

## Jo Chih Ho 若之何→Nai Ho 奈何

Edwin G. Pulleyblank

This paper discusses the proposal made by Yoshida Megumi 吉田惠 in 1954 that the word *nai* 奈 in the expression *nai ho* 奈何 is derived from a phonetic fusion of the words *jo chih* 若之 in the longer expression *jo chih ho* 若之何 that means the same thing. It is shown that this hypothesis makes sense in terms of the relative chronology of the two expressions in texts of the Chou period and that the phonetic difficulties are lessened if one accepts proposals that I have put forward elsewhere for Old Chinese reconstruction, though lack of an exact parallel for this particular fusion makes it difficult to come to a firm conclusion. Some related problems concerning other members of the word family of *ju* 如, *jo* 若, *nai* 奈, etc. are also discussed.

The problem that I wish to focus on in this short paper which I offer in honour of the late Professor Li Fang-kuei is the etymology of the idiomatic expression *nai ho* 奈何 (EMC *naj<sup>h</sup> ɣa*) 'what can one do about it?'. In 1954 Megumi Yoshida suggested that it arose through a phonetic fusion of the first two syllables of the longer expression *jo chi ho* 若之何 (EMC *ɲiak tɕi ɣa*) which has the same meaning. In my opinion this is correct but I think one can improve on his argument both from the point of view of grammar and from the point of view of morphology. In the course of the discussion I shall have occasion to lay stress on two features of my own Old Chinese reconstruction (both well grounded in other respects in my opinion) which account in a much readier and simpler way than any alternatives that have been proposed for certain types of word family relationship, namely the 'two vowel,' inner/outer, \*ə/a or \*zero/a ablaut, and the prosodic interpretation of the dichotomy into what I call Type A and Type B syllables (replacing Karlgren's 'Grade III' *yod*).

The words *nai* 奈 EMC *naj<sup>h</sup>* < \*nátš, and *jo* 若 EMC *ɲiak* < \*nàk 'conform

to, accord with; agree; thus; such; like, as; if, etc.', are part of an important word family which also includes at least the following: *no* 諾 EMC *nak* < \**nák* 'agree, say yes', *ju* 如 EMC *niä* < \**nää* 'like; if, etc.', *jan* 然 EMC *nian* < \**nàn* 'like that, thus, so', *erh* 而 EMC *ni* < \**nè* 'then, and (linking verbs in series); yet, but, etc.', *nai* 乃 EMC *nəj* < \**nó* 'then, thereupon', *erh* 爾 EMC *niä* < \**nəj* 'thus'. It would take me too far afield and would be premature to attempt to make a full analysis of the semantic and phonological connections between these various words. It should be remarked, however, that the close etymological connection between *erh* 而 and *ju* 如, which is amply attested by glosses in which one is interpreted as standing for the other, is a good example of \*ə/a ablaut. The semantic opposition of between *erh* 而, which is primarily a connector between verbs and is thus more relational, and *ju* 如, which can stand on its own as a predicator, fits the 'extrovert' vs. 'introvert' opposition that is associated with this ablaut. The reconstruction of these words as having no final consonant in Old Chinese, except for the [ǎ] glide in \**nää*, is something that I shall reserve for discussion on another occasion.

Note also that the phonological contrast, according to my reconstruction, between *no* 諾 \**nák* and 若 \**nàk*, and between *nai* 乃 \**nó* and *erh* 而 \**nè*, which are semantically so close, is reduced to one of prosody and does not involve a difference of initial consonant (dental \**n* as opposed to palatal \**ñ*) or the absence/presence of a segment \*-j- as is required by Karlgren. The first point has been widely accepted by other scholars but the second is still controversial. It has a direct bearing on the phonology of *nai* 奈 and we shall return to it in below.

