



# How to Read Chinese Poetry Podcast

## Topic 1 *The Book of Poetry*

Guest Host: William H. Nienhauser (University of Wisconsin at Madison)

### Episode 1 Marriage Poems

#### I. Texts

The Grove at Zhu 株林

“Why are you in Zhu Grove?

Have you followed after Xia Nan?”

“I have not gone to Zhu Grove,

To follow after Xia Nan.”

“I drove my team of four horses,

I rested in the outskirts of Zhu;

I teamed my four colts,

And breakfasted in Zhu.”

hú wéi hu zhū lín  
胡為乎株林

cóng xià nán  
從夏南

fēi shì zhū lín  
匪適株林

cóng xià nán  
從夏南

jià wǒ shèng mǎ  
駕我乘馬

shuì yú zhū yě  
說于株野

chéng wǒ shèng jū  
乘我乘駒

zhāo shí yú zhū  
朝食于株

[Translated by William H. Nienhauser]

The Peach Tree Tender 桃夭

The peach tree budding and tender,

Vivid and bright its flowers.

This girl is going to be married,

And fit for her chamber and house.

The peach tree budding and tender,

Quite large its fruit.

This girl is going to be married,

And fit for her house and chamber.

The peach tree budding and tender,

Its leaves luxuriant and lush.

This girl is going to be married,

And fits with all in the family.

táo zhī yāo yāo

桃之夭夭

zhuó zhuó qí huá

灼灼其華

zhī zǐ yú guī

之子于歸

yí qí shì jiā

宜其室家

táo zhī yāo yāo

桃之夭夭

yǒu fén qí shí

有蕢其實

zhī zǐ yú guī

之子于歸

yí qí jiā shì

宜其家室

táo zhī yāo yāo

桃之夭夭

qí yè zhēn zhēn

其葉蓁蓁

zhī zǐ yú guī

之子于歸

yí qí jiā rén

宜其家人

[Translated by William H. Nienhauser]

Poems read in Mandarin by Zhao Wenxuan

## II. Episode Notes

### 1. Introduction to the *Book of Poetry*

- Dates of composition: ca. 11th-7th BCE
- Three types of poems: *song* 頌 (hymnes), *ya* 雅 (odes), *feng* 風 (airs)
- Mostly four-word-line poetry. This genre later became a very formal genre.
- Three modes of presentation: *fu* 賦 (exposition), *bi* 比 (comparison), and *xing* 興 (affective or evocative imagery)
- Airs or folk songs composed in a social setting that predated Confucian mores.
- *Zhou li* 周禮 (Zhou Ritual)

### 2. Analysis of “On the Mountain is a Thorn Elm”

- The 2+2 rhythm of four-word-line poems
- Topic+comment structure of a four-word line
- Comparison with Greek poetic fragments: Archilochos, Fragment #107; Alkman, Fragment #82

### 3. Analysis of “Why are you in Zhu Grove?”

- Xia Nan 夏南
- Duke Ling of Chen 陳靈公 (r. 613-599 BCE)
- Erotic associations of the groves

### 4. Analysis of “The Peach Tree Tender”

- Comparison (*bi*) between the bride and the peach tree
- Peach tree associated with female fertility in traditional China
- Epithalamiums - marriage songs

## III. Textual Source

William H. Nienhauser, JR. “Tetrasyllabic Poetry: *The Book of Poetry (Shijing)*.” In *How to Read Chinese Poetry: A Guided Anthology*, ed. Zong-qi Cai. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008, pp. 13-35, especially 13-17.

