

A CASE OF SANDHI?

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The equation *yen* 焉 = *yü chih* 於之 made by Professor George A. Kennedy in *JAOS* 60 (1940) 1-22, 193-207, has been widely accepted as explaining the grammatical functioning of the character and had indeed been anticipated to some degree by Wang Yin-chih's explanation of *yen* as frequently equal to *yü-shih* 於是.¹ Professor Kennedy's further hypothesis that it represents a fusion of *yü* and another pronominal element **an*, which occurs also in *jan* 然 (如 *ju + an*) seems very plausible but doubts have been expressed on the grounds that no such pronominal element **an* can be found on its own. There is, however, another case, not previously noted, which seems precisely parallel to the series *yü*: *yen*, *ju*: *jan*, and which seems to give strong support to the fusion theory.

The binome *jo-kan* 若干 "so many" "such and such a number" is well known and its meaning is clear. Its formation has, however, never, so far as I know, been satisfactorily explained. Two early commentators are commonly quoted. One of the sub-commentaries of the *Li-chi* says, "The ancients in speaking of number said *jo-kan* . . . *jo* is "like" (*ju*), *kan* is "seek" (*ch'iu* 求). The meaning is that if the thing is in itself not fixed, one must always seek it like this".² This is not very convincing. Ku Yen-wu's commentary to *Han-shu* 24B. is better. He says, "*jo-kan* is a word which postulates (*ch'ieh-she* 且設) a number. *Kan* is like *ko* (箇). The meaning is simply that it should be a number like this many 當如此箇數耳".³ (Note that both commentators find it necessary to introduce "like this" 如此 into their explanations of the meaning.) The equation of *kan* with *ko* (arch. *kâr*) is not altogether unreasonable since the words are phonetically not very far apart. The alternative form of the character 个 has indeed a reading *kân*; but this is only in the sense of "sides of a target", not "piece". *Kan* is not known in the sense of *ko* in any other context and to accept Yen Shih-ku's explanation would still leave the problem virtually unresolved.

¹ Wang Yin-chih 王引之 *Ching-chuan shih-tz'ü*, p. 51, Chung-hua shu-chü, Peking, 1956.

² *Li-chi chu-shu* 5.18a (*Ch'ü-li* 下), edition of *Shih-san chu-shu*, 1739-46.

³ *Han-shu pu-chu* 24B.52. Two later commentators, Sung Ch'i of Sung and Hu Kuang of Ming, both gave their support to the view that *kan* means "seek". The Ch'ing scholar Wang Ming-Sheng remarked that the word was still in ordinary use to express an unknown or approximate number.

It will no doubt by now be apparent that I am suggesting that, just as *an* = *ju + an* and *yen* = *yü + an*, so *jo-kan* = *jo + an*. According to Karlgren's reconstruction the archaic sound of *jo-kan* was *ñjak-kân*. One need only suppose the gemination of the medial consonant to derive this from *ñjak-ân*.⁴

Can we discover this hypothetical - *ân* in a free state? It is surprising to me that the familiar interrogative *an* 安 (Archaic *ân*) has not been put forward as a candidate. That a relationship exists between *yen* final and *yen* interrogative (involving, it would appear, a difference in initial, which Professor Kennedy attributes to a difference in stress⁵) has been accepted both by Professor Kennedy and by persons opposed to his theory. Moreover the occurrence of *an* in a non-interrogative sense has been pointed out by Wang Yin-chih. E.g. *Kuo-yü* 若不戰而結成, 王安厚取名而去之 "If he concludes peace without fighting, Your Majesty will thereby depart from him having obtained great renown."⁶ In this sense it is not uncommon in *Hsün-tzu* and other third century texts, where it is sometimes written 案 or 按. Professor Kennedy has already pointed out in relation to *yen* that there is nothing unusual in Chinese in the same word functioning on the one hand as an interrogative and on the other as an indefinite pronoun or vague demonstrative.⁷

It might of course be thought that the interrogatives *an* and *yen*, being so similar in meaning, are only phonetic variants of one another and this view might be strengthened by the observation that some texts such as *Lun-yü* and *Meng-tz'ü* use *yen* exclusively.⁸ On the other hand many other texts have both. In the *Tso-chuan*, which as Karlgren has demonstrated, has a regular and distinctive grammar, *yen* is more common but *an* is by no means unknown. We have even a case such as 暴而不戢, 安能保大。猶有晉在, 焉得定功。所違民欲猶多, 民何安焉。 where *an* and *ho* occur in successive sentences. Legge translates, "Cruel and not calling in the weapons of war, how can I preserve the great appointment? And while still the State of Tsin remains, how can I firmly establish my merit? There are many things by which I oppose what the people desire, and how can they get repose from me?"⁹ All three interrogatives are translated "how" and it would be highly subjective to attempt to see any differences in the meaning here, though a careful examination

⁴ Professor W. Simon suggests to me that the gemination may be explained as compensating for the loss of the glottal stop. One could also express it as assimilation of the glottal stop to the preceding *k*. For other examples of *sandhi* in the phonology of Archaic Chinese see Yü Min 俞敏 in *Yenching hsieh-pao* 35 (1948) pp. 29-50.

⁵ See G. A. Kennedy, *JAOS* 60 (1940), pp. 193 ff. and *HJAS* 16 (1953), p. 228.

⁶ *Kuo-yü*, "Wu yü", 19.13a, b (*Ssü-pu ts'ung-k'an*). See Wang Yin-chih, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-48.

⁷ See *HJAS* 16 (1953), p. 229.

⁸ Interrogative *an* occurs once in *Lun-yü* XI, 25.

⁹ Hsüan-kung 12. Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, V, 1, p. 320.

of all contexts might perhaps be able to distinguish some differences of usage.

An is a rather vague interrogative pronoun translatable according to the context as "where?", "how?". *Yü* is an equally vague and generalized prepositional word, "in", "at", "to", "by", "from", etc. It is not surprising therefore that the combination *yen* = *yü/an* should have much the same meaning as *an* alone and should replace it altogether in some varieties of Chinese.

Whether or not the enclitic *-an* can be identified with 安 it seems to me that its presence in *jo-kan* can be asserted on both phonetic and semantic grounds. The distinction between *jan* "like this" and *jo-kan* "like this" (or better "suppose this") is an interesting illustration of a distinction in meaning between *ju* and *jo*, but that is a subject on which I do not propose to embark here.