The members of the word family that we must look at more closely in our investigation of *nai* 奈 are *jo* 若 \**nàk* and *ju* 如 \**nää*. In later usage they became virtually synonymous and they are often treated as such. Nevertheless, as one can see from the above dictionary definitions based on Karlgren's *Grammata Serica Recensa*, they were far from being exact

equivalents in the earliest stages of the written language. *Jo* 若 \*nák is mostly a transitive verb meaning 'be concordant, agree with, obey', *no* 諾 \*nák being the form taken when it was used as a one word utterance, "I agree, yes". *Ju* 如 \*nää, on the other hand, was used as a copula: A 如 B 'A is like B.' I call it a copula because its syntax differed in some important respects from that of an ordinary transitive verb. In the first place, it differed in its word order with interrogative pronouns. The regular rule in both standard Classical Chinese and the pre-Classical language was that interrogative pronoun objects were placed in front of transitive verbs that governed them: *ho yu* 何有 'has what? there is what?', *ho i* 何以 'using what? by means of what?'. In the case of the pre-Classical copula 維, however, the interrogative pronoun follows: *wei ho* 維何 'is what?', *wei shuei* 維誰 'is who?'. This word order is also followed in the case of the demonstrative pronouns *ssu* 斯 EMC siä < \*sàj and *i* 伊 EMC 'ji < \*'èj used as copulas, the locative prepositions *yü* 于 EMC wuä < \*wää '(go) to, at, in' and *yü* 於 EMC 'iä < \*'ää 'in', and, most importantly from the point of view of our present investigation, *ju* 如 \*nää 'like'.<sup>1</sup>

1. 其樂如何 (Its pleasure is like what! =) How great is my pleasure! (Shih 228/1)
2. 如何新畬。於皇來牟 How are the second year's and third year's fields? Oh, fine are the wheat and the barley. (Shih 276/2)

The pre-Classical word class that I am calling 'copulas' was broken up when *wei* 維(also written 唯, 惟) was replaced by the final particle *yeh* 也 as the principal means of marking noun predication and was restricted to the meaning 'only'. *Ho yeh* 何也 replaced *wei ho* 維何 in the meaning 'is what?'<sup>2</sup>

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- 1 Another syntactical feature that is shared by *ju* 如, *yü* 於, and *yü* 于 is that they all exclude the object pronoun 之 *chih* and instead have special forms in \*-n which are used when reference back is required, namely *jan* 然, *yen* 焉, and *yüan* 爰, I expect to publish a separate article dealing with this point shortly.
  - 2 The old word order was retained, however, for 爲 EMC wiä < \*wäl 'make' when it was used as a copula. Cf. 爲誰 'is who?' in *Lun yü* 18/6 (twice).

The old word order was retained in the case of *yü ho* 於何 EMC \*'äǎ ɣäǎ < \*'äǎ gál 'in what? how? where?', which was, however, commonly replaced by *wu hu* 惡乎 EMC 'ɔ ɣɔ < \*'äǎɣäǎ. I suspect that this was a phonetic fusion of *yü ho* 於何 (or perhaps of *yü hu* 於胡 EMC \*'äǎ gää). In the case of *ju* 如, however, things developed differently. It was reinterpreted as an ordinary transitive verb and *ho ju* 何如 (or *ho jo* 何若 in some dialects) replaced 如何 *ju ho* in the meaning 'is like what? Thus, in the Analects.

3. 何如其知也 what is his wisdom like? (*Lun-yü* 5/18)

The matter is, unfortunately, complicated by the fact that *ju ho* 如何 continues to appear to a limited extent in the Classical period, sometimes as a survival of the earlier usage meaning 'is like what?' but also sometimes as an abbreviated form of *ju chih ho* 如之何 'how should one do it? what can one do about it?', an expression that already appears, mostly including *chih* 之 but also sometimes with *chih* 之 omitted, in the *Shih Ching*.

