

## On the topic marker “者(zhe)” in the Old Chinese

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As already well known, there exist topic markers such as *wa* in Japanese:

Watashi	wa	tyuugokujinn	desu.
I	topic marker	Chinese	be

It is also known that this kind of topic marker can be found not only in Japanese but also in Korean as spoken on the Korean peninsula, and in a number of Tibeto-Burman languages such as Kachin. To this background this presentation adds the claim that 者 in ancient Chinese, as found in e.g. 廉颇者赵之良将也 in 史記 is also a topic marker. By revealing the first occurrence of 者 in ancient records we here try to track its date of origin.

The grammatical function of 者 is since long back described as 別事詞也 in 說文. Also in present day 现代汉语词典(修订本), the fourth way of usage of 者 is described as <书>用在词、词组、分句后面表示停顿:风~, 空气流动而成. The present speaker is in other words not the first to point out this grammatical function. But when it comes to describing 者 as used in this way, as a topic marker such as the Japanese *wa* etc. the present speaker may be the first. Thus the first aim of this presentation is the claim that languages that include topic markers has since long been used in Japan, on the Korean peninsula and in mainland China, as well as in Burma and part of India.

The second aim of this presentation is to make clear when this kind of 者 came into use. In short, my results indicate that 者 as a topic marker came into existence in Confucius' days, i.e. between 500-400 B.C. After investigating ancient records such as 「易經」「詩經」「書經」「春秋」「論語」 it was concluded that the first use of 者 was as a **simple pronoun** and, later, as a **complex pronoun**. However, the use of 者 as a topic marker could only be found in 論語 and in one part - 佂 - of 易經.

It goes without saying that this use of 者 is considered to be a grammatical offspring of 者 as in its substantial meaning.