

Grammar Revision 6: Quantification

1. Subject Quantifiers

The adverbs *jiē* 皆 and *jǔ* 舉 mean “all (the subjects)” (for exceptions concerning *jiē* 皆 cf. below, no.2):

小人皆能養其親。 Petty men can all nurture their parents.
天下之民舉安。 All the people of the world are content.

The adverb *jū* 俱 ‘together, both’ is often found when the subject consists of two persons or things:

父母俱存。 Father and mother are both alive.

The adverb *gè* 各 means ‘each’:

大夫各愛其家。 The grandees each love *their own* families.

Huò 或 means ‘some (of the subjects)’:

宋人或得玉。 (Someone among the people from Song:) Someone from Song found [a piece of] jade.

Mò 莫 means ‘none (of the subjects)’:

晉國天下莫強焉。 The state of Jin – no [state] in the entire realm is stronger!

The double negation *mò bù* 莫不 is often used in the sense of ‘all’:

萬物莫不然。 None of the myriad things are not like this. > The myriad things are all like this.

Jìn 盡 (to exhaust > “exhaustively”): ‘completely’ usually quantifies the object (cf. below), but when there is no suitable object to be quantified, it regularly does so with the subject:

萬物盡然。 The myriad things are all like this.

Shú 孰 means ‘which one (out of a given set)’:

事孰爲大？事親爲大。 Of [the different kinds of] service which one is the most important? Serving one’s parents is most important.

In the post-classical language, and in some cases even earlier, some of the above adverbs develop into pronouns: *jiē* 皆 ‘everybody’, *huò* 或 ‘someone’, *mò* 莫 ‘nobody’.

2. Object Quantifiers

Jiē 皆 may quantify the object if the subject is unquantifiable, which is very common if the subject is a pronoun:

孫子皆殺之。 Master Sun killed them all.
汝皆說之乎。 Do you enjoy all these things?

In its usual function as object quantifier, *jìn* 盡 frequently has meanings like ‘completely [use up etc.]’:

子皮盡用其幣。 Zipi used up all his silk offerings.
盡食其肉獨，舍其肝。 They ate up all the flesh, leaving only the liver.

Like *jìn* 盡, *xī* 悉 can, as a verb, mean ‘to exhaust’, and it tends to quantify the objects of the verbs it precedes:

臣願悉言所聞。 I want to tell all I have heard.

Biàn 徧 (= 遍) appears to have the meaning ‘all the objects (indiscriminately / everywhere)’:

目不徧視，手不徧操。 The eye does not see everything (everywhere indiscriminately), the hand does not grasp everything.

The adverb *zhōu* 周 sometimes has spatial connotations:

文王周視得失，徧覽是非。 King Wen looked at all successes and losses, surveyed all rights and wrongs.
周知九州之地域。 [He] knew all the areas of the Nine Continents.

3. Adnominal Quantifiers / Prefixes

There are a few words which, used adnominally, mean ‘all the nouns’ and which function like pluralising prefixes.

Zhū 諸:

諸侯 the feudal lords
諸將 all the generals (*jiàng* 將)
楚王諸弟 all the king of Chu’s younger brothers

Qún 群 (‘flock, herd’):

群臣 all the ministers

Zhòng 眾 (‘crowd’):

眾狙皆悅。 The crowd of monkeys (*jū* 狙) were all pleased.