4. 析薪如之何，匪斧不克。The splitting of firewood, how is it done? Without an axe one cannot do it. (*Shih* 101/3)

5. 伐柯如何，匪斧不克。How does one hew an axe-handle? Without an axe one cannot do it. (*Shih* 158/1)

This construction is to be interpreted as a causative transformation in which the interrogative pronoun is not the direct object but an added complement after the direct object: 'make it like what?' Transitive verbs cannot normally be made causative in this way but intransitive verbs and adjectives can: *hsing* 行 'walks, proceeds', *hsing chih* 行之 (equivalent to 使之行) 'put it into motion, operate it; *mei* 美 'is beautiful', *mei chih* 美之 'makes it beautiful' or 'calls it beautiful' (equivalent to 使之美 or 謂之美). *Ju ho* 如何 'is like what?' is semantically equivalent to a predicate adjective, which may help to account for the fact that it can have a causative transformation: 使之如何→如之何 by the same kind of 'raising' of the complement verb as in the case of 使之美→美之.

The *ju chih ho* 如之何 construction persists, without any change in word

order, in the Warring States period, replaced in some dialects by *jo chih ho* 若之何 or *nai ho* 奈何. Instead of *chih* 之 one may find a substantive, or even a nominalized sentence as the object of *ju* 如 or *jo* 若:

6. 不能政其身，如政人何。If he cannot govern his own person, what can he do about governing others? (Lun-yü 13/13)

One of the merits of M. Yoshida's article was that he analyzed correctly the difference in meaning between *ju (chih) ho* 如(之)何 and *ho ju* 何如在 the Classical period and so accounted for the difference in word order. But he overlooked the fact that, apart from the comparatively few cases in which it is an abbreviated form of *ju chih ho* 如之何, *ju ho* 如何 in the Shih Ching has the same meaning as *ho ju* 何如 in later texts and he thought the absence of 何如 there was merely a matter of chance.

Apart from the change in word order from *ju ho* 如何 to *ho ju* 何如, the *Lun-yü*, representing the Lu dialect, continues to use *ju* 如, rather than *jo* 若, both for 'is like what?' and 'make it like what? do what about it?' Mencius is like the *Lun-yü* in this respect, except that, although *ho ju* 何如 predominates (14 examples), there are 5 examples of *ju ho* 如何. Most of these can, however, be explained as shortened forms of *ju chih ho* 如之何, rather than survivals of pre-Classical usage. This is clearly true of example 7.

7. 曹交問曰。人皆可以爲堯舜，有諸。……如何則可。Chiao of Ts'ao asked [Mencius], "Is it so that all men can become Yaos and Shuns?... What must one do for this to be possible?" (*Meng-tzu* 6B/2)

Compare 如之何則可 in *Meng-tzu* 1A/5, 1B/14, 1B/15 and 1B/12. Example 8 is quite similar.

8. 敢問國君欲養君子，如何斯可謂養矣 I venture to ask how, when a ruler of a state wishes to support a superior man, he must do it so that it **can** (properly) be called support. (*Meng-tzu* 5B/7)

The following two cases are closely parallel to one another.

9. 敢問瞽瞍之非臣如何 I venture to ask how you explain that Ku-sou

was not a minister. (*Meng-tzu* 5A/4)

10. 敢問薦之於天而天受之，暴之於民而民受之，如何 I venture to ask what you mean by [saying that Yao] presented him to Heaven and Heaven accepted him, presented him to the people and the people accepted him. (*Meng-tzu* 5A/5)

In both Mencius is asked, not what a certain situation was like, but what he has to say about a point in the argument.

In the one remaining case 如何 undoubtedly means 'is like what?' but it forms a descriptive complement after the main verb, rather than an independent predicate, which may account for the survival of the older word order.

11. 憂之如何 What way is he anxious about it? (*Meng-tzu* 4B/28)

The *Tso-chuan* differs sharply from the Lu dialect texts in the use of *ju* 如 and *jo* 若, as Karlgren pointed out in his classic study (1926). The important point from our present point of view is that, while, as in the *Lun-yü* and *Meng-tzu*, *ho ju* 何如 is common in the sense of 'is like what?', *jo* 若 completely replaces *ju* 如 in the phrases *jo X ho* 若 X 何 and *jo chih ho* 若之何, with its shortened form *jo ho* 若何. It is also of interest to note that there are 5 examples of *ju ho* 如何, all of which have to be interpreted as survivals of the pre-Classical word order rather than as abbreviations of (the non-occurring) *ju chih ho* 如之何, for example,

12. 非鼠如何 If you were not a rat in this, what were you? (*Hsiang* 23/fu)

The *Tso-chuan* also has a single example of *nai ho* 奈何.

