The loss of *wh*-movement in Early Middle Chinese

Late Archaic Chinese (LAC; 5th-3rd C. BCE) had a type of *wh*-movement in which a VP-internal constituent moved to a focus position located in the edge of *v*P (Aldridge 2010). In (1), the object controller moves to the left of the matrix verb.

(1) 若子死，將誰使代子？   (LAC, 3rd C. BCE; *Hánfēizǐ* 22)

Ruò   zǐ   sǐ,   jiāng   **shéi**   shǐ __ dài   zǐ ?
if   you die will   who   make replace you
'If you die, then who shall (I) have replace you?'

The movement was lost in Early Middle Chinese (EMC; 2nd C. BCE – 2nd C. CE). The interrogative pronoun in (2) remains in its base position following the matrix verb.

(2) 令誰代之？   (EMC, 1st C. BCE; *Shǐjì*, Běnjì 8)

Lìng   **shéi**   dài   zhī?
order who   replace   him
'Who should we order to replace him?'

This paper is concerned with the question of why LAC *wh*-movement was lost. Feng (1996) proposes that LAC *wh*-movement and its loss in EMC were related to prosody. Feng analyzes movement of monosyllabic *wh*-words in LAC as cliticization to the verb and proposes that *wh*-in-situ resulted when larger phrasal categories became common in Middle Chinese, as in (3a). Fronting of monosyllabic *wh*-words can still be seen in this period, as in (3b).

(3) a.   此故其理也，有何怨乎？   (EMC, 1st C. BCE; *Shǐjì*, Lièzhuàn 21)

Cǐ   gù   qí   lǐ   yě,   yǒu   **hé**   **yuàn**   hū?
this ADV DEM way COP   have what complaint EXCL
'This is the way things are; what complaint could you have?!'

b. 子將何欲？   (EMC, 1st C. BCE; *Shǐjì*, Lièzhuàn 26)

Zǐ   jiāng   **hé**   yù __ ?
you will   what want
'What will you want?'

However, the prosodic approach is unable to account for examples like (2), in which monosyllabic *wh*-words also remain in situ in EMC. I propose instead that LAC *wh*-fronting was lost as a result of the loss of focus marking in the [Spec, *v*P] landing site. Focus is not overtly marked with non-phrasal *wh*-words as in (1). But the focus marker *zhī* appears following phrasal interrogative constituents in LAC.

(4) 夫晉，何厭之有？   (LAC, 5th C. BCE; *Zuǒzhuàn*, Xī 30)

Fú   Jìn,   [hé   yàn]   **zhī**   yǒu __ ?
DEM Jin   what satisfaction FOC   have
'(As for) Jin, what satisfaction would they have?'

The connection I make between *wh*-movement and overt focus marking may seem surprising, given that the majority of *wh*-questions in LAC involve non-phrasal interrogative constituents, which were never marked with *zhī*. But this asymmetry between phrasal and non-phrasal *wh*-constituents is accounted for straightforwardly after considering the diachronic origin of the focus marker *zhī*. The particle *zhī* in LAC had a wide distribution, functioning not only as a focus marker, but also as a pronoun and a genitive case marker. All of these functions can be traced back to its original function in Pre-Archaic Chinese (14th– 11th C. BCE) as a demonstrative pronoun. Djamouri (1999) shows that the demonstrative *zhī* grammaticalized into a personal pronoun by Early Archaic Chinese (EAC; 10th – 6th C. BCE). According to Wang (1959) and Yue (1999), genitive *zhī* grammaticalized from a possessive pronoun when it

resumed a full NP possessor in EAC. In EAC, the possessed NP in (5) would have been interpreted as 'the lords, their land'.

(5) 諸侯之地方百里。   (LAC: 4th C. BCE; *Mencius*, Gàozǐ 2)

    [Zhūhóu   **zhī**   dì]   fāng   bǎi   lǐ.
    feudal.lord   GEN   land   square 100   *li*
    'The fiefdoms of the lords are square and consist of 100 *li*.'

This origin also explains why *zhī* does not follow monosyllabic *wh*-words, since the pronoun could only double definite DPs. Fronted *wh*-phrases like those in (4) are all headed by a referential nominal and are D-linked. The origin of *zhī* in phrasal *wh*-fronting as a resumptive pronoun is also supported by the fact that fronted referential objects are followed either by *zhī* (6a) or by the demonstrative *shì* (6b) when they are focused. In LAC, *shì* is a demonstrative pronoun, as it was in EAC, while *zhī* functions as a focus marker (Meisterernst 2010).

(6) a. 吾唯子之怨。   (LAC, 5th C. BCE; *Zuǒzhuàn*, Wén 7)

    Wú   wéi   zǐ   **zhī**   yuàn __ .
    1   be.only   you   FOC   resent
    'I will resent only you.'

    b. 今王非越是圖。   (LAC; *Guóyǔ* 19; from Meisterernst 2010: 79)

    Jīn   wáng   fēi   Yuè   **shì**   tú __ .
    now   king   not.be   Yue   DEM   plan
    'Now, it is not Yue that the king is concerned with.'

I propose that the grammaticalization of *zhī* as a focus marker can be accounted for in the same way as its function as a genitive particle. Both *shì* and *zhī* appear in focus constructions in EAC, though *shì* was far more common in early EAC (Yin 1985). This is easily accounted for due to the fact that *zhī* had only just begun to acquire non-pronominal functions in the beginning of the EAC period. Given this diachronic background, it is reasonable to conclude that *zhī* carried the functional load of marking focus in LAC and its loss then removed the evidence for acquirers to posit a focus position in the edge of *v*P. EMC provides two types of evidence for this account of the loss of *wh*-movement.

First, the loss of *wh*-fronting in EMC coincides with the loss of *zhī* as both a genitive and focus marker. (7) is a possessed NP very similar to (5) but lacking *zhī*.

(7) 侵奪諸侯地方。   (EMC: 1st C. BCE; *Shǐjì*, Běnjì 7)

    Qīn   duó   [zhūhóu __ dì].
    cut.into   confiscate feudal.lord   land
    '(They) reduce and confiscate the fiefdoms of the lords.'

According to Sun (1994), focus fronting (and its concomitant marking) of the type shown in (6) had disappeared from the spoken language by the beginning of the Common Era. Obligatory *wh*-in-situ for phrasal constituents, as in (3a), also confirms the loss of this type of focus fronting, together with the loss of *zhī* to mark focus.

Secondly, even though non-phrasal *wh*-constituents continued to front in EMC, the landing site was not the edge of *v*P, suggesting that *v* could no longer host a focus feature to attract a VP-internal constituent. I propose that non-phrasal *wh*-movement was reanalyzed as incorporation to the verb. I show that when the *wh*-word is merged as the verb's complement, then it undergoes head movement and adjoins to the verb, accounting for examples like (3b). But fronting was lost in structural environments that did not permit head movement to the verb, as in (2), since the *wh*-word is merged in the specifier of VP, from which position it cannot incorporate to the verb. I will provide additional evidence from the absence in EMC of long distance fronting and movement from a PP, both of which were found in LAC.