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RELATIVE CLAUSES
IN LATE ARCHAIC CHINESE

0 - AIMS

This short article has two aims: the first is to show in a rather informal way that Late Archaic Chinese embodies a type of relative clause forming strategy which might further our knowledge of both the language-specific and the universal aspects of syntactic strategies used across languages. In this respect it addresses itself to linguists in general. The second is to show that current linguistic theories can be profitably brought to bear on the extant data of dead languages. In this respect it is hopefully meant to encourage Sinologists to reassess the state of linguistic research in their own field in the light of recent developments in linguistics(2).

1 - GENERAL REMARKS

The present discussion is devoted to restrictive relative clauses, with an excursus into one type of pseudo-relative. Unlike appositive

(1) This paper was presented in a slightly modified form to the Linguistics Section of the 1st Congress of the European Association of Chinese Studies at Paris in September 1976. I wish to thank all those members who took the trouble to discuss some of the critical points with me. Wherever possible within the scope of this article such criticism has been accounted for.

(2) A satisfactory balance between these two aims is difficult to achieve, for at times it means overstating things for one target group without reaching full clarity for the other. I wish to apologize for all shortcomings due to this approach.

Cah. de Ling. Asie Orientale n° 1 Mars 1977, pp. 61-71
relative clauses\(^3\), restrictive relative clauses narrow, i.e. restrict, the referential scope of the head noun phrase (NP), i.e. of the antecedent. E.g.

1 - *The man I saw was bald* (restrictive)
2 - *John, who is intelligent, failed his exams* (appositive)

The development of generative theory has shifted the attention of comparative linguistic research from surface structure phenomena to the analysis of the surface structure realizations of common or even universal deep structure features. Thus questions like e.g. "Is there a definite or indefinite article in Archaic Chinese?" make way to questions like e.g. "How are the deep structure features of nominal expressions, e.g. definite and indefinite, which in English happen to be superficially realized as articles, realized in Archaic Chinese?" To some extent, this question turned out to be crucial to the investigation of the structure of restrictive relative clauses.

In generative theory, NPs are regarded as comprising a set of features, some of which regularly, others only under certain conditions, influence the syntactic behaviour and at times also the surface form of a given NP. For example: the inherent feature [+ female] normally surfaces when the (English) noun "woman" is pronominalized. Binary features are composed of mutually exclusive bits of predominantly syntactic information. This type is normally a rule feature, i.e. it either triggers or blocks the operation of (a) certain transformation(s). For example: an NP is either pronominalized, i.e. [+ Pro], or not, i.e. [- Pro], the positive variant resulting in distinct lexemic material. The features of an NP usually become operative in varying subsets.

Restrictive relative clauses are functionally related with other determiner constituents of nominal expressions. It therefore seems reasonable to assume that some of the features that determine the surface structure realization of the latter should also be involved in the behaviour of the former. This is apparently the case for at least the following features: [+ definite] and [+ specific]. These features are interrelated in the

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\(^3\) Appositive relative clauses are rare in Archaic Chinese. As far as I can judge, the only constructions that are susceptible to an analysis as appositives are such that might be mistaken for complements but for the fact that they lack the distinctive characteristics of the complement construction, i.e. the general embedding marker ZH1e and the final (verbalizing) marker ye (也) E.g.

(i) 付因知王之不怒也

*I of course know that the king cannot bear (it).*

The string wang shi\(\_\)e bu ren ye is a complement

(ii) 有朋友自邁方來不亦淵乎

*To have friends, who come from afar, is this not after all delightful?*

Antecedent: peng you; appositive relative clause: peng you zi yuan fang lai

The positioning of the appositive relative clause corresponds with the general rule for appositive expressions, e.g. in word-formation.