The *Kuo-yü*, as in other respects, closely resembles the *Tso-chuan* but *nai ho* 奈何 is more prominent (5 examples as compared to 21 of *jo chih ho* 若之何). There are also three cases in which *nai* 奈 replaces *jo* 若 in the construction *nai X ho* 奈 X 何. More will be said below on the significance of this.

Later Warring States texts outside the Lu dialect mostly agree with the

*Tso-chuan* and *Kuo-yü* in excluding *ju X ho* 如 X 何 and *ju chih ho* 如之何, while *ju ho* 如何 almost completely disappears. There is a single example in *Chuang-tzu*. Note also a single example of *ju chih ho* 如之何 in *Hsün-tzu*. On the other hand the role of *nai* 奈<sup>3</sup> as compared to *jo* 若 become increasingly prominent. *Mo-tzu* has 20 cases of *nai ho* 奈何 and only 1 of *ju chih ho* 若之何. *Chuang-tzu* has 16 cases of *nai ho* 奈何 as against 7 of *jo chih ho* 若之何, 3 of *jo X ho* 若 X 何 and 2 of *jo ho* 若何. It also had 2 cases of *nai chih ho* 奈之何 and one of *nai X ho* 奈 X 何. *Hsün-tzu* has 5 cases of *nai ho* 奈何 as against 2 of *jo chih ho* 若之何. *Kuan-tzu* has 60 cases of *nai ho* 奈何 as compared to 21 of *jo ho* 若何, 1 of *jo chih ho* 若之何, and 2 of *jo ho* 若何. *Han Fei-tzu* has 23 cases of *nai ho* 奈何, 6 of *nai X ho* 奈 X 何, and 1 of *nai chih ho* 奈之何, and only a single case of *jo ho* 若何.

If we assume, as seems justified on other grounds, that the language of the *Tso-chuan* is relatively archaic in its grammar as compared to other Warring States texts, it would appear from this survey that *nai ho* 奈何 arose in the same dialect area as *jo chih ho* 若之何 but was later in appearing and had largely replaced the latter during the third century. This history is quite consistent with the hypothesis that *nai* 奈 is a fusion of *jo chih* 若之 but there are still some difficulties that have to be addressed.

The first point concerns an occurrence of *nai ho* 奈何 in the 'Shao kao 召告,' one of the genuine parts of the *Shu Ching*, which is regularly cited in dictionaries as the earliest occurrence of the expression.

13. 曷其奈何弗敬 How can he be but careful? (Karlgren, *Book of Documents* p. 48)

Yoshida has suggested that *nai ho* 奈何, which seems quite anachronistic from the rest of what we know about the history of this expression, is an editor's gloss on *ho ch'i* 曷其 which has crept into the text. This must surely be correct. It is hard to account otherwise for the repetition of the inter-

3 In these figures I do not distinguish the variant graphs 奈 and 𢇛.

rogative particle *ho* 曷 by a second interrogative phrase which adds nothing to the meaning.

The other problem from the point of view of syntax is the occurrence of *nai chih ho* 奈之何 and, even more, of *nai X ho* 奈 X 何, which seems to imply that *nai* 奈 was sometimes treated as if it were equivalent to *jo* 若 alone, rather than *jo chih* 若之. Statistically, however, *nai chih ho* 奈之何 is far less common than *nai ho* 奈何, which is the reverse of the situation in the Tso-chuan, in which *jo chih ho* 若之何 greatly outnumbers *jo ho* 若何. Examples of *nai X ho* 奈 X 何 are also quite infrequent. Moreover *nai* 奈 is almost always accompanied by *ho* 何 and is never used for *jo* 若 in any other construction. As *nai* 奈 came to be perceived as a single monosyllable, somewhat altered from its component parts, it took over the whole function of *jo* 若 in the idiom. One might compare the English colloquial contraction *ain't*, originally derived from the first person singular *amn't*, later extended indiscriminately to all three persons, singular and plural and to the verb *have* as well as *be*.

