

Grammar Revision 2: Uses of *zhě* 者

Zhě 者 forms noun phrases and has pronominal character. It substitutes for humans beings (“someone who...”; Mandarin: ... 的人) or a thing or abstract idea (“the fact that...”, sometimes: “the act of...”; Mandarin: ... 的事).

Zhě 者 following Verbs

1. Intransitive verbs (including stative verbs)

死者	[those who died:] the dead
勇者	so. who is brave
善於是者	sth. that is better than that
來者	so. who comes

2. Passive verbs

治於人者	those who are governed by others
刖者	so. who had his foot chopped off

3. Transitive verbs

得玉者	so. whos has found [a piece of] jade
知我者	the one who knows me
勝己者	those who surpass oneself
殺人者	[so. who killed another man:] a murderer

Nominal phrases governed by *zhě* 者 can encompass subordinated verbal phrases with *ér* 而:

富而不驕者	those who are rich but not arrogant
知其不可而爲之者	so. who does sth. even though he knows it is impossible

Sometimes *zhě* 者 follows a sentence with a subject other than the person or thing substituted for by *zhě* 者:

其母死者 so. whose mother has died

Following a verb, *zhě* 者 can turn it into a noun, the equivalent of a gerund. These phrases can often be translated into infinitive sentences, subordinated clauses beginning with “That...”, or conditional sentences starting with “If...”:

爲子君者	Is it not indeed arduous to be your prince?
不亦難乎	
殺其麋鹿者	To kill his elks or deers (equals:) is regarded as equal to the guilt of killing a man.
如殺人之罪	

無分者人之大害也 It is of great harm to men not to make any distinctions.

Complex sentences can be followed by *zhě* 者; again, translation by “That...”, “If...” or infinitive sentences are possible:

群臣不盡力于魯君者非不能事君也 [...]	That the ministers do not exert their strength to the full for the prince of Lu is not because they are not capable of serving their prince [...]
足下不聽臣者 [...]	If you don't listen to me, your minister [...]

Some *zhě* 者-phrases can equally well be translated impersonal or as “so. who...”:

知德者鮮矣 Those who understand virtue are rare. / Understanding of virtue is rare.

Zhě 者 following Nouns

Following nouns, *zhě* 者 can substitute for generic terms:

雉兔者	hunters of hares and pheasants
渚者	those living on islands

Adherents of some early “schools” of thought are designated in this way:

墨者	Mohist
儒者	“Confucians”, classicists

Especially when following the subject of a nominal sentence, *zhě* 者 has a topicalising effect which is often used in definitions:

仁者人也 The term benevolence / “manliness” is the same as “man”.

Following personal names, *zhě* 者 means “a certain”:

羊舌鮒者	a certain Yangshe Fu
北郭驕者	a certain Beiguo Jiao

