I started out in the morning on my way from Cang-wu,
By evening I had arrived at the Hanging Garden.
I wanted to stay a while in those fairy precincts,
But the swift-moving sun was dipping to the west.
I ordered the Xi He to stay the sun-steeds’ gallop,
To stand over Yan-zi Mountain and not go in;
For the road was so far and so distant was my journey,
And I wanted to go up and down, seeking my heart’s desire.
I watered my dragon steeds at the Pool of Heaven,
And tied their reigns up to the Fu-sang tree.
I broke a sprig of the Ruo tree to strike the sun with,
I ordered my phoenixes to mount on their pinions.

 Topic 4  *The Lyrics of Chu: Qu Yuan and His Poetic Allegories*
Guest Host: Fusheng Wu (The University of Utah)

Episode 12  Spiritual and Imaginary Journeys in *Lisao* or “On Encountering Trouble”

I. Text

“*Lisao*” or “On Encountering Trouble” 離騷

zhāo fù rèn yǔ cāng wú xī
朝發轫于蒼梧兮

xi yǔ zhī hū xuān pǔ
t夕余至乎縣圃

yù shāo lù cǐ líng suǒ xī
欲少留此靈琐兮

rì hū hū qí jiāng mù
d日忽忽其將暮

wǔ líng xī hé mì jì xī
吾令和兮弭節兮

wàng 崢嵫而勿迫

lù mán mán qí xiā yuán xī
路漫漫其修遠兮

wú jiāng shāng xià ér qú suǒ
吾將上下而求索

yǐn yù mǎ yǔ xiān chì xī
飲余馬于咸池兮

zhōng yù péi hū fú sāng
總余辔乎扶桑

zhé ruò mù yī fǔ rì xī
折若木以拂日兮

wǔ líng fēng niǎo fēi téng xī
吾令鳳鳥飛騰兮
And fly ever onward by night and by day.
The whirlwinds gathered and came out to meet me,
Leading clouds and rainbows, to give me welcome.
In wild confusion, now joined and now parted,
Upwards and downwards rushed the glittering train.
I ordered Heaven’s porter to open up for me;
But he leant across Heaven’s gage and eyed me churlishly.
The day was getting dark and drawing to its close,
Knotting orchids, I waited in indecision.

... 

I searched for the holy plant and twigs of bamboo,
And ordered Ling Fen to make divination for me.
He said, “Beauty is always bound to find its mate:
Who that was truly fair was ever without lovers?
Think of the vastness of the wide world,
Here is not the only place where you can find your lady.
Go farther afield,” he said, “and do not be faint-hearted.
What woman seeking handsome mate could ever refuse you?
What place on earth does not boast some fragrant flower?
Why need you always cleave to your old home?
The world today is blinded with its own folly,
You cannot make people see the virtue inside you.

...
Since Ling Fen had given me a favorable oracle,
I picked an auspicious day to start my journey on.

Harness winged dragons to be my coursers,
Let my chariot be of fine work of jade and ivory!
How can I live with men whose hearts are strangers to me?
I am going on a far journey to be away from them.

I took the way towards the Kun-lun Mountain,
A long, long road with many a turning in it.
The cloud-embroidered banner flapped its great shade above us,
And the jingling jade yoke-bells tinkled merrily.
I set off at morning from the Ford of Heaven,
At evening I came to the world’s western end.
Phoenixes followed me, bearing up my pennants,
Soaring high with majestic wing-beats.

My eight dragon steeds flew on with writhing undulations,
My cloud-embroidered banners flapped on the wind.

But when I had ascended the splendor of the heavens,
I suddenly caught a glimpse of my old home.
My groom’s heart was heavy and the horses for longing
Arched their heads back and refused to go on.
Luan

Enough!

There are no true men in the state: no one understands me.

Why should I cleave to the city of my birth?

Since none is worthy to work with in making good government

I shall go and join Peng Xian in the place where he abides.

[Translated by David Hawkes]
The poem read in Mandarin by Fusheng Wu

II. Episode Notes

- shenyou 神遊 (spiritual/supernatural journey, flight)
- xiangxiang 想象 (imaginary)
- guyu 故宇 (old home)
- meizheng 美政 (good government)
- Peng Xian 彭咸
- Catharsis

III. Textual Source