We are left then with the strictly phonological problem of showing how *jo chih* 若之 EMC *niak tɕi* could have merged to give *nai* 奈 EMC *naj<sup>h</sup>*. Using Karlgren's reconstructions *\*ńźjak t'jæg* and *\*nâd*, Yoshida had to explain (a) the difference in initial consonants, (b) the loss of medial *j* and (c) the final *\*d* of the resultant form. Point (a) has already been disposed of above. Most scholars are, I believe, now agreed that the Middle Chinese palatal affricates *[tɕ]* *[tɕ<sup>h</sup>]*, etc., and the nasal *[ɲ]* (=Karlgren's *ńź*) were derived from Old Chinese dentals, not from a separate Old Chinese palatal series. The second point has also been alluded to. According to my reconstruction Karlgren's *yod* does not represent a segmental phoneme in Old Chinese but corresponds to a prosodic distinction which divided all syllables into two kinds: Type A, marked with an acute accent, which ended up with mid or low vowels in Middle Chinese, and Type B, represented by a grave accent, which ended up with high vowels, with or without

a following /a/, in Middle Chinese. I have made this proposal in other publications (1973, 1984) and will not repeat the details here. Let me just remark in passing that an explanation in terms of a shift in prosody is more concordant with the close semantic relationships between such word pairs as 乃 and 而 or 若 and 諸 than would be the assumption of a \*j infix. Compare also the synonymous question particles 安 EMC 'an < \*'àn 'how? where?' and 焉 EMC 'ian < \*'àn 'how?, where?'

We are left with the question of the finals. *Nai* 奈 EMC naj<sup>h</sup> belongs in a rhyme which I reconstruct as \*-as < earlier \*-ats. Again we have to enter an area of controversy. Nevertheless evidence is accumulating from many quarters to support the hypothesis of a final sibilant in such rhymes surviving well into the present era. It happens that there is directly supporting evidence for the word *nai* 奈. According to the Shuowen the proper form of the graph is 柰, with 'tree' instead of 'great' as the upper element, standing for the name of a fruit tree, namely, the Chinese pearleaved crabapple, *Malus asiatica*. Jerry Norman has proposed that Japanese *nashi*, 'pear' is an early borrowing of this Chinese word at a time when the final \*-s was still pronounced (1982: 244). This must certainly be correct. Since it is a borrowing from Chinese into a foreign language and not a Chinese transcription of a foreign word, it provides evidence of a different kind from that which I have cited previously for the reconstruction of final \*-s.

The Shuowen also states that the lower element, 示 EMC dzi<sup>h</sup>, is phonetic. This can hardly be correct and, since it also has no apparent relation to the meaning, one wonders whether it is not a corruption of 木 'tree'. If the original form of the graph was 柰, with 木 as signific and 大, EMC daj<sup>h</sup> < \*dâts, as phonetic, it would provide a good *hsieh-sheng* graph for the \*náts tree<sup>4</sup>. However this may be—and one must admit that no

4 The phonology parallels that of 大 in that, besides the reading EMC naj<sup>h</sup>, it had a second EMC reading, na<sup>h</sup>. In the *Chung-yüan yin yün* it still has two readings, EM naj<sup>h</sup> and nuä<sup>h</sup> (< EMC na<sup>h</sup>).

such graph is actually attested—奈 is much the most common form and a phonetic role for 大 would make good sense.

We must now confront the most difficult phonological problem. Could dissyllabic \*nàk tət have fused, with a change of prosody, into monosyllabic \*náts or \*nás? Since there is no parallel that I am aware of, it is scarcely possible to offer proof, but speculation may not be entirely vain.

