection to the people.

The image here is either that of a forest (Mawangdui) or of looking downward, usually construed as overseeing or governing—perhaps related to seeing the forest instead of the trees. Certainly a forest grows well when it is planted in earth fed by subterranean sources of water. Then few droughts are severe enough to kill the trees, and their lives seem inexhaustible, fed by vast aquifers below them. Similarly looking down from the height of a tree should provide perspective and a wider, more comprehensive view of those for whom one is responsible. From this vantage point, one should be able to see workable combinations of people and tasks, and to act with both knowledge and sensitivity to feelings.

Think of the great strength a forest possesses, especially one fed by subterranean springs or streams. In addition to this sustenance, the trees can lean against one another so that strong gusts of wind are far less likely to topple them than a single tree standing alone. Forests were often on land shared by many, and the people were free to gather downed branches and other dead wood to use for their cooking fires. By the fourth century BCE, Mencius had already recognized the dangers of deforestation and erosion. This suggests that such destruction had already occurred in some places by his era; he mentioned a specific hill near a large city.

Shaughnessy, 108–109, 305.

Lynn, 254–259.

Wilhelm/Baynes, 78–81.