



How to Read Chinese Poetry Podcast

Topic 3 *The Book of Poetry: The Han Canonization*

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Episode 7 A Love Song and A Moral Exemplum

I. Text

Ospreys 關雎

"Guan, guan," cry the Ospreys,

On the islet in the river.

Graceful is this fair maiden,

A fine bride for a gentleman.

Thick and thin grows the water mallow,

Left and right one gets it in the flow.

Graceful is this fair maiden,

Awake or asleep, I am seeking her.

Seeking though I was, I could not possess her,

Awake or asleep I was longing for her.

Alas, longing and forlorn

I tossed and turned in bed.

guān guān jū jiū
關 關 雎 鳩

zài hé zhī zhōu
在 河 之 洲

yǎo tiǎo shū nǚ
窈 窕 淑 女

jūn zǐ hǎo qíu
君 子 好 逑

cēn cī xìng cài
參 差 荇 菜

zuǒ yòu liú zhī
左 右 流 之

yǎo tiǎo shū nǚ
窈 窕 淑 女

wù mèi qiú zhī
寤 寐 求 之

qiú zhī bù dé
求 之 不 得

wù mèi sī fú
寤 寐 思 服

yōu zāi yōu zāi
悠 哉 悠 哉

zhǎn zhuǎn fǎn cè
輾 轉 反 側

Thick and thin grows the water mallow,
Left and right one plucks it.
Graceful is the fair maiden,
With zither and zithern I will befriend her.

cēn cī xìng cài
參差荇菜
zuǒ yòu cǎi zhī
左右采之
yǎo tiǎo shū nǚ
窈窕淑女
qín sè yǒu zhī
琴瑟友之

Thick and thin grows the water mallow,
Left and right one gathers it.
Graceful is this fair maiden,
With bells and drums I will gladden her.

cēn cī xìng cài
參差荇菜
zuǒ yòu mào zhī
左右芼之
yǎo tiǎo shū nǚ
窈窕淑女
zhōng gǔ lè zhī
鐘鼓樂之

[Translated by Zong-qi Cai]

The poem read in Mandarin by Zhao Wenxuan

II. Episode Notes

1. The Making of the Confucian Canon during the Han
 - Emperor Wu of the Han 漢武帝 (156-87 BCE) adopted Confucianism as state ideology
 - “The Prefaces to *the Book of Poetry*”
2. The Commentary on “Osprey” by the author of the “The Prefaces to *the Book of Poetry*”
 - King Wen 文王 (1152-1056 BCE), the founder of the Zhou dynasty
 - Tai Si 太姒, the wife of King Wen
 - Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127-200 AD), a famous Confucian scholar in the Eastern Han Dynasty
 - The praise of Tai Si’s moral character as reflected by her perfect harem management

III. Textual Source

Zong-qi Cai. “The Canonization of the *Book of Poetry* During the Han.” In *How to Read Chinese Poetry in Context: Poetic Culture from Antiquity Through the Tang*, ed. Zong-qi Cai. New York: Columbia University Press, 2018, pp. 65-77, especially 65-70.