I am assuming that proto-Chinese allowed final consonant clusters of the type -Cs. We must suppose that originally \*s could follow any of the possible final consonants of the language but only the stops are relevant from the point of view of the present discussion. There is good evidence that \*-ps had already been assimilated to \*-ts by the time of the Shih Ching. This assumption is necessary in order to account for cases like *nei* 內 EMC nwəj<sup>h</sup> < \*-ts < \*-ps 'inside', which already rhymes with other words in \*-əts in the Shih Ching but which is phonetic in the graph for the cognate word *na* 納 EMC nəp 'bring in' and also sometimes used for that word without the added signific. Compare also *li* 立 EMC lip 'stand', which is used for *wei* 位 EMC wi<sup>h</sup> < \*-ts < \*-ps 'place of rank, position (as ruler)' in inscriptions, as well as having the role of phonetic in the enlarged graph. (I leave aside the problem of the initials.)

There is good evidence that \*-ts retained its sibilance well into the post-Han period but it is more difficult to find clear evidence for the time at which \*-ts simplified to \*-s. I suspect that this had already occurred by the Western Han period, and that by the same time \*-ks had become a velar fricative \*-x. The merger of 若之 to 奈 must have taken place considerably earlier, however. Let us suppose that at that time \*-ks had already simplified to \*-x and \*-ts remained as the only established final cluster in the language. In these circumstances, as \*nàk tət tended to lose its second vowel in rapid speech and become monosyllabic, it would have given \*nàkt and then, with a change of prosody, \*nàkt. By progressive assimilation of [k] to [t], followed by assibilation of the tense geminate

[tt], this would have become \*nátt, and then \*náts. This, being a possible syllable within the phonemic system of the language, was stabilized as a new morpheme and given its own written form. This provides at least one scenario by which the fusion could have taken place.

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The word *no* 那 EMC na (level tone), a rare question particle in the Classical language, has been claimed to be a fusion of *nai ho* 奈何 (Yang Shuda, *Tz'u-ch'üan* p. 67, citing Ku Yen-wu, *Jih chih lu* 32). Examples are very few, the principal one being the following:

14. 牛則有皮，犀兕尙多，棄甲則那 Oxen have skins, there are still many rhinoceroses. Then what was so serious about throwing away armour? (*Tso-chuan* Hsüan 2/1)

The speaker has suffered a disgraceful defeat and been captured by the enemy, after which he has escaped and returned to Sung, where he is attempting to repair the defences. He has been accused in a satirical ballad of having thrown away his armour. Tu Yü's commentary glosses 那 as 何. Ku Yen-wu explained this by saying that 那 was a rapid way of saying 奈何. In view of the rarity of 奈何 in the *Tso-chuan* it seems more likely that *no* 那 EMC na < \*näl is a fusion of *ju ho* 如何 EMC niä ɾa < \*nää gäl. 'Is like what?' also seems to fit the meaning better than 'what can one do about it?'

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To recapitulate: we have shown that 奈何 was equivalent in meaning to 若之何 and historically later. It makes excellent sense from the point of view of syntax and semantics to suppose that it arose as a fusion of the first two syllables. I believe that I have also shown that the hypothesis of such a fusion makes sense from a phonetic point of view.

## Note On Phonetic Transcriptions

Reconstructed forms for the *Ch'ieh-yün*, prefixed EMC (Early Middle Chinese) are based on Pulleyblank 1984, with the following modification: the glide /ǎ/ (being predictable) is omitted where it follows the vowel /a/, both in syllable final position and before velar consonants. Hypothetical earlier forms are preceded by an asterisk.

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8: 118-131.

## 摘 要

本文討論的是吉田惠氏在一九五四年提出的一個觀點即「奈何」一詞中的「奈」是「若之何」這一較長的表達方式中前兩個字「若之」的合音。兩詞表達的意思相同。

本文說明，就這兩種表達方式在周朝文獻中出現的先後時間看，「奈」爲「若之」的合音這一假設有其道理。盡管缺乏與「奈何」這一合音完全相同的詞例，從而難以作出定論，但是，如果接受本人在其他文中所提出的關於古漢語再構成的某些觀點，語音方面的問題將會有所減少。

本文還討論了與「如」、「若」、「奈」等屬於同一詞族的其他成分的有關問題。