



**A REEVALUATION OF SO-CALLED PASSIVE  
CONSTRUCTIONS IN ANCIENT CHINESE:  
FROM PRE-QIN TO THE HAN DYNASTY**

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## ABBREVIATIONS OF LINGUISTIC TERMS

A = agent

AM = agent marker

ASP = aspect

A-O = agent-oriented

ASP = aspect marker

APP = “appellation” referring to the “official title”

B/S = Baxter/Sagart

CAUS = causative (in some cases, only C is used)

CL = classifier

CP = complement phrase

DISP = disposal marker

e = empty

E = experiencer

E-O= experiencer-oriented

FIN = final particle

GEN = genitive

G = goal

i = index

INI = initial particle

INTR = intransitive

INS = instrumental marker

Lit. = literal translation

MC = Middle Chinese

MODI = modifier (i.e., *zhī*)

MOD = modal adverb

N = noun

NEG= negation

NP = noun phrase

NOM = nominalization

NAME = person’s name or place name or country’s name

OC = Old Chinese

OBJ = object

OBL = oblique marker  
PART = particle  
P = patient  
PASS = passive  
POSS = possessive  
PP = prepositional phrase  
PRON = pronoun  
PREP = preposition  
PV = pure “patient+V” construction  
PP. = personal pronoun.  
S = sentence  
SUBJ = subject  
SVO = subject verb object  
t = trace  
V = verb  
VP = verb phrase  
RVC = resultative verb compounds  
V = verb  
V<sub>1</sub> = the first verb  
V<sub>2</sub> = the second verb  
VA = verb of action  
VAR = verb of action implying a result  
V-C = verb followed by a complement  
NPS = negative patient-subject sentence

## CORPUS INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, I mainly use examples from the following pre-Qin texts (with tentative dates):

- Shijing* 诗经 (1046<sub>BC</sub>-771<sub>BC</sub>)  
*Zuo zhuan* 左传 (468<sub>BC</sub>-300<sub>BC</sub>)  
*Guoyu* 国语 (475<sub>BC</sub>-221<sub>BC</sub>)  
*Lunyu* 论语 (480<sub>BC</sub>-350<sub>BC</sub>)  
*Mozi* 墨子 (490<sub>BC</sub>-221<sub>BC</sub>)  
*Mengzi* 孟子 (340<sub>BC</sub>-250<sub>BC</sub>)  
*Yanzi chunqiu* 晏子春秋 (475 BC - 221 BC)  
*Xunzi* 荀子 (475<sub>BC</sub>-221<sub>BC</sub>)  
*Zhuangzi* 庄子 (350<sub>BC</sub>-250<sub>BC</sub>)  
*Hanfeizi* 韩非子 (475<sub>BC</sub>-221<sub>BC</sub>)  
*Lüshi Chunqiu* 吕氏春秋 (247 BC-239 BC)  
*Zhouli* 周礼 (300 BC-100 BC)  
*Yili* 仪礼 (475 BC - 221 BC)  
*Shangjunshu* 商君书 (475<sub>BC</sub> - 221<sub>BC</sub>)  
*Shangshu* 尚书 (772<sub>BC</sub>-476<sub>BC</sub>)  
*Zhouyi* 周易 (1046<sub>BC</sub>-771<sub>BC</sub>, dating doubtful)  
*Guanzi* 管子 (475<sub>BC</sub> - AD220)  
*Zhan Guo Ce* 战国策 (350 BC-6 BC)  
*Gongyangzhuan* 公羊传 (206<sub>BC</sub> - AD9).

Occasionally, also examples from Han Dynasty texts are used:

- Shiji* 史记 (109<sub>BC</sub> -91<sub>BC</sub>)  
*Hanshu* 汉书 (AD36-AD111)  
*Lunheng* 论衡 (AD27 - AD97)  
*Shishuo Xinyu* 世说新语 (AD420 - AD581)  
*Yanshi jiaxun* 颜氏家训 (AD420 - AD581)

What has to be emphasized is that many examples in the *bei* chapter (i.e., Chapter 3 of Part 3) are taken from Middle Chinese since *bei* appeared quite late and boomed since the Six dynasties.

These tentative dates are based on *Zhongguo Zhexueshu Dianzi Jihua* 中国哲学书电子化计划 “Chinese Text Project” (Sturgeon 2011, at <http://ctext.org>, accessed on 28 Oct. 2018). A discussion of the dating of these texts is beyond the scope of this thesis.



## SYMBOLS USED IN EXAMPLES

? Question symbol is attached to the end of a linguistic form to indicate that it is doubtful

\* Asterisk symbol indicates that the sentence is ungrammatical

+ Plus sign is a symbol used to connect syntactic constituents of a sentence

A > B > indicates that literally A, idiomatically B

A → B Arrow indicates a change from one linguistic form to another

★ Star suggests that this sentence is a reconstructed sentence

[] Square brackets are used in this work in three situations: (1) In the *gloss*, square brackets indicate that this information is supplemented by the author according to the context; (2) in the *Reference*, square brackets indicate the English translation of the title of an article; (3) in the *year*, square brackets indicate the reprinted year of a work, for example 1958[1980] means this work was first published in 1958 and the version cited in this thesis was reprinted in 1980.

## TRADITIONAL PERIODIZATION OF CHINESE HISTORY

The system is based on Wolfgang Behr's periodization of defining Old Chinese, Medieval Chinese and Mandarin.

### •Old/Archaic/Ancient Chinese 1600 BCE – 200 CE

-Early OC 1600 – 1100 BCE (甲骨文 ca. 1250 BCE)

-Middle OC 1100 – 200 BCE

-Western Zhou OC 1100 – 800 BCE

-Chunqiu OC 800 – 480 BCE

-Warring States OC 480 – 200 BCE (“Classical period”, the basis for Literary Chinese)

-Late OC 200 BCE – 200 CE

-Western Han OC 200 BCE – 0

-Eastern Han OC 0 – 200 CE

### •Medieval/ Middle Chinese 200 – 1100

-Early MC 200 – 700

-Late MC 700 – 1100

### •Mandarin 1100 - present

-Early M / Proto-Macro M 1100 – 1400

-Late M 1400 – 1650

-Modern M 1650 - present

## FREQUENTLY USED MARKERS AND PATTERNS

Frequently used patterns with their corresponding Chinese characters:

<i>jian/xian</i>	见
<i>jian V</i>	见 V
<i>xian V</i>	见 V
<i>bei</i>	被
<i>bei V</i>	被 V
<i>bei A V</i>	被 AV
<i>wei</i>	为
<i>wei V</i>	为 V
<i>wei A V</i>	为 AV
<i>wei V suo V</i>	为 A 所 V
<i>wei A zhi suo V</i>	为 A 之所 V
<i>yu</i>	于/於
<i>jian V yu N</i>	见 V 于/於 N
<i>ke</i>	可
<i>nan</i>	难
<i>yi</i>	易
<i>zu</i>	足
<i>ke yi</i>	可以
<i>nan yi</i>	难以
<i>yi yi</i>	易以
<i>zu yi</i>	足以

*yi*

以

*yi X wei Y*

以 X 为 Y

*zao*

遭

*yu*

遇

*shou*

受

## ABSTRACT

While there have been written many linguistic studies on the passive voice in Chinese, many aspects of this field of research have remained controversial, such as the emergence of various constructions, their exact syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic features, as well as the question from which period onward we can talk about a “mature” passive (i.e., passive voice). Three main opinions are presented in current scholarship. Ma, in a pioneering work from 1898 (reprinted in 2007: 160), defined the Chinese passive construction as a construction with “a patient appearing in the subject position” without clearly defining the “subject” or discussing the construction (外动字之行，有施有受。受者居宾次，常也。如受者居主次，则为受动字，明其以受者为主也。)。 Much later, Gao 1949 (reprinted in 2011: 226-227) argued that none of the explanations that have been provided in scholarship so far validated the assumption that the constructions could be treated similarly to the passive voice found in many western languages (汉语具有动词功能的词，实在并没有施动和受动的分别), while other recent studies have labeled the Chinese structures that had overt syntactic markers as passive structures. In order to contribute to this fundamental and long-lasting scholarly debate, this comprehensive study provides a review of the diachronic development of the so-called Chinese passive from the pre-Qin era to the end of the Han dynasty.

Part 1 reviews the studies of passive in Chinese and also introduces the definition of passive in a cross-linguistic perspective. Especially, some relevant terminology, in particular, “passive sense”, “passive voice”, “passive function” and “passive construction”, are distinguished in order to better understand the passive in Ancient Chinese. Meanwhile, three important factors that could trigger a passive interpretation in Ancient Chinese are introduced as a general background of this dissertation.

Part 2 examines two types of notional passive (i.e., PV construction) in Ancient Chinese, i.e., Type 1 and Type 2. It is found that most notional passives were in fact the intransitive use of labile verbs (i.e., Type 1) that could only be interpreted as a passive depending on the context. Meanwhile, in some special contexts, a few verbs

with strong transitive features are also found in the notional passive construction (i.e., Type 2), which is rarely observed cross-linguistically. Type 2 should be understood as a special situation of Type 1 in which the event expressed by the verb is not likely to occur spontaneously.

Part 3 focuses on the diachronic development of the four lexical items traditionally regarded as “passive markers”: *jian* 见, *bei* 被, *wei* 为 and *yu* 于, and concludes that all are ambiguous for both passive and non-passive interpretations, since a passive interpretation is determined by the *context* rather than by these markers themselves, which were also used in active sentences and could also be assembled to constitute new structures and variations. Therefore, it was concluded that there was no consistent syntactic marker that specifically expressed the passive voice in Ancient Chinese.

Part 4 examines whether the *ke* construction was a passive construction in Archaic Chinese by reviewing the formation of the *ke* (and *ke yi*) constructions, as well as the *nan* (*yi*), *yi* (*yi*) and *zu* (*yi*) constructions. It was concluded that these were more likely to be interpreted as serial verb constructions with deontic modality and a generic reading with middle characteristics that possibly also expressed a passive meaning. However, it was concluded that *ke*, *nan*, *yi* and *zu* could not justifiably be defined as passive markers.

Part 5 concludes that in Chinese it is important to differentiate between the *passive voice* and a *passive sense*. From a translation perspective, some so-called passive structures were found to express passive meanings and were translated as such into English and other languages. However, as the passive meaning appeared to be pragmatically rather than syntactically determined, none of the alleged passives in Ancient Chinese can be qualified as passive voice in accordance with a syntactic definition of passive. In general, the *degree of grammaticalization* of the passive markers in Archaic Chinese was quite low and they are better explained from a functional grammar viewpoint rather than a transformational generative grammar perspective.

Hoewel er veel studies geschreven zijn over het passief in het Chinees, zijn veel aspecten van dit onderzoek controversieel gebleven, zoals de opkomst van verschillende structuren, hun exacte syntactische, semantische en pragmatische kenmerken, evenals de vraag vanaf welke periode we kunnen spreken van een 'volwassen' passiefconstructie. Drie hoofdpunten worden aangehaald binnen de huidige stand van zaken. Ma, in een baanbrekend werk uit 1898 (herdrukt in 2007: 160), definieerde de passieve constructie als een "patiens die verschijnt in de positie van het onderwerp" zonder het "onderwerp" duidelijk te definiëren of de constructie te bespreken (外动字之行，有施有受。受者居宾次，常也。如受者居主次，则为受动字，明其以受者为主也。). Veel later voerde Gao 1949 (herdrukt in 2011: 226-227) aan dat geen van de verklaringen die tot dusver in onderzoek zijn voorgesteld de stelling bevestigen dat de structuren op dezelfde manier kunnen worden behandeld als het passief in vele westerse talen (汉语具有动词功能的词，实在并没有施动和受动的分别). Andere recente studies hebben dan weer Chinese structuren met openlijk syntactische markers als passieve structuren bestempeld. Om bij te dragen aan dit fundamentele wetenschappelijke debat geeft deze uitgebreide studie een overzicht van de diachrone ontwikkeling van het zogenaamde Chinese passief vanaf het pre-Qin-tijdperk tot het einde van de Han-dynastie.

Deel 1 bespreekt de studies van passieve structuren in het Chinees en introduceert ook de definitie van 'passief' vanuit een taaloverschrijdend perspectief. In het bijzonder wordt er aandacht besteed aan terminologie, zoals 'passieve betekenis', 'passieve vorm', 'passieve functie', 'passieve constructie', ten einde het passief in Oud-Chinees beter te begrijpen. Ook worden drie factoren geïntroduceerd die aanleiding kunnen geven tot een passieve interpretatie in het Oud-Chinees, als algemene achtergrond in deze doctoraatsstudie.

Deel 2 onderzoekt twee vormen van het 'notioneel passief' (i.e. PV structuur) in het Oud-Chinees, namelijk Type 1 en Type 2. Er wordt gesteld dat de meeste notionele passiefstructuren intransitieve structuren zijn van labiele werkwoorden (Type 1), die

wel, afhankelijk van de context, als passief kunnen worden geïnterpreteerd. Daarnaast zijn er, in bijzondere contexten, een aantal werkwoorden met sterke transitieve kenmerken in een notioneel passieve structuur (Type 2). Dit wordt zelden gezien in talen. Dit type dient geïnterpreteerd te worden als een bijzonder geval van Type 1, waarbij de gebeurtenis uitgedrukt door het werkwoord niet of moeilijk spontaan ontstaat.

Deel 3 concentreert zich op de diachronische ontwikkeling van de vier lexicale items die traditioneel als 'passieve markers' worden beschouwd: *jian* 见, *bei* 被, *wei* 为 en *yu* 于, en concludeert dat ze alle zowel passief als niet-passief kunnen zijn, aangezien een passieve interpretatie wordt bepaald door de context in plaats van door deze markers zelf. De markers kunnen immers ook in actieve zinnen voorkomen en kunnen daarnaast ook samengesteld gebruikt worden om nieuwe structuren en variaties te vormen. Daarom luidt de conclusie dat er geen consistente syntactische markers zijn die specifiek het passief in het Oud-Chinees aanduiden.

Deel 4 onderzoekt of de *ke*-structuur een passieve structuur is in Archaisch Chinees door de vorming van de *ke* (en *ke yi*) structuren te bekijken, evenals de *nan* (*yi*), *yi* (*yi*) en *zu* (*yi*) structuren. De conclusie luidt dat deze eerder moeten geïnterpreteerd worden als seriële werkwoordconstructies met deontische modaliteit en als een generieke lezing met midden kenmerken die mogelijk ook een passieve betekenis uitdrukken. Aldus luidt de conclusie dat *ke*, *nan*, *yi* en *zu* niet als passieve markers kunnen worden gedefinieerd.

Deel 5 stelt het in het Chinees belangrijk is om onderscheid te maken tussen een passieve vorm en een passieve betekenis. Vanuit een *vertaalspectief* blijkt dat sommige zogenaamde passieve structuren passieve betekenissen uitdrukken en ze werden als zodanig in het Engels en in andere talen vertaald. Omdat de passieve betekenis echter pragmatisch in plaats van syntactisch bepaald lijkt te zijn, is het niet correct om zogenaamde passief in het Oud-Chinees als een passieve structuur te definiëren, in termen van een syntactische analyse. Over het algemeen was de



*grammaticalisatiegraad* van passief-aanduiders in Archaïsch Chinees vrij laag en kunnen structuren beter worden verklaard vanuit een functionele grammatica dan vanuit een transformationeel generatief grammaticaperspectief.

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# PART 1: INTRODUCTION



Through an analysis of the origin and development of all alleged passives from the pre-Qin era to the end of the Han dynasty, this study examines the veracity of the claims of the existence of the *passive voice* in Ancient Chinese and compared its specific characteristics to Modern Chinese and other languages. This thesis is descriptive with the aim of accounting for the various passive constructions in Ancient Chinese.

This part is organized as follows. Section 1 gives a brief research history on the passive in Ancient Chinese, Section 2 examines the main findings in previous studies, Section 3 discusses whether the passive voice existed in Ancient Chinese and the specific factors triggering for the passive interpretations in Ancient.

## 1. HISTORY OF THE PASSIVE IN ANCIENT CHINESE

In almost every Chinese (historical) reference grammar, there is a specific chapter on the passive, which indicates that many linguists believe that a passive existed in Ancient Chinese and continues to exist in Modern Chinese. The review in sections 1 and 2 is compiled on the basis of such a background.

The study of the passive in Ancient Chinese has a long history, which according to Zhang (2010), can be generally divided into three stages: (1) research before 1898; (2) research from 1898 to 1950; and (3) research after 1950.

The research into the passive before 1898 can be found in the context of *xungu* 训诂 “exegesis of ancient texts,” the principal feature of which was an explanation of the ancient words and characters in the language at that time. This type of research started during the Han dynasty period, with some commentators explaining the older Chinese passive type with reference to the type that was popular at the time, as explained by Zhang (2010: 7).

(1) A sentence from *Zuozhuan* 左传: *ji qi dan wei ren yong hu? Ren yi yu shi.* 鸡其惮为人用乎? 人异于是。 “Is the cock afraid of being used [as a sacrificial animal]

by men? Men differ in that respect.” (*Zuozhuan* 左传, 22<sup>nd</sup> year of lord Zhao 召公二十二年).

(2) Du Yu’s<sup>1</sup> annotation for the example in (1) is *ji xi sui jian chong shi, zhong dang jian sha, ren bei chong shi, ze dang gui sheng* 鸡牺虽见宠饰, 终当见杀; 人被宠饰, 则当贵盛 “Although the cock is favoured and decorated, it will be killed; however, the person who is favored will be eminent.” in his *Chunqiu Zuozhuan ji jie* 春秋左传集解 (“Annotation of classics and elucidations in Spring and Autumn Annals”).<sup>2</sup>

(3) Kong Yingda’s<sup>3</sup> commentary was *ji bei chong shi, zhong dang jian sha, ruo ren bei chong shi, ze dang gui sheng* 鸡被宠饰, 终当见杀, 若人被宠饰, 则当贵盛 “Although the cock is decorated and favored, it will be killed; however, the person who is favored will be eminent.” in *Chunqiu zuo zhuan zheng yi* 春秋左传正义 (“Explanations of *Spring and Autumn Annals* and *Zuozhuan*).”<sup>4</sup>

These three examples analyze the same phrases but use different passive constructions: a *wei* 为 construction is used in (1), a *jian* 见 construction is used in (2), and a *bei* 被 construction is used in (3), which suggests that although different on the surface, some similarities in these patterns had been recognized. However, none of these scholars of course mentioned a *passive* (voice), and in pre-Modern China there was no specific research that examined the category of voice or passive voice in particular, which indicates that the approach to the passive construction at that time was very different from our modern approaches (this situation was very different in Ancient India, for example, where the study and definition of grammatical constructions received much attention).

The first standard Chinese grammar publication was by Ma Jianzhong (1845–1900) in 1898[2007]: *Mashi wentong* 马氏文通 “Mr. Ma’s grammar,” which examined the syntactic rules of Ancient Chinese from mainly Latin perspectives or models. Ma

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<sup>1</sup> Du Yu 杜预, AD 222-AD 285 in Jin dynasty.

<sup>2</sup> Zuo, Qiuming 左丘明. 1977. *Chunqiu zuozhuan jijie* 春秋左传集解 [Annotation of classics and elucidations in Spring and Autumn Annals], annotated by Du, *yu* 杜预. Shanghai: Shanghai renming chubanshe.

<sup>3</sup> Kong Yingda 孔颖达, AD 574-AD 648 in Tang dynasty.

<sup>4</sup> Zuo, Qiuming 左丘明. *Chunqiu zuozhuan zhengyi* 春秋左传正义 [Explanations of *Spring and Autumn Annals* and *Zuozhuan*], annotated by Duyu 杜预, commented on by Kong Yingda 孔颖达. Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe.

briefly summarized the features and types of passive structures in Ancient Chinese in the chapter *shoudongzi* 受动字 “passive verbs.” The publication of *Mashi wentong* significantly influenced the study of Chinese grammar in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with research in the 100 years following this publication divided into two stages: before and after 1950.

Generally, it has been claimed that the research from 1898 to 1950 was the beginning of the examination of passive structures in Chinese. After the publication of *Mashi wentong*, there was an increase in Chinese language *grammar* publications that included the *passive*, such as Li’s (1924) *Xinzhu guoyu wenfa* 新着国语文法 “New version of Chinese grammar,” Yang’s (1936) *Zhongguo wenfa yuwen tongjie* 中国文法语文通解 “General grammatical explanations of Chinese grammar,” Lü’s ([1942]1982) *Zhongguo wenfa yaolue* 中国文法要略 “A summary of Chinese grammar,” and Gao’s (1948) *Hanyu yufa lun* 汉语语法论 “Discussions on Chinese grammar”—most of which focused on describing the passive patterns, passive types, and passive functions.

Research on the passive after 1950 increased dramatically with Wang (1957), Hong (2000), Fang (1971), Zhu and Lü (1979), Chao (1968), and Pan (1982) being primary examples. After 1950, linguist focused on both synchronic descriptions and diachronic analyses. The research in this period was also influenced by many new linguistic theories, such as structural grammar, functional grammar, cognitive grammar, and generative transformational grammar, which meant that there were a wide range of views emerging regarding Ancient Chinese passive constructions, some of which are reviewed in the following section.

## **2. EXAMINATION OF THE PASSIVE IN CHINESE IN PREVIOUS STUDIES**

The research in this field has been very extensive; therefore, in the following, only the most seminal papers are mentioned.

## 2.1 Types of Chinese passive

As the passive in Ancient Chinese appears to be multifarious, classifying the Chinese passive types was the focus of many early studies. Therefore, this section divides this research into: (1) passive with or without a marker and (2) passive with or without an agent.

### 2.1.1 *With or without a marker*

Chinese passives have commonly been divided into passives with a marker and passives without a marker.

#### **Passives with a marker**

Since Ma's (1898) publication, many Chinese pre-Qin passive markers have been identified—*yu* 于, *wei* 为, *jian* 见, and *bei* 被—of which many varieties have been identified for *wei* 为: *wei* V, *wei* A V, *wei* A *suo* V, *wei* A *zhi suo* V, and *wei zhi* V. Further, two varieties have been identified for *jian* 见: *jian* V and *jian* V *yu* A. *Bei* 被 appeared relatively later than *yu* 于, *wei* 为 and *jian* 见, and was usually used directly before a verb (i.e., *bei* V construction), and the A did not appear until the end of the old Chinese period. Later, more infrequent passive constructions were found: *wei* A *suo jian* V (Lü [1942]1982), *wei* A *zhi suo* V, *wei suo* V and *wei A jian* V (Xie 1989), and *bei* A *zhi suo* V, and *wei* A V<sub>1</sub> V<sub>2</sub> (Liu 1985).

Han (1985) claimed that the marked passive in Ancient Chinese could be further classified into three types: (1) passives with *wei* 为, *bei* 被, and *yu* 于 **introducing an agent**; (2) passives with *wei* 为, *jian* 见, *bei* 被, *suo* 所, and *shou* 受 used directly **before V**; and (3) “complicated passives” with different levels of markers, which could be further divided into three subgroups: (a) auxiliary+auxiliary+V, e.g., *wei suo* V and *suo jian* V; (b) preposition+agent+auxiliary+V, e.g., *wei* A *suo* V, *wei* A *jian* V, and *bei* A *suo* V; and (c) auxiliary+V+preposition+agent, e.g., *jian* V *yu* A, *shou* V *yu* A, *bei* V *yu* A, and *wei* V *yu* A.

Zhang (2010) later claimed that Ancient Chinese passives could be classified into the following types based on their origins: (1) passive markers which are derived from a preposition introducing an agent (i.e., *yu* 于 and *hu* 乎); (2) passive markers which are derived from a copula (i.e., *wei* 为); (3) passive markers which are derived from verbs expressing “suffer” like *jian* 见, *bei* 被, *zao* 遭, *yu* 遇, and *shou* 受; and (4) passive markers which are derived from verbs with the semantics “receive,” such as *huo* 获 and *de* 得.

In general, the Ancient Chinese passive markers were very numerous, and all are ultimately derived from lexical verbs. However, no derivational morphemes can be observed, since Chinese basically is an isolating language which lacks morphological markers.

### Passives without marker

Passives without markers were first discussed by Ma (1898[2007]), who claimed that *wai dong zi dan yong, xian hou wu jia, yi ke zhuan wei shou dong* 外动字单用，先后无加，亦可以转为受动 “a transitive verb being used intransitively without elements before or after the verb can also be interpreted as passive.” This was then interpreted as *fanbin weizhu* 反宾为主 “fronting object as subject” by Li (1933), with Xie (1996) later defining *fanbin weizhu* as “a passive used when the object of a transitive verb is fronted to the subject position,” and Song (2007), who categorized most *fanbin weizhu* cases as being “ergative.”<sup>5</sup>

Wang (1984a) and Li (1980) treated this type of passive as a “notional passive” and

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<sup>5</sup> Ergative verbs refer to the verbs which can be used in the same form either intransitively or transitively without the addition of any affix, e.g., *open* and *break* (Halliday 1967: 44f, Fillmore 1968, Davides 1992, Lemmens 1998 ). This phenomenon has attracted much scholarly attention. Besides the term “ergative”, it has also been discussed from many other aspects with different terms: labile verbs” (Kulikov 2003, Letuchiy 2009, Kehayov & Vihman 2014), “versatile verbs” (Lüpke 2007), “unaccusative verbs” (Burzio 1986, Levin and Rappaport 1995, Chierchia 1989[2004]), and so on. Song (2007) divided *fan bin wei zhu ju* 反宾为主句 “fronting object as subject” into two types: (1) the one derived from a “true” transitive construction, and (2) the one-argument structures of ergative verbs. In contrast to Song, here the term “labile” is used instead of the term “ergative” in (2) in order to avoid discussions concerning the disputed notion of “ergative”.

subsequently, Zhang (2008) classified the notional passive into a “relative” passive and an “absolute” passive depending on whether or not a passive marker could be added.<sup>6</sup>

Even though notional passives are used more frequently than marked passives, there have been far fewer studies on the notional passive than marked passives, possibly because it is more controversial. Therefore, the notional passive deserves more attention in terms of an accurate definition, its specific features, and an elucidation of the relationship between marked passives and notional passives, all of which are discussed further in Part 2.

### 2.1.2 *With or without an agent*

As mentioned, while many markers introduce agents, an agent is not always necessary in Chinese language passive constructions. For example, in the *wei* construction, the agent can be present or absent, that is, *wei V* and *wei A V/wei A suo V* constructions. This is similar also for *bei* constructions; for example, *bei V* vs. *bei A V*. However, for *jian*, an agent *must* be introduced following the main verb using *yu*; for example, only “*jian V yu A*” construction is attested while “*jian A V*” construction is not found. While the *ke* construction has also been defined as a passive construction, it has been claimed by some scholars to be incompatible with an agent (e.g., Zhang 2010).

Zhu and Lü (1979) classified the passives into “complete passives” and “simplified passives” depending on whether an agent was present or not. Liu (1987) defined examples that included an agent after *bei* as “weak passives” and examples without an agent after *bei* as “strong passives.” Interestingly, although the passive is commonly found without an agent in many other languages, this is not true for Chinese, which is further discussed in Part 2, Section 4.

In sum, there have been no consistent criteria for the classification of the passive in Chinese. The brief analysis above, however, raises two questions that are explored in

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<sup>6</sup> In Song’s study, the absolute passive was exemplified by *ke shang wan le* 课上完了 “class is over”; *lazhu ran qi lai le* 蜡烛燃起来了 “the candle is on fire”; and *gei haizi de xin, zao yi xie hao le* 给孩子的信，早已写好了 “the letter for the children has already been written.”

detail in this thesis: (1) is the passive in Chinese determined by the absence or presence of a passive marker or an agent or both? And (2) are these two criteria sufficient in defining the true nature of the Chinese passive?

## 2.2 Nature of Chinese passive markers

The nature of some passive markers is easy to define. For example, *yu* has been analyzed as a preposition by almost all scholars, and *jian* is normally treated as an auxiliary verb. However, *wei* and *bei* appear to be much more complicated as both can be either followed directly by a verb or have an intervening *agent*. The current views concerning the grammatical functions of *wei* and *bei* are summarized in the following.

### A. Preposition hypothesis

Pan (1982), Liu (1983), Zhang (1987), and Rao (1990) all treated *wei* and *bei* as prepositions regardless of whether or not there was an agent.

### B. Verb hypothesis

Gao (1948[2011]), Hashimoto (1987), Shimura (1995), and Deng (2003) all treated *wei* and *bei* as verbs regardless of whether or not there was an agent.

### C. Auxiliary verb hypothesis

Wang (1985) treated both *wei* and *bei* as auxiliary verbs.

### D. Passive marker hypothesis

Hong (2000) classified *wei* and *bei* as passive markers.

### E. Different-nature hypothesis

Li (1992) claimed that *bei* and *wei* were prepositions when used before an agent and were auxiliary verbs when used before verbs.

Therefore, as these passive elements, i.e., *jian*, *bei*, *wei* and *yu*, have not been fully explained from diachronic perspectives, their functions and behaviors, which are in the focus of this thesis.

## 2.3 The notion of “affectedness” in passive constructions

Wang (1957) claimed there were semantic limitations to the use of the passive *bei* and *wei* constructions as they always expressed negative feelings of the subject and that this had been the most common use of the passive since ancient times. Wang (2002) also argued that the *bei* passive was almost always used to express something negative, that is, being affected by misfortune (see many examples in Part 3, Chapter 3), which was also accepted by Zhu and Lü (1979). However, many other scholars such as Liang (1960) and Wang (1984a) do not find this argumentation convincing, claiming that these passives could also have neutral and positive connotations. Xing (2004) specifically explored the *positive passive* for functions such as *receiving praise*, Yuan (2005) concluded that the *de* 得 and *meng* 蒙 passives both had positive meanings, and Diao (2016) proved that the *huo* 获 passive also had positive connotations.

Li (2004) concluded that negative connotations were a prototypical, unmarked (default) feature of passives in Chinese, whereas the “positive” connotations were marked. Most current explanations as to why the passive prototypically expresses negativity attribute this to the origins of the passive markers. For example, Hashimoto (1987) acknowledged that it is quite understandable that the passive expresses a negative feeling, considering that the marker *bei* was originally a verb meaning “suffer.” However, Hashimoto (1987) also disproved this opinion claiming that (1) *wei* as a verb never expressed the meaning “suffer”; (2) many words from dialects identified as passive markers were not verbs expressing “suffer”; and (3) passive markers in many other languages were not derived from verbs implying “suffer.”

There are two current opinions with regard to this “negative” impact: (1) a reference to the subject, or (2) a reference to the speaker. For example, Li (1986) and Sugimura (1998) claimed that the negative connotations in passive sentences referred to the speaker, while Zu (1997) claimed that they referred to the subject or subject-related elements. Zu’s opinion has proven to be more convincing, which was confirmed by



Li's (2004) example *Diren bei xiaomie le* 敌人被我们消灭了 “The enemies were slaughtered by us” in which the “unfortunate” passive effect appears to refer to the passive subject “enemies,” rather than the speaker or narrator.

Therefore, as Li (2004) concluded, it has become more accepted that Ancient Chinese passive implied negative, neutral, and even positive affectedness, though the latter was less frequent.<sup>7</sup> However, most of these discussions on inflictive coloring have been based on the study of passives in Modern Chinese. This thesis mainly focuses on the affective coloring (i.e., 情感色彩) of the passive constructions in Ancient Chinese.<sup>8</sup>

## 2.4 Functions of the passive

Lü (1942/1982) claimed that the use of the passive was motivated by a need to maintain sentence structure consistency (i.e., NV or VN structure) in the context. Zhang (2003a), however, claimed that the passive was employed (1) to emphasize the patient; (2) to demote the agent, as the agent is unknown or not in focus; (3) to maintain the topic consistency of the paragraph in order to ensure text cohesion; or (4) to express a special emotion. Generally, these opinions on the use and functions of the passive appear to be somewhat similar from a cross-linguistic perspective. For example, Siewierska (1984), Shibatani (1985), Keenan and Dryer (1985), and Abraham (2006) identified several core characteristics for the use of passive, among which the demotion of the agent and the promotion of the patient were quite prominent.

Generally, the sentence-initial position is reserved for the words or phrases that are “given” or “predictable” from previous contextual information, with “new” or less predictable information tending to appear later. In other words, as the general

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<sup>7</sup> Especially, in the Yue Chinese of Hongkong, the passive with positive and negative meanings are expressed with *zao* 遭 “suffer” and *huo* 获 “receive” respectively (Shi 2006), indicating that there is even a specific marker to express positive passive.

<sup>8</sup> “Affective coloring” neutrally means *ganqing secai* 感情色彩, while “inflictive coloring” specifically refers to a derogatory (negative) coloring. Since this is a shared feature of all passives in Ancient Chinese, this topic is discussed further in Part 5.

principles of human linguistic expressions follow the *given (old) to new information sequence*, when a speaker wants to emphasize a non-agent element, the sentence word order needs to be adjusted. The passive has these functions, that is, the promotion of the patient transforms the patient into given information while the agent is marked as new information (Allan 2009). Therefore, based on this discussion, it could be concluded that the movement of an NP from the object position to the subject position is the most important feature of the passive construction in western languages like English. However, special attention is required when discussing the use of the passive in Ancient Chinese.

The passive in Ancient Chinese has been widely studied from many angles. However, the research results have generally been based on the assumption that there indeed existed a *passive in Ancient Chinese*, which has ignored two fundamental questions: did the passive in Ancient Chinese really exist? (1) If not, why? And (2) if yes, what were the unique features of the passive in Ancient Chinese as compared to the use of the passive voice in Modern Chinese and other languages? Therefore, answering these questions is an important goal of this thesis.

### **3. WAS THERE A PASSIVE IN ANCIENT CHINESE ?**

To examine this question, I start with the topic what “passive” refers to.

#### **3.1 What does “passive” refer to?**

In this section, I first take the definition of passive in English as an example, then show the definition of passive from a typological perspective, then I will try to explore whether it is possible to define passive cross-linguistically.

##### *3.1.1 Definition of passive in English grammatical tradition*

As English is familiar to most researchers, the definition of passive in English is introduced here in order to give readers a preliminary idea about the category that can

be referred by the term ‘passive’. Generally, the definition of passive in English often relates to (1) the rearrangement of noun-phrases and the use of the *by*-phrase, with the passive being characterized as a demotion of the subject to the status of an oblique, and the subsequent promotion of the direct object to the subject position and (2) the combination of the verb *be* with the *past participle* form of a transitive verb to form a new semantic unit, that is, the periphrastic passive (e.g., Chomsky 1957 and Bach 1979). In order for a transformation rule to be applicable, the string on which it operates had to be described. In the case of the passive, that string seems to be an ordinary transitive sentence NP-V-NP, and all the specific information about what happens in a passivization process – word order change, insertion of an auxiliary, adding a suffix to the verb stem, inserting a *by*-phrase – had to be inserted into the passive transformation rule: “Thus, the passive transformation applies to strings of the form NP-Aux-V-NP and has the effect of interchanging the two noun phrases, adding *by* before the final noun phrase, and adding *be+en* to Aux” (Chomsky 1957: 61).

However, other languages use other strategies to signal passive, as summarized in Table 1 (based on Allan 2009: 66).

**Table 1 Counterexamples to the strategies for passive signaling in English**

Strategies in English	Counterexamples in other languages
Verbal marking	Bahasa Indonesia
Additional verb (an auxiliary)	Lummi, an Amer-Indian language, uses verbal inflexion alone
Noun-phrase positional change (word order)	Basque signals the change using an auxiliary
Noun-phrase nominative-accusative case marking (pronoun case remnants)	Ergative languages, e.g., Basque, in which the subject and direct object are both in the absolute case
By-phrase	Latvian does not permit an optional <i>by</i> -phrase that expresses an agent

From the table above, it is clear that the definition of passive in English is not applicable for many other languages. As for typological linguists, such a definition is definitely too narrow, as shown below.

### 3.1.2 *Passive as defined in typological studies*

The definition of passive from a typological perspective should obviously be based on a large and representative sample of languages. In this section I will quote some important definitions.

Siewierska (1984: 2–3), defined *passive* as a construction that has the following three characteristics:

- a. its grammatical subject is the object of its corresponding active construction;
- b. the subject of the active counterpart is expressed in the passive in the form of an agentive adjunct or is left unexpressed;
- c. the verb in the passive construction corresponds to the transitive verb in the active counterpart and is marked passive.

Haspelmath (1990: 27) states the following: “A construction is called passive if: (i) the active subject corresponds either to a non-obligatory oblique phrase or to nothing; and (ii) the active direct object (**if any**) **corresponds** to the subject of the passive; and (iii) the construction is somehow restricted vis-à-vis another unrestricted construction (the active), e.g., less frequent, functionally specialized, not fully productive,”

Kulikov (2010: 371) states that the modification of the basic (neutral) transitive diathesis which results in the passive equivalent of a transitive clause typically suggests the following two (partly independent) syntactic phenomena: (i) the promotion of the initial direct object to the subject (= the subject of the passive construction); and (ii) the demotion of the initial subject (usually, an agent). The demotion of the subject may amount either to its downgrading to an oblique object (passive agent) or to its removal from the structure.

Abraham (2006: 2) summarized the features of passive in a typological work on passive as follows:

- a. Passives are agent-defocusing; this entails Agent suppression and (Direct) Object orientation and reduction by one valence place: e.g., detransitivization;
- b. Passivization entails predicative stativization (from a perfective-resultative perspective and marked verbal morphology);

- c. Passivization entails subjectivization of a non-Agent (Patient/Recipient, an original DO/IO);
- d. Passivization entails topicalization of a non-Agent (e.g., for more adequate context fit with respect to thema continuation);
- e. Passivization presupposes the affectedness of the surface subject (implied by Agent loss and Patient promotion);
- f. Passivization may be sensitive to perfective aspect;
- g. Passives never go without special morphological marking: either from a separate passive or medial paradigm by Aux+verbal Anterior (participial form), or by virtue of reflexive suffixation – in certain languages even as an unbound reflexive morpheme.
- h. Passives are detransitivizers both in terms of designated theta roles and as syntactic valence determinants. In other words, passives reduce the valence of a predicate by the designated external, or subject, argument.

Compared to the definition in English, the definitions from the typological study tend to vacillate in the point that “the verb is marked”. For example, both Haspelmath and Kulikov do not emphasize the “morphological marker on the verb” maybe because they realize that passive in some languages are not marked on the verb; while Siewierska and Abraham still emphasize this point, maybe because most passives are marked morphologically. However, all of them focus on the *contrastive feature between the active and the passive*, especially the semantic role exchange between the subject and the object in these two types of sentences. In these definitions, Haspelmath’s definition looks to be scrupulous: he avoids words like “promotion” and “movement”, but replaces them with the word “correspond”, and also uses the words “if any” to make the definition looks more accurate (see Haspelmath (1990: 27) above). I admit that such a definition extracts the essential nature of passivity in most languages and can avoid disputes to some extent. However, such a definition will inevitably include many cases that are not actual passive. In sum, such a definition defines a necessary precondition for the passive, while it is insufficient for passive. Meanwhile, compared with the former three definitions, Abraham’s definition seems to focus more on the functional perspective.

Another interesting definition is from Lüpke (2007), although his definition is not often mentioned in secondary literature.

### 3.1.3 Lüpke's definition

Lüpke's (2007: 137) sets the following criteria for passive:

- (1) unambiguous with regard to an active reading;
- (2) independent of the semantic features of the participants, such as animacy;
- (3) independent of pragmatic parameters such as context;
- (4) highly productive; and
- (5) formally intransitive.

Whether his definition is accurate or not, he has proposed some unprecedented perspectives on passive, which are beyond doubt. Comparatively speaking, other passive definitions are defined in terms of languages with mature passive (voice), while Lüpke's definition focuses more on judging whether a passive is "mature" or not. Interestingly, concerning the passive in Ancient Chinese, Lüpke's definition is much more useful.

Based on the discussions above, I move on to another topic: whether is it possible to define a passive cross-linguistically?

### *3.1.3 Is it possible to define a cross linguistically passive*

It has been generally accepted that a cross-linguistic definition for the passive is elusive for the following reasons (Allan 2009).

- (1) Languages have differing word orders. While English has a subject-verb-object (hereafter SVO) order, this is not universal. For example, Irish (Noonan 1994), Welsh (Roberts 2005), and Polynesian (Brown and Koch 2016) tend to be verb-subject-object (hereafter VSO) order languages. Of the six possible word-order possibilities, four are well attested. Interestingly, from a passive viewpoint, the two possibilities that may not occur in the world's languages are both object-first

languages – object-verb-subject (OVS) and object-subject-verb (OSV).

(2) Different languages have different cultures; this means that the words that may appear to be equivalents in other languages tend to have different nuances of meaning (Malinowski 1998). Similarly, constructions that are labeled as passive may have different cross-linguistic nuances. For example, Noonan (1994) discussed the *impersonal passive* in Irish, which seemed to verify this point. Although the patient in the impersonal passive is positioned exactly like the direct object in a transitive clause and this construction is commonly translated into English as a passive, this is not the only way these sentences can be interpreted. A similar phenomenon is also found in Chinese. Noonan claimed that there were numerous cases of such impersonals where passive translations were not even possible.

(3) Many languages claim not to feature passive (voice), particularly Austronesian<sup>9</sup> and Amerindian language families, as well as Hungarian.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, it may be impossible to provide a cross-linguistically valid and universal definition for passives, as concluded by Siewierska (1984: 1): “The analysis of the various constructions referred to in the literature as passive leads to the conclusion that there is not even one single property which all these constructions have in common.” Even language by language, there may be varying definitions or patterns. In sum, the answer to whether a language has a passive or not seems to be dependent to some extent on the definition applied, which is also true for Chinese. As mentioned before, this thesis focuses on the passive in Ancient Chinese and occasionally in Middle Chinese rather than in modern Mandarin or other Chinese dialects.

### **3.2 Was there a passive voice in Ancient Chinese?**

As discussed, since it is impossible to give a cross-linguistic definition for the passive, whether there is a passive in Ancient Chinese is determined to some degree by how

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<sup>9</sup> However, Kulikov (personal communication) reminds me that: more precisely, we talk today about a particular variety of the category of voice found in Austronesian languages, the so-called “Philippine-type voice system”.

<sup>10</sup> See Siewierska (1984: 23) for a list of languages that do not have passives.

the passive is defined. Currently, there are two dominant opinions: (1) positive answers that have a *broad definition*, that is, all patient-subject sentences are passive sentences, and a *narrow definition*, that is, only sentences with passive markers are passive sentences; and (2) negative answers, that is, a refutation that the passive even existed in Ancient Chinese.

### 3.2.1 Positive answer

#### **Broad definition**

In his pioneering work on the Chinese passive, Ma defined the passive as [1898[2007]: 160]:

*Wai dong zi zhi xing, you shi you shou. Shou zhe ju bin ci, chang ye. Ru shou zhe ju zhu ci, ze wei shou dong zi, ming qi yi shou zhe wei zhu ye.* 外动字之行，有施有受。受者居宾次，常也。如受者居主次，则为受动字，明其以受者为主也。“The action features of a transitive verb imply that there is both an agent and a patient. It is normal that the patient occurs in the object position; however, if the patient appears in the subject position, then the verb becomes passivized to indicate the prominence of the patient.”

Accordingly, any sentences in which the patient occurs in the subject position can be categorized as passive. The scholars who followed this broad definition normally thought that the notional passive was the most basic form of all passives in Ancient Chinese (and even in Modern Chinese).

However, Ma did not provide a definition for “the subject position” in Chinese and this is not easy to define because: (1) Chinese has an SVO word order (Sun and Givón 1985, Norman 1988) with the subject occurring in the initial sentence position in most cases; and (2) Chinese is a topic prominent language in which the main topic may also appear in the sentence-initial position (Li and Thompson 1976 and 1981). Therefore, Ma’s definition possibly also included topicalization, as in the example, *ji bu chi, ya*



*chi* 鸡不吃, 鸭吃 “Chicken I don’t [want to] eat [but] duck I [want to] eat.”<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, this definition appears to be too broad for Ancient Chinese as it does not clearly differentiate between the subjects and topics that are in the sentence-initial position (see more discussion in Section 3.2.2).

### **Narrow definition**

In contrast to Ma’s broad and loose definition of the passive, most recent studies on the history of the Chinese passive have taken a more narrow, restrictive view (e.g., Wu 2007), considering the passive to be a purely *syntactic phenomenon* and using the overt presence of a passive marker as the sole criterion to identify the passive. Based on this definition, therefore, only the syntactically marked periphrastic passives such as the *wei* 为, *jian* 见, *bei* 被, and *yu* 于 constructions are recognized as passives, which means that these scholars do not acknowledge the notional passive.

Therefore, although they differ in defining the scope of the passive, the “positive group,” which dominates current research, agrees that there was a passive in Ancient Chinese. However, every construction conventionally labeled as passive is questioned by some scholars, with the negative answer still being encountered in secondary research.

### *3.2.2 Negative answer*

In this section, some arguments are provided to evaluate both the broad and narrow definitions.

### **Inadequacy of the broad definition**

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<sup>11</sup> This example is actually ambiguous in its meaning. As mentioned in the text, *ji* 鸡 “chicken” and *ya* 鸭 “duck” can be interpreted as topics: Chicken I don’t [want to] eat [but] duck I [want to] eat. Meanwhile, from a mere syntactic standpoint, *ji* 鸡 “chicken” and *ya* 鸭 “duck” could also be interpreted as agent subjects, that is, *the chicken does not eat anything, but the duck eats something*. However, the *agent subject* interpretation is not relevant for the passive topic. Thus, it is not discussed more.

Besides the intricate relationship with topicalization, the weakness with defining all patient-subject sentences as passives is further manifested in the following two counterexamples: (1) the *ke* construction and (2) the negative patient construction.

### ***Ke* construction**

The *ke* construction has been somewhat controversial in terms of whether it should be interpreted as a passive construction. Semantically, the role of the subject coincides with that of the object of V in the *ke* construction, that is, the subject is a patient subject. Syntactically there is a marker *ke* before the V. Pragmatically, the *ke* construction has a passive sense. However, this has not normally been analyzed as a passive construction, needless to say treating *ke* as a passive marker. This situation is similar to the *zu* 足, *nan* 难 and *yi* 易 constructions.<sup>12</sup> The reason for this debate may be because the *ke*, *nan*, *yi* and *zu* constructions only describe the nature of the subject and do not refer to a result. Recall that if the definition from the functionalists (Section 3.1.1) that the passive always represents “stativization” is referred to, it is quite reasonable to assume that the *ke* sentence is not a passive sentence and *ke* cannot be analyzed as a passive marker.

### **Negative patient-subject sentence**

Frequently, in Ancient Chinese negative sentences, the patient is frequently fronted, which leads to a negative patient-subject sentence (hereafter, an NPS sentence), as in the example below.

1. 小不忍，则乱大谋。(Lunyu 论语. Weilinggong 卫灵公)

*xiao bu ren ze luan da mou*  
small NEG tolerant then confound large project

If one does not show patience concerning small matters, then one will mess up one's major projects.

Clearly, this NPS sentence is in no way related to the passive, which is an interesting phenomenon because although the subject is a patient, it cannot be interpreted as a

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<sup>12</sup> Also to others named *middle sentences*.

passive.<sup>13</sup>

Besides these two counterexamples, another typical patient-subject sentence, the *notional passive*, has also had a somewhat controversial status (see the discussion below) if it is not a counterexample.

### Notional passive

Examples such as *Long Feng zhan* 龙逢斩 “Long Feng is cut off” have been defined as the notional passive form of [Sb.] *zhan long feng* 斩龙逢 “[Sb.] cut off Long Feng.” The common hypothesis for notional passives treats the structure V+O as the base, and sees O+V as a derived form of V+O. This opinion is frequently found in passive-related studies and dominates this research field.

However, the alternative view that suggests that these structures express a *state* rather than the passive has become more popular recently (e.g., Lü [1942]1982). Lü believed that *action* and *state* were two different but closely related aspects, that is, *something becomes a state when an action is completed/accomplished*. As such, a sentence in which the V has an “accomplished” meaning is also expressing a “state” meaning. In particular, as the passivized verb has the semantic feature of [accomplishment], the resulting NV structure expresses a state.<sup>14</sup> While Fang (1971) agreed that the NV structure expressed a state, he did not believe that the V was passivized in the NV structure as there was no antithesis between the active and passive forms of the verb, claiming that these NV examples only meant that these actions had been accomplished and that the V in these structures were similar to adjective/stative verbs, which implied that the NV structure is not being formed by fronting the object as the subject. Zhou (1997: 260-267) also claimed that the PV structure was a kind of

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<sup>13</sup> Even more interesting, some negative patient subject sentences indeed imply the passive sense. See the example below.

1. 吾不试，故艺。(Lunyu 论语. Zihan 子罕)

wu bu shi, gu yi

I NEG. appoint therefore art

It is because I have never been appointed to office that I have learned these many arts.

<sup>14</sup> Here he is talking about the NV (i.e., PV) structure. He on one hand stated that the PV structure expressed a state since V has an “accomplishment” meaning. On the other hand, he acknowledged that the V here was a passivized form. This conflicting conclusion made by such an experienced scholar shows the complexity of this topic.

adjective structure that was parallel to an active rather than a derived structure. Therefore, the interpretation of the notional passive remains ambiguous (see more discussion on this point in Part 2).

From this discussion, therefore, it can be concluded that the presence of a patient subject construction should not be regarded as a sufficient condition for a passive analysis of a construction. However, the patient subject has been clearly identified as a necessary prerequisite for a passive interpretation in Ancient Chinese (and in Modern Chinese), and stativization should also be a necessary precondition, which gives rise to the following question: if the notional passive seems (1) to appear within a patient-subject structure and (2) to express a state, why then is it still not interpreted as a passive? This is discussed in detail in Part 2.<sup>15</sup>

### **Inadequacy of the narrow definition**

For every alleged passive marker, there are differing opinions in the secondary literature.

#### **(1) *Yu* construction**

As *yu* is a frequently used word in the Oracle Bone Inscriptions, its construction has been considered to be the oldest passive marker to introduce an agent as in Wang (1958[1980]), Pan (1982), Tang and Zhou (1985), Yang and He (2001), and Hong (2000), among others. However, increasingly more scholars have realized that this may not be true. For example, Wang (2005: 273) corrected his own conclusion made in 1958[1980] in the following way:

In the past, I thought that the *yu* in the *P+V+yu+agent* construction was a passive marker. Now, I correct my conclusion: the function of *yu* in the so-called passive construction is no different from the

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<sup>15</sup> Actually, there are even more examples with the patient in the initial place in a sentence, which nonetheless cannot be interpreted as a passive. For example, *liangge ren dou gai fa* 两个人都该罚 “both persons should be punished.” In this sentence, *liangge ren* “both persons” is indeed the object of *fa* “punish,” and its translation in English is indeed a passive; however, the passive connotation in the Chinese is quite weak. Another example, *ni er gege de yu diao le* 你二哥哥的玉掉了 “your second elder brother’s jade is lost.” Similarly, although *ni ergege de yu* “your second elder brother’ jade” is indeed the object of *diao* “lose,” but from the standpoint of Chinese grammar, it should not be interpreted as a passive.

*yu* in the *locative prepositional structure*.

This opinion has now been accepted by many scholars, such as Guo (1997), Hong (2009), Sun (2005), Ma (1898 [2007] ), and Xiang (2000) (see a more thorough discussion in Part 3, Chapter 6).

## **(2) *Wei* construction**

Many scholars (Wang 1958[1980], Peyraube 1989) identified “*wei* V” constructions as passive. However, these were also commonly viewed as copula constructions (Ma 1898 [2007], Wei 1994, Lü [1959]2002, Aldridge 2013, Yao 1998, Fang 2002, Jiang 2012a). Similarly, the *wei* A *suo* V construction, which has been present since pre-Qin times, has been commonly treated as a passive construction. However, there are also differing opinions that argue that it is also a copula construction (Ma 1898 [2007] , Lü [1959]2002, Li 1982, Yu 1987). The copula hypothesis is preferable as it does not seem to require any additional explanations for the behavior of *wei* and *suo* in the *wei* A *suo* V construction.

## **(3) *Jian* construction**

*Jian* is commonly believed to be a passive marker. However, this interpretation was repeatedly questioned. For example, Yao (1990) argued that *jian* should be defined as a verb expressing the meaning “suffer” just like *zao* 遭, *yu* 遇, and *shou* 受 because of their similar behaviors.

## **(4) *Bei* construction**

It is generally accepted that *bei* developed from a noun meaning “blanket” to an action verb meaning “cover” to a verb meaning “suffer” and was finally reanalyzed as a passive marker. However, the question when it developed into a passive marker remains controversial. Li (1998) claimed that the *bei* passive had appeared between the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period, and Tang (1988) claimed that the *bei* passive appeared in the Eastern Han Buddhist scriptures and its use has increased dramatically since then; however, Gao (2003) stated that there was no real *bei* passive

in the Eastern Han dynasty Buddhist scriptures and that all examples had transitional features. At present, most scholars believe that the mature *bei* passive appeared at the earliest after the Han dynasty. As such, it is safe to claim that there was no *bei* passive in Ancient Chinese.

Some scholars (Kratochvil 1968, Lapolla 1990) still claim that there is no real passive in Chinese (Ancient or Modern Chinese). These diverse opinions about the passive in Ancient Chinese are because of three main factors.

### **3.3 Three important factors related to passive interpretations in Ancient Chinese**

The three factors relevant to the passive interpretation in Ancient Chinese are: (1) the comprehensive features of Ancient Chinese verbs; (2) the non-marked word-class switch between nouns and verbs, which is usually referred to as *zi zhi* 自指 “self-designation” and *zhuan zhi* 转指 “transferred designation”; and (3) the general syntax features of Chinese. While there may be other factors, these three are the most important relevant to the passive interpretation and are further elaborated on in the following.

#### *3.3.1 The comprehensive features of some Ancient Chinese monosyllabic verbs*

In contrast to the predominantly polysyllabic lexicon of middle and Modern Chinese, classical Chinese had a predominantly monosyllabic vocabulary; therefore, Ancient Chinese had many unique features (Yao 2015, Shi 2003a, Xu 2006, Hu 2005). In this section, two specific areas are focused on: (1) the synthesis of action and result; and (2) the synthesis of orientations,<sup>16</sup> which are quite important when seeking to

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<sup>16</sup> Hu (2005) stated that the development of Chinese from the ancient to the medieval period amounted to the development from *yin han* 隐含 (“implicit”) to *cheng xian* 呈现 (“explicit”): some concepts were originally expressed using one monosyllabic word in Archaic Chinese but were correspondingly expressed with disyllabic or trisyllabic words with more detailed semantics in Medieval Chinese. Accordingly, I infer that *yin han* 隐含 here literary means “the conflation of several semantics in a monosyllabic word in Ancient Chinese”, while *cheng xian* 呈现 means “different semantics are manifested with different elements, resulting in disyllabic or trisyllabic words in Medieval Chinese / Modern Mandarin”. He summarized three types of implications (i.e., conflation) in Archaic Chinese

determine the formation of the notional passive (see Type 1 below) and the development of the disputed passive markers, especially the nature of *yu* (see Type 2 below).

### Type 1: synthesis of action and result

Shi (2003a) stated that verbs are conceptualized as either an action or as the result of an action. In Modern Chinese, verbs implying only an action (hereafter **VA**) can be expressed using a monosyllabic verb while a verb implying both an action and the result of an action (hereafter **VAR**) requires a *resultant complement* following the V (hereafter a V-C construction), such as *kan* 看 (i.e., action of perceiving) vs. *kan jian* 看见 (i.e., a perceptive action implying a result), that is, a verb implying a result must have a V-C structure. However, in Ancient Chinese, VA and VAR were both conceptualized using only monosyllabic verbs;<sup>17</sup> for example, the pair *kan* 看 vs. *kan jian* 看见 in modern Mandarin was correspondingly expressed by the pair *shi* 视 vs. *jian* 见 in Ancient Chinese. Therefore, it could be deduced that *jian* 见 in Ancient Chinese was a comprehensive form of the Modern Chinese V-C structure *kan jian* 看见. In other words, *jian* in Ancient Chinese implied both action (i.e., V) and the result of the action (i.e., C).<sup>18</sup> More examples from Shi (2003a) are shown in Table 2.<sup>19</sup>

**Table 2 Comparison of conceptualization of action and result in Ancient and Modern Chinese**

	Ancient Chinese	Corresponding Modern Chinese
1	<i>Shi</i> 食 (VA): action of eating →	<i>Chi</i> 吃 (VA): action of eating

(Hu 2005: 2).

(1) Conflation of the head and its modifier, e.g., *yan* 眼 “eyes” (i.e., modifier)+*lei* 泪 “tear” (i.e., head) in Modern Madarin was solely expressed with word *lei* 泪 “tear” in Ancient Chinese.

(2) Conflation of the action and its object, e.g., *shu* 漱 “gargle” (i.e., V)+*kou* 口 “month” (i.e., O) in Modern Madarin was expressed only with word *shu* 漱 “gargle” in Ancient Chinese.

(3) Conflation of the action and its result. He only mentioned this point, but without providing more detailed explanation. However, it is a key point in this thesis. See more information in Table 2.

<sup>17</sup> In ancient Chinese, about 80% of the words were monosyllabic (Baxter and Sagart 2014).

<sup>18</sup> The difference and relevance between *kan* and *jian* can be seen in chapter 1 in part 2.

<sup>19</sup> Dai (1984) argued that Chinese in general does not have monosyllabic accomplishment verbs. Instead, resultative verb compounds that express action and result are used. Therefore, there is no monosyllabic Chinese word for “kill” (Dai and Zhou 1975). Obviously, this statement is unjustified for Ancient Chinese according to Table 2.

	<i>Yan</i> 厌 (VAR): action and result of eating →	<i>Chi bao</i> 吃饱 (V-C): action and result of eating
2	<i>Zhu</i> 逐 (VA): action of chasing after →	<i>Zhui</i> 追 (VA): action of chasing after
	<i>Ji</i> 及 (VAR): action and result of chasing after →	<i>Zhui gan shang</i> 追赶上 (V-C): act and result of chasing after
3	<i>Ting</i> 听 (VA): action of listening →	<i>Ting</i> 听 (VA): action of listening
	<i>Wen</i> 闻 (VAR): action and result of listening →	<i>Ting jian</i> 听见 (V-C): action and result of listening

Shi possibly ignored another important category such as *po* 破 “breakthrough,” which has been frequently identified as being a synthesis of action and result (e.g., Yang 2002/2005/2017, Hu 2005, Wu 2008), as in the example *qi po yan* 齐破燕 “The state of Qi smashed the state of Yan” (*Zhanguoce* 战国策).<sup>20</sup> Yang explained that when Qi carried out the action of *po* 破 “break,” then the event “Qi attacked Yan” always suggested a result, that is, Yan is in a state of *po* 破 “break,” which is quite different from *gong* 攻 “attack,” which only emphasizes the “attack” action but does not indicate a result. The corresponding modern Mandarin expressions are also different. While *po* can be rephrased as a V-C structure, *gong* can only be rephrased as a V-V structure.<sup>21</sup> The comparison of *gong* and *po* is summarized as a *continuation of Table 2*. There are more examples given in Part 2 of this thesis.

#### Continuation of Table 2

	Ancient Chinese	Corresponding Modern Chinese
4.	<i>Gong</i> 攻 (VA): action of attacking →	<i>Gong da</i> 攻打 (V-V): action of attacking
	<i>Po</i> 破 (VAR): result of attacking →	<i>Gong po</i> 攻破 (V-C): result of attacking

<sup>20</sup> Therefore, the V in Ancient Chinese itself implies the aspect information. In other words, there is no need for another aspect marker to indicate the aspect information.

<sup>21</sup> As is well known, most verbs in modern Mandarin are disyllabic compound verbs. It was also found that verbs like *gong* 攻 “attack” normally function as *shang wei zi* 上位字 “words appearing in the first place of a compound verbal word,” i.e., *gong*-V; while verbs like *po* 破 “break” normally function as *xia wei zi* 下位字 “words appearing in the second place of a compound verbal word,” i.e., V-*po*. Meanwhile, some verbs function as both *shang wei zi* and *xia wei zi*, for example *zhe* 折 “break off,” i.e., *zhe*-V or V-*zhe*. It is concluded that the sequence of the combination of the two elements in the verbal compound words crucially depends on the degree of the “result” semantic: the higher the degree of the “result” semantic, the more possible it is that it functions as a *shang wei zi*, or vice versa.



Based on the examples in “Continuation of Table 2”, a clear corresponding relationship between VA vs. V-V and VAR vs. V-C is observed.

In sum, while some verbs had comprehensive action and result features in Ancient Chinese, verbs with these features often had a PV (i.e., notional passive) structure. For *jian* and *po*, which are discussed in more detail in later chapters, P+*jian* 见 examples were quite common, but P+*shi* 视 examples were rare (see Chapter 2, Part 3), and P+*po* 破 was common, but P+*gong* 攻 was rare. Therefore, Type 1 offers a new interpretation of the nature of the possible notional passive in Ancient Chinese. For example, Wu (2008) claimed that some verbs implied both “action” and “result” semantics when they were conceptualized, and speakers tended to choose different syntactic structures when using these two semantic features, that is, a V+P structure was chosen when emphasizing an action semantic and a P+V structure was chosen when emphasizing a result semantic, which suggests that it was the nature of the verb itself (i.e., implying both action and result semantics) as to whether it could be used transitively or intransitively. This has been commonly discussed as a cross-linguistic “labile,” which is detailed in Part 2.

## **Type 2: synthesis of orientations**

As the normal energy flow of a sentence is from an agent to a patient, the orientation of such a kind of verb is explicit (i.e., *waixiang dongci* 外向动词 “outward word”); e.g., *shou* 授 “give/teach.” However, for some verbs, and especially those that express “receive/get,” the energy flow of the sentences are from the patient to the agent (i.e., *neixiang dongci* 内向动词 “inward word”); e.g., *shou* 受 “receive/suffer.” However, the energy flow of some verbs is not fixed and can appear in two SVO structures with opposite orientations. In other words, even though both structures have an SVO word order and an agent-verb-patient relationship, the orientations for the transfer of the energy flow are opposite. Chao (1968: 704) suggested that there were verbs where the (semantic) “direction of action” could go either “outward from the subject as actor or inward toward the subject as goal” and referred to these verbs as “verbs of indeterminate direction”, with (a) indicating a

movement from the agent to the patient and (b) indicating a movement from the patient to the agent, as shown in the *bei* 被 examples below.

## **Bei** 被

*Bei* meaning *shiji* 施及 “extend to”

2. 光被四表。(Shangshu 尚书. Yaodian 尧典)

*guang bei si biao*  
light cover four directions

The light (of his authority) extended across the four extreme points (of the world).

*Bei* meaning *mengshou* 蒙受 “receive”

3. 万民被其利。(Mozi 墨子. Shangxian 尚贤)

*wan ming bei qi li*  
ten-thousand people receive his benefit

All people receive his benefit.

Examples (2) and (3) have both SVO structure, however, the subject of (2) is the *source* of giving while of (3) is the *goal* of giving. Interestingly, the situation is also similar with the verbs *jian* and *xian*.

## **Jian/xian** 见

*Jian* meaning *dedao* 得到 “receive”

4. 爱人而不必见爱。(Lüshi chunqiu 吕氏春秋. Biji 必己)

*ai ren er bu bi jian ai*  
love people but NEG necessary receive love

The superior man loves other people, but it is not necessary to receive love from other people.

*Xian* meaning *zhanshi* 展示 “show/manifest”

5. 君子之道也……生则见爱。(Mozi 墨子. Xiushen 修身)

*jun-zi zhi dao ye sheng ze xian ai*  
superior-man MODI character FIN give-birth then show love

For the man of character, when someone is born, he will show solicitude.

The subject of *ai* 爱 in (4) is the goal/recipient of “loving” while in (5) it is the source of “loving”. The special situation of *jian* is that there is a transition period “*N xian*,” that is, the relationship between groups (4) and (5) is deduced rather than being a direct relationship (this is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, Part 3).<sup>22</sup>

An examination of the grammaticalization of the possible passive markers in Ancient Chinese finds that only those with “inward” semantic features can be grammaticalized into passive markers; for example, both *jian* (Chapter 2, Part 3) and *bei* (Chapter 3, Part 3) had developed the semantic “suffer/receive,” which is directly relevant to the development of a possible passive and quite different from Modern Chinese. The newly developed passive markers in Modern Chinese, that is, *jiao* 叫, *rang* 让, and *gei* 给, were all derived from *wai xiang dong ci* 外向动词 [verbs with outward features]; however, their development into passive markers was not due to the semantic “suffer/receive” but because of a “pivotal construction,” which indicates that the passive coding was different in Ancient and Middle Chinese. However, these two methods for shaping the passive were not in a “take over” relationship as both phenomena are also present in modern Mandarin.

Type 2 also explains the nature of the passive marker *yu*. The orientations for the verbs *wang* 往 “go toward” and *fan* 反 “go back” are clearly opposite; however, both *wang* and *fan* can be used together with the verb *yu*.<sup>23</sup>

6. 帝初于历山，往于田。(Shangshu 尚书. Dayu mo 大禹谟)

*di chu yu li-shan wang yu tian*  
emperor early PREP li-mountain go go field

In the early time of the Di, when he was living by mount Li, he went into the fields.

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<sup>22</sup> *Ai* 爱 is also ambiguous in being a noun or verb. I prefer to analyze them as nouns in these examples.

<sup>23</sup> *Yu* was initially a verb meaning “go” which was always followed by a locative object in Oracle Bone Inscriptions. Then it was reanalyzed as a locative preposition (i.e., “to go to” > “to/towards”) in the serial verb construction (i.e., *bu/wang* 步/往 “go”+*yu* 于 “go to”+locative noun).

7. 彼知其将反于齐也。(Guanzi 管子. Xiaokuang 小匡)

bi zhi qi jiang fan yu qi ye  
they know PRON will return to NAME FIN

They know that he expects to return to state of Qi.

Accordingly, the orientation of *yu* should be un-fixed, that is, it is double-oriented. This feature remains when *yu* is grammaticalized as a preposition introducing both a patient and an agent. Therefore, similar to *jian* and *bei*, *yu* could possibly have a passive marker function when the sentence implies an *inward semantic feature* introducing an agent (See further discussion in Part 3, Chapter 6).

### 3.3.2 Category shift between noun and verb

From the semantic perspective, *chenshu* 陈述 “assertion/declaration” and *zhicheng* 指称 “designation/denotation” are two basic components for the language expression system; however, under certain conditions, they can either express: (1) nominalization (switching from assertion to designation); or (2) predicativization (switching from designation to assertion) by using particles such as *zhe* 者, *suo* 所 and *zhi* 之. In this section, the focus is only on the *unmarked category shift* between noun and verb. Zhu (1983) discussed two phenomena: (1) *zi zhi* 自指 “self-designation” and (2) *zhuan zhi* 转指 “transferred designation,” both of which are related to this topic.

Self-designation means that the core semantic of a word is maintained, while its part of speech is changed, cf. the difference between *kind* and *kindness* and *drive* and *driving* in English. As an example, *you* 忧 “worry” from Ancient Chinese is given in the following.

8. 三务成功，民无内忧。(Zuozhuan 左传. Zhaogong 昭公 23)

san wu cheng gong min wu nei you  
three labour achieve succeed people NEG inside anxiety

The important labors of the three (seasons) were successfully accomplished, and the people had no cause for *anxiety* in the State.

9. 嫠不恤其纬，而忧宗周之隕。(Zuozhuan 左传. Zhaogong 昭公 23)

*li bu xu qi wei er you zong-Zhou zhi yun*  
widow NEG regard PRON wool but be-anxious state-Zhou PART fall

The widow does not regard her wool, but *is anxious about* the fall of the honored (House of) Zhou.

*You* 忧 “worry” is a noun in the first example but a verb in the second example. Self-designation in Ancient Chinese is normally unmarked as seen in *you* 忧 “worry,” which is the same in examples (8) and (9). The verbal use and the nominal use have respectively been termed as *transitive use* and *abstract noun*. Cikoski (1978) specifically noted that abstract nouns denoted qualities or state being not physical objects.

Transferred designation means there is change in the core semantic meaning and the word class as in *write* and *writer* in English. (10) below is an example from Ancient Chinese.

10. 今有功者必赏。(Hanfeizi 韩非子. Nansan 难三)

*jin you gong zhe bi shang*  
now have achievement NOM certain reward

Then those who had achievements were sure to be rewarded.

In this example, *you gong* 有功 “have achievements” is a predicative phrase and as a noun phrase changes to mean “someone who has achievements” through the use of *zhe* 者. Transferred designations normally have markers in Ancient Chinese, such as *zhe* 者 and *suo* 所; however, this marker is not obligatory, as shown in the following example for *qin* 禽 “capture or captivity.”

11. 收禽挟囚。(Zuozhuan 左传, Xiangong 襄公 24)

*shou qin xie qiu*  
harvest prisoner carry prisoner

Seized the *prisoner* and carried him off under his arm.

12. 君子不重伤，不禽二毛。(Zuozhuan 左传, Xigong 僖公 22)

*jun-zi bu chong shang bu qin er-mao*  
superior NEG again wound NEG arrest old-age

The superior man does not inflict a second wound, and *does not take a prisoner* with gray hair.

*Qin* 禽 is a noun in (11) but a verb in (12), and there is no formal difference or syntactic marker making this word class change overt. This nominal use has also been called a *derived noun* denoting the patients of the action represented by the verbs. According to Giles (1982: x) "...it is said that no Chinese character can be definitely regarded as being any particular part of speech or possessing any particular function, absolutely, apart from the general tenor of its context."

Generally, all passive markers, i.e., *jian*, *bei*, *wei*, and *yu*, were initially autonomous verbs and were reanalyzed as passive markers when followed by verbs such as *you* 忧 or *qin* 禽, as discussed above. However, as shown, the category shift between noun and verb was frequently unmarked; therefore, a further check of the statistical data for the elements after *jian*, *bei*, and *wei* gave the following results.

(1) Many of the category shifts between noun and verb were actually unmarked for *you* 忧, *qin* 禽, *ru* 辱, and *xiao* 笑. Therefore, it cannot be convincingly argued that *jian*, *bei*, and *wei* were passive markers as *you* 忧, *qin* 禽, *ru* 辱, and *xiao* 笑 after them were not certain to be verbs. This indicates that other verb-like elements may also be interpreted as nouns because these structures force verbal elements to be nominalized (*zhi cheng hua* 指称化).

(2) The use of verb-like elements in these constructions is rather limited because the amount and semantic are limited, with most being associated with *kill*, *capture*, *insult*, and *worry*.

Based on these two observations discussed above, some scholars have begun to rethink the passive hypothesis asking why they should be definitely considered to be a passive. It is acceptable to interpret *wei* V as a (semi-)copula construction and *jian/bei* V as a structure meaning "suffer something," if the elements following them are nouns. Therefore, the phenomenon that the assertion and the designation can be transferred without markers, on one hand, is the key for *jian*, *wei* and *bei* to be reanalyzed as passive markers in Ancient Chinese, and on the other hand, it is also

fundamental to the divergence between a passive interpretation and a non-passive interpretation. This problem is related to what is known as the *grammaticalization degree*, which has been widely discussed in previous studies on the passive in Ancient Chinese. However, few scholars have paid sufficient attention to verb use after the passive markers and the low grammaticalization degree of the markers. This is discussed in more detail in Part 3.<sup>24</sup>

### 3.3.3 General grammar features of Chinese

Beside the two factors mentioned above, another point is the grammatical features of Chinese as a specific language, that is, its typological characteristics. Dai (2013) gave a brief review of the typological characteristics of Chinese that had been noted by various Chinese grammarians. First, Chinese has been characterized by many scholars as being more “discourse-oriented” or “pragmatic-oriented” (Chao 1968, Cao 1990, Huang 1994, Chu 1998). In this respect, Lapolla (1990: 174) had an even more radical opinion, as shown below:

What we have then in modern Mandarin Chinese is a language that is organized almost entirely according to pragmatic principles at all levels above the noun phrase. Discourse markers and the focus-structure marking particles of certain constructions aid in this pragmatic interpretation, but these should not be seen as syntactic cases or passivation markers; syntactic considerations are secondary to real world semantics and pragmatics.

Lapolla (1990: 174) also linked the findings from Modern Chinese to Ancient Chinese, concluding that old Chinese was possibly an even more pragmatically based language than modern Mandarin. In my opinion, Lapolla’s conclusion is convincing and *pragmatics* does play an important role in Chinese grammar. In particular, the passive, which is cross-linguistically explained in a syntactic-oriented way, is also highly dependent on context (i.e., pragmatic information) in Chinese, that is, all passives are pragmatically determined rather than having fixed syntactic markings.

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<sup>24</sup> Li (2015) followed Wei’s (2003: 77) statement that categorical ambiguity declined in Middle Chinese. Such statement should be regarded with caution as the ambiguity of part of speech is still common even in modern Mandarin. Maybe it is true that some ambiguous verbs in Ancient Chinese were no longer ambiguous in Middle Chinese; however, categorical ambiguity as a linguistic phenomenon does not decline in Chinese.

According to Van Valin and LaPolla's (1997) Role and Reference Grammar (RRG), a given clause-internal relation may be syntactic, semantic or pragmatic. The precondition for a voice system is the existence of syntactic relations, such as subject and object. To meet this precondition, a language must have at least one construction with a restricted neutralization of semantic roles for syntactic purposes. After testing different constructions in Mandarin, Van Valin and LaPolla (1997: 260-263) come to the conclusion that the language has no purely syntactic relations. In spite of the lack of syntactic relations, I admit that Mandarin has a voice-like system expressing passive meaning, such as the notional passive and the marked passives.

However, not all PV structures can be analyzed as notional passives as many are intransitive use of labile verbs that have ambiguous passive and non-passive interpretations, with the degree of this ambiguity being dependent on the pragmatic information. The situation is similar for the marked passives as all can appear in either an agent subject sentence with an active interpretation or a patient-subject sentence with a passive interpretation. Therefore, the pragmatic information is important when seeking to deal with this inefficiency.

Second, Dai (1989) observed that Chinese has grammatical structures similar to child language, sign language, young creoles, and pidgins. Some commonalities were summarized in Aronoff, Meir and Sandler (2005: 307):

“These commonalities include: no distinction between tensed and infinitival clauses, no tense marking but a rich aspectual system, no pleonastic subjects, *no true passives* [emphasis added], the occurrence of transitive verbs with agent subjects as intransitives with patient/theme subjects as well, pervasive topic-comment word order; both young creole languages and ASL (i.e., American sign language) *make extensive use of content words as grammatical markers* (emphasis added); neither young creole languages nor ASL use prepositions to introduce oblique cases; both use preverbal free morphemes to express completive aspect; and both rely heavily on prosodic cues like intonation for expressing certain syntactic relations (such as those encoded by relative clauses and conditionals in other languages).”

Therefore, as compared to the *definition* provided by such as Haspelmath (1990: 27) , I think Lüpke's (2007: 137) explanation is much more useful when studying the passive in Ancient Chinese.

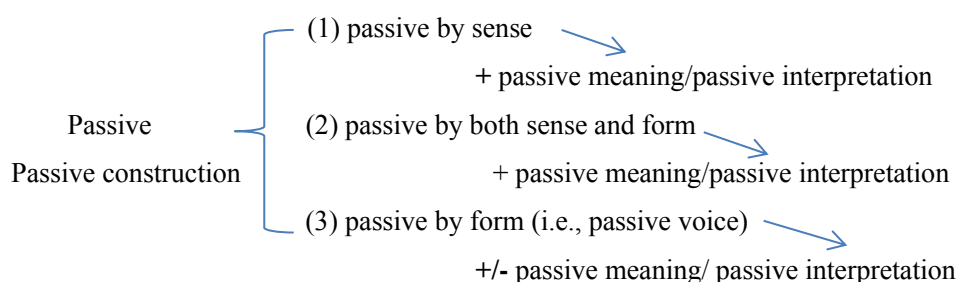


In summary, when studying the passive in Ancient Chinese, the three factors introduced above should be kept in mind, since they are the basic *background* for this research. In particular, this dissertation tries to argue that we cannot ignore semantics or pragmatics in any aspect of Chinese grammatical relations (and the study thereof), and that pragmatics (i.e., context) is frequently even more basic than syntax. In my opinion, there is no true passive voice (syntactically marked passive) in Ancient Chinese; however, there are indeed examples that imply a passive sense, which is a view that is consistent with the opinion that the grammaticalization degree of passive markers in Ancient Chinese is quite low, as mentioned in Factor 2 above.

Therefore, some relevant concepts, i.e., “passive sense”, “passive meaning”, “passive interpretation”, “passive construction” and “passive voice”, are required to be differentiated.

Most importantly, the differentiation between passive sense and passive voice is explored. In Abraham (2006: 2), he has a subtitle “Semantic mapping and other functional accounts – passive by form vs. passive by sense”. Accordingly, it is inferred that the passive is divided into two types, i.e., passive by form and passive by sense. As for the relationship between them, he concludes that the term “passive sense” is used as opposed to “passive morphology”. He takes German as an example, and explains that “passive sense” is more appropriate for the historical stages of German, as opposed to today’s German and English, where one simply says that “there is a passive” and that it is one of the verbal genders and that it is part of verbal diathesis – i.e., that it is co-classified with categories such as causative/ decausative, transitive/ reflexive/ middle verb, transitive/ detransitive, etc. Then he further asks “How do we understand the shift from the aspectually laden object predication in the periods before Early Modern German to the verbal passive gender in Modern Standard German? Did the modern language add another verbal gender category out of the blue, as it were?” Moreover, concerning the impersonal passive, he thinks that “impersonal passives have no true passive sense since the subject, *es*, or *pro* above does not project a thematic role.” According to his statements, it is inferred that some passives are marked morphologically or syntactically (i.e., passive voice), but without passive sense; while some only with passive sense but without a morphological or syntactical marker. Certainly, many passives are with both passive sense and passive form.

Therefore, Abraham's dichotomy supposition is better to be changed as trichotomy, as shown in the diagram below.<sup>25</sup>



Although he does not define these two types of passive in detail, such a distinction is similar to the distinction of passive sense and passive voice made in this dissertation. More importantly, I think that *passive sense* is mainly semantically and pragmatically determined, while *passive voice* is dominantly syntactically marked since voice, normally refers to a verbal category. Therefore, semantic and pragmatic is the prerequisite for a passive sense, while it is not for a passive voice.

As for passive meaning/ passive interpretation used in this dissertation, they are broad concepts. Roughly, passive sense definitely implies a passive meaning or passive interpretation. However, passive voice does not necessarily implies a passive meaning as shown by Abraham with the examples of some impersonal passives. Because the passive meaning/ passive interpretation and passive sense has a sufficient and necessary condition relationship, therefore, these concepts are used interchangeably in this dissertation. By contrast, passive voice is avoided since the dissertation believes that it is unjustified to argue that Ancient Chinese had a passive voice.

The term passive construction refers to a construction comprising different components (e.g., patient, V and agent), and expressing a passive meaning. The passive construction can refer to both passive by form and passive by sense. Note that, the terms passives and passive constructions are used “loosely” in this dissertation.

The advantages of listing “passive by sense (i.e., passive sense)” separately are clear: (1) it is specifically useful when studying the grammaticalization into passive, since it

<sup>25</sup> + means “with such a feature”; +/- means “with or without such a feature”. → means “imply”.

is more convenient to explain the passives which are in the transition stage of becoming a “mature passive”.

(2) Moreover, it provides an explanation for the passive which is not marked morphologically.

(3) As for the study of passive in Ancient Chinese, such a concept makes it unnecessary for us to completely deny the existence of the passive, and enables us to further explore the particularities of the Chinese passive.

Generally speaking, passive sense mainly refers to some isolating languages, in which there is lack of morphemes and the distinction of categories remains unclear.

Normally, they have many forms to express passive sense (e.g., *jian*, *bei*, *wei*, *yu* and *ke* discussed in Ancient Chinese in this dissertation), yet passive understanding is often not the only possible interpretation for these structures (e.g., all the alleged passives markers are ambiguous in lexical and passive interpretations, as discussed in this dissertation). By contrast, passive voice is aimed at some inflectional and agglutinative languages, which have rich morphemes and clear distinction of categories. Therefore, they normally have passive markers with clear division of function, even when the passive sense is not obvious in the sentence. In sum, passive sense represents a passive with low degree of grammaticalization, while passive voice represents a passive with high degree of grammaticalization.

In sum, the difference between these two concepts will be implemented throughout the thesis.

## PART 2: NOTIONAL PASSIVE AND LIABILITY IN ANCIENT CHINESE

# CHAPTER 1: THE SO-CALLED NOTIONAL PASSIVE IN ANCIENT CHINESE

This chapter attempts to determine the nature of the so-called notional passive in Ancient Chinese. The notional passive is commonly defined as a construction with the following features: a superficially intransitive predicate (i.e., no apparent object following V on the surface), a patient subject, and no obvious passive marker before the predicate. In other words, the notional passive construction is a PV construction. After analyzing the data, I argue that the PV construction can be further divided into two types according to the nature of V: the PV construction of a labile V (i.e., Type 1 in this chapter) and the PV construction of a transitive action V (i.e., Type 2 in this chapter). The differences between Type 1 and Type 2 are summarized below.

- (a) Verbs in Type 1 imply both action and result semantics. Meanwhile, those in Type 2 only imply action semantics (i.e., the agentive feature of V in Type 2 is stronger than that in Type 1).
- (b) In Type 1, PV use is free and occurs with high frequency. On the other hand, in Type 2, it is limited to special contexts and occurs with low frequency.
- (c) The V in Type 1 is often argued to have alternating initial consonants, i.e., *qing* 清 (voiced) and *zhuo* 浊 (voiceless), in their Middle Chinese form, while in Type 2 it does not.

Based on these differences, we can easily infer that instances of Type 1 are dominant in the study of notional passive constructions, while Type 2 appears to be quite marginal. Therefore, concerning the nature of the notional passive, the focus will naturally be on Type 1.

In Western studies, the PV construction in Type 1 is rarely analyzed as passive but instead is commonly seen as a non-causative structure expressing a change of state that occurred spontaneously, i.e., The door opened.

By contrast, Chinese linguists often analyze the construction as expressing the passive voice, i.e., notional passive. This difference may be due to the existence of Type 2,

which is not well attested in linguistic studies by Western scholars. As mentioned, V in Type 2 is typically an action transitive verb. Therefore, the PV construction in Type 2 can express the passive because of its strong agentive feature.

Yet, I believe that Type 2 is not a matured passive construction because of the following: (1) the extremely limited use of the PV construction with only a few verbs and (2) the limitation of its use to certain contexts. Probably, this is just a structurally analogical development of Type 1. Then, the PV construction of Type 2 can also be interpreted as expressing a change of state. In sum, the commonly seen statement that the “notional passive is the most common form of passive in Chinese” (Yip and Don 2004: 210) is doubtful.

However, I admit that the involvement of the agent-oriented meaning components indeed complicates the interpretation of the nature of the PV structure in Ancient Chinese. This characteristic motivates the analysis put forward here.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In studies on passive constructions in Ancient Chinese, it is inevitable to discuss the so-called notional passive, which is commonly defined as a construction that has the following features: (1) a superficially intransitive predicate (i.e., no apparent object following V on the surface); (2) a patient subject; and (3) no an apparent marker. See examples (13) and (14) below.

13. 吴师大败。(Zuozhuan 左传. Dinggong 定公 5)

wu shi da bai  
wu military greatly defeated  
The military of Wu was greatly defeated

14. 昔者龙逢斩，比干剖。(Zhuangzi 庄子. Quqie 胠箝)

xi-zhe Long-Feng zhan Bi-Gan pou  
past NAME cut-down NAME disembowel  
In the past, Long Feng was cut down and Bi Gan was disemboweled.

Other terms used to refer to this construction, such as *fanbin weizhu* 反宾为主

“fronting object as subject,” *yinian beidongju* 意念被动 “notional passive,” and *wu biaoji beidong* 无标记被动 “unmarked passive,” are similar in that they treat the intransitive construction as a passive construction derived from the transitive one [A]VP.<sup>26</sup> Accordingly, *wu shi bai* 吴师败 “the military of Wu is defeated” derives from [A] *bai wu shi* [A]败吴师 “[A] defeat the military of Wu” by fronting *wu shi* in the subject position. Similarly, *Long Feng zhan* 龙逢斩 “Long Feng is cut down” derives from [A] *zhan Long Feng* [A]斩龙逢 “[A] cut down Long Feng,” and *bi gan pou* 比干剖 “Bi Gan is disemboweled” derives from [A] *pou Bi Gan* [A]剖比干 “[A] cut off Bi Gan.” This analysis accords to the common hypotheses on passive constructions, namely, that the structure V+O is the base while O+V is a derived form of V+O. The view is found in almost all passive related studies, and it is the dominant perspective in the existing research on Chinese linguistics (e.g., Li 1983, Hong 2000). However, an alternative view that these constructions are shaped to express a [change-of] state rather than the passive (e.g., Lü [1942]1982) has become popular in recent studies. Lü believes that “something becomes a state when the action is accomplished.” As such, a sentence in which V has an “accomplishment” meaning also expresses a “(resultant) state” meaning. In particular, the passivized verb conveys the meaning of accomplishment; thus, the PV structure expresses a (resultant) state.

Fang (1971) agrees with the view that the PV structure expresses a state. However, he refutes that V is passivized in the PV structure, since there is no antithesis between the active and passive forms of the verb (i.e., non-marked). He asserts that these PV examples only mean that the actions have been accomplished. In addition, he claims that the examples involve intransitive verbs that function quite similar to adjectives. Fang’s opinion implies that the PV structure is not formed by fronting the object as a subject. In other words, verbs in these examples can be used intransitively without transformation. I agree with the refuting opinions. However, the PV construction not only expresses the “accomplishment” but also a “resultant state” (for further discussion, see Section 4.1.3).

The debate continues over whether these examples should be treated as constructions

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<sup>26</sup> [A] represents “an agent” in this chapter.

expressing the passive or a (resultant) state. Both sides lack convincing evidence since they ignore an essential problem: can all kinds of V appear in the notional passive construction? The answer is no. Then, what kind of V can appear? As examples (13) and (14) demonstrate, *bai* can be used freely in either transitive or intransitive constructions without formal change, while *pou* is normally used in a transitive construction and the PV construction is only found occasionally.<sup>27</sup> In other words, verbs like *bai* have an alternating feature, so that the form “Agent+V+patient” alternates freely with “patient+V.” However, the same is not true for verbs like *pou*. This illustrates the complexity of the verb types involved in the notional passive. Here, a more important question arises: is there any difference between these two types of PV structure, although both of them are one-participant (i.e., intransitive) structures on the surface and the subject can be recovered as the object of V? In order to address these questions, the verbal system will be examined and all types of one-participant structures in Ancient Chinese will be extracted in Section 2.

## 2. THE VERBAL SYSTEM AND ONE-PARTICIPANT STRUCTURE IN ANCIENT CHINESE

Traditionally, Chinese verbs are classified as transitive or intransitive, depending on whether or not they take an object. However, scholars increasingly realize that this criterion is insufficient, since some verbs can be used either transitively or intransitively without any formal change. Because of this flexibility, Gao (1948[2011]: 214) concludes that verbs could be used transitively or intransitively depending on the *context*. He believed that all verbs in Ancient Chinese function *neutrally*.<sup>28</sup>

It is true that there is no neat boundary between transitive and intransitive verbs; however, absolutely refuting the difference between transitive and intransitive is a quite radical approach. Actually, the trichotomy hypothesis and quartering hypothesis, which emerged later, were developed on the basis of the transitive-intransitive

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<sup>27</sup> In Pre-Qin texts, 31 examples of *pou* 剖 were found. Among these examples, 18 appeared in the V+N pattern while 13 appeared in the N+V pattern. However, almost all N+V examples are *Bi Gan pou* (xin) 比干剖(心) *Bi Gan* (or *Bi Gan*'s heart) was cut. As for the frequency of *bai* N and N *bai*, see the Table 3.

<sup>28</sup> Neutrally here means “no distinction between transitive and intransitive.” Note that “neutrally” here is not related to the “neutral verb” discussed later.



dichotomy.

### **Trichotomy hypothesis**

Guan (1994) classified the Ancient Chinese verb into three types:

- (1) Intransitive verbs
- (2) Transitive verbs
- (3) Verbs that alternate between transitive and intransitive

A similar opinion is proposed by Zhang (2003a). He found that 50% of the verbs in *Zuozhuan* sometimes take an object but other times do not. Therefore, he suggested that it is better to establish a new class “between transitive and intransitive.”

### **Quaternary hypothesis**

Yi (1999) classified the Ancient Chinese verbs into four types: intransitive, transitive, direct, and ergative. Among them, *direct verbs* are transitive verbs whose object can be present or not, as in the English example *drink*, which is transitive in both of the following sentences: *John drinks* and *John drinks beer*. In other words, *John drinks* can be considered as an omission of the object in the sentence *John drinks beer*. This kind of verb is also defined as *zhongxing dongci* 中性动词 “neutral verb” in Cikoski (1978) and Onishi (2004). In this thesis, *ergative verbs* are defined as those which can be used either transitively or intransitively, where the semantic role of the subject of the intransitive clause is identical with that of the object of its transitive clause. Note that more traditionally oriented typologist may dislike the notion of ergativity being applied to this phenomenon (e.g., Dixon 1994). Different from the neutral verb mentioned above, the presence or absence of an object is important for the interpretation of the ergative verb. In detail, if no object is present, the process could be carried out by itself or by an implied causer. For example, in *The door opened*, the door could have opened spontaneously or been opened by an implied causer. However, if an object is present, the emphasis is changed because the causer (i.e., the subject) causes the process. For instance, *John opened the door* means John caused the door to

open.

Song (2014) basically agrees with Yi but with the modification that he classifies the *zhongxing dongci* “neutral verb” as transitive. In addition, he carried out much more detailed research on the ergative verbs. This makes Song’s verbal system more like a trichotomy: (1) transitive (including *zhongxing dongci* “neutral verbs”), (2) ergative, and (3) intransitive.

In sum, the trichotomy hypothesis is quite consistent and simple: transitive, medial (i.e., V which can be used both transitively and intransitively), and intransitive. By contrast, the quaternary hypothesis is more complex because new angles of view are introduced, e.g., neutral verbs and ergative verbs. However, the essence of their thoughts is the same; i.e., some verbs can function both transitively and intransitively. The difference is that these verbs are classified into one category in the former system but divided into two categories in the quaternary hypothesis.

Here, for the unity of terminology use, verbs that may be used either transitively or intransitively without any overt marking are defined as *labile verbs*. Moreover, the Ancient Chinese labile verbs are divided into two types, atypical (i.e., intransitive-based labile) and typical (i.e., unclear-based labile), based on whether the intransitive use is relevant to the notional passive or not (for further discussion in Sections 2.1 and 2.2). Note that, during the study of the verbal system of Ancient Chinese, my focus will be mainly on the intransitive member of the alternative pairs, since the notional passive is basically a one-participant structure.

## **2.1 Intransitive verbs**

Intransitive can be further divided into typical intransitive verbs and primarily intransitive.

### *2.1.1 Typical intransitive verbs*

Typical intransitive verbs refer only to a small class of action verbs that are mainly

used in intransitive clauses. They designate an event with an actor agent subject but without external causative elements or a theme subject. However, verbs in this group are also observed in causative structures in some special contexts, with extremely low frequency. The verbs *zuo* 坐 “sit down” and *luo* 落 “fall down” are taken as examples in (15) to (18).

### Intransitive *zuo* 坐 “sit”

15. 侧席而坐。(Liji 礼记. Quli shang 曲礼上)

*ce xi er zuo*  
apart mat then sit

Sit with his mat spread a part from others.

### Causativization of *zuo* 坐 “sit”

16. 二子在幄，坐射犬于外。(Zuozhuan 左传. Xianggong 襄公 24)<sup>29</sup>

*er zi zai wo zuo she-quan yu wai*  
two officers PREP tent sit NAME PREP outside

The two officers sat in their tent, while let She Quan sit [and wait] outside.

### Intransitive *luo* 落 “fall down”

17. 草木黄落。(Liji 礼记. Yueling 月令)

*cao mu huang luo*  
grass tree yellow fall-down

The grass and the leaves of trees became yellow and fell down.

### Causativization of *luo* 落 “fall down”

18. 我落其实。(Zuozhuan 左传. Xigong 僖公 15)

*wo luo qi shi*  
I fall-down its fruit

I made its fruits fall down.

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<sup>29</sup> In English, “sit” in a causative sense has been lexicalized as a verb “seat” which can be naturally used in the structure “seat somebody”. However, even in Modern Mandarin, examples like “*zuo*+somebody” are not attested.

More examples include *tao* 逃 “escape,” *qi* 泣 “cry,” *si* 死 “die,” and so on. Generally, the absolute intransitive may not exist in Ancient Chinese because the verb can be followed by different elements forming different semantic relations besides the causative relationship. This is why I do not use terms like “true intransitive,” or “pure intransitive.” For example, *si* 死 “die” is primarily used as an intransitive verb cross-linguistically. However, it could be followed by a noun indicating a person (i.e., *si+N*) to form the meaning “die for somebody” in Ancient Chinese, e.g., *Gouxijiang si zhi* 荀息将死之 “Gouxijiang will die for him (i.e., the king).”

### 2.1.2 Primarily intransitive (i.e., intransitive-based *labile*)

Primarily intransitive refers to a large class of verbs that usually occur in intransitive clauses but also alternatively occur in some transitive clauses. Relatively, the causative use of this kind of verb is much more common as compared to use of the verbs in Section 2.1.1. This is why this verb type is commonly defined as *labile verbs* in functional grammar or *ergative/un-accusative verbs* in the un-accusative hypothesis.<sup>30</sup> Three classes of verbs, i.e., verbs of existence, verbs of motion, and verbs of mental state, are studied as representatives below.

#### 2.1.2.1 Verbs of existence

*Xing* 兴 “appear” is representative of this verb class. The basic structure should be “N+*xing*,” meaning “something/somebody appear(s).” This kind of verb is often followed by an object, forming the *causative transitive* meaning “make something appear.” Contrasting examples are shown in (19) and (20).

#### **Intransitive *xing* 兴 “appear”**

19. 师兴而雨。(Zuozhuan 左传. Xigong 僖公 19)

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<sup>30</sup> As to the question of what criterion can be used to distinguish 2.1.1 from 2.1.2, it is far beyond the scope of this chapter and will not be pursued further.

*shi xing er yu*  
army appear then rain

[When] the army appeared, it rained.

### Causativization of *xing* 兴 “appear”

20. 遂兴师伐吴。(Guoyu 国语. Yueyu 越语)

*sui xing shi fa wu*  
then raise troop attack NAME

Then [he] made his troop move (i.e., raised his troops) and attacked the state of Wu.

#### 2.1.2.2 Verbs of motion

*Chu* 出 “come from inside to outside” is taken as a representative of this verb class. The basic structure is “somebody+*chu*+ [somewhere],” indicating somebody has carried out an action of “moving out [from somewhere]”. In other words, the verb is originally an intransitive structure “somebody+*chu*” in which the location object can be present or not.<sup>31</sup> However, when it is followed by an animate noun, (e.g., somebody+*chu*+somebody), this suggests a causative use, i.e., making somebody carry out the action of “moving out.” See examples (21) and (22) below.

### Intransitive *chu* 出 “come out”

21. 晋人不出。(Zuozhuan 左传. Luwengong 鲁文公 3)

*jin ren bu chu*  
jin people NEG come-out

The troops of Jin did not come out [to against him].

### Causativization of *chu* 出 “come out”

22. 臣出晋君。(Zuozhuan 左传. Xigong 僖公 10)

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<sup>31</sup> These verbs can be directly followed by a location element that makes it like a transitive verb. However, *location* is basically an oblique element rather than an internal argument of the verb. Therefore, *yu* can be inserted before the location or the location can be just omitted (for further discussion, see *yu* chapter in Chapter 6, Part 3).

*chen chu jin jun*  
I come-out NAME king

I will then make the marquis of Jin go out (i.e., leave) [this country].

### 2.1.2.3 Verbs of mental state

*Nu* 怒 “be angry” is an example of this class. Its original structure is “somebody+*nu* 怒,” which shows that “somebody is in an emotional state of anger.” When it is followed by an animate noun, then it has the causative use, which means “cause somebody to have an emotional state of anger.”<sup>32</sup> This is demonstrated by examples (23) and (24).

#### Intransitive *nu* 怒 “be angry”

23. 公子怒，欲鞭之。(Zuozhuan 左传. Xigong 僖公 23)

*gong-zi nu yu bian zhi*  
prince furious want whip PRON

The prince was furious and he wanted to have the man whipped.

#### Causativization of *nu* 怒 “be angry”

24. 林楚怒马。(Zuozhuan 左传. Dinggong 定公 8)

*Lin-Chu nu ma*  
NAME furious horse

Lin Chu made his horses furious (i.e. infuriated his horse).

The verbs of mental state here are ambiguous with adjectives. Interestingly, the typical adjective in Ancient Chinese can also be followed by a causative object without any surface change, such as *xiao* 小 “small,” as demonstrated by (25) and (26).

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<sup>32</sup> The particularity of the verb of mental state is that it can be used in three structures: (1) Somebody *nu* 怒/*ju* 惧 (i.e., somebody feels an emotion of anger or fear); (2) Somebody *nu/ju* (*yu*) something (i.e., somebody feels an emotion of anger or fear because of something); and (3) Somebody *nu/ju* somebody (i.e., cause somebody to have the emotion of anger or fear).

### Adjective *xiao*:

25. 卫虽小，其君在焉，未可胜也。(Zuozhuan 左传. Dinggong 定公)

*wei sui xiao qi jun zai yan wei ke sheng ye*

NAME though small his king is FIN NEG AUX conquer FIN

Although the state of Wei is small, its ruler is there, it cannot be conquered.

### Causativization of adjective *xiao*:

26. 匠人斫而小之。(Mengzi 孟子. Lianghuiwang 梁惠王下)

*jiang-ren zhuo er xiao zhi*

craftsman cut and reduce it

The craftsman cut it and reduced [the size] of it.

In such case, the subject of the one-participant structure is defined as a “theme.”

To conclude, the most remarkable feature of verbs in this section is that the deriving relationship is quite clear even though there is no apparent marker:<sup>33</sup> the base is undoubtedly the intransitive construction, and the transitive construction is derived. This is why the verbs are defined as intransitive-based labile verbs. Another important feature is that the subject of intransitive-based labile verbs, when used intransitively, could be either a prototypical agent (e.g., verbs in Sections 2.1.2.1 and 2.1.2.2) or a prototypical theme (e.g., verbs in Section 2.1.2.3). Therefore, the intransitive member here emphasizes that the event only involves one participant that could be *an agent acting volitionally* or *a theme acting spontaneously*. In sum, the intransitive member of this type of labile verb is not relevant to the passive at all.

Until now, it has seemed that all intransitive verbs in Ancient Chinese can be followed by a *shidong binyu* 使动宾语 “causative object” (i.e., non-direct object/causee), but with great differences in the frequency of their occurrence. For example, the causative use is limited to certain contexts for the verbs in Section 2.1.1, while it occurs with

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<sup>33</sup> It is argued that there originally might have been morphological changes (e.g., Schuessler 2006).

high frequency for those in Section 2.1.2.<sup>34</sup> Despite this difference, the fact that almost all intransitive verbs can be followed with a causative object should be emphasized more, since this feature makes the labile phenomenon in Ancient Chinese much more common than in other languages. This group of verbs is normally discussed in terms of the inchoative and causative by Western linguists.

Therefore, although many scholars (Song 2014, Yang 2014) interpret the V in Section 2.1.2 as a labile verb (or *ergative verb*), I rather define it as an *atypical labile verb* in order to distinguish it from the typical labile verb, which is described in Section 2.2. There are two main differences between atypical and typical labile verbs. Namely, (1) typical labile verbs are most widely observed cross-linguistically, and (2) for typical labile verbs, it is difficult to identify whether the transitive or intransitive use is the base.

## 2.2 Typical labile verbs

Typical labile verbs can be used either transitively or intransitively without any differences in form, and the *semantic role* of the intransitive subject matches that of the transitive object. Cross-linguistically, verbs of breaking (*break, scatter*) and opening or closing (*open, close*) are commonly observed as typical labile verbs. This is also observed in Ancient Chinese, as seen by examples (27) to (30) with *zhe* 折 “break” and *shang* 伤 “wound.”

### Transitive *zhe* 折 “break off”

27. 为长者折枝。(Mengzi 孟子. Lianghui wang shang 梁惠王上)

*wei zhang zhe zhe zhi*  
for older NOM break-off branch

Breaking off a branch for an elder.

### Intransitive *zhe* 折 “break off”

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<sup>34</sup> It is quite common that the causative object is just an anaphoric pronoun *zhi* 之.



28. 夫栋折而榱崩。(Guoyu 国语. Luyu 鲁语)

*fu dong zhe er cui beng*  
INI rooftree crack and rafter collapse

If the rooftree cracks and the rafters collapse.

### Transitive *shang* 伤 “injure”

29. 伤国君有刑。(Zuozhuan 左传. Chenggong 成公 16)

*shang guo-jun you xing*  
injure king have punishment

Anyone who injures the ruler of a state will be punished!

### Intransitive *shang* 伤 “injure”

30. 子皙伤而归。(Zuozhuan 左传. Zhaogong 昭公 1)

*Zi-xi shang er gui*  
NAME wound than return

Zi Xi returned wounded.

More examples are the following: *bai* 败 “defeat,” *duan* 断 “cut,” *huai* 坏 “break,” *jian* 见 “see,” *jiang* 降 “descend,” *jie* 解 “untie,” *zhi* 治 “govern,” *hui* 毁 “destroy,” *zhang* 张 “open,” *chen* 沉 “sink,” *po* 破 “break,” *zhi* 止 “stop,” *kai* 开 “open,” and *qi* 启 “start.”

As mentioned above, one of the features of the *typical labile verb* is that the intransitive and transitive occur with similar frequencies. This can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3 Alternations of typical ergative verbs in eight texts in pre-Qin times

<b>Bai 败</b>											
Semantic	Consonant	syntactic function	<i>Shi Jing</i>	<i>Zuo Zhuan</i>	<i>Guo Yu</i>	<i>Lun Yu</i>	<i>Meng Zi</i>	<i>Xun Zi</i>	<i>Han Feizi</i>	<i>Zhan Guo</i>	Total
Defeat	<i>Zhuo</i>	Intran.	2	86	17	0	3	6	35	43	192
	<i>Qing</i>	Tran.	2	137	26	0	1	2	23	42	233
<b>Duan 断</b>											
Semantic	Consonant	syntactic function	<i>Shi Jing</i>	<i>Zuo Zhuan</i>	<i>Guo Yu</i>	<i>Lun Yu</i>	<i>Meng Zi</i>	<i>Xun Zi</i>	<i>Han feizi</i>	<i>Zhan Guo</i>	Total
Cut	<i>Zhuo</i>	Intran.	0	0	0	0	0	4	4	4	12
	<i>Qing</i>	Tran.	3	13	0	0	0	6	13	15	50
<b>Zhe 折</b>											
Semantic	Consonant	syntactic function	<i>Shi jing</i>	<i>Zuo zhuan</i>	<i>Guo yu</i>	<i>Lun yu</i>	<i>Meng zi</i>	<i>Xun zi</i>	<i>Han feizi</i>	<i>Zhan guo</i>	Total
break off	<i>Zhuo</i>	Intran.	0	3	2	0	0	3	8	4	20
	<i>Qing</i>	Tran.	4	11	2	0	2	1	4	6	30
<b>Huai 坏</b>											
Semantic	Consonant	syntactic function	<i>Shi jing</i>	<i>Zuo zhuan</i>	<i>Guo yu</i>	<i>Lun yu</i>	<i>Meng zi</i>	<i>Xun zi</i>	<i>Han feizi</i>	<i>Zhan guo</i>	Total
Break	<i>Zhuo</i>	Intran.	?	6	1	1	0	3	13	1	25
	<i>Qing</i>	Tran.	?	5	1	0	0	0	3	2	11
<b>Shang 伤</b>											
Semantic	Consonant	syntactic function	<i>Shi jing</i>	<i>Zuo zhuan</i>	<i>Guo yu</i>	<i>Lun yu</i>	<i>Meng zi</i>	<i>Xun zi</i>	<i>Han feizi</i>	<i>Zhan guo</i>	total
Wound	<i>Zhuo</i>	Intran.	1	13	8	0	0	3	10	9	44
	<i>Qing</i>	Tran.	2	10	3	2	6	29	33	30	115

Note: This table is summarized from Yang (2014) and Song (2014).

Another feature of *typical* labile verbs is that it is difficult to identify which the transitive or intransitive structure is the base. Different researchers' opinions are summarized in Table 4.

**Table 4 Different hypotheses of the base of the typical ergative verbs**

	Jiang (2001)	Song (2014)	Li (1983)	Yin (1997)	Zhang (2003a)	Liu (2006a)
<i>Po</i> 破 “break”	Orig. tr.	Orig. tr. → then intr. → both Tr. and intr.				
<i>Bai</i> 败 “defeat”	Orig. intr.	Orig. tr. → intr.	Orig. intr.	Orig. intr.	Orig. intr.	
<i>Mie</i> 灭 “disintegrate”	Orig. tr.	Orig. tr. → intr. then intr. → tran.				Orig. intr.
<i>Shan</i> 伤 “injure”	Orig. tr.		Orig. intr.		Orig. intr.	Orig. intr.
<i>Zh</i> 折 “break”	Difficult to decide	It could be orig. tr. then tr. and intr. were equally used	Orig. intr.			

Among these scholars, Song carried out detailed statistical work for each verb, trying to find the diachronic development of the transitive and intransitive uses. However, the alternative use of the typical labile verb should be more determined by the innate semantic feature of expressing a change of state. This is the third feature of the typical labile verbs, and it distinguishes them from atypical labile verbs. This group is the most commonly referred to in the discussion of labile (or ergative) verbs in Ancient Chinese. Western scholars tend to discuss this type of verb in terms of causative/non-causative or causative/anti-causative pairs, which have been mainly limited to change-of-state events (cf. Haspelmath 1987/1993, Nedialkov and Comrie 1988), which are perceived as inherently causative. *Break* is often used as an example to illustrate the causal chain. For example, *Harry broke the vase* can be modelled with a three-segment causal chain:

- (i) Harry acts on the vase
- (ii) the vase changes state
- (iii) the vase is in a result state (i.e., broken)

(Croft 1994: 38)

A complex event structure is also summarized for this kind of verb:

Break: [[x ACT] CAUSE [BECOME [y <BROKEN>]]]

(Levin and Rappaport Hovav 2005: 113)

Note that in the previous studies of the *notional passive*, most of the examples cited are actually intransitive members of the *typical labile V*. Therefore, the first construction related to our topic is observed here (i.e., notional passive) (hereafter *Type 1*).

## 2.3 Transitive

Transitive verbs refer to a large class of verbs, which have two arguments and assign two theta roles. The interesting thing is that they can also be used intransitively, and the intransitive use can be further divided into two types. One is A-lability, in which only the agent is preserved in the intransitive use (*John drinks tea/John drinks*), and the other is P-lability, in which only the patient is preserved in the intransitive use (*I broke the stick/The stick broke*).

### A-lability

The A-lability refers to the *zhongdongci* 中动词 “neutral verb” mentioned before (e.g., Cikoski 1978, Onishi 2004): the one-participant construction can only be interpreted as an omission of its object rather than an object fronting or something else. Common examples are verbs expressing “eat” and “drink.” For instance, examples (31) and (32) use *shi* 食 “eat.”

31. 鬮鼠又食其角。(Zuozhuan 左传. Chenggong 成公 7)

*xi-shu you shi qi jiao*  
mice again ate its horns

The mice again ate its (i.e., the cow's) horns.

32. 孔甘不问肉之所由来而食。(Mozi 墨子. Feiru xia 非儒下)

*Kong-gan bu wen rou zhi suo you-lai er shi*

NAME NEG ask meat MODI NOM come-from and eat

Kong Gan did not ask where the meat came from and ate [it].

Another example is *sheng* 胜 “win”:

33. **Transitive:** 司空无骇入极，费彛父胜之。(Zuozhuan 左传. Yingong 隐公 2)

*Sikong-Wuhai ru ji Fei-Qinfu sheng zhi*

NAME enter NAME NAME win PRON

Sikong Wuhai entered the place Ji, [and he ordered Fei Qinfu to conquer place Ji,] Fei Qinfu conquered it.

34. **Object omission:** 邹人与楚人战，则王以为孰胜？楚人胜。(Mengzi 孟子. Lianghuiwang zhangju shang 梁惠王章句上)

*zhou-ren yu chu-ren zhan*

zhou-people and chu-people fight

*ze wang yi-wei shu sheng*

then king think who win

*chu-ren sheng*

chu-people win

[If] the people of Zhou fights with the people of Chu, who do you think will win? The people of Chu will win.<sup>35</sup>

Apparently, the examples *Fei Qinfu sheng zhi* 费彛父胜之 “Fei Qinfu conquered it” and *Chu ren sheng* 楚人胜 “Chu people conquered [it]” are *superficially* composed of a two-participant and one-participant structure, respectively. After analyzing the semantic relationship of each sentence, it is found that the subjects of both sentences are agents (for further discussion, see Lü 1989).

Verbs like *pan* 叛 “revolt,” *zhan* 战 “fight,” and *xin* 信 “believe,” mentioned before, also belong to this group. Although the A-lability is not relevant with the passive, it is worth mentioning here since it is also a type of lability found in Ancient Chinese.

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<sup>35</sup> *Sheng* in Ancient Chinese cannot be equated to the English translation “win.” One cannot say “win somebody or win some countries”, only “win a game/match”, or one has to use a preposition (“win over”) in this function. However, *sheng* in Ancient Chinese can be used with human objects (“*sheng*+somebody”) or other objects (i.e., *sheng chu* 胜楚).

## P-lability

Word order is of paramount importance in Chinese. Since Chinese is an SVO language,<sup>36</sup> the object of a transitive verb normally follows V and should not be allowed to be fronted in the subject position without any marker. Actually, the phenomenon fronting of an object of a typical transitive verb is normally related to the passive construction, in which there is always a marker. According to Haspelmath (1990: 27) the “passive constructions without passive morphology do not exist.” In many languages including English, events represented by a typical transitive V cannot be expressed by the notional passive. For example, Haspelmath (1987/1993: 93-96) notes the contrast between the English verbs *cut* and *tear* and concludes that “concepts of actions involving agent-oriented meaning components, such as tools or methods, virtually never alternate between transitive and intransitive use.”

Moreover, after dividing separating verbs into two classes, i.e., *cut* verbs and *break* verbs, Guerssel et al. (1985) claims that *cut* verbs normally appear in a transitive form and do not participate in the causative/inchoative (i.e., ergative) alternation since they have a strong agentive feature. He further states that their intransitive counterparts, if a language allows them, are only supposed to be middle constructions (e.g., *the bread cuts easily*).

Therefore, the unmarked passive is not a common topic in cross-linguistic studies. However, the situation is obviously different in Chinese as in corpus data we have seen quite a few action verbs whose objects are fronted in the subject position without any markers. The most common examples that Chinese grammarians cite are *wei* 围 “besiege/attack” and *zhan* 斩 “behead.” See (35) to (38) below.

35. **Transitive:** [魏]围邯郸。(Lüshichunqiu 吕氏春秋. Shironglun 士容论)

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<sup>36</sup> Wang (1958 [1980]), Feng (1996), Xu (2006) and many others have argued for a SOV order as the canonical word order for Chinese. Specifically, they claim that Proto-Chinese was an SOV language (right-headed structures), which slowly changed to the SVO order (left-headed structures) in Archaic Chinese. On the other hand, many works argue that Chinese has always been a SVO language (Aldridge 2012; Djamouri 2005; Djamouri et al. 2007). Li (2018) argues for the SVO order assumption by showing that the proportions of SVO word order in different time periods are stable and predominantly higher than those of both SOV and OSV orders. I agree with the SVO hypothesis.

*Wei wei han-dan*

NAME besiege NAME

[The state of Wei] besieged the capital city of Zhao Handan.

36. **Object fronted:** 邯郸围。(Zhuangzi 庄子. Quqie 祛箧)

*han-dan wei*

NAME besiege

[The capital city Handan] is besieged.

37. **Transitive:** 韩献子将斩人。(Guoyu 国语. Jinyu 晋语)

*Han-Xianzi jiang zhan ren*

NAME will cut-down someone

Han Xianzi was about to cut down someone.

38. **Object fronting:** 昔者龙逢斩。(Zhuangzi 庄子. Quqie 祛箧)

*xi-zhe Long-Feng zhan*

past NAME cut down

In times past, Long Feng was cut down.

*Wei* 围 “besiege” and *zhan* 斩 “chop” are normally categorized as transitive action verbs that are rarely used in the PV construction. Other examples are *qu* 取 “take,” *fa* 伐 “attack,” and *zhu* 诛 “kill.” Table 5 shows the low frequency of the PV use of such verbs.

**Table 5 Frequency of transitive and intransitive uses of some transitive verbs<sup>37</sup>**

Syntactic feature	<i>Wei</i>	<i>Zhan</i>	<i>Qu</i>	<i>Fa</i>	<i>Zhu</i>	Total
Tr.	188	73	590	1101	114	2066
Intr.	7	9	7	3	19	45

As Table 5 indicates, these verbs always take direct objects, and the objects can occasionally be fronted in the subject position. As mentioned above, a typical transitive action verb is normally argued to have a strong agentive feature; thus, cross-linguistically, it does not participate in the labile alternation. Therefore, many

<sup>37</sup> Note that the phenomenon of object omission is also found in this type of transitive verb. However, in Table 5, object omission is not included in the results of the statistical work.

studies have explained why the P can be fronted in the subject position in Ancient Chinese. The most common opinion is that it is driven by the special contexts (for further discussion on context, see Section 3.3).

Here, we can go one step further in explaining why the PV use of these verbs is restricted. The reason seems quite easy to understand: the direct object of a transitive can be absent (see Section 2.3) in some contexts, and if it can also be fronted to shape the PV construction freely, then the situation of the transitivity system could be very confusing. Consider *sheng* 胜 as an example. “A *sheng* B” is the original transitive sentence, and the omission of the object results in “A *sheng*,” as discussed in Section 2.3. If “A *sheng* B” can also be freely changed to “B *sheng*,” then the situation of the one-participant construction of *sheng* will be quite confusing. In sum, the direct object of a transitive V can be fronted, though not freely. Here, I find the second one-participant construction that is related to the notional passive (hereafter, **Type 2**). This phenomenon deserves special attention, since it is not common in cross-linguistic studies. In my opinion, just because of the existence of such kind of phenomenon, the labile phenomenon becomes quite complicated in Ancient Chinese.

In this section (i.e., Section 2), two verb types relevant to the notional passive in Ancient Chinese are summarized: the intransitive sentence of the labile verb (i.e., **Type 1**) and the object fronting of a transitive verb (i.e., **Type 2**). In the following, the differences between these two verb types will be studied carefully to show the internal heterogeneity of the notional passive.

### **3. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TYPE 1 AND TYPE 2**

Concerning the differences between Type 1 and Type 2, I will first show the semantic differences of the verbs in Section 3.1, then study the differences in morphological manifestation in Section 3.2, and finally demonstrate the different contexts of usage in Section 3.3.



### 3.1 Difference in verbal semantic features

Note that Type 1 refers only to the intransitive member of *typical labile* verbs in Section 2.2. The semantic features of typical labile verbs have already been discussed above. Across languages, the overwhelming number of labile verbs participating in the alternation denotes *a change of state or a change of degree*. We can say that the core semantic feature of a typical labile verb is that it must first of all express a change-of-state. Chinese scholars observed a similar phenomenon in that the verb in Type 1 is particular in its semantics: it implies both action and a resultant state (Yang 2002/2005/2017; Hu 2005; Wu 2008).<sup>38</sup> For example, Yang (2002/2005/2017) thought that these verbs should include both “action” and “resultant state” in their semantics. One example from his paper is presented as (39).

39. 齐破燕。(Zhanguoce 战国策. Yance 燕策)

qi            po            yan

NAME    smash    NAME

The state of Qi smashed the state of Yan.

Yang explained that when Qi carries out the action of *po* 破 “break,” then the event “Qi attacked Yan” has a resultant state: *Yan* is in the state of *po* 破 “having been destroyed.” Therefore, *po yan* 破燕 expresses a resultant state.

Wu (2008) stated that the semantic feature of these verbs is that it includes both action semantics and resultant state semantics, and different syntactic structures tend to be chosen for these two semantic features. The transitive structure is chosen when emphasizing the action semantics, while the intransitive structure is chosen when emphasizing the resultant state semantics. Note that emphasizing the “action semantics” or “resultant state semantics” just means that one is chosen as the prominent meaning. It does not mean that the other one completely disappears, but rather is placed in a secondary place or backgrounded. Wu’s opinion suggests that it is the nature of the verb itself (i.e., implying both action and resultant state) that decides whether a verb can be used alternatively.

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<sup>38</sup> Such verbs are also defined as *shunshi dongci* 瞬时动词 “momentary verbs.”

Although the Chinese scholars did not mention any concept about lability or ergativity when they studied the notional passive, their remarks indeed refer to the features of typical lability or ergativity, i.e., Type 1. Type 2 seems to be ignored in their studies, since the semantic features of verbs in Type 2 are not like this: they do not imply a change-of-state, and their two-participant structures cannot be naturally rephrased as “analytic causative” with *make*. It is possible that the earlier works falsely included Type 2 in Type 1. At least, they did not distinguish between the two verb types.

It seems that some verbs in Type 2 can be explained in a similar way as in Type 1. For example, *pou* and *zhan* should be classified as “cut” verbs according to Guerssel et al. (1985); however, *pou* and *zhan* also refer to specific punishments indicating the final result “die” in Ancient Chinese. From this point, these *cut* examples discussed here should not be treated as typical action verbs since their semantic also imply a resultant state (i.e., death) to some extent. A similar opinion is seen in Jiang (2017). However, there are examples that cannot be explained in this way, such as *shuo* 说 “say,” *ting* 听 “listen,” *ba* 拔 “pull out,” *chi* 吃 “eat,” *gong* 攻 “attack,” and *fa* 伐 “attack.”

In summary, the overall correlation between verbal semantics and verbs’ faithfulness to the notional passive is clearly demonstrated. Inherent change-of-state verbs are consistently the most faithful to the notional passive. While the typical transitive verbs are the least likely to change the state of the theme, and correspondingly, they rarely occur in the national passive construction.

### **3.2 Differences in morphological manifestation**

From the perspective of labile verbs, the intransitive and transitive alternations differ only in the number of arguments they take while without any marker. However, as mentioned, the labile in Ancient Chinese should be much more complicated than in other languages, since (1) almost all the intransitive verbs can be followed by different types of objects shaping different semantic relationships (see Section 2.1) with different frequencies and (2) almost every object of a transitive verb can be fronted with low frequency. In sum, the term labile in Ancient Chinese may cover

different phenomena discussed cross-linguistically, such as the inchoative/causative, non-causative vs. causative, anticausative vs. causative, and active vs. passive. Cross-linguistically, these alternations show a lot of morphological variation on either (or both) member(s) of the pair.

It is also commonly argued that in Ancient Chinese, there is a phonological difference in the intransitive and transitive pairs in Type 1 in their Middle Chinese forms, which are reconstructed on the basis of *Qieyun*, *Guangyun*, *Yuntu*, and so on. What we see in Middle Chinese (and sometimes in Modern Chinese) are often quite systematic “reflections” of morphological, or rather derivative differences. However, to exactly reconstruct them is difficult, just like Baxter (1992: 187) stated below:

Old Chinese initial consonants are more difficult to reconstruct than Old Chinese finals, because we have less evidence about them. The *Shjing* rhymes, which tell us much about main vowels and codas, tell us nothing about initial consonants. We must therefore rely primarily on the initials of Middle Chinese and on the evidence from the writing system. Our basic strategy is to project the Middle Chinese initials backwards in time in a way which is consistent with the graphic evidence.

A thorough discussion of these features is far beyond the scope of this work. Therefore, in this chapter, the reconstructed initials of William H. Baxter as recorded in *Thesaurus Linguae Sericae* (TLS) will be applied for convenience. Consonant alternation as reflected in Middle Chinese is traditionally known as *qing zhuo bie yi* 清浊别义 “distinguishing meanings by voiced and voiceless initials” (Wang 1958[1980], Pulleyblank 1973/2000, Mei 1989, Baxter 1992, Lapolla 2003), indicating the alternation between voiceless and voiced initials where the voiced-initial form is used for intransitive verbs while the voiceless-initial form is used for transitive verbs. An example is *bai* 败 “defeat,” which is traditionally read with a voiced initial *b* in the intransitive use meaning “be defeated” and with a voiceless initial *p* in the transitive use meaning “defeat.” More examples are shown in Table 6.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> *Qing-zhuo* contrasts are first known from rhyme tables of the Song dynasty and might be reflections of processes that took place in Ancient and Early Middle Chinese. It is used here for convenience, without discussing too much the Ancient Chinese pronunciations, since the pronunciations for Ancient Chinese are not reliably reconstructed. For example, Karlgren follows standard historical-linguistic practice in marking his reconstructed OC forms with an asterisk, indicating that these are hypothetical, unattested pronunciations. Ancient Chinese now appears to be a fundamentally different language from

**Table 6 Examples of voicing alternation<sup>40</sup>**

Pronunciation	Character	Meaning	Pronunciation	Character	Meaning
<i>Jian/**keens</i>	见	To see	<i>Xian/**geens</i>	见、现	To appear
<i>Zhe/**kljed</i>	折	To break	<i>She/**rtaaŋ?</i>	折	To bend
<i>Bie/**biet</i>	别	To separate	<i>Bie/**piet</i>	别	To depart, to be different
<i>Bai/**praads</i>	败	To defeat	<i>Bai/**braads</i>	败	To suffer defeat
<i>Huài/**kruuls</i>	坏	To destroy	<i>huài/**gruuls</i>	坏	Be destroyed

There have been different proposals regarding the origin of consonant alternations. Three representatives are summarized by Zev (2012: 71) here. (1) Sagart (1999) showed that the intransitive prefixes in Tibetan-Burmese languages were often nasals. Thus, he proposed to reconstruct this prefix as \*N-, a nasal prefix which assimilates its point of articulation on the consonant that follows it. Mei (2009) advocated that a similar OC prefix \*s- was responsible for the voicing alternation pattern, similar to Gong (2000) and Gong (2001). However, in Gong's system, proto-Sino-Tibetan \*Cr- (where C is a voiced stop b, d, or g) developed into OC \*r- and then to Middle Chinese l-; in contrast, \*N-Cr- developed into OC \*Cr- and then into a Middle Chinese obstruent initial. Sagart's hypothesized that only the prefix \*N- was involved; Mei thinks that only the prefix \*s- was involved; and Gong is of the opinion that both prefixes were involved. According to Sagart's proposal, verbs participating in the alternation have voiceless root initials; according to Mei's proposal, verbs that allow the alternation have voiced root initials; and according to Gong's proposal, verbs that allow the alternation have voiced initials, though other alternations with voiceless initials are also elucidated. In terms of the consonant alternation of examples listed in Table 6, I believe Sagart is correct: the voiceless initial is the root, while the voiced initial is the derivation, according to the study results described in Section 2.

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all known later forms of Chinese. It was probably atonal and had an elaborate system of subsyllabic morphological affixes, a complex syllable structure including numerous cluster types occurring in both onset and coda position, and some sort of non-segmental syllabic distinction (the Type A/B distinction). Some of these features can be illustrated with a few examples of reconstructed words in the system of Baxter and Sagart (2014); see also Schuessler 2006 who embeds these assumed differences in his system of "word families."

<sup>40</sup> The reconstructed pronunciations are extracted from Thesaurus Linguae Sericae (TLS).

Interestingly, the reconstructed voicing alternation mainly contains examples mentioned in *Type 1* (i.e. *typical labile/ergative verb*). Therefore, it seems that the voicing alternation is *not* a regular feature of all verbs but only relates to a *limited* number of verbs. This is supported by Unger's (1983) observation: around 50 verbs show a variation in their root initial in Hao Ku (20: 156f).<sup>41</sup> There has been a great controversy over whether these two readings are real or artifacts. In my opinion, different readings are a real phenomenon *but the contrasts they express do not systematically apply to all verbs*. For example, for the verbs in Type 2, I do not find any records for the pronunciation alternation.<sup>42</sup>

### 3.3 Differences in the context of usage

Yin (1997) argued that the PV construction is used with low frequency and is motivated by special contexts, when he studied the notional passive. This statement can be evaluated from two angles.

(1) For Type 1, it is unjustified since both the transitive and intransitive can be used freely. Actually, the PV use of V in *Type 1* is not dependent on context. Onishi (2004) even proposed that the PV use should be its prototypical feature while the CVP is a derived use.<sup>43</sup>

(2) For Type 2, Yin's statement is supported by the data in Song (2014) to some degree. Some contexts which are frequently mentioned in previous studies are summarized below.

**Parallel context:** It is commonly argued that the parallel context has resulted in the use of PV structure. For example, two different types of parallel structures are found below: one utilizes all N+V structures consistently (see Example (40)); while the other alternates the use of N+V and V+N structures consistently (see Example (41)).

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<sup>41</sup> Citation from Meisterernst (2008).

<sup>42</sup> Although these and further examples clearly demonstrate that obviously morphological distinctions existed in the verbal system of Ancient Chinese, the data does not suffice to verify with certainty to what extent the morphological distinction was marked *systematically* in Ancient Chinese.

<sup>43</sup> CVP here means "causer+V+patient (i.e., causee)".

40. 蠹众而木折，隙大而墙坏。(Shangjunshu 商君书. Xiuquan 修权)

du zhong er mu she xi da er qiang huai  
insect many then wood snap crack big then wall collapse

If wood-worms are numerous then the wood is breaking, if there are large cracks then the wall collapses.

41. 军之所出，矛戟折，镞弦绝，伤弩，破车。(Zhanguoce 战国策. Qice 齐策)

jun zhi suo chu mao ji she  
army PART NOM cost spear halberd break  
huan xuan jue shang nu po che  
sword-ring bowst-ring break strain crossbow shatter chariot

[The cost of] calling out the army, spears and halberds are broken, sword rings and bowst rings are broken, [it] strained crossbows, [it] shattered chariots.

**Theme consistency:** To maintain a *continuation of a theme* is another motivation for using the PV construction. For example, see (42).

42. 西伯拘而演《周易》；仲尼厄而作《春秋》；屈原放逐，乃赋《离骚》；左丘失明，厥有《国语》。  
(Bao Ren'an shu 报任安书)

xi-bo ju er yan zhou-yi  
NAME arrest then infer-deduct book-name  
Zhong-ni e er zuo chun-qiu  
NAME poverty-stricken then compose book-name  
Qu-yuan fang-zhu nai fu li-sao  
NAME exile then write book-name  
Zuo-qiu shi ming jue you guo-yu  
NAME lose sight then have book-name

*Xi Bo* was arrested and then wrote the *Zhouyi*, Confucius suffered poverty and then wrote the *Chunqiu*, *Qu Yuan* was exiled and then composed the *Lisao*, *Zuo Qiuming* lost his eye-sight and then compiled the *Guoyu*.

In this example, the subject of each sentence is the theme of both verbs: *Xi Bo* is not only the agent of *yan* 演 “infer-deduct” but also a patient of *ju* 拘 “arrest.” The PV construction (i.e., *Xi Bo ju* 西伯拘 “*Xi Bo* was arrested”) is the result of maintaining a consistency of a theme (i.e., *Xi Bo*). The situation is similar in the remaining sentences of this category.

**Background of the agent:** In legal and administrative documents, the agent usually refers to an entity related to the government, which is often easy to infer. Thus, these documents contain many PV constructions, like the “V+N+zhe 者+V” construction in (43).

43. 令不可犯，犯令者斩。(Bingfa 兵法. Zhanduan 斩断)

ling bu ke fan fan ling zhe zhan  
order NEG AUX offend offend order NOM kill

The order cannot be offended; the people who offend the order will be killed.

Besides the contextual limitations mentioned above, it was also found that many verbs in Type 2 are used together with (modal) verbs *ke* “be acceptable/make acceptable,” *yi* “be easy/make easy,” *nan* “be difficult/make difficult,” and *zu* “be sufficient/make sufficient.” This fact is supported by Zhang’s (2003a: 48) data: almost all examples in the section titled “Patient subject of action verbs” co-occur with these (modal) verbs (i.e., *ke*, *nan*, *yi* and *zu*). By contrast, the Type 1 examples rarely co-occur with such elements. If we define *ke*, *nan*, *yi* and *zu* constructions as notional passive, then the scope of Type 2 is greatly extended. However, in this thesis, these constructions are proved to be unjustified to be treated as notional passive (see discussion in Part 4). This point is quite important, otherwise, it is unconvincing to state that Type 2 is rare.

Hitherto, the differences between Type 1 and Type 2 have been studied. Note that these differences are inter-related. According to the differences studied above, it can be inferred that the dominant component of the notional passive would refer to Type 1, while examples in Type 2 should be less numerous. It is noteworthy that I am not trying to demarcate the boundary between change-of-state verbs and non-change-of-state verbs (i.e., Type 1 vs. Type 2). Essentially, (semantic) categories are not always well-delineated but structured around prototypes with degrees of membership, as the view that cognitive construction grammar holds (Goldberg 1995: 13-14, Langacker 2008: 13). In this discussion, the transition from change-of-state to non-change-of-state is better perceived as a continuum. Meanwhile, we should not forget that even the dominant one is quite limited in numbers: about 50 verbs in Ancient Chinese (see Unger in Section 3.2). In sum, the frequency of the notional

passive may be not so high in Ancient Chinese.<sup>44</sup>

So far, the Ancient Chinese verbal system was reviewed and the possible one-participant constructions were displayed in Section 2. Such work is quite important since it has been clearly shown that only Type 1 and Type 2 are related to the passive topic among the complicated labile verbal system. More importantly, the differences between these two verb types provide a novel perspective to understand the nature of the notional passive: concerning the nature of the PV structure in types 1 and 2, respectively. This analysis is quite different from previous studies which mixed both cases and paid no attention to the difference between them.<sup>45</sup>

## 4. NATURE OF THE PV CONSTRUCTION

The PV construction, as mentioned, includes the “dominant” Type 1 and the marginal Type 2. In this section, the features of each type will be discussed in more detail.

### 4.1 Nature of Type 1

Concerning the nature of Type 1, three opinions can be found among Chinese linguists: (1) passive construction, (2) *zi dong ju* 自动句 “autonomous sentence,” and (3) perfective structure.

#### 4.1.1 Opinion 1: passive and active

Type 1 is generally not regarded as a passive construction by most Western linguists (e.g., Haspelmath 1987/1993, Nedialkov and Comrie 1988). Similarly, it should also not be a passive construction in Ancient Chinese. See Cikoski’s (1978: 140) statement

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<sup>44</sup> Emphasizing again, some scholars (e.g., Zhang 2010) also treat *ke*, *nan*, *yi* and *zu* constructions as notional passives. As such, the scope of the concept of *notional passive* has been greatly extended. However, this opinion is not adopted in this thesis.

<sup>45</sup> Song (2014) mentioned that Type 1 is ergative while Type 2 is not. However, his focus is not on the passive.



below:

I admit that ergative verbs [in Chinese] as nucleus are often translated as passives in English, since the English verb or verb-phrase that is the closest equivalent to a given Chinese verb is often not itself ergative in English. For example, I had chosen a slightly more exact English equivalent for *miat* (i.e., *hui* 毀), namely, *destroy*. The former should be translated as “they destroy it,” while the latter should be translated as “it was destroyed,” since the English verb *destroy* is not ergative.

I agree with Cikoski: Type 1 should not be regarded as a passive construction, although in most situations it is convenient to use an English “be+Ved” phrase in translation, which is ambiguous with the passive. That is, *The window is broken* is ambiguous in terms of whether it should be interpreted as “be+adjective” (i.e., copula+adjective) or a passive (i.e., auxiliary+passive participle), to translate an Ancient Chinese labile (i.e., ergative) verb.

From the phonological perspective, it is commonly argued that the “voiced and voiceless” pair expresses “passive and active” voice. However, such an opinion may be incorrect because only verbs of Type 1 are argued to have the pair of “voiced and voiceless” initials, *while the feature is not attested for Type 2 verbs*. We can also think reversely, if the “voiced and voiceless” pair is to mark the “passive and active” voice, then it should be expected that Type 2, i.e., the verbs with a strong transitive feature, also has the feature of alternative initials. However, this is not the fact. Therefore, there is lack of phonological evidence for the passive hypothesis.

Below is more evidence to refute the passive hypothesis.

### **Fact 1: Cause and result context**

Another interesting point is that the PV structure is sometimes used in the parallel context, which expresses a *cause and result* relationship. See (44) below.

44. 狡兔死、走狗烹；飞鸟尽、良弓藏。(Shiji 史记. Yuewang gouqian shijia 越王勾践世家)

*jiao tu si zou gou peng*  
cunning hare die running dog cook  
*fei niao jin liang gong cang*

flying bird exhausted good bow hide

When the cunning hare has died, then the hunting dog will be cooked; when the flying bird is exhausted, then the good bow is hidden.

On the one hand, *jiao tu si* 狡兔死 “the cunning hare has died” is the reason for *zou gou peng* 走狗烹 “the hunting dog will be cooked,” and *fei niao jin* 飞鸟尽 “flying bird is exhausted” is the reason for *liang gong cang* 良弓藏 “the good bow is hidden.” On the other hand, the latter is the result of the former in each sentence pair. Therefore, the PV construction here implies a resultant state.

## Fact 2: Similar to the adjectival predicate construction

One more interesting point is that the PV structure is quite similar to the adjectival predicate structure in Ancient Chinese. See examples (45) and (46) with adjectival predicates below.

45. 天道远, 人道迩。(Zuozhuan 左传. Zhaogong 昭公 18)

*tian dao yuan, ren dao er*  
heaven way distant man way near

The way of Heaven is distant, while the way of man is near.

46. 栾伯善哉!(Zuozhuan 左传. Xuangong 宣公 12)

*luan-bo shan zai*  
NAME good FIN

Luan Shu was excellent.

Superficially, the PV construction is quite similar to the “N+Adj” construction. Actually, the two categories, i.e., verb and adjective, are closely related in Ancient Chinese, and sometimes it is difficult to tell one from another (Chao 1968, Li 2004, Ye 1984, among others). Moreover, almost all the verbs in Type 1 can function as modifiers just like adjectives. See *bai jun* 败军 “vanquished army” in example (47) and *huai qiang* 坏墙 “broken wall” in example (48) below.

47. 则不免为败军禽将。(Zhanguoce 战国策. Qice 齐策)

*ze bu mian wei bai jun qin jiang*

then NEG avoid be vanquished army captured general  
[He] could only have been known as the captured general of a vanquished army.

48. 必筑坏墙，是不善人将窃。(Hanfeizi 韩非子. Shuolin xia 说林下)

bi zhu huai qiang, shi bu shan ren jiang qie

should build broken wall this NEG good people will steal

[You] should build (i.e. repair) the broken wall; otherwise the bad people will steal [things from your home].

### Fact 3: Absence of an agent

Generally, sentences of the *John was slapped* type are defined as the basic passive construction since it is the most widespread one across world languages (e.g., Keenan and Dryer 1985). Note that although *an agent* is not obligatory on the surface, it is always implied in the passive (i.e., it is an integral part of the passive). However, the addition of an agent in some of the PV structures makes the sentence awkward. See example (49) below.

49. 宜阳效则上郡绝，河外割则道不通。(Shiji 史记. Suqin liezhuan 苏秦列传)

Yi-yang xiao ze shang-jun jue

NAME obey then NAME lose

He-wai ge ze dao bu tong

NAME cut then road NEG pass

Yiyang being given away, your area of Shangjun would be cut off. Hewai being ceded, your roads would not reach anywhere.

In Ancient Chinese, *yu* is often understood as a passive marker since it can introduce an agent in the oblique case. However, *yu* mainly introduces a source, location, or even reason, but rarely introduces a typical agent (i.e., a human being) (for more details, see the discussion in Chapter 6, Part 3). Examples with “*yu*+typical agent (i.e., human being)” are very restricted to “comparison” contexts, like *Lao xin zhe zhi ren, lao li zhe zhi yu ren* 劳心者治人, 劳力者治于人 “Those who work with their mind control other people, while those who work with manual labor are controlled by other people.”

The absence of an agent is quite relevant to the innate semantic feature. If a verb

implies a change of state, then it suggests that the action is more likely to occur spontaneously. Therefore, the intransitive sentence with a typical labile verb rarely co-occurs with agent-oriented adverbs and clauses indicating a purpose. This point is also relevant to the next hypothesis on *zidong* 自动 “spontaneous action” and *shidong* 使动 “causative action.”

#### 4.1.2 Opinion 2: *zidong* 自动 “spontaneous action” and *shidong* 使动 “causative action”

It is also argued that such pairs express *zidong* 自动 “spontaneous action” and *shidong* 使动 “causative action,” which are reflected as the *qing zhuo dui li* 清浊对立 “voiceless and voiced alternation” in their Middle Chinese form. It is true that *zidong* and *shidong* contrasts were frequently found in Ancient Chinese, such as the examples discussed in Section 2.1, which are interestingly without the *qing zhuo dui li* phenomenon. The only problem is whether it is appropriate to group all *qing zhuo dui li* pairs as *zi dong* and *shidong* pairs. *Zidong* often implies “spontaneous/autonomous,” which means the action is carried out or brought about by the subject itself. On the other hand, *shidong* implies that the subject is a causer and the realization of the action is caused by the subject. Is this hypothesis justified for Type 1? Let us have a look at the example (50) below.

50. *Xi hou fa zheng, zheng bo yu zhan yu jing, xi shi da bai er huan.* 息侯伐郑，郑伯与战于竟，息师大败而还 “The marquis of Xi invaded Zheng, The earl fought with him at the borders, when the army of Xi received a great defeat, and retreated.”

Obviously, *xi shi* 息师 “xi+army” does not express the action “defeat” by itself. Thus, this structure is not always “spontaneous” or “autonomic.” By contrast, this defeat is caused by Lord Zheng or State Zheng; therefore, we can expect a causative form like *Zheng bai xi shi* 郑败息师 “The state of Zheng caused the Xi army to be defeated.” Although some intransitive uses (i.e., the *qing* member of the *qing zhuo dui li* pair) in Type 1 can be explained as *zidong*, such as *luan po* 卵破 “the egg is broken,” there are others that cannot.

In sum, the examples discussed in Section 2.1 are generally accepted as *zidong* and *shidong* pairs. However, the *Type 1* examples leave open whether or not the process is self-instigated (i.e., *zidong*) or instigated by an external agent (i.e., causative). Accordingly, I would say that while *shidong* is justified as a description of the transitive form, *zidong* is not a precise term to describe the function of the corresponding intransitive form.<sup>46</sup>

Besides the hypothesis about *zidong* and *shidong*, the function of the alternation has been cast in different terms by various scholars, as summarized in Table 7.

**Table 7 Terms for the syntactic/semantic properties associated with the voiced/unvoiced alternation**

Scholar \ Structure	AVN	NV
Mei (2009)	Causative (i.e., <i>shi dong</i> )	Simplex (i.e., <i>zi dong</i> )
Sagart (2003)	Transitive	Intransitive
Schuessler (2006)	Simplex	Endopassive
Handel (2012)	Higher valence Outer directed	Lower valence Inner directed
Jin (2006)	Non-perfective	Perfective

Among these opinions, Jin’s opinion is very attractive for my approach, and I will further investigate it below.

#### 4.1.3 Opinion 3: perfective and im-perfective

Jin (2006) assumed that in Ancient Chinese, the voiceless and voiced alternation of the root initial distinguishes non-perfective aspect and perfective aspect, respectively. This opinion is not new; many scholars implicitly or explicitly expressed a similar view. For example, even Mei (1988), in his work *Neibu gouni hanyu san li* 内部构拟汉语三例 “Three examples of the internal reconstruction of Chinese,” mentioned that there is a relationship between *qing zhuo* alternation and “aspect”: the *zhuo* vowel has

<sup>46</sup> What needs attention is that the term *zidong* and *shidong* pair indeed work for the examples in Section 2.1, which may involve tonal differences. See the examples in Section 2.1.

a sense of perfective. Similarly, Knezevic and Brdar (2014) argued that the semantic properties relevant for ergativity (i.e., labiality) in Croatian are the telicity of unaccusative predicates (*a sort of perfectivity*) and the thematic non-agentivity of their surface subjects. The cross-relationship between perfective aspect and passive voice can be also observed in Beedham (1998). He argued that there are in English not two but three aspects: the perfective, progressive, and passive.

However, if the PV structure expresses perfect aspect, then it is unclear why there are some specific perfective aspect markers that can be used for all verbs and in active sentences, such as *ji* 既 “already” and *yi* 已 “already.” If we state that the PV structure just expresses the resultant state of a verb which implies both action/process and resultant state semantics, then it is quite understandable why the PV construction co-occurs with specific aspect markers like *ji* and *yi*. Moreover, the perfective aspect markers, such as *ji* 既 “already” and *yi* 已 “already” mainly emphasize that an action has occurred (maybe without any results), while the PV construction in Type 1 emphasizes that there is a *resultant state* rather than only the occurrence of an action. Last but not least, as mentioned several times already, the verbs in Type 1 are quite limited in number, and it is unclear why the perfective aspect is not used for other verbs. In sum, stating that the PV construction in Type 1 expresses a resultant state is more accurate than stating that it expresses a perfective aspect.

To conclude, although Type 1 is closely related to the passive voice and the perfective aspect, it is not justified to define it as either an aspect or a voice. It is a construction mainly expressing a resultant state which is greatly determined by the innate feature of the verb. In order to make this point clear, I will make a brief comparison between the monosyllabic verb *gong* 攻 “attack” in Ancient Chinese and disyllabic verbs *gong da* 攻打 “attack” and *gong po* 攻破 “attack” in Modern Mandarin. In Ancient Chinese, there was only the monosyllabic verb *gong* 攻 “attack.” As a typical transitive verb, it was rarely used in the PV structure. By contrast, there are both *gongda* 攻打 “attack” and *gongpo* 攻破 “attack” in Modern Mandarin. The former implies an action while the later not only implies an action but also a result. Then, it is interesting to analyze the possible passive of *gongda* 攻打 “attack” and *gongpo* 攻

破 “attack” in Modern Mandarin.<sup>47</sup>

### Marked passive

51. 城市被攻打了。

*cheng-shi bei gong-da le*  
city            *bei*            attack            FIN

The city was attacked.

52. 城市被攻破了。

*cheng-shi bei gong-po le*  
city            *bei*            attack-breach    FIN

The city was attacked and destroyed.

### Notional passive

53. 城市攻破了。

*cheng-shi gong-po le*  
city            attack-breach    FIN

The city was attacked and destroyed.

54. ?城市攻打了。

*cheng-shi gong-da le*  
city            attack            FIN

The city was attacked.

In (51) to (54), we can see that both (i.e., *gong da* and *gong po*) can be used in the marked passive, while only *gong po* 攻破 “attack,” which implies an action and a result, can be used in the notional passive form. This fact shows that a semantic element indicating result is a necessary condition for the notional passive but not for the marked passive. Therefore, it is justified to say that the presence of the resultant complements will enhance the acceptability of the PV construction. This observation indirectly suggests that the PV construction mainly expresses a resultant state.

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<sup>47</sup> Scholars (e.g., Lü 1982) argue that there are many unmarked passives (i.e., notional passives) in Modern Chinese. However, these require many specific conditions. For example:

我洗两件衣服        →        \*(ungrammatical) 两件衣服洗;  
我洗了两件衣服    →        (correct)        两件衣服洗了;  
我洗好了两件衣服 →        (correct)        两件衣服洗好了。

From this comparison I find that the appearance of aspectual information (e.g., *le* 了) or resultant information (i.e., *hao* 好) is quite important for the acceptability of the examples.

Subsequently, I proceed to another related question. Should the PV structure in Type 2 be regarded as passive voice or perfective aspect? Again, in this case, my answer is also “no” (see discussion in Section 4.2 below).

## 4.2 Nature of Type 2

Concerning the nature of the PV structure in Type 2, two points need attention. Firstly, the intransitive construction in **Type 1** itself carries meaning, i.e., *the constructional meaning*, as pointed out by Lemmens (1998). I agree with him and speculate that the constructional meaning of Type 1 (i.e., typical labile verb) will be added to the interpretation of the sentence in Type 2 which is an analogical development of Type 1. Therefore, the interpretation of Type 2 would be similar to Type 1: it also expresses a change of state rather than a perfective aspect or a passive voice. However, Type 2 can be interpreted as passive meaning since it indeed implies strong agentive information.

Secondly, the notional passive is argued to be common in isolating languages. As shown in Section 3.2, no phonetic morphological markers for Type 2 can be found. Therefore, if Type 2 were a passive construction, it would mean there is indeed an unmarked passive in Ancient Chinese. However, this conclusion is quite opposite to Haspelmath’s (1990: 27) conclusion that “passive constructions without passive morphology do not exist.” In such situation, Lüpke’s (2007: 133) observation may provide a solution. After having investigated many languages in Africa, he concluded that although most typologically oriented definitions of passives insist — for reasons that remain implicit in most cases — on the presence of morphological/periphrastic marking on the verb phrase as a necessary criterion for passive constructions, undeterred by the clash with the mainstream definition, the descriptions for a considerable number of African languages use the label passive for constructions without verbal marking. He further explained that morphologically unmarked passives occur in particular in languages that are predominantly isolating or are losing morphological distinctions, in line with their general lack of verbal morphology. These languages seem to favor the encoding of passives by syntactic means. Chinese



is defined as an isolating language; therefore, it is not surprising that it has the notional passive. However, two points need to be emphasized: (1) although there are some types of notional passives in isolating languages, this does not suggest that the notional passive is a “mature passive voice” or the only way to express the passive meaning, as will be shown in this thesis; and (2) although Lüpke’s observation is valuable, he did not explore any diathesis in the notional passive in the languages he studied.

Combining these two points into one, it is concluded that Type 2 can only be understood as a special situation of Type 1 in which the event expressed by the verbal is not likely to occur spontaneously. It is this fact that makes the notional passive a special phenomenon and the distinction between notional passive and inchoative/ unaccusative/ ergative/ anticausative a special problem in Chinese. In this sense, the use of the term “construction” is groundless in the notional passive construction since some PV examples in Type 2 indeed express passive meanings; however, some do not necessarily express a passive meaning. In other words, it is not a specialized construction for the passive, since most PV examples express a resultant state. Meanwhile, from the perspective of verbal semantics, the likelihood of an event’s spontaneous occurrence is not binary but falls on a continuum, making it impossible to clearly distinguish Type 1 from Type 2 in Ancient Chinese.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Evidently, verbal lability is not an internally homogeneous category with a clear-cut boundary in Ancient Chinese and the scope of the lability phenomenon could be much broader than that in English. Assuming that labile verbs include both typical and atypical verbs, this study explores which type of intransitive labile verb is relevant to the notional passive.

In this chapter, two intransitive (i.e., one-participant) constructions, called Type 1 and Type 2, are described in terms of their relevance to the notional passive in Ancient Chinese. Three differences were observed between Type 1 and Type 2. Firstly, verbs in Type 1 always imply both *action* and *result* semantics, while in Type 2 they only

imply *action*. Secondly, the V in Type 1 is often argued to have alternating initials, i.e., *qing* 清 (i.e., voiced) *zhuo* 浊 (i.e., voiceless) initials as reflected in their corresponding Middle Chinese pronunciations, for the transitive and intransitive forms, respectively; while in Type 2 they do not. Thirdly, the PV construction is used freely in Type 1 with high frequency, while it is used rarely and mainly determined by specific *contexts* in Type 2. Accordingly, Type 1 is the dominant one while Type 2 is marginal with regard to the notional passive in Ancient Chinese. Therefore, Type 1, i.e., the intransitive form of the labile verb, was the focus of this chapter. In Western studies, Type 1 is rarely defined as the passive. Among Chinese scholars, especially in phonological studies, verb pairs of Type 1 are frequently treated as the passive and active; *zidong* 自动 and *shidong* 使动, or imperfective and perfective. However, it turns out that all these hypotheses are unconvincing.

Finally, I conclude that the PV construction of Type 1 mainly emphasizes the resultant state. As for the nature of the PV structure in Type 2, it is probably promoted by special contexts and an analogical development of Type 1. Therefore, it should not be interpreted as expressing aspect or voice. However, examples in Type 2 are indeed more possible to imply passive meanings because of the strong agentive information. In other words, Type 2 can only be understood as a special situation of Type 1 in which the event expressed by the verb is not likely to occur spontaneously. Essentially, there is no way to tear apart these two cases since verbal semantics is a continuous scale instead of binary.

In sum, the PV construction in Ancient Chinese is often confused with perfective aspect and passive voice, since all of them may imply a “state” to some degree. Currently, studies from the angle of *aspect studies* may argue that the PV construction is a perfective (or inchoative) construction, while studies from the perspective of *voice studies* will state that it is a passive construction. Frankly, the nature of the PV construction seems to be determined, to some degree, by the way how scholars define aspect or voice. Moreover, it is also tangled with anticausative. All are adjacent in semantic space, i.e. they are separated only by minimal meaning differences. In this chapter, the PV construction is mainly studied on the basis of the features of the construction itself, supplemented with many study results from other perspectives,

such as labile, ergative, and causative. The conclusion is that it is insufficient to argue that the PV construction in Ancient Chinese constitutes an aspect or a voice. According to the analysis, the statement that “the PV structure expresses a resultant state” is a more precise interpretation.

## PART 3: MARKED PASSIVES IN ANCIENT CHINESE

# CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1. INTRODUCTION

It is commonly argued that Ancient Chinese has four passive markers: *jian* 见, *bei* 被, *wei* 为, and *yu* 于,<sup>48</sup> all of which are derived from meaningful lexical verbs. Then, the question arises as to how the lexical verbs became functional markers. This process, called *grammaticalization* in Western linguistics,<sup>49</sup> describes “how lexical items and constructions come in certain linguistic contexts to serve grammatical functions or how grammatical items develop new grammatical functions,” from a historical perspective (Hopper and Traugott 1993: 1).

A similar view of the process can be found in traditional Chinese linguistics studies in terms of *xuhua* 虚化. In the Yuan dynasty, Zhou Boqi (1983) made the following famous statement in his work *Liu Shu Zheng e* 六书正讹 “The Correct and the Erroneous in the Six Categories of Chinese Characters”:

*Da di gu ren zhi zi, jie cong shi wu qi. Jin zhi xu zi, jie gu zhi shi zi* 大抵古人制字，皆从事物起。今之虚字，皆古之实字 [All words were originally created for concrete things by the ancients, and the “empty” words (i.e., function words) nowadays were derived from the full concrete words.]

Accordingly, we know that *xuhua* mainly focuses on “semantic bleaching” or “semantic weakening.” By contrast, *grammaticalization* emphasizes not only this point but also “grammatical development.” In sum, the concept of grammaticalization has a much wider scope than that of *xuhua*, as Shen (1994) concluded. In this thesis, the term *grammaticalization* is adopted to discuss the passive in Ancient Chinese.

The grammaticalization of the so-called passive markers in Ancient Chinese is an

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<sup>48</sup> The four markers appeared in the sequence as *yu*, *wei*, *jian*, and *bei*. However, they are studied in the sequence as *jian*, *bei*, *wei* and *yu* according to different features and their relevance for each other. Meanwhile, *wei* is studied in two chapters (i.e., Chapters 4 and 5) as it has many different patterns.

<sup>49</sup> The term “grammaticalization” was first used by A. Meillet in 1912 in the sense of “the attribution of grammatical character to an erstwhile autonomous word” (Meillet 1912: 131; see also Hopper and Traugott [1993]2003). The concept was later developed into a major linguistic theory in the field of historical studies (see, e.g., Heine, Claudi, and Hunnemeyer (1991); Lehmann (1995); Hopper and Traugott ([1993]2003), and in the context of Chinese studies in the West systematically applied by Alain Peyraube.

inevitable topic since a diachronic perspective is essential to understand the notion of the passive. As explained by Givón (2001: 92), firstly, diachronic relations shed considerable light on the functional aspects of passivization, and secondly, the diachronic perspective explains much of the synchronic typological variation both cross-linguistically and within the same language. Givón also observes that the typological diversity of passive constructions results from the fact that each passive type arises diachronically from a different source construction. Haspelmath (1990: 59) points out that the diachronic study of the passive is important because it reveals what the original functions of the passive markers really were. Therefore, the diachronic perspective will be apparent throughout the thesis.

## 2. GRAMMATICALIZATION OF THE PASSIVE MARKERS

In the study of the grammaticalization of the so-called passive markers in Ancient Chinese, two factors are quite important.

Firstly, it is found that only ones with an “inward” semantic feature were grammaticalized into passive markers. That is, both *jian* and *bei* developed a semantic meaning of “suffer/receive,” which is directly relevant to the development to the so-called passive marker. This situation is quite different from the one in Modern Chinese. Actually, the newly developed so-called passive markers in Modern Chinese, i.e., *jiao* 叫, *rang* 让, and *gei* 给, are all derived from *wai xiang dong ci* 外向动词 “verbs with outward features.” The key for their development into passive markers is not the meaning “suffer/receive” but the “pivotal construction.” This observation suggests that the coding of passives may differ in Ancient versus Modern Chinese. Shi (2005a) divided the development of Chinese passives into four stages according to the psychological cognition characteristics of coding passives. Two of the stages are particularly relevant here: (1) from Warring states to the Tang and Song dynasties, the passive was mainly expressed by *zao yu dong ci* 遭遇动词 “verbs expressing a kind of suffering,” like *jian* 见, *bei* 被, and *chi* 吃; (2) by contrast, from the Yuan dynasty to the Qing dynasty, the passive was mainly expressed by *shi ling dong ci* 使令动词

“causative verbs” like *jiao* 叫, *jiao* 教, and *rang* 让.<sup>50</sup> Such an opinion is quite similar to mine.

Secondly, the reanalysis of the so-called passive markers (i.e., *jian*, *bei*, *wei*, and *yu*) mainly occurred when they were followed by elements with a verbal feature. Therefore, the appearance of elements with verbal features after them is another important factor in the grammaticalization process.

In short, for Ancient Chinese, the inward semantic feature is the premise for a verb to develop into a passive marker, and the verbal feature of the elements after them further motivates the process. See the brief summarization of the grammaticalization process of each passive marker below.

## 2.1 *Jian* construction

The grammaticalization of *jian* is commonly summarized as follows: *Jian* was initially a verb indicating a visual perception, and then it developed into a verb indicating “receive,” which is argued to have been further grammaticalized as a passive marker before a *verb* (see Chapter 2 in this part).

## 2.2 *Bei* construction

*Bei* developed from a noun meaning “blanket” to an action verb meaning “cover,” then to a verb meaning “suffer,” which finally became a passive marker when it was used before a *verb* (see Chapter 3 in this part).

The grammaticalization of *jian* and *bei* are relevant to both factors discussed above and they are studied in succession because of these similarities. However, *wei* and *yu* are relevant to only one of the factors. Concretely, in the grammaticalization process of *wei*, the inward semantic feature is less relevant than the (semi-)copula function.

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<sup>50</sup> *Gei* 给 “give” is also a verb with an outward semantic feature, and it develops into a kind of passive in Modern Chinese (e.g., Xu 1992, Jiang 1999, Jiang 2002).

However, reanalysis indeed occurred when *wei* was followed by a *verb*. See the main points below.

### 2.3 *Wei* construction

*Wei* is primarily a semantically full verb, and its meaning is analyzed in the context of specific examples (e.g., *do*, *make*). Later, it developed into a semi-copula. Based on its copula function, it developed into a passive marker when followed by a *verb* (Yao 1998, Wei 1994/1997, Onish 2005, Fang 2002) (see Chapters 4-5 in this part).

By contrast, the development of *yu* is not related to the second factor. However, its passive interpretation is indeed related to its inward semantic feature. See the summarization below.

### 2.4 *Yu* construction

*Yu* was originally a transitive verb meaning “go,” i.e., a verb with an outward feature. However, *yu* can be reinterpreted as a preposition when it is used together with verbs like *lai* 来 “come,” which has an opposite orientation as compared to “go.” Meanwhile, the orientation feature of the V before *yu* also influenced the orientation of *yu*. As such, *yu* has become a *double-oriented* preposition: it can introduce either a patient or an agent at the end of a sentence, and it is regarded as a passive marker only when it introduces an agent (see Chapter 6 in this part).

To conclude, the inward semantic feature is important for the development of most of the so-called passive markers, and words with an outward semantic feature did not evolve into passive markers in Ancient Chinese. Meanwhile, except the marker *yu*, other markers like *jian*, *bei*, and *wei* were reanalyzed when followed by *verbs*. Therefore, the verbal feature of the elements after them is another important factor in grammaticalization. Although *jian*, *bei*, *wei*, and *yu* are usually argued to be passive markers, opposing opinions are also frequently found. These debates are addressed below.



### 3. DISPUTING THE PASSIVE AND NON-PASSIVE INTERPRETATIONS

Differences of opinion can be found for almost every so-called passive marker.

#### 3.1 A discussion of *jian*, *bei* and *wei*

For *jian*, *bei* and *wei*, the commonly seen reasons are that (1) the words occur with low frequency, (2) the verbal elements after them are restricted to specific ones, and (3) there is no reason to refute the V-O interpretation.

##### *Jian*

Ma (1898 [2007] ) and Wang (1990a) asserted that *jian* is the *most undisputed passive* marker in Archaic Chinese. Although this hypothesis has had many supporters, it was strongly refuted by Yao (1990), who argued that *jian* should be defined as a verb expressing “encounter > suffer” just like other verbs with similar semantics, including *zao* 遭, *yu* 遇, and *shou* 受.

##### *Bei*

The *bei* construction appeared later than *jian* and *wei* constructions, and it developed into the dominant passive marker in Late Medieval and Modern Mandarin. Concerning the question of whether it should be regarded as a passive marker in Middle Chinese, there is as yet no agreement among scholars. Some think it was a passive marker (e.g., Zhang 2003b), while others refute this interpretation (e.g., Li 2007).

##### *Wei*

Regarding the features of the “*wei* V” construction, two main views have been proposed. Some scholars regard it as a passive construction (e.g., Wang

1958[1980], Peyraube 1989) that became popular as early as the pre-Qin era, whereas others identify it as a copula construction (e.g., Ma 1898 [2007] , Wei 1994, Yao 1998, Fang 2002, Jiang 2012a, Lü [1959]2002, Aldridge 2013, Zeng and Anderl 2019). The same applies to other *wei* constructions such as *wei* A V and *wei* A *suo* V.

Among the three reasons to refute *jian*, *bei*, and *wei* as passive markers, the third one (i.e., there is no reason to refute the V-O interpretation) deserves further attention. This reason can be seen from three viewpoints: (1) *jian*, *bei*, and *wei* can still be interpreted as verbs meaning “suffer/undergo” and “become,” respectively; (2) the verbal elements after them can still be interpreted as nouns due to the phenomenon that the category shift between nouns and verbs could be unmarked in Ancient Chinese; (3) interpreting them as V-O structures does not really influence the meaning of the sentence. See a detailed discussion in Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 in this part.

### **3.2 A discussion of *yu***

Different from the case of *jian*, *bei*, and *wei* mentioned above, the main reasons for refuting *yu* as a passive marker mainly focus are as follows: (1) *yu*'s function as a preposition to introduce an agent is quite marginalized, and (2) besides introducing an agent, *yu* can also appear before an object. See the brief review below.

#### ***Yu***

*Yu* was analyzed as a passive marker by scholars such as Wang (1958[1980]), Pan (1982), Tang and Zhou (1985), Yang and He (2001), and Hong (2000). Yet, an increasing number of scholars (e.g., Xu 2006) have objections to this hypothesis.

In summary, none of the so-called passive markers are fully accepted by scholars as such. I argue that the ambiguity of the passive interpretation and the V-O interpretation of some cases (e.g., *jian*, *bei*, and *wei*) should be treated as an important feature of the so-called marked passive in Ancient Chinese.<sup>51</sup> Note that such

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<sup>51</sup> Although *zao* and *shou* are relatively infrequently argued as passive markers, they are argued as

ambiguity is seen not only in Ancient Chinese but also in other Asian languages. For example, Lekawatana (1970: 139) describes the meaning of the Thai passive this way: “As a lexical item, /thu’uk/can have a meaning and there is no reason why it should not mean ‘suffer, or experience something unpleasant,’ the meaning attributed to the /thubk/construction.” Because of this meaning of “unpleasantness” that the passive communicates, only certain types of verbs may occur in the complement of the passive verb /thu’uk/. In this regard, the situation in Thai is quite similar to that in Ancient Chinese, with *jian*, *bei*, and *wei*.

In order to clarify whether these four words should be treated as passive markers or not, special attention is paid to the following: (1) factors in the grammaticalization process, (2) reasons for refuting the passive hypothesis, and (3) comparisons with other verbs expressing “suffer/undergo,” like *zao* 遭, *yu* 遇, and *shou* 受. Moreover, the study of particular features of these markers will also provide new perspectives to understand the passive in Ancient Chinese.

## 4. PARTICULARITIES

In the investigation of whether the so-called passive markers indeed mark the passive, I found that some points deserve special attention.

First, three (i.e., *jian*, *wei*, and *yu*) of the four words can be used, not only with a patient subject, but also with an agent subject. The only exception is *bei* which is never used together with an agent subject.

Second, V can still take an object when it is passivized in almost all of the so-called passive constructions in Ancient Chinese. In English, when a transitive verb is passivized, then it becomes an intransitive verb on the surface and it cannot take an object anymore. However, with *jian*, *bei* and *wei*, V can occur with a direct object. Admittedly, the same phenomenon is found even more commonly in Modern Mandarin (Ma 2016, Xiong 2017).

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verb-passive (Li 1994a, Shi 2005b).

The third point, and the most interesting one, is that all the so-called passive markers can be assembled freely, resulting in many diversified and multi-layered passive constructions. Note that it is not strange for a language to have multiple passive markers; it is, however, uncommon that those different markers can be assembled freely.

In sum, attention will be focused on the grammaticalization of the so-called passive markers and the ambiguity of the passive and non-passive interpretations. To understand the passive in Ancient Chinese better, three points of particularities of the so-called passive markers will be discussed: (1) they can co-occur with both agent subjects and patient subjects, (2) the V after them can still take an object when it is passivized, and (3) the passive markers can be assembled freely.

## CHAPTER 2: THE NATURE OF *JIAN* IN THE 见 V STRUCTURE

The Chinese character 见 has two different pronunciations in Modern Mandarin, *jian* and *xian*, respectively reflecting Middle Chinese voiceless and voiced initial consonants, *i.e.*, *keens* and *geens*.<sup>52</sup> The *jian* pronunciation was a transitive verb that indicated visual perception, the subject for which should be generally interpreted as an experiencer (e.g., Viberg 1983) or as the “dative case” (Fillmore 1968) because of its special uncontrollable, un-volitional and un-intentional semantic features compared with other perception verbs such as *kan* 看 “look.” The *xian* pronunciation, however, is not a verb of visual perception, and can be further divided into *xian*<sub>1</sub> and *xian*<sub>2</sub>. *Xian*<sub>1</sub> (*i.e.*, be visible/appear) is normally used intransitively in Ancient Chinese and *xian*<sub>2</sub> (*i.e.*, show/introduce) is often used transitively. Even though this distinguishing feature between *xian*<sub>1</sub> from *xian*<sub>2</sub> has often been ignored, it is relatively important when exploring the relationships between the *jian* and *xian* pronunciations.

Therefore, this chapter examines the relationships between the *jian* and *xian* pronunciations from three aspects: (1) *jian* & *xian*<sub>1</sub>; (2) *xian*<sub>1</sub> & *xian*<sub>2</sub>; and (3) *jian* & *xian*<sub>2</sub>. After reviewing many examples, it was found that the relationships in (1) were action (*i.e.*, see) versus a resultant state (*i.e.*, be visible), in (2) were non-causative (*i.e.*, be visible/appear) versus causative (make something visible/introduce somebody) and in (3) were introvert verbs (*i.e.*, undergo/suffer/receive) versus extrovert verbs (*i.e.*, show/manifest) (c.f., *shou* 受 “receive” versus *shou* 授 “give”). While (1) and (2) have been widely discussed in previous studies, (3) is newly introduced here. In essence, while the pairs (1) *jian* vs. *xian*<sub>1</sub> and (2) *xian*<sub>1</sub> vs. *xian*<sub>2</sub> have direct relationships, pair (3) *jian* vs. *xian*<sub>2</sub> has an “indirect relationship” that is inferred from (1) and (2). Therefore, it is acceptable that although *jian* and *xian*<sub>2</sub> have an “introvert verb” vs. “extrovert verb” relationship, they do not have the non-*qu* tone vs. *qu* tone relationship observed in other similar verb pairs.

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<sup>52</sup> This reconstruction is based on the data provided in TLS (which is based on Baxter/Sagart).

*Jian* and *xian*<sub>2</sub> are often used transitively while *xian*<sub>1</sub> is *always* used intransitively; however, the “见 V” structure should not be related to the intransitive *xian*<sub>1</sub> as in this structure the 见 is followed by a verbal object V (i.e., referential verb). Therefore, it is hypothesized that depending on whether there is a passive or active context, the character 见 in a 见 V structure could be either *jian* or *xian*<sub>2</sub>. Based on this hypothesized relationship between *jian* and *xian*<sub>2</sub>, (i.e., introvert verb vs. extrovert verb), this chapter innovatively explains the nature of the character 见 in the 见 V structure as follows: although *jian* V implies a passive meaning, *jian* is a marker for introversion rather than a passive marker, and, *xian*<sub>2</sub> is a marker for extroversion rather than a “personal pronoun.” Although the definition as a “pronoun” has been quite popular among especially Chinese scholars, I firmly disagree with it and regard as utterly counter intuitive based on the originally verbal features of *jian*.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The 见 V structure can have both passive and active interpretations, as shown in examples (55) and (56) respectively.

55. 盆成括见杀。(Mengzi 孟子. Jinxin xia 尽心下)<sup>53</sup>

<i>pen-chengkuo</i>	<i>jian</i>	<i>sha</i>
NAME	<i>jian</i>	kill

Pen Chengkuo suffered slaughter.

*Jian sha* 见杀 “being killed” in Example (55) is supposed to have the passive meaning and the pronunciation of the character 见 is definitely *jian*.

56. 少加孤露，母兄见骄。(Yu Shanjuyuan juejiao shu 与山巨源绝交书)

<i>shao</i>	<i>jia</i>	<i>gu-lou</i>	
young	addition	orphaned	
<i>mu</i>	<i>xiong</i>	<i>jian/xian</i>	<i>jiao</i>
mother	elder-brother	JIAN/XIAN	indulge

<sup>53</sup> Li (2015) interpreted it as “Pen Chengkuo encountered killing” and argued that this interpretation does not ensure that “the subject Pen Chengkuo is the person who was killed.” However, I think *jian* here should be explained as “suffer” rather than “encounter.”

[When I was] young, I was orphaned. My mother and elder brother showed me lots of indulgence. → My mother and my elder brother indulged me.

In contrast, 见宠 “show indulgence” in Example (56) has an active meaning and whether the pronunciation of the character 见 should be *xian* or *jian* remains controversial; however, most researchers views 见 as *jian*, with only a few admitting it could be *xian* (Yao 1988).

In these two examples, the 见 in (55) is taken to be a passive marker while in (56) it is taken to be a personal pronoun.<sup>54</sup> However, such conclusions have been recently questioned (Yao 1988, 1990).

Therefore, there is no consistent explanation for the pronunciation and nature of the character 见 in these two examples. The main goal of this chapter, therefore, is to explore the nature of 见 in these two examples by analyzing 见’s pronunciation and its semantic and syntactic features. While 见 has been widely studied (e.g., Jin 2006, Huang 1997), the conclusions were not convincing, as insufficient attention has been paid to the particularity of *jian* as a verb of visual perception.

## 2. *JIAN* 见 AS A VERB DENOTING VISUAL PERCEPTION

Perception verbs denoting sight, sound, touch, smell and taste play an important role in the verb categorization. After reviewing many of the world’s languages, Viberg (1983) established a perception verb hierarchy (ibid: 136): sight > hearing > touch > smell and taste: and concluded that verbs in which the primary denotation was a sensory modality higher in the hierarchy had higher usage frequency and their meanings could be extended to modalities lower in the hierarchy (ibid.: 136-137). Therefore, based on this assessment, visual perception verbs have the highest usage

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<sup>54</sup> I am aware that treating *jian* as a “personal pronoun” (ren cheng dai ci 人称代词) is very unusual, however, since this hypothesis is rather commonly seen in Chinese linguistic studies, I have been dealing with it in this section. See more explanations in Section 4.2.1.2.

frequency and the greatest degree of polysemy, which has also been confirmed elsewhere (compare Sweetser 1990: 23-48).

Visual perception verbs in Chinese include *kan* 看 “look,” *jian* 见 “see” and *wang* 望 “look” in Ancient Chinese. These verbs are similar because they all describe an interaction between the eyes, light and an object, their semantics can be generalized as “somebody perceiving something”, they are syntactically alike, and all are generally used in an SVO structure. However, although these verbs have many similarities, there are also many semantic and pragmatic differences. The differences between the visual perception verbs are usually exemplified with *jian* 见 (i.e., “see” in English) and *kan* 看 (i.e., “look” in English). In the following, some previous studies on the differences between *see* and *look* in English are introduced, after which the differences between *jian* 见 and *kan* 看 in Chinese are discussed.

## 2.1 Differences between “see” and “look”

As the differences between “see” and “look” have been widely studied, in the following, only the most important conclusions are reviewed.

Fillmore (1968: 24-25) analyzed the differences between *see* and *look* based on semantic theory and concluded that the semantic frame for *look* was+ [--O+A] (O=objective; A=Agentive) and the semantic frame for *see* was+ [--O+D] (O=objective; D=dative). In sum, while both *look* and *see* take objects, the semantic roles of the respective subjects are different, that is, the subject for *look* is agent-oriented while the subject for *see* is dative-oriented. Of the many cases defined by Fillmore, here three are selected — agentive case, dative case and objective case — as they are the most relevant to the focus in this chapter.

Agentive (A): the case of a typically animate perceived instigator for the action identified by the verb.  
Dative (D): the case of an animate subject that is affected by the state or action identified by the verb.  
Objective (O): as this is the semantically most neutral case in which the role of the noun in the action or state is identified by the semantic interpretation of the verb itself, it conceivably should be limited to things that are affected by the action or state identified by the verb.



Although few others have followed Fillmore's analysis of the subject of *see* as being dative, this opinion could be seen to reflect the special nature of *see*.

Swan (1980) convincingly summarized the difference between *see* and *look* as follows: *See* is the general verb to express that something "comes to our eyes", whether or not we pay attention to the process, for example, *Suddenly I saw something strange*. (NOT *Suddenly I looked at something strange*.). *Look (at)* is used when concentrating, paying attention and trying to see what is there. Therefore, it is possible to see something without wanting to, but it is only possible to deliberately *look at* something.

Tobin (1993) distinguished *see* from *look* based on process and result notions: the semantic feature for *look* is [+process] (compare *look at the TV* and *watch TV/look at him* vs. *watch him doing something*, etc.) while the semantic feature of *see* is [+result]. Although Tobin's interpretation is helpful, it could be debated that the semantic feature of *see* is not only [+result] and also includes [+process], that is, the semantic features of *see* are [+process and+result] (see the more detailed discussion in Section 3.3 (c)).

Viberg (1983) (see also Whitt 2009) stated that it was useful to draw a two-way distinction between subject-oriented and object-oriented perception verbs. Subject-oriented perception verbs are transitive, feature the perceiver as the grammatical subject of the perception verb, and emphasize the perceiver's role in the perception act. Subject-oriented perception verbs can be further subdivided into agentive and experiencer verbs, with the former featuring the subject's volition and intent to perceive, and the latter focusing only on the perception act itself. Typical subject-oriented agentive verbs are *listen* and *look* and typical subject-oriented experiencer verbs are *hear* and *see*. Whitt (2011) held a similar opinion and two examples from this paper are cited here: (1) Anita looked at the sculpture and (2) Anita saw the sculpture. Whitt argued that the verb *look* indicated not only that Anita visually perceived the sculpture, but also that she intended to do so; however, *see* indicated that Anita had visually perceived the sculpture whether she had intended to or not.

Gisborne (2010) divided perception verbs into three classes: an “agentive listen-class” (as in *I listened to the tenor*), an “experiencer hear-class” (as in *I heard him struggle*), and a “percept sound-class” (as in *The high C sounded flat*), as shown in Table 8 below (Gisborne 2010: 6).

**Table 8 Three kinds of perception verb**

“Listen” class (agentive verbs)	“Hear” class (experiencer verbs)	“Sound” class (percept verbs)
Look/A	See/E	Look/P
Listen/A	Hear/E	Sound/P
Feel/A	Feel/E	Feel/P
Smell/A	Smell/E	Smell/P
Taste/A	Taste/E	Taste/P

He also gave three visual perception verb examples: (1) I looked at the painting; (2) I saw the painter’s signature and (3) The painting looked damaged, which provided information on the relevant semantic issues. In (1), *looked* is an agentive verb that informs the reader/listener about the action the subject performed; in (2), the verb *saw* has an experiencer subject, that is the subject experiences a visual sensation without intention; and in (3) the subject did not experience anything. As examples such as (3) are unrelated to the focus of this chapter, they are not discussed further here. He also claimed that *listen* and *look* were agentive and that *hear* and *see* were not by providing evidence that agentive verbs could be distinguished from experiencer verbs depending on whether they were able to appear with adverbs that expressed “deliberately.” Gisborne also concluded that agentive verbs tended to favor the progressive but experiencer verbs did not.

Gruber (1965) stated that *look* and *see* could be further differentiated, as the former was obligatorily agentive and the latter was obligatorily not agentive. An agentive verb is when its subject refers to an animate object that is the willful source or agent of the activity being described in the sentence, can be modified by a purpose phrase beginning with *in order to*, and can be modified by adverbs of manner such as

*carefully*. However, *see* is obligatorily non-agentive as it does not fit these criteria: for example, (1) John looked through the glass carefully vs. (2) \* John saw through the glass carefully; (3) What John did was look at Bill vs. (4) \* What John did was to see Bill; and (5) John looked into the room to learn who was there vs. (6) \* John saw into the room to learn who was there.

In sum, the differences between *see* and *look* have been studied from different aspects, which are summarized in Table 9.

**Table 9 Difference between *See* and *Look***

Scholars	“See”	“Look”
Fillmore	Dative subject	Agentive subject
Swan	Without intention	With intention
Tobin	Result	Process
Viberg	Agentive verb	Experiencer verb
Gisborne	Agentive subject	Experiencer subject
Gruber	Non-agentive verb	Agentive verb

These opinions appear to be interrelated and the conclusions concerning the differences in the subjects for *see* and *look* deserves most attention: the subjects for *see* are experiencers while the subjects for *look* are agents. In the following section, the differences between *jian* 见 and *kan* 看 are examined.

## 2.2 Differences between *jian* 见 and *kan* 看

Generally, the differences between *jian* 见 and *kan* 看 are similar to *see* and *look*. Ma (1992: 18, 21) concluded that *kan* was a *zizhu dongci* 自主动词 “volitional verb”, that is, the subject carries out the action with intent and is able to control the action. However, *jian* was a *fei zizhu dongci* 非自主动词 “un-volitional verb” and had the opposite features to *kan*, that is, the subject of *kan* actively perceives something while the subject of *jian* passively perceives something. Similarly, Zhang (2006) also

argued that people perceived information actively or passively as represented by the use of *kan* or *jian*.

Lü (1999b: 333) pointed out that *kan* only emphasized the perception process and did not refer to the result, but that *jian* emphasized not only a perception process but also the result of the perception process. This view has been widely accepted.

As all the above conclusions were based on Modern Mandarin usage, are they also consistent in Archaic Chinese? As is widely known, *kan* 看 “look” is not attested in Archaic Chinese and the corresponding function is represented by another character,<sup>55</sup> *shi* 视 “look.” Therefore, the differences between *jian* and *shi* in Archaic Chinese are examined in the following from two aspects.

First, the differences between *shi* and *jian* are widely found in many classical texts, with two of these exemplified in the following.

57. 视之而弗见。(Li ji 礼记. Zhongyong 中庸)

<i>shi</i>	<i>zhi</i>	<i>er</i>	<i>fu</i>	<i>jian</i>
look	it	but	NEG	see

We look for them, but do not see them.

Example (57) is a good illustration of the differences between *shi* and *jian*, and is similar to the opinion in Lü (1999b), that is, *shi* only emphasizes the perception process while *jian* emphasizes both the perception process and the result of this process. In *Shuowen Jiezi* the difference between *jian* and *shi* was expressed even more clearly, as shown in example (58) below.

58. 用目及物曰视，物来遇目曰见。(Shuowen jiezi 说文解字)

<i>yong</i>	<i>mu</i>	<i>ji</i>	<i>wu</i>	<i>yue</i>	<i>shi</i> ,
using	eyes	reach	things	say	look
<i>wu</i>	<i>lai</i>	<i>yu</i>	<i>mu</i>	<i>yue</i>	<i>jian</i>
thing	come	meet	eyes	say	see

<sup>55</sup> The earliest example of *kan* 看 was found in *Hanfeizi*, i.e., *Liangche xin wei ye ling, qi zi wang kan zhi* 梁车新为邳令，其姊往看之 “Liang Che had recently become Commander of Ye, and his elder sister went up to visit him.” *Kan* means “visit” here. In the Wei, Jin, and Southern and Northern dynasties, the use of *kan* became more common.

The process using eyes to reach the objects is called *shi*, while the process that objects come into the eyes is called *jian*.

This indicates that the perception process is “active” for *shi* but “passive” for *jian*, which coincides with the opinions of both Ma (1992) and Zhang (2006).

Second, *shi* and *jian* have different relationships with the instrumental *mu* 目 “eyes”, that is, the “instrument” through which the perception takes place. For *shi*, the *mu* is clearly marked by an instrumental preposition *yi* 以 “using/with”, which indicates that this perception process is active and the subject is the agent using the eyes, as exemplified in the following.

59. 鸟以数百目视子。(Han Feizi 韩非子. Waichu shuo 外储说)

*niao yi shu bai mu shi zi*  
bird using several hundred eyes look you

The birds observe you with several hundred eyes.

While these examples are common for *shi* 视, they are not for *jian* 见, again indicating that the perception process is active for *shi* and passive for *jian*.

Therefore, based on these studies, the differences between *jian* and *shi* in Archaic Chinese are similar to the differences between *jian* and *kan* in Modern Chinese. The features of *jian* and *kan/shi* are summarized in Table 10.

**Table 10 Differences between *jian* and *kan/shi***

Scholars	<i>Jian</i>	<i>Shi/kan</i>
Ma	<i>Fei zi zhu dong ci</i> 非自主动词 “un-volitional verb”	<i>Zi zhu dong ci</i> 自主动词 “volitional verb”
Lü	Process and result	Process
Zhang	Passive perception	Active perception

These conclusions were made on the premise that both *jian* and *kan* function as *verbs of visual perception*. However, for *non-visual* semantic items, these conclusions are

not meaningful. For example, these conclusions do not apply to *jian* when associated with the semantics “visit” (see Section 3.1 *development of structure 2*).<sup>56</sup>

The discussion in Sections 1 and 2 reveal the key differences in the *research emphasis* by English and Chinese scholars. English language research has emphasized the semantic roles of the subjects associated with *see* and *look*, while Chinese research has mainly focused on the verbs *jian* and *kan* themselves. Both views are integrated in Table 11.

**Table 11 Differences in English and Chinese research emphases**

	Research emphasis in English papers	Research emphasis in Chinese papers
	Subject feature	V feature
<i>Jian</i> (i.e., <i>see</i> ) <sup>57</sup>	Dative/Experiencer	uncontrollable, un-volitional, un-intentional
<i>Kan/shi</i> (i.e., <i>look</i> ) <sup>58</sup>	Agentive	controllable, volitional, intentional

The research results from both sources are important for a comprehensive understanding of the differences between *jian* (i.e., *see*) and *shi/kan* (i.e., *look*), with the Western approach, and especially Viberg and Fillmore’s viewpoints, being important for the focus in this chapter as both examined the differences in the semantic roles of the subjects. Viberg distinguished the subject of *see* as an “experiencer subject” and *look* as an “agent subject”, and Fillmore defined them respectively as dative case and agentive case. Therefore, these views both generally defined the subject of *see* as experiencer signals, that is, Viberg’s *see* focused on the subject’s de facto sensory experience, and Fillmore’s “dative” interpretation implied

<sup>56</sup> In most parts of this chapter, *jian* is studied as a *verb of visual perception*, while the semantics of “visit” are mentioned only when necessary.

<sup>57</sup> Although there are many similarities between *jian* and *see*, it does not suggest that the semantic distributions of *jian* and *see* are totally the same. For example, as for the sense of *guess*, *understanding* or *connotation of modality and causality*, the vector used in English is verb *see*, while in Chinese, *kan* is employed instead of *jian*. In consideration of authoritative dictionaries, the semantics for the English *see* seem to contain many of the semantics for both *kan* and *jian*. However, as already emphasized, here I am only talking about the features of *jian* and *see* when they are perception verbs indicating visual actions. Therefore, on this point, they are quite similar.

<sup>58</sup> Similarly, the semantic composition of the English *look* and the Chinese *kan* are similar in physical space models (i.e., as a perception verb indicating visual action) when other semantic items are not concerned.

that the perceiving action had some influence on the human subject.<sup>59</sup> In other words, the subject (i.e., the person) is on the affected side while the object (i.e., something that comes into somebody's eyes) is a kind of stimulus for the *see* perceptual act.

Accordingly, it is hypothesized that *jian* is an experiencer-oriented verb (hereafter as E-O verb) and *kan* is an agent-oriented verb (hereafter as A-O verb). In sum, *jian* is indeed special in terms of its perception process because although the animated entity is placed in the subject position and is normally analyzed as an agent in grammatical terms, it is pragmatically an experiencer. In other words, the human being is a “passive perceiver.”

However, the two pronunciations for the character 见 in Archaic Chinese, *jian* \*ken 见先去 \*\*keens and *xian* \*fien 匣先去 \*\*geens, and the voiceless and voiced initials in Middle Chinese raise more questions, such as (1) is it possible for the *jian* pronunciation for the character 见 to also be defined as an E-O verb? (2) under what circumstances is the *xian* pronunciation assumed for the character 见? and (3) what is the relationship between these two pronunciations? These questions are discussed in the following Section 3.

### 3. THE *JIAN* AND *XIAN* PRONUNCIATIONS FOR THE CHARACTER 见

To answer the questions proposed above, this section examines the pronunciations for the character 见 in detail.

#### 3.1 Pronunciation *jian*

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<sup>59</sup> It is admitted that the *dative* term has few supporters while the term *experiencer* is cited frequently. However, it is still used here in order to do justice to Fillmore's approach.

The character 见 is pronounced as *jian* in Modern Mandarin when the transitive visual perception verb meaning is “see”,<sup>60</sup> with the object for *see* being something or somebody, as represented in structures (1) and (2), respectively.<sup>61</sup>

### Structure (1) Somebody+*jian* (i.e., saw)+something

60. 齐侯游于姑棼，遂田于贝丘。见大豕。(Zuozhuan 左传, Zhuangong 庄公)

<i>qi-hou</i>	<i>you</i>	<i>yu</i>	<i>gu-fen</i>			
qi-marquis	go-out	PREP	NAME			
<i>sui</i>	<i>tian</i>	<i>yu</i>	<i>bei-qiu</i>	<i>jian</i>	<i>da</i>	<i>shi</i>
then	hunt	PREP	NAME	see	big	pig

The marquis of Qi went on an outing to Gufen, and then proceeded to hunt at Beiqiu. He caught sight of a huge boar.

Wild animals are things that people seek to see in such a specific context.

61. 吾见赤黑之祲，非祭祥也。(Zuozhuan 左传, Zhaogong 昭公 15)

<i>wu</i>	<i>jian</i>	<i>chi</i>	<i>hei</i>	<i>zhi</i>	<i>qin</i>
I	see	red	black	MODI	halo
<i>fei</i>	<i>ji</i>	<i>xiang</i>	<i>ye</i>		
NEG	sacrifice	auspicious	FIN		

I saw a red and black halo, inauspicious [for the sacrifice].

However, in example (61), the red-black halo is an (inauspicious) phenomenon people usually do not want to see.

This case is similar to when the object is a human being, as in structure (2) below.

### Structure (2): Somebody+*jian* (i.e., saw)+somebody

62. 既见君子，云胡不喜。(Shijing 诗经, Zhengfeng 郑风)

<sup>60</sup> *See* in English can be used intransitively when the meaning for “see” is as a perception verb. For example:

- (1) Bill thought he could see into the room.
- (2) It is easy to see through this glass.
- (3) The baby bird saw over the rim of the nest.

However, *jian* in Chinese never functions like this.

<sup>61</sup> It is occasionally used without an object, e.g., in the negative context, or in the *ke* construction.



<i>ji</i>	<i>jian</i>	<i>jun-zi</i>	<i>yun</i>	<i>hu</i>	<i>bu</i>	<i>xi</i>
already	see	lord	INI	how	NEG	happy

Since I have (already) seen my lord, how could I not be joyous!

The lord is the person the girl desires to see.

63. 郭重仆，见二子。(Zuozhuan 左传, Aigong 哀公 25)<sup>62</sup>

<i>Guo-Zhong</i>	<i>pu</i>	<i>jian</i>	<i>er</i>	<i>zi</i>
NAME	serve	see	two	person

Guo Zhong served [Lord Ai] and saw the two people (i.e., Ji Kangzi and Meng Wubo).

However, the two people (i.e., Ji Kangzi and Meng Wubo) were people Guo Zhong did not want to see according to the context in footnote 60.

In sum, the “content/object” for *jian* 见 “see” could be a thing or person that people either like or dislike. This fact is in agreement with the feature of *jian* summarized above, that is, as *jian* (i.e., see) is uncontrollable and non-volitional, the subject sees the object without intention. In other words, a person can unintentionally look/perceive something/people if it/they arbitrarily enter/s their visual scope. Nonetheless, the action of seeing (“encountering by vision”, as to say) is accomplished.

These features are further exemplified in the following.

64. 宾孟适郊，见雄鸡自断其尾。(Guoyu 国语. Zhouyu 周语)

<i>Bin-meng</i>	<i>shi</i>	<i>jian</i>			
NAME	go	suburb			
<i>jian</i>	<i>xiong-ji</i>	<i>zi</i>	<i>duan</i>	<i>qi</i>	<i>wei</i>
see	cock	self	pluck	its	tail

(On one occasion) Bin Meng had gone to the suburbs, where he saw a cock plucking out its tail.

65. 宋华父督见孔父之妻于路，目逆而送之，曰：“美而艳”。(Zuozhuan 左传, Huangong 桓公 1)

<sup>62</sup> The context is shown below.

六月，公至自越。季康子、孟武伯逆于五梧。郭重仆，见二子，曰：“恶言多矣，君请尽之。” In the sixth month, the duke arrived from Ye. Ji Kangzi and Meng Wubo met him at Wuwu. Guo Zhong drove the duke’s carriage; and when he saw the two ministers, he said, “They spoke much evil. Let your lordship pay particular attention to them.”

*song Hua-Fudu jian kong-fu zhi qi yu lu*  
 state-song NAME see NAME PART wife PREP road  
*mu ni er song zhi yue mei er yan*  
 eye back and follow PRON said beautiful and gorgeous

Hua Fudu of Song happened to *see* the wife of Kongfu on the way. He gazed at her as she approached, and followed her with his eyes when she passed, saying: “How beautiful and gorgeous!”

In these two examples, Bin Meng and Hua Fudu “happen to see/come across” “a cock plucking out its tail” and “the wife of Kongfu”, respectively. Therefore, *jian* here manifests all the features summarized in Section 2.

As mentioned, *jian* usually appears in “past tense” contexts as an already accomplished action of perception. While it is also occasionally used in contexts in which the act of perception has not yet been realized, this is only possible for structure (2) and generally indicates a new semantic item “visit.” This process is a development in structure (2), as discussed in the following.

### Development of structure (2): Somebody+*jian* (i.e., visit)+somebody

The features of *jian* in the following two examples change because of the special contexts marked by *shi* 使 “make” and *ze* 择 “choose.”

66. 使子路反见之。(Lunyu 论语. Weizi 微子)

*shi zi-lu fan jian zhi*  
 order NAME back see/visit PRON

Confucius asked Zi Lu to go back to *see/visit* the man.

67. 齐戒以事鬼神，择日月以见君。(Liji 礼记. Biaoji 表記)

*qi jie yi shi gui-shen*  
 fasting vigil in-order-to serve spirit  
*ze ri yue yi jian jun*  
 choose day month in-order-to see (>visit) king

Vigil and fasting are required (as a preparation) for serving the spirits (in sacrifice); the day and month in which to *see/visit* the ruler are chosen beforehand.

In the above two examples, the auxiliaries *jiang* 将 “will” and *yu* 欲 “want” suggest that the action *jian* has not yet been realized, which results in the disappearance of the regular features of *jian* as a visual perception verb and transforms it into another derived semantic item meaning “visit (somebody)” (note that in English, there is the same semantic derivation for the verb “see”). As the newly derived semantic item “visit” is indeed an *intentional action*, it is similar to a common transitive verb with controllable and volitional features. Therefore, this semantic item is quite different from the meaning of “see” as a visual perception verb. The nature of *jian* as “visit” could therefore be defined as an A-O verb compared with the *jian* meaning “see”, which is an E-O verb. The features for *jian* meaning “see” and *jian* meaning “visit” are summarized in Table 12.

**Table 12 Respective features of *jian* meaning “see” and “visit”**

<i>Jian</i>	Semantics	Subject feature	V feature
Verb of perception	See	E-oriented	uncontrollable, un-volitional, un-intentional
Verb of non-perception	Visit	A-oriented	controllable, volitional, intentional

However, as both “see” and “visit” have the same basic syntactic structures, that is, “somebody+见+somebody/something”, some examples are ambiguous when a context is not specified, as shown in (68).

68. 子见父。(Liji 礼记. Neize 内则)

*zi jian fu*  
son see/visit father

The son visits his father.

This example could be interpreted in two ways: the son *saw* his father with “uncontrollable, un-volitional and un-intentional” features, or the son intends to *visit* his father with “controllable, volitional and intentional” features. According to the context, the *jian* 见 in this example should be interpreted as “visit,” as only the latter interpretation is possible.

It is important to clarify that the passive *jian* 见 structure is only related to the semantic item “see” as a perception verb, and is unrelated to the semantic item “visit.”

## 3.2 Pronunciation *xian*

When discussing the *xian* pronunciation for the character 见, it is also necessary to consider the other character *xian* 现. The common diachronic relationships between these two characters are: *jian* 见 encompasses the *xian* 现 meaning, which was not attested in the Oracle Bone, Bronze, and Seal scripts; and while *jian* 见 appeared in early times, the character *xian* 现 appeared later as a differentiation of the reading *xian* for the character *jian* 见 (however, both graphical forms were regularly exchanged throughout the medieval period). Therefore, the *basic* semantic and syntactic features for the *xian* pronunciation for the character 见 are similar to the character *xian* 现. The *xian* pronunciation can be either intransitive or transitive and for convenience in this chapter is defined as *xian*<sub>1</sub> (see Section 3.2.1) and *xian*<sub>2</sub> (see Section 3.2.2) respectively.

### 3.2.1 *Xian*<sub>1</sub>

The verb *xian*<sub>1</sub>, the grammatical subjects for which can be animate or inanimate, is normally understood to be an intransitive verb meaning “be visible” or “appear”, as shown in structures (3) and (4):

#### Structure (3) something+*xian*<sub>1</sub> (i.e., be visible)

69. 火见，郑其火乎。(Zuozhuan 左传. Zhaogong 昭公 6)

<i>huo</i>	<i>xian</i>	<i>zheng</i>	<i>qi</i>	<i>huo</i>	<i>hu</i>
fire	be-visible	NAME	MODI	fire	FINI

The Huo star was visible, is there going to be fire in Zheng?

70. 卜，桑林见。(Zuozhuan 左传. Xianggong 襄公 10)

<i>bu</i>	<i>sang-lin</i>	<i>xian</i>
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divine      NAME      be-visible

Divine, the spirit of Sang-ling was visible.

The subjects in (69) and (70) are inanimate and *xian*<sub>1</sub> has a “be visible” meaning. However, the N *xian*<sub>1</sub> is frequently followed by a prepositional phrase *yu*+N, as exemplified in (71).

71. 龙见于绛郊。(Zuozhuan 左传. Zhaogong 昭公 29)

*long      xian              yu              jiang              jiao*  
dragon   be-visible      PREP      NAME      suburb

A dragon was visible in the suburbs of Jiang.

#### Structure (4) Somebody+*xian*<sub>1</sub> (i.e., appear)

72. 客出，惠子见。(Zhuangzi 庄子. Waipian 外篇)

*ke              chu              hui-zi              xian*  
guest      leave      NAME      appear

[When] the guest left, Huizi appeared.

73. 范叔见，劳之如郤伯。(Zuozhuan 左传. Chengong 成公 2)

*Fan-shu      xian      lao              zhi              ru              xi              bo*  
NAME      appear      trouble      PRON      like      NAME      earl

When Fan Shu appeared [before the duke], the duke thanked him for his troubles and spoke in the same way as he had to Earl Xi.

As the subjects are animate/human in (72) and (73), *xian*<sub>1</sub> is better explained as “appear.” The corpora demonstrate that the use of *xian*<sub>1</sub> with human subjects is much more common than with non-human subjects.

The analysis of the examples in structures (3) and (4) indicate that depending on the features of the respective subjects, the *xian*<sub>1</sub> in (3) tends to be interpreted as “be visible” while in (4) tends to be interpreted as “appear”, and that the relationship between the semantic items “be visible” and “appear” is easy to infer.

The *xian*<sub>1</sub> pronunciation for the character 见 is basically an intransitive verb with only one argument (i.e., theme). Therefore, when followed by an object, it has causative meaning and is defined as *xian*<sub>2</sub>.

### 3.2.2 *Xian*<sub>2</sub>

Compared to *xian*<sub>1</sub>, *xian*<sub>2</sub> has a causative meaning, that is, to make something visible to others or to make somebody appear in front of somebody else, as illustrated in structures (5) and (6).

**Structure (5) Somebody+*xian*<sub>2</sub>+something: somebody makes something visible → somebody shows something.**

74. 泣血三年，未尝见齿。(Liji 礼记. Tangong shang 檀弓上)<sup>63</sup>

<i>qi</i>	<i>xue</i>	<i>san</i>	<i>nian</i>	<i>wei-chang</i>	<i>xian</i>	<i>chi</i>
cry	blood	three	year	NEG-ever	show	teeth

[He] cried for three years and did not show his teeth. → He cried for three years and never smiled.

75. 毋见五兵之刃。(Guanzi 管子. Sishi 四时)

<i>wu</i>	<i>xian</i>	<i>wu</i>	<i>bin</i>	<i>zhi</i>	<i>ren</i>
NEG	show	five	weapon	PART	edge

Do not show the blade of the five weapons.

As the objects after *xian*<sub>2</sub> in the above examples are concrete, *xian*<sub>2</sub> can be interpreted as “make something visible.” However, sometimes the objects following *xian*<sub>2</sub> can be quite abstract.

76. 贫则见廉，富则见义，生则见爱，死则见哀。(Mozi 墨子. Xiushen 修身)

<i>pin</i>	<i>ze</i>	<i>xian</i>	<i>lian</i>	<i>fu</i>	<i>ze</i>	<i>xian</i>	<i>yi</i>
poor	then	show	probity	rich	then	show	rectitude
<i>sheng</i>	<i>ze</i>	<i>xian</i>	<i>ai</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>ze</i>	<i>xian</i>	<i>ai</i>
give-birth	then	show	solicitude	die	then	show	grief

<sup>63</sup> The context is shown here. 高子皋之执亲之丧也，泣血三年，未尝见齿，君子以为难。When Gao Zigao was mourning his parents, his tears flowed (silently) like blood for three years, and he never (laughed) so as to show his teeth. Superior men considered that he did a difficult thing.

When poor he will show probity, when rich he will show rectitude, when someone is born he will show solicitude, when someone dies he will show grief.

77. 故君见恶则群臣匿端，君见好则群臣诬能。(Hanfeizi 韩非子. Erbing 二柄)

gu jun xian wu ze qun chen ni duan,  
so king show hatred CONJ group minister hide motive

jun xian hao ze qun chen wu neng  
king show liking CONJ various minister cheat talented-person

Therefore, if the ruler shows his hatred, then the various ministers will hide their motives; if the ruler shows his likings, then the various ministers will cheat about their abilities.

Therefore, the causative meanings in the above examples are lexicalized as “show.”

**Structure (6) somebody+xian<sub>2</sub>+somebody+[yu somebody]: somebody make somebody appear in front of somebody → somebody introduces somebody to somebody**

78. 吾今见之于君。(Hanfeizi 韩非子. Shuoling shang 说林上)

wu jin xian zhi yu jun  
I now introduce him PREP king

I now introduce him to the king [of Song].

79. 见其二子焉。(Lunyu 论语. Weizi 微子)

xian qi er zi yan  
introduce his two son FIN

[The old man] introduced his two sons to [Confucius].

When *xian<sub>2</sub>* is followed by a human being, it can be explained as “cause somebody to be visible to somebody else”, with the causative meaning usually being lexicalized as “introduce” as shown in the above examples. The evidence that the causative form is already lexicalized as the semantic meaning “introduce” is illustrated in (80).

80. 孙见于祖。(Liji 礼记. Neize 内则)<sup>64</sup>

<sup>64</sup> The context is shown here.

子生三月之末，……凡父在，孙见于祖，祖亦名之，礼如子见父，无辞。

**When the baby was three-months old**.... In all cases though the father is alive, the grandson is presented to the grandfather, who also names him. The ceremonies are the same as when the son is

*sun*          *xian*          *yu*          *zu*  
 grandson    show          PREP        grandfather

The grandson was shown to his grandfather.

The context for this sentence is demonstrated here (see footnote 62): when the grandson is three-months old, he has to *be presented to* rather than *presenting himself to* the grandfather to get a name, so *xian*<sub>2</sub> is interpreted as “is shown/ presented to.” In this example, *xian* appears to be a passive form for *xian*<sub>2</sub> (i.e., show), indicating that *xian*<sub>2</sub> has been lexicalized as a fixed semantic item.

As the meaning for *xian*<sub>2</sub>, it is similar to “show”, it is definitely an A-O verb. Fillmore made the following statement about the differences between “see” and “show”:

The verb *show*, to give another kind of example, might well have the same semantic representation as *see*, differing from it only in that the frame feature for *show* contains an agent subject where that for *see* does not. (Fillmore 1968: 30) [Emphasis added]

See (+[-O+D]) versus show (+[-O+D+A])

Therefore, the relationship between *xian*<sub>1</sub> and *xian*<sub>2</sub> is basically between the non-causative and the causative. The syntactic and semantic features for both *xian*<sub>1</sub> and *xian*<sub>2</sub> are summarized in Table 13.

**Table 13 Relationship between *xian*<sub>1</sub> and *xian*<sub>2</sub>**

<i>Xian</i>		Structure	Translation	Subject feature
<i>Non-causative</i>	<i>Xian</i> <sub>1</sub>	Something <i>xian</i> <sub>1</sub>	Something is visible	Theme-oriented subject
		Somebody <i>xian</i> <sub>1</sub>	Somebody appears	
<i>Causative</i>	<i>Xian</i> <sub>2</sub>	Somebody <i>xian</i> <sub>2</sub>	Somebody makes something visible	Agent-oriented subject
		Somebody <i>xian</i> <sub>2</sub>	Somebody makes somebody appear	

Hithero, character 见 has only two pronunciations, i.e., *jian* and *xian*. However, for convenience and analytical purposes, these two pronunciation are further divided into

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presented to the father; but there is no (interchange of) words (between the mother and him).



*jian*<sub>1</sub>/*jian*<sub>2</sub>; *xian*<sub>1</sub>/*xian*<sub>2</sub>, respectively, according to their *different syntactic behavior and functions*. In other words, the internal difference between *jian*<sub>1</sub> and *jian*<sub>2</sub>, as well as between *xian*<sub>1</sub> and *xian*<sub>2</sub>, is about syntactic function and semantics, rather than having different pronunciations.

### **3.3 Essential differences between *jian* and *xian* pronunciations**

The essential differences in the *jian* and *xian* pronunciation functions for the character 见 have attracted significant research attention. However, most research has focused on the morphological aspects, that is, the reconstruction of the pronunciations, and proposals that the pronunciations for *kens* 见 and *gens* 现 both have an -s suffix but differ by having voiced and voiceless initials. Therefore, research has tended to focus on finding a consistent pattern to explain the relationships between *jian* and *xian* but has ignored the differences between *xian*<sub>1</sub> and *xian*<sub>2</sub>. However, such attempts have been relatively unconvincing as demonstrated in Section 3.3.1. In Section 3.3.2, a new methodology is applied to distinguish *xian*<sub>1</sub> from *xian*<sub>2</sub> and the relationships analyzed between each pair: *jian* vs. *xian*<sub>1</sub>; *xian*<sub>1</sub> vs. *xian*<sub>2</sub>; and *jian* vs. *xian*<sub>2</sub>.

#### *3.3.1 Previous opinions*

In this section, two common hypotheses about the relationships between *jian* and *xian* are given: (A) active vs. passive, and (B) non-causative vs. causative.

#### **(A) *Jian* vs. *xian*: active vs. passive view**

The most popular hypothesis treats *xian* as a passive form of *jian* (for example Wang 1990a: 468, Downer 1959: 258-290, Sun 2004: 562-565). However, the argument for the passive is not strong enough in any pair: *jian* vs. *xian*<sub>1</sub> or *jian* vs. *xian*<sub>2</sub>. The refutation of the *jian* vs. *xian*<sub>2</sub>, active vs. passive relationships is easy to demonstrate as translating *xian*<sub>2</sub> as “be seen” makes no sense in any of the cited examples;

therefore, in the following, only evidence to refute *jian* vs. *xian*<sub>1</sub> as active vs. passive is given.

First, the subjects for *xian*<sub>1</sub> are normally not *affected* in the examples given in sub-section 3.2.1. A prominent pragmatic feature of passive constructions is that the grammatical subject (i.e., patient) is affected to some degree, and more precisely, a negative affectedness is more common than a positive affectedness. However, as the subjects for *xian*<sub>1</sub> in the examples were not really affected, it is unjustifiable to define *xian*<sub>1</sub> as a passive form of *jian*. Reynolds (1996: 125) also refuted this passive hypothesis explaining that as the subject for *xian*<sub>1</sub> (i.e., intransitive verb) underwent an internally motivated and non-volitional change, it was not caused by an outside force, which means it is much less likely to be interpreted as passive.

Second, a passive reading requires a possible agent; however, there is little evidence for this as no example for “P+*xian*<sub>1</sub>+*yu*+agent” has been attested.

Third, while examples such as “somebody+*jian*+*yu*+somebody” were conventionally analyzed as being passive, these have been proven to be incorrect, as shown in (81) and (82).

81. 入以见于君。(Mozi 墨子. Jianai 兼爱)

*ru yi jian/xian yu jun*  
enter in-order-to was seen/*was seen/make visible* PREP king

[He] entered [the court] and was seen by the king. [??] →/[He] entered [the court] and appeared in front to the king. Or: [He] entered [the court] and visited the king.

82. 冉有季路见于孔子曰。(Lunyu 论语. Jishi pian 季氏篇)

*Ran-You Ji-Lu jian/xian yu Kongzi yue*  
NAME NAME were seen/*make visible* PREP NAME say

? Ran You and Ji Lu were seen by Confucius and said. → Ran You and Ji Lu appeared in front to Confucius, saying.../ Ran You and Ji Lu visited Confucius and said...

In the two examples above, 见 is usually pronounced as *jian*. First, if the pronunciation *jian* is correct, then it is necessary to question why there is no object following *jian*. It could be said that (a) the object is omitted, or, (b) this is a passive

sentence for *jian*; however, both answers are impossible based on the contexts (i.e., no object omission or passive meaning). However, there is another possible explanation. Based on the study in the *yu* chapter (i.e., Section 5.1, Chapter 6, in this part), it can be seen that a transitive verb may be followed by the preposition *yu* before the object. If this is true, then the V-O relationship between *jian* and the object is not as close as the V-O relationship between *kan* and its object, as *kan* never behaves in this way. Second, 见 here can be alternatively pronounced as an intransitive verb, *xian*<sub>1</sub>. Therefore, there is no passive meaning in these examples.

Consequently, the active vs. passive view can be refuted as it does not explain the relationships between the *jian* vs. *xian*<sub>1</sub> pair or the *jian* vs. *xian*<sub>2</sub> pair.<sup>65</sup>

### **(B) *Jian* vs. *xian*: non-causative vs. causative**

Some studies (Zhou 1961-62, Yu 1984, Wang 1990a) have concluded that the pronunciation *xian* should be interpreted as a causative structure for the pronunciation *jian*, which does not distinguish *xian*<sub>1</sub> from *xian*<sub>2</sub>. Evidence for countering the opinion that these *jian* vs. *xian*<sub>1</sub> distinctions are due to non-causative vs. causative relationships is clear: (1) *xian*<sub>1</sub> is intransitive while the causative form is normally argued as a transitive form and (2) it is also awkward to treat the *xian*<sub>1</sub> pronunciation as a causative form for the *jian* pronunciation as it makes no sense when translating “*xian*<sub>1</sub>” as “cause to see” in almost all the given examples.

Admittedly, the *xian*<sub>2</sub> pronunciation can have a causative meaning; however, *xian*<sub>2</sub> is a causative form for *xian*<sub>1</sub> rather than for *jian*. Therefore, the relationship between *jian* and *xian* should not be analyzed as non-causative vs. causative for either the *jian* vs. *xian*<sub>1</sub> pair or the *jian* vs. *xian*<sub>2</sub> pair.

### *3.3.2 An alternative analysis*

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<sup>65</sup> Hypothesizing *jian* vs. *xian* as active vs. passive relationship is actually opposite to my opinion to some degree: according to Fillmore’s definition of *dative*, it is quite similar to a *patient*, thus the subject of the pronunciation *jian* is closer to patient rather than the subject of the pronunciation *xian*. Similarly, Viberg’s *experiencer* is also closer to a *patient* as compared to the subject of *xian*.

In Section 3.2, *xian*<sub>1</sub> was distinguished from *xian*<sub>2</sub>; therefore, similarly, the relationship between (1) *jian* vs. *xian*<sub>1</sub>, (2) *xian*<sub>1</sub> vs. *xian*<sub>2</sub> and (3) *jian* vs. *xian*<sub>2</sub> is analyzed here. As the relationship between the pair *xian*<sub>1</sub> and *xian*<sub>2</sub> was discussed above in Section 3.2.2, here, only the relationships between *jian* vs. *xian*<sub>1</sub> and *jian* vs. *xian*<sub>2</sub> are discussed in (C) and (D).

**(C) *Jian* vs. *xian*<sub>1</sub>: action vs. resultant state**

As discussed, *jian* was originally reconstructed as a transitive verb with a voiceless initial as it has both “action” and “result” features — *jian* [+action,+result] — while *xian*<sub>1</sub> is an intransitive verb with a voiced initial meaning “be visible” and expressing a resultant state: *xian*<sub>1</sub> [+resultative]. Therefore, the features for *jian* and *xian*<sub>1</sub> are similar to the labile verbs in Ancient Chinese, such as *bai* 败 “defeat” and *huai* 坏 “destroy”, that have voiceless (i.e., transitive) and voiced (i.e, intransitive) alternating initials (see more discussion in Part 2). As discussed in Zhang (2018), the intransitive member of labile verbs in Ancient Chinese, e.g., *bai* 败 “defeat” and *huai* 坏 “destroy”, mainly expresses a change of state. Therefore, it is justifiable to define the relationship between *jian* and *xian*<sub>1</sub> as being an action vs. resultant state. Similarly, Schuessler (2006: 49-50) stated that “in English we sometimes project a passive through translation, but actually it might have been a phenomenon of ‘endopassive derivation’, i.e., emphasizing the *resultant state* of an action, in Chinese.” [Emphasis added]

It is also necessary to recognize that the subject for *jian* is perceiver-oriented (i.e., experiencer-oriented), while the subject for *xian*<sub>1</sub> is object (of perceiving)-oriented. The relationships are summarized in Table 14.

**Table 14 Relationship between *jian* and *xian*<sub>1</sub>**

<i>jian</i> & <i>xian</i> <sub>1</sub>	Active vs. passive	NO
	Non-causative vs. causative	NO
	Action vs. resultant state	YES
	perceiver-oriented (i.e., experiencer-oriented) vs. object (of perceiving)-oriented	YES

#### (D) *Jian* and *xian*<sub>2</sub> pair: inward-directed verb versus outward-directed verb

The relationship between *jian* and *xian*<sub>2</sub> has been overlooked in previous studies. However, as has already been demonstrated in several sections in this chapter, differentiating *xian*<sub>1</sub> from *xian*<sub>2</sub> is extremely important. The study in Section 3.2.2 illustrated that *xian*<sub>2</sub> was the causative form of *xian*<sub>1</sub> and was lexicalized with the new semantic item meaning “show/introduce.” Alternatively, it could be said that *xian*<sub>2</sub> developed from a causer-oriented verb to an agent-oriented verb (compare the analysis in Section 2.2 where it was shown that *jian* was actually an experiencer-oriented verb). Therefore, it could be concluded that *jian* is an experiencer-oriented verb while *xian*<sub>2</sub> is an agent-oriented verb, that is, *jian* and *xian*<sub>2</sub> have different direction-orientations, with *jian* being “inward directed” and *xian*<sub>2</sub> being “outward-directed.” Therefore, the relationship between pair (3) could be defined as “inward-directed verb vs. outward-directed verb.” This relationship was commonly found in Ancient Chinese, such as *mai* 买 “buy” vs. *mai* 卖 “sell” (AC, B/S: \*m<sup>h</sup>rajʔ vs. \*m<sup>h</sup>rajʔ-s). From a phonological perspective, in Middle Chinese “inward-directed verb vs. outward-directed verb” pairs were often distinguished through the non-*qu* tone and *qu* tone, as in *mai* 买 “buy” (i.e., non-*qu* tone, B/S: meaX) and *mai* 卖 “sell” (*qu* tone, B/S: meaH). Concretely, the suffix -s had changed into a *qu* tone by the time of Middle Chinese (in Modern Mandarin, this has been preserved as a fourth tone; compare the notion of the “fourth tone derivation”). Seen from this angle, it could be argued that there is a lack of morphological evidence. However, the only relationships for the pairs (1) *jian* vs. *xian*<sub>1</sub> and (2) *xian*<sub>1</sub> vs. *xian*<sub>2</sub> are “direct”, while the relationships for the pair (3) *jian* vs. *xian*<sub>2</sub> are **indirectly deduced** from the observations in pairs (1) and (2). Therefore, morphological support for the relationships between *jian* and *xian*<sub>2</sub> is not needed as the “inward-directed verb & outward-directed verb” pair may not always be distinguished by a non-*qu* vs. *qu* pair. The relationships between *jian* and *xian*<sub>2</sub> are summarized in Table 15.

**Table 15 Relationships between *jian* and *xian*<sub>2</sub>**

	Subject	Structure	Feature	Similar verbs
<i>jian</i>	Experiencer→patient	NVN	Introvert verb	e.g., <i>shou</i> 受 “receive”, <i>mai</i> 买 “buy”, <i>jie</i> 借(进) “borrow”
<i>xian</i> <sub>2</sub>	Causer→agent	NVN	Extrovert verb	e.g., <i>shou</i> 授 “give, teach”, <i>mai</i> 卖 “sell”, <i>jie</i> 借(出) “lend”

Interestingly, the hypothesis that treats *jian*<sub>1</sub> and *xian*<sub>2</sub> as “inward-directed verb vs. outward-directed verb” pairs provides an innovative idea for solving the problems discussed in the introduction, that is, the pronunciation and features of 见 in 见 V structures.

## 4. THE NATURE OF *JIAN* IN THE “见 V” STRUCTURE

The pronunciation for the character 见 in the 见 V structure could also be different, which could shape the so-called *passive “jian V”*, which is discussed in Section 4.1 or the *active “xian V”* discussed in Section 4.2. However, it needs to be remembered that the conventional terms “passive” and “active” may be not accurate and are only used for convenience in this section.

### 4.1 Passive *jian V* structure

In the following, the formation of the *jian V* structure and the nature of *jian* in such constructions are respectively discussed.

#### 4.1.1 Development of the *jian V* structure

In earlier times, the objects for *jian* were usually concrete nouns (see examples in Section 3). However, later, more abstract objects were being used in this structure, as exemplified in (83) and (84).

83. 故国离寇敌则伤，民见饥则亡。(Mozi 墨子. Qihuan 七患)

<i>gu</i>	<i>guo</i>	<i>li</i>	<i>kou-di</i>	<i>ze</i>	<i>shang</i>
so	state	suffer	invader-enemy	then	hurt
<i>min</i>	<i>jian</i>	<i>ji</i>	<i>ze</i>	<i>wang</i>	
people	encounter	starve	then	die	

Therefore, the state is damaged when it suffers invaders and enemies; people died when suffered famine.

84. 昔者越国见祸，得罪于天王。(Guoyu 国语. Wuyu 吴语)

<i>xi-zhe</i>	<i>yue</i>	<i>guo</i>	<i>jian</i>	<i>huo</i>
past	NAME	state	encounter	disaster
<i>de</i>	<i>zui</i>	<i>yu</i>	<i>tian</i>	<i>wang</i>
commit	crime	PREP	heaven	king

In the past, the state of Yue suffered disaster and received punishment by the heavenly king.

In the above examples, *ji* 饥 “famine” and *huo* 祸 “disaster” are not actually “visible”, unlike the objects in the examples in Section 3. Therefore, *jian*’s semantic meaning has developed into “encounter” (with something) rather than visually “perceive” a concrete object.

Later, so-called “referential verbs” (*zhichengxing dongci* 指称性动词),<sup>66</sup> which is a word that is not a clearly identifiable word class that can sometimes be interpreted as a verb and sometimes as a noun, were used after *jian*. Similar to the examples in Section 3, the referential verb after *jian* can be either negative (85 and 86) or positive (87 and 88).

### Negative: suffer

85. 厚者为戮，薄者见疑。(Hanfeizi 韩非子. Shuonan 说难)

<sup>66</sup> As Chinese lacks a developed morphological system, some words can be used either as verbs or nouns without clear distinction. *Zhichengxing dongci* 指称性动词 “referential verb” here means the words that are commonly treated as verbs but can sometimes also be interpreted as nouns with no formal distinction.

*hou zhe wei lu bo zhe jian yi*  
 serious NOM become kill light NOM suffer doubt

In the serious cases the persuader got killed, and in the slighter cases he became the subject of suspicion.

86. 随之见伐，不量力也。(Zuozhuan 左传. Xigong 僖公 20)

*sui zhi jian fa bu liang li ye*  
 NANE PART suffer invasion NEG estimate energy FIN

[The reason] why the state of Sui suffered an invasion was that it did not [correctly] estimate its strength.

Interpreting *jian* as “suffer” is acceptable in the above examples. However, a better explanation would be “receive/get” when the V is positive.

### Positive: receive/get

87. 敬人而不必见敬，爱人而不必见爱。(Lüshi chunqiu 吕氏春秋. Xiaoxinglan 孝行览)

*jing ren er bu bi jian jing*  
 respect people but NEG necessary receive respect  
*ai ren er bu bi jian ai*  
 love people but NEG necessary receive love

When respecting people it is not necessary to receive respect (from other people); when loving people it is not necessary to receive love (from other people).

88. 婴闻之，有幸见爱，无幸见恶。(Yanzi chunqiu 晏子春秋. Waipian 外篇)

*ying wen zhi you xing jian ai*  
 NAME hear PRON have luck receive love  
*wu xing jian wu*  
 NEG luck suffer hate

I (i.e., Ying) heard that if I am fortunate, then I will receive love, if I am not fortunate, I will suffer hate.

When followed by referential verbs, the interpretations for these *jian* examples are ambiguous as they are V-O structures when the elements after *jian* are analyzed as nouns but could be argued to constitute passivity when the elements are analyzed as verbs. This *ambiguity* is important when seeking to understand the nature of *jian*.



In sum, *jian* was originally used with the concrete object meaning “see” and by extension “meet” (with an object perceivable by the eye), as shown in Section 3.1. However, as abstract objects such as famine, disaster, love, and respect cannot really be visually perceived, *jian*’s semantics developed into “suffer\ encounter\ receive” meanings, and later became so abstract when followed by referential verbs that it was reinterpreted to be a passive marker. Emphasizing again, the development of the *jian* V structure is unrelated to the semantic item “visit.”

Therefore, the formation of the *jian* V structure could be seen to be a natural development of *jian* as a verb of visual perception that emphasizes that somebody passively perceives (i.e., receives) something. In other words, its subject is a “passive” perceiver (i.e., experiencer). This appears to be the fundamental motivation for *jian* developing into a verb that means “suffer”, or by extension, a passive marker. While this point has not been previously fully discussed, it clearly explains why only *jian* developed in this way and verbs such as *kan* did not. In the following, the nature of *jian* in the *jian* V construction is explained.

#### 4.1.2 The nature of *jian* in the *jian* V structure

Three hypotheses have been suggested in recent studies for the nature of *jian* in the *jian* V structure: (1) a passive marker, (2) a full verb meaning “suffer”, (3) an auxiliary verb.

1. Ma (1898 [2007] ) and Wang (1990a) asserted that *jian* was the most undisputed passive marker in Archaic Chinese. Although this hypothesis has had many followers, it was strongly refuted by the second hypothesis.

2. Represented by Yao (1990), this group refuted the first passive hypothesis and claimed that similar to *zao* 遭, *yu* 遇, and *shou* 受, *jian* should be defined as a verb expressing “suffer” because: (1) it has been followed by both nouns and verbs (i.e., referential verbs 指称动词) throughout its historical development; (2) the lexical meaning (i.e., suffer) is not evidently lost in this structure, which is different from

being a passive marker with only a grammatical function;<sup>67</sup> and the third point (3) is not presented here as it was not convincing.<sup>68</sup> This explanation also works for *bei* which is studied in the following chapter (i.e., Chapter 3 of this part).

3. Represented by Bai (2004), the third group defined *jian* as an auxiliary verb; however, similar to the first hypothesis, this hypothesis has many problems as it can never be used in the *bu jian bu* 不见不 and *jian bu jian* 见不见 structures.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, it does not show any other features related to auxiliary verbs, and most importantly, this view does not really explain the nature of *jian* 见.

Of these three hypotheses, Yao's opinion has been the most convincing because: (1) *jian* V is normally used alone without an agent, and examples like *Yanzi jian yi yu Qi jun* 晏子见疑于齐君 “Yanzi was doubted by King Qi” are rarely attested; and (2) *jian* mainly functions as a visual perception verb even in Modern Chinese. However, Yao's treatment of *jian* as a verb expressing “suffer” is also inaccurate as it does not explain why some positive verbs (e.g., *ai* 爱 “love”, *yong* 用 “use”, *xin* 信 “believe”, *chen* 称 “praise”) can follow *jian*. Therefore, it is hypothesized that *jian* is an “inward-directed” verb when the element after it is understood to be a noun, or it is an “inward-directed” marker when the element after it is understood as a verb. Further, it is claimed that verbs such as *zao* 遭, *yu* 遇, and *shou* 受 are also “inward-directed verbs” which imply a passive meaning (i.e., can be translated as

<sup>67</sup> For example, *bei* 被 is no longer used as a full verb in Modern Chinese.

<sup>68</sup> Yao thought that *bing zhi jian* 并之见 was equivalent to *jian bing* 见并 and *chen zhi jian* 臣之见 was the equivalent of *jian chen* 见臣 in the following example.

1. (a) 并之见，则诸侯疏矣。(Xunzi 荀子)

*bing zhi jian/xian ze zhu-hou shu yi*  
annex MODI see/show then lord estrange FIN

If they see any inclination on his part to take their lands, they will keep their distance.

(b) 臣之见，则诸侯离矣。(Xunzi 荀子)

*chen zhi jian/xian ze zu-hou li yi*  
enslave MODI see/show then lord estrange FIN

If they see any inclinations to subordinate them as his servants, the feudal lords will be alienated.

This interpretation is refuted by some scholars (e.g., Hao 2001). Hao thought 见 should be pronounced as *xian* rather than *jian* in such examples. In my opinion, both pronunciations are possible according to the kind of subject:

(a) *zhu hou jian bing* 诸侯见并 “If the feudal lords see the inclination to take their lands”,

(b) *jun xian bing* 君见并 “If you (i.e., king) manifest the inclination to take their lands”

(c) *ze zhu hou li yi* 则诸侯离矣 “then the feudal lords will be alienated”

No matter (a)-(c) or (b)-(c) are justified.

<sup>69</sup> This is an important criterion to identify an auxiliary verb in Modern Chinese.

passive in English). However, it is not justifiable to define *jian* as a passive marker because of the evidence given above.

## 4.2 Active *xian* V structure

The pronunciation for the character 见 in the active 见+V structure has been explicated as *jian* in traditional studies (hereafter “traditional hypothesis”), and has therefore been rarely analyzed as *xian* (hereafter “new hypothesis”). In the following, the formation of this structure and the nature of the character 见 in such a construction is respectively discussed from both perspectives.

### 4.2.1 Traditional hypothesis

Traditionally, the character 见 in the active 见+V structure has also been pronounced *jian*. To distinguish this from *jian*<sub>1</sub>, which was formerly regarded as a passive marker, the character 见 in such a case is defined as *jian*<sub>2</sub> for convenience. Based on this preconception, previous studies on the development of the active *jian*<sub>2</sub>+V structure and the nature of *jian*<sub>2</sub> are examined.

#### 4.2.1.1 Development of the active *jian*<sub>2</sub>+V structure

Four proposals for the formation of *jian*<sub>2</sub>+V structure are examined.

(1) Lü (1999b) believed that P *wei* A *suo jian* V was formed by combining two passive patterns: P *jian* V *yu* A and P *wei* A *suo* V. Then, because of the redundancy, P *wei*... *suo* was deleted in the P *wei* A *suo jian* V, which resulted in the structure A *jian*<sub>2</sub> V. This hypothesis is illustrated in Table 16 to make it easier to understand.

Table 16 The formation of *jian*<sub>2</sub> V structure (Lü 1999b)

<b>Structure (1)</b>	P	<i>Jian</i> 见	V	<i>Yu</i> 于	A	P
<b>Plus</b>	+					
<b>Structure (2)</b>	P	<i>Wei</i> 为	A	<i>Suo</i> 所	V	
<b>Equal</b>	=					
<b>Structure (3)</b>	P	<i>Wei</i> 为	A	<i>Suo</i> 所	<i>Jian</i> 见	V
<b>Deleting</b>						
<b>structure (4)</b>	P	<i>Wei</i> 为		<i>Suo</i> 所		
<b>Resulting in structure (5)</b>			A		<i>Jian</i> 见	V

Note: structure (1)+structure (2) = structure (3)

structure (3) – structure (4) = structure (5)

However, this complicated hypothesis is unconvincing as the structure “A *jian*<sub>2</sub> V” probably appeared earlier than the “P *wei* A *suo jian* V” structure. Further, there are few examples for structures (1) and (3).

(2) Wei (2001) speculated that the “A *jian*<sub>2</sub> V” structure was formed from the omission of *er* 而 in the “A *jian er* 见而 V” structure in which *jian*<sub>2</sub> means “meet/visit.” One example taken from Wei’s paper is presented below.<sup>70</sup>

89. 到燕，各异日，更见责王。宗正者，主宗室诸刘属籍，先见王，为列陈道昭帝实武帝子状。侍御史乃复见王，责之以正法。(Shiji 史记. Sanwang shijia 三王世家)

更见责王

*geng jian ze wang*  
alternative visit blame king

[When they] arrived in the state of Yan, they blamed King Yan on different days. Zong Zheng, who was the person in charge of the domiciliary register of the royal family, first met King Yan. He demonstrated to King Yan the fact that King Zhao was the son of King Wu. Then, the imperial historian went to see King Yan and blamed him according to the law of the state.

From the context in this paragraph, it is known that the court sent two officials to the state of Yan to *jian ze* 见责 “blame” King Yan. Wei (2001) believed that the *jian ze*

<sup>70</sup> This example is too long for the word-by-word translation. Therefore, only *geng jian ze wang* 更见责王 is translated word-by-word with *pinyin*.

见责 “blame” here was an abbreviation of *jian er ze zhi* 见而责之 “meet him and blame him” based on the logical expressions after the sentence *geng jian ze wang* 更见责王 “they blamed king Yan on different days separately.” The key words indicating the sequence of events are bolded as follows.

*xian jian wang* 先见王 “**at first**, go to see the king”, *fu jian wang* 复见王 “**once more**, go to see the king”, and *ze zhi yi zheng fa* 责之以正法 “blame him according to the national law.”

Wei’s conclusion seems plausible for this example; however, this hypothesis explains only a few examples, as Wei also recognized, as there was always an object after the “*jian er V*” structure, which made it difficult to explain why there was an infrequent object after the *jian<sub>2</sub> V* structure.

(3) The third hypothesis, represented by Li (1995), was that the active *jian<sub>2</sub> V* structure was formed through a passive *jian<sub>1</sub>* structure in a subjectless sentence and was therefore ambiguous for either an active or passive meaning. For instance:

90. 根虽为舅，上敬重之不如禹。根言虽切，犹不见从。(Hanshu 汉书. Kuang zhang kong ma zhuan 匡张孔马传)

<i>gen</i>	<i>sui</i>	<i>wei</i>	<i>jiu</i>			
NAME	although	be	uncle			
<i>shang</i>	<i>jing-zhong</i>	<i>zhi</i>	<i>bu</i>	<i>ru</i>	<i>yu</i>	
king	great-reverence	PRON	NEG	attain	NAME	
<i>gen</i>	<i>yan</i>	<i>sui</i>	<i>qie</i>			
NAME	word	although	sincere			
<i>you</i>	<i>bu</i>	<i>jian/xian</i>	<i>cong</i>			
still	NEG	<i>jian</i>	listen			

Although Gen is [the king’s] uncle, the king does not respect him as much as Yu; although Gen’s words are sincere, his words are not listened to. → [the king] did not listen to his words.

In example (90), the subject of *you bu jian cong* 犹不见从 “not listen/are not listened” could be recovered as either *gen yan* 根言 “Gen’s words” or *shang* 上 “the king” resulting in both passive and active interpretations. While this hypothesis seemed plausible, it was unconvincing as it inverted the cause and effect: only when *jian V* is interpreted as having either a passive or an active meaning can the

subjectless sentence be recovered by either an agent subject or a patient subject; however, vice versa is less possible.

(4) Pan (1982) believed that the “A *jian*<sub>2</sub> V” structure was formed by fronting the A to the subject position in the passive structure “*jian*<sub>1</sub> V *yu* A”. For example, *ci fu jian bei* 慈父见背 is formed from *jian bei yu ci fu* 见背于慈父 by fronting *ci fu* 慈父 to the subject position. However, if *jian* V (i.e., *jian*<sub>1</sub> V discussed in Section 4.1) was normally used alone without a *yu*+agent phrase, then how can Pan’s opinion be convincing?

In sum, all hypotheses for the character 见 as *jian*<sub>2</sub> are unconvincing as it is difficult to define 见’s nature by treating it as *jian*<sub>2</sub>.

#### 4.2.1.2 The nature of *jian*<sub>2</sub> in *jian*<sub>2</sub> V structure

Wang (1958 [1980]) stated that the derivation of *jian* from *jian*<sub>1</sub> (expressing passive meaning) to *jian*<sub>2</sub> (expressing active meaning) made *jian*<sub>2</sub> a prefix after the Han dynasty. However, Bai (2004) refuted this statement as *jian*<sub>2</sub> and the V after it are never lexicalized as a compound word. As examples such as *jian jiao* 见教 “teach” and *jian xiao* 见笑 “laugh” in contemporary Chinese are idiomatic rather than lexicalized compounds, defining *jian*<sub>2</sub> as a prefix is unconvincing.

Pan (1982) concluded that the function of *jian*<sub>1</sub> for indicating passive has been lost and has become an auxiliary verb (i.e., defined as *jian*<sub>2</sub> in this chapter) that appears in front of a main verb to express an active meaning. However, this perspective does not really describe the nature of *jian*<sub>2</sub> as it does not clearly distinguish it from *jian*<sub>1</sub>. Moreover, as already discussed in Section 4.1.2 above, there is no justification for analyzing *jian*<sub>2</sub> as an auxiliary verb.

Shi (1986) proposed the following hypothesis: besides being a function for expressing the passive, the auxiliary verb *jian* also has a function that expresses *ren jia yu wo* 人加于我, that is, “other people do something to me” (i.e., active), with the object of

*jian* normally being a personal pronoun such as *wo* 我 “me.” This opinion was similar to Yang and He’s (2001). From the end of the Warring states, there has been a *jian*<sub>2</sub>+V structure that appears to be similar to the *jian*<sub>1</sub>+V structure on the surface but differs in the semantic roles of its subject. In the *jian*<sub>2</sub>+V structure, the subject is an agent, but in the “*jian*<sub>1</sub>+V” structure, it is a patient. In such a case, Yang and He thought that *jian*<sub>2</sub> could be interpreted as “me” or “myself” and no longer expressed a passive meaning, as exemplified in (91).

91. 我与其处而待之见攻，不如先伐之。(Zhanguoce 战国策. Qinwu 秦五)

<i>wo</i>	<i>yu-qi</i>	<i>chu</i>	<i>er</i>	<i>dai</i>	<i>zhi</i>	<i>jian</i>	<i>gong</i>
I	instead-of	let	and	wait-for	PRON	<i>jian</i>	attack
<i>bu-ru</i>	<i>xian</i>	<i>fa</i>	<i>zhi</i>				
inferior	first	attack	PRON				

Instead of letting her arrange things her way by waiting for her to attack [me], would it not be better for me to attack [it] first?

According to this hypothesis, *jian* in example (91) was treated as a personal pronoun meaning “me”, therefore, *jian gong* 见攻 means “attack me.” Although this interpretation is not so intuitive, *it has been the most popular for a long time in the Chinese linguistic field*. Recently, however, it has been heavily questioned. For example, Peng and Yu (2006) argued that *jian*<sub>2</sub> not only can be interpreted as the first person personal pronoun, but also as the second or third personal pronouns depending on the context.

92. 寡人以王子为子任，欲子之厚爱之，无所见丑。(Zhanguoce 战国策. Zhao er 赵二)

<i>guan-ren</i>	<i>yi</i>	<i>wang-zi</i>	<i>wei</i>	<i>zi</i>	<i>ren</i>			
I	PREP	prince	as	your	task			
<i>yu</i>	<i>zi</i>	<i>zhi</i>	<i>hou</i>	<i>ai</i>	<i>zhi</i>	<i>wu-suo</i>	<i>jian</i>	<i>chou</i>
wang	you	PART	great	love	PRON	never	PRON	dislike

The king said: “I regard ‘taking care of the prince’ as your job, and I require you to love the boy and in no way dislike him.”

If the “personal pronoun hypothesis” is correct, then *jian* should be a third person pronoun in example (92) as *jian chou* 见丑 means “dislike him.” Moreover, examples

with “non-personal pronoun objects” are also possible as shown in Section 4.2.2 (examples (99) and (100)).

Therefore, Peng and Yu’s arguments are correct: *jian*<sub>2</sub> is definitely not a personal pronoun as it never functions as a pronoun: (1) pronouns are normally used after verbs (in object position), while *jian* never behaves like this; and (2) a pronoun is commonly fronted in negative and interrogative sentences; however, this is not a feature of *jian*. Basically, the object after V is recovered based on the context, that is, the whole sentence rather than by *jian*<sub>2</sub> alone. They finally concluded that *jian*<sub>2</sub> was an adverb that indicated the direction of the verb, that is, it the subject was an agent. Although they were near to the truth, they ignored two points: (1) why *jian*<sub>2</sub> behaved in this way; and (2) why *jian*<sub>1</sub> and *jian*<sub>2</sub> have similar structures on the surface, but are opposite in function.

Summing up, both the personal pronoun and adverb hypotheses are incorrect.

Therefore, treating the character 见 as *jian*<sub>2</sub> neither explains how the active *jian*<sub>2</sub>+V construction is shaped nor the nature of *jian*<sub>2</sub>; therefore, these unresolved problems are the motivation for determining a new, more accurate hypothesis.

#### 4.2.2 New hypothesis

Different from the traditional hypotheses, the character 见 in the active 见+V structure is innovatively pronounced as *xian*, or more precisely *xian*<sub>2</sub>, in the new hypothesis as treating the character 见 as *xian*<sub>2</sub> in such cases has the advantage to explain its functions.

##### 4.2.2.1 Justification and advantages of the *xian*<sub>2</sub>+V hypothesis

In Section 3.2.2, *xian*<sub>2</sub> was distinguished from *xian*<sub>1</sub>. As an agent-oriented transitive verb, it can be followed by a concrete, abstract or even a referential object. These three aspects are defined as: stage (1) concrete object, e.g., *xian*<sub>2</sub> *chi* 见齿 “(make



visible >) show teeth” in Section 3.2.2; stage (2) abstract object, e.g., *xian<sub>2</sub> ai* 见爱 “showing love” in Section 3.2.2 and stage (3) a referential verb, e.g., *xian<sub>2</sub> xin* 见信 “showing trust”, and *xian<sub>2</sub> jiao* 见骄 “showing indulgence”, as shown in (93) and (94).

93. 则虽甘义繁说，众不见信。(Lunheng 论