Woven  綿

Woven and unbroken are the gourds, large and small.
As the early life of our people.
From the Du to the Qi
Came the ancient honorable Dan Fu.
He dug shelters, he dug caves—
They still did not have houses and homes.
The ancient honorable Dan Fu,
On the next morning drove his horses.
Leading them west along the banks of the river,
He reached the foot of Mount Qi.
Then with the woman Jiang
He came himself to look for places to dwell.
The plain of Zhou was so fertile
Even bitter celery was like honey.
Then he began, then he divined,
Then he notched our tortoises.
They read “stay,” they read “it’s time.”
So he built homes there.
And so he was content, and so he stayed.
And so he created a left, and so he made a right.
And so he set boundaries, and so he made territories.
And so he dredged gullies, and so ordered the
From the west to the east
Everywhere he then took charge of affairs.
The he summoned a Master of Construction;
Then he summoned a Master of Labor.
So that they could erect houses and homes.
Their plumb lines ruled straight,
They lashed together planks as earthen molds,
To build an ancestral temple, reverent and respectful.
Carrying the earth in crowds and multitudes,
Throwing it into molds with clamors and shouts;
Raising walls with a pounding beat,
Smoothing them with a scraping sound.
One hundred walls rose up together—
The beating of the work drums could not keep up!
So he created the outer gate soaring,
Soaring the gate so high.
So he erected the palace gate,
The palace gate so grand.
So he erected a great earthen shrine,
Whereby to parade the Rong captives (in defeat).

Tho’ over time he could not stop the enemy’s wrath,
Still they did no harm to our reputation.
He thinned the oaks,
He cleared the roads,
He frightened away the Kun barbarians—
Ah, how they panted in exhaustion.

To cause the Yu and the Rui to pledge peace,
King Wen quickened their yielding natures.
I say he brought those estranged to follow him;
I say he drew those from front and back to him;
I say he caused those with petitions to rush to him;
I say he brought his defamers to his defense.

[Translated by William H. Nienhauser]
The poem read in Mandarin by Zhao Sikun
II. Episode Notes

1. Analysis of “Woven”
   - Da ya 大雅
   - Zhou dynasty 周
   - Gu Gong Dan Fu 古公亶父
   - Shang dynasty 商
   - Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145-ca.86 BCE)
   - Shiji 史記 (Records of the Grand Scribes)
   - Hou Ji 后稷
   - Gong Liu 公劉
   - Xunyu people 紅霓
   - Rong-Di people 戎狄
   - King Wen of Zhou 周文王
   - Repeated rhyme as mnemonic device
   - Sound echoing sense in -ng final
   - General obscurity of shi poems in isolation

III. Textual Source