On the Differeinces of the Usages of Firstperson Pronouns between the Chuci and other Texts in Classical Chinese

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ON THE DIFFERENCES OF THE USAGES OF FIRST-PERSON PRONOUNS BETWEEN THE CHUCI AND OTHER TEXTS IN CLASSICAL CHINESE

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1. Introduction

Classical Chinese is a language which is abundant in its texts such as the Lunyu, the Mengzi, the Zuozhuan and so on. The grammatical system of Classical Chinese is very different from that of the oracle bone inscriptions, the bronze inscriptions and the Shujing which we often call Preclassical Chinese.

So far the studies of the grammatical systems of Classical Chinese have been restricted to the texts of the northern part of China, and strange as it seems few studies have been made of the texts of the southern part of China, that is the Chuci 楚辞. [1]

For example, Karlgren studied the differences of the usages of 27 functional words in Classical Chinese texts, and concluded that we could classify the Classical Chinese texts into three main groups, i.e., the Lun - Meng - Tan group, the Zhuang - Mo - Xun - Lü group and the Zuo - Guo group. But no attention was given to the Chuci in his paper. [2]

Therefore this paper is intended as an investigation of the grammatical system of the Chuci. In my first study I will examine the system of first-person pronouns of the Chuci, and I will compare it to the system of other Classical Chinese texts.[3]

2. General survey of Classical Chinese

Before examining the grammatical system of first-person pronouns of the Chuci, I will first begin by making a general survey of the systems of first-person pronouns of Classical Chinese.

According to a study by Huang, [4] we can summarize that there are four types of systems of first-person pronouns in Classical Chinese, i.e., the Lunyu-proup [the Lunyu and the Tangong (a chapter of the Li-Ji)], the Mengzi-group [the Mozi, the Mengzi and so on], the Zuozhuan-group [the Zuozhuan and the Guoyu] and the Xunzi-group [the Xunzi, the Hanfeizi and so on]. These four types can be schematized as follows:

TABLE 1: First-Person Pronouns of Classical Chinese

	Lunyu-gr.		Mengzi-gr.		Zuozhuan-gr.		Xunzi-gr.
Subj.	吾/我	予	吾/我	予	吾/我	余	吾/我
Poss.	吾	予	吾/我	予	吾/我	余	吾/我
Obj.	我	予	我	予	我	余	我
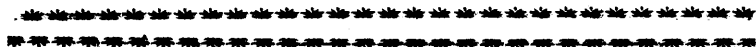
The Lunyu-group use wu 吾 and wo 我 regularly, while yu 予 is used under some special circumstances.[5] I once suggested that yu 予 is used on the condition that the speaker wants to change his tone and create an atmosphere of solemnity, and that yu 予 is used as subjective, possessive and objective, and is used only in the singular. [6] The differences in usages between wu 吾 and wo 我 can be summarized like this: as subjective wu 吾 is usually used , while wo 我 is used when the speaker wants the subject to be more emphasized than other persons. [7] As possessive wu 吾 only is used, and as objective wo 我 only is used.

In the Mengzi-proup, as possessive wo 我 is also used when the speaker wants the main-word of the possessive to be more emphasized than other persons.

The system of the Zuozhuan-proup is basically the same as the system of the Mengzi-group, but yu 余 is used instead of yu 予. According to the study by Fang-kuei Li, yu 予 has the same phonetic value as yu 余; [8] therefore we can recognize that yu 予 and yu 余 form a complementary distribution between the Mengzi-group and the Zuozhuan-group.

In the Xunzi-group the word yu 予 (or yu 余) disappeared, and only wu 吾 and wo 我 were used.

3. The System of First-Person Pronouns of the Chuci

In the preceding chapter I made a general survey of the

grammatical systems of first -person pronouns of Classical Chinese. In this chapter we will see statistical results of first -person pronouns in the Chuci, and I will consider the differences between the system of first -person pronouns of the Chuci and that of the texts of the northern part of China, i.e.,the Lunyu -group, the Mengzi -group,the Zuozhuan -group and the Xunzi -group.

It seems reasonable to suppose that in the Chuci anthology, the poems named the Lisao 離騷, the Jiuge 九歌, the Tian-wen 天問, the Jiuzhang 九章, the Jiubian 九辯 and the Zhaohun 招魂 are earlier works.

Now I will present a statistical analysis of first -person pronouns in these six poems in the following table:

TABLE 2: Statistical Analysis of the Chuci

|	余	予	朕	吾	我	Total
離	51	4	4	26	2	87
歌	15	7	0	5	2	29
天	1	0	0	2	1	4
章	25	0	2	31	4	62
辯	6	0	0	1	0	7
魂	0	0	1	1	1	3
Total	98	11	7	66	10	192 Sum Total

The sum total includes 192 data.

There are 87 data from the Lisao, there are 62 data from the Jiuzhang, and there are 29 data from the Jiuge.

There are 7 data from the Jiubian, there are 4 data from the Tianwen , and there are 3 data from the Zhaohun. The small amount of data from these three poems makes it hard to clearly understand the grammatical system of first -person pronouns.

Strictly speaking, we should here examine all the poems one by one, and then discuss the differences between the six poems. But to argue this point would lead us into other specialized areas of the problems of the periods when these six poems were formed and the problems of the authors who wrote these six poems, and such a digression would undoubtedly obscure the outline of our argument. So here I will summarize the relationship between these six poems briefly as follows:

a) The Lisao has the most strict and regular grammatical system of first - person pronouns.

b) The systems of the Jiuge and the Jiubian are basically the same as the system of the Lisao.

c) The Jiuzhang has a looser grammatical system of first - person pronouns than the system of the Lisao.

d) The systems of the Tianwen and the Zhaohun are very different from the system of the Lisao.
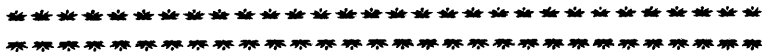
Now I will examine the poem which has the most strict and regular grammatical system, i.e., the Lisao.

The statistical analysis of first -person pronouns in the Lisao are shown in the following table:[9]

TABLE 3: Statistical Analysis of the Lisao

Subj.	吾 23	余 16
Poss.	朕 4/吾 1	余 21
Obj.	我 2/吾 2/予 1	余 14

In the table above there are some points to be mentioned. First, I datum fo wu 吾 used as possessive is as follows:

1.退將復脩吾初服.　　　　　　(Lisao p.17)[10]

Tui Jiang fu xiu wu chu fu.

And so, retired, I would once more fashion my former raiment. [11]

In this sentence wu 吾 is used as possessive. I suppose that this datum is a sort of exceptional case which is produced in the transcribing process. [12] So I take no notice of this exception.

Secondly, 2 data of wu 吾 used as objective are as follows:

2.恐年歲之不吾與.　　　　　　　(Lisao p.6)

Kong nian sui zhi bu wu yu.

Afraid Time would race on and leave me behind.

3.不吾知其亦已兮,　　　　　　　(Lisao p.17)

Bu wu zhi qi yi yi xi,

I will no longer care that no one understands me,

In these 2 data wu 吾 is used as objective of the so-called negative-reversion. As to this point I once concluded that we can find wu 吾 as objective when it is only in the negative reversion in the Lunyu. [13] Therefore we may say that in these data wu 吾 is not used as a usual objective, but used irregularly.

Thirdly, 4 data of zhen 朕 used as possessive are as follows:

4.朕皇考曰伯庸.　　　　　　(Lisao p.3)

Zhen huang kao yue Bo yong.

Bo Yong was my father's name.

5.回朕車以復路兮,　　　　　　(Lisao p.16)

Hui zhen che yi fu lu xi,

To turn about my chariot and retrace my road,

哀朕時之不當.　　　　　　　(Lisao p.25)

懷朕情而不發兮， （Lisao p.35）

In these 4 data zhen 朕 is used as possessive. In these data zhen 朕 is used when the speaker wants to create an atmosphere of solemnity, or when the speaker wants to avoid repetition of the same first - person pronouns. Zhen 朕 is used only 4 times as opposed to yu 余 which is used 21 times, and in TABLE 2 we can see that zhen 朕 had not been used in the time of the Jiuge and the Jiubian. So I recognize that the usage of the word zhen 朕 was already on the decline in the time of the Lisao.

Fourthly, the most important point to be mentioned is the differences between the usages of wo / yu 我 / 予 and that of yu 余. The usages of wo / yu 我 / 予 are as follows:

6.恐高辛之先我． （Lisao p.34）

Kong Gao xin zhi xian wo.

And feared that Gao xin would get there before me.

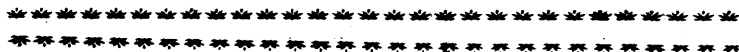7.國無人莫我知兮， （Lisao p.47）

Guo wu ren no wo zhi xi,

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

8. 申申其詈予． （Lisao p.19）

Shen shen qi li yu.

And over and over expostulated with me.

9. 夫何榮獨而不予聽. (Lisao p. 20)

Fu he qiong du er bu yu ting.

Why should you be so aloof and not take our advice?

倚閶闔而望予. (Lisao p. 29)

詔西皇使涉予. (Lisao p. 45)

It is obvious that wo/yu 我/予 is used at the end of verse which includes the special condition that wo/yu 我/予 is used before the word xi 兮 or used as objective in the nega-tive −reversion.

On the other hand, the usages of yu 余 are as follows:

10. 皇覽揆余初度兮, (Lisao p. 4)

Hang lan kui yu chu du xi,

My father, seeing the aspect of my nativity,

11. 肇錫余以嘉名. (Lisao p. 4)

Zhao xi yu yi jia ming.

Took omens to give me an auspicious name.

名余曰正則兮, (Lisao p. 4)

字余曰靈均.	(Lisao p. 4)
初既與余成言兮，	(Lisao p. 10)
既替余以蕙纕兮，	(Lisao p. 14)
謠諑謂余以善淫.	(Lisao p. 15)
鸞皇爲余先戒兮，	(Lisao p. 28)
雷師告余以未具.	(Lisao p. 28)
鳩告余以不好.	(Lisao p. 33)
命靈氛爲余占之.	(Lisao p. 35)
告余以吉故.	(Lisao p. 37)
靈氛既告余以吉占兮，	(Lisao p. 42)
爲余駕飛龍兮，	(Lisao p. 42)

In these 14 data yu 余, which is used as objective, occurs without exception in the middle of verse.

In the preceding study it has often been asserted that yu 余 is the same word as yu 予, and that these two words form a complementary distribution in two different types of texts. That fact can be schematized like this:

TABLE 4: Usages of yu 余 and yu 予

	Preclassical Chinese	Classiical Chinese
Use yu 余	Oracle Bone Inscriptions Broze Inscriptions	*Zuozhuan* *Guoyu*
Use yu 予	*Shujing*	*Lunyu* *Mozi* and so forth

In the Lisao, on the contrary, both yu 余 and yu 予 are surprisingly used in one text, and these two words also form a complementary distribution, i.e., yu 予 is used at the end of verse, while yu 余 is used in the middle of verse.

This conclusion makes it clear at once that yu 予 cannot be the same word as yu 余 in the Lisao, so I suggest that yu 予 had a different phonetic value from yu 余. The word wo 我, which is used in the same circumstances as yu 予, was pronounced in a shangsheng 上聲; therefore I think that yu 予 was pronounced in a shangsheng, while yu 余 was pronounced in a pingsheng 平聲.[14]

Fifth, in other Classical Chinese texts, both wu 吾 and wo 我 are used as subjective or possessive in some circumstances as has been mentioned above, but in the Lisao wu 吾 is used as subjective and wo 我 is strictly used as objective.

Finally, as to the problem on the differences between the usages of wu 吾 as subjective in 23 data and that of yu 余 as subjective in 16 data, at present I have no clear idea why this is. Both wu 吾 and yu 余 are usually used as subjective in the Lisao, so we may say that there are some rules under which wu 吾 or yu 余 are used regularly.

Now, I will point out two phenomena to be noted: first, there are many examples in which a modal-adverb jiang 將 or a verb ling 令 follow wu 吾, but there is no example in which either of them follow yu 余. Examples are as follows:

12. 顧竢時乎吾將刈.   (Lisao p. 11)

Yuan si shi hu wu jiang yi.

When the time had come, I could reap a fine harvest.

13. 延佇乎吾將反.   (Lisao p. 16)

Yuan zhu hu wu jiang fan.

I halted, intending to turn back again.

吾將上下而求索.   (Lisao p. 27)

朝吾將濟於白水兮,   (Lisao p. 30)

歷吉日乎吾將行.   (Lisao p. 42)

吾將遠逝以自疏.   (Lisao p. 43)

吾將從彭咸之所居.   (Lisao p. 47)

14. 吾令羲和弭節兮,   (Lisao p. 27)

Wu ling xi he mi jie xi,

I ordered Xi-he to stay the sun-seeds' gallop,

15. 吾令鳳鳥飛騰兮   (Lisao p. 29)

Wu ling feng niao fei teng xi,

I caused my phoenixes to mount on their pinions,

吾令帝閽開關兮,   (Lisao p. 29)

吾令豐隆乘雲兮,   (Lisao p. 31)

吾令蹇脩以爲理.   (Lisao p. 31)

吾令鴆爲媒兮,   (Lisao p. 33)

Next, there are many examples in which a shuangsheng 雙
聲 or dieyun 疊韵 word follow yu 余, but there is no example
in which either of them follow wu 吾. Examples are as fol-
lows:

16. 忳鬱邑余侘傺兮,   (Lisao p. 15)
Tun yu yi yu cha chi xi,
But I am sick and sad at heart and stand irresolute,

17. 曾歔欷余鬱邑兮,   (Lisao p. 25)
Ceng xu xi yu yu yi xi,
Many a heavy sigh I heaved in my despair,

I explain these two phenomena as pollows: when the
speaker uses the modal-adverb jiang 將 or the verb ling 令,
he is conscious that wu 吾 is the subject of the verb; when the
speaker uses the shuangsheng or dieyun word, he is conscious
that yu 余 is the topic of the sentence.[15]

Below, I will summarize the main points that have been
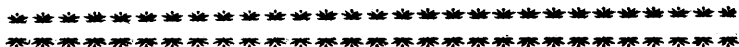made in this chapter:

TABLE 5: First-Person Pronouns of the Lisao

Subj.	吾	余
Poss.	朕	余
Obj.	我／予	余

The grammatical system of first-person pronouns in the Lisao is:

a) As subjective, wu 吾 is used when the speaker is conscious that it is the subject of the verb; yu 余 is used when the speaker is conscious that it is the topic of the sentence.

b) As possessive, yu 余 is usually used; zhen 朕 is used when the speaker wants to create an atmosphere of solemnity, or when the speaker wants to avoid repetition of the same first-person pronouns.

c) As objective, wo／yu 我／予 is used at the end of verse; yu 余 is used in the middle of verse.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, I will summarize from what has been said above that:
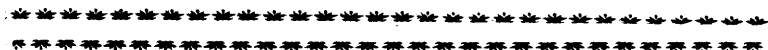
a) In Classical Chinese of the northern part of China,
yu 予 is used in the Lunyu - group or the Mengzi - group;
yu 余 is used in the Zuozhuan - group.

But on the other hand in the Lisao of the Chuci an-
thology, yu 予 is used at the end of verse as objective;
yu 余 is also used in the middle of verse as objective.

b) In Classical Chinese of the northern part of China,
both wu 吾 and wo 我 are used as subjective or posses-
sive in some circumstances.

But on the other hand in the Lisao, wu 吾 is used as
subjective, wo 我 is used strictly as objective.

c) In Classical Chinese of the northern part of China, as
subjective wu 吾 is usually used; yu 予 (or yu 余) is used
on the condition that the speaker wants to change his
tone and create an atmosphere of solemnity. But on the
other hand in the Lisao wu 吾 is used when the speaker
is conscious that it is the subject of the verb, 余 is used
when the speaker is conscious that it is the topic of the
sentence.

I suppose that these differences in the usages were produced
by the differences of the dialects in Classical Chinese. Meng
ke 孟軻, who came from the northern state Zou 鄒 (very near
to Lu 魯), used to severely criticize the man named Xu xing
許行 who came from the southern state Chu 楚. For example

in his work Mengzi:

南蠻鴃舌之人   (Mencius 3A)

nan man jue she zhi ren

southern barbarian who chats unintelligibly as the
butcher-bird does

For Mengke, Chu dialect must have been a kind of foreign
language.

(Mar. 30, 1994)

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1. For example, in Huang Sheng-zhang 黄盛璋, "Guhanyu
de renshengdaici yanjiu 古漢語的人身代詞研究," Zhongguo
yuwen 中國語文 6 (1963), 443-472, Huang made a statisti-
cal analysis of the Chuci, but it was too elemental. Liao Xu-
dong 廖序東,"Lun Qufu zhong renchengdaici de yongfa 論屈
賦中人稱代詞的用法," Zhongguo yuwen 5 (1964), 360-367,
is the only work which studies pronouns of the Chuci espe-
cially. But Liao thought that the Lisao, the Jiuge, the Tian-
wen and the Jiuzhang were consistent in their using and made
few comparisons between the usages of the Chuci and the us-
ages of other Classical Chinese text.

2. Bernhard Karlgren, "Excursions in Chinese Grammar,"
Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities 23 (1951),
107-113.

3. The reason why I chose the first‐person pronouns of the Chuci for my first step, is that the Chuci, especially the Lisao, uses first‐person pronouns very often; therefore there are many examples which can be analyzed easily.

4. See Huang Sheng‐zhang "Guhanyu de renshengdaici yanjiu."

5. It is often asserted that in Preclassical and Classical Chinese there are two types of first‐person pronouns, i. e., *ng‐ and *r‐. This fact may be explained from an etymological point of view, especially from the establishment of civilization of China. But this point needs further consideration.

6. Nishiyama Takeshi 西山猛, "Shangguhanyu diyirencheng daici yu de chuxian tiaojian wenti 上古漢語第一人稱代詞'予'的出現條件問題," Chugoku bungaku ronshu 中國文學論集 21 (1991), 106 – 117.

7. Many papers have been written on this problem, but it has not been answered clearly yet. For further details, see Nishiyama, "Shangguhanyu diyirencheng daici yu de chuxian tiaojian wenti."

8. Li Fang‐kuei 李方桂, Shangguyin yanjiu 上古音研究 (Beijing: Commercial Press, 1980). The phonetic value of the two words are *rag.

9. The number on the right side of each Chinese character refers to its number of data.

The statistical analysis of the other five poems is as fol-

lows:

Jiuge		
Subj.	吾 4	余 1
Poss.	吾 1	余 11
Obj.	我 2/予 6	余 3

Tianwen		
Subj.	吾 1/我 1	
Poss.	吾 1	
Obj.	余 1	

Jiuzhang		
Subj.	吾 18	余 8
Poss.	吾 8/朕 2	余 12
Obj.	我 5/我 4	余 5

Jiubian		
Subj.	吾 1	余 1
Poss.		余 4
Obj.		余 1

Zhaohun		
Subj.	吾 1/我 1/朕 1	
Poss.		
Obj.		

10. The edition used throughout is Hong Xing-zu 洪興祖, Chuci buzhu 楚辭補注 (Beijing:Zhonghuashuju ed., 1983).

11. As to English translations, I used David Hawkes, The Songs of the South (London: Oxford University Press, 1959).

12. We must always consider that transcribed texts may be lacking in reliability especially for functional words like pronouns. As to this point in the future I am planning to examine Chu silk manuscripts and Chu wooden strips.

13. See Nishiyama, "Shangguhanyu diyirencheng daici yu de

chuxian tiaojian wenti."

14. In George A. Kennedy, "Zai lun wu wo 再論吾我,"
(tr. by Li Bao - jun 李保均) Academia Sinica, Bulletin of the
Institute of History and Philology 28 (1956), 273 - 281,
Kennedy asserted that the usages of pronouns are based on
their tones, i.e., the pingsheng or the shangsheng.

We may suppose that these usages of yu 予 and yu 余 are
concerned with rhymes or meters.

But we can find the following examples also:

a)國無人莫我知兮,　　　　　　　(Lisao p. 47)
b)聞佳人兮召予,　　　　　　　　(Jiuge p. 66)

These usages are not concerned with rhymes or meters,
because in exmple a) wu 吾 can be used instead of wo 我, and
because in example b) yu 予 rhymes with no word. Therefore
we must say that this problem remains to be proved.

15. For this point I used the terms of Li & Thompson,
Mandarin Chinese - a functional reference grammar -
(California: University of California Press, 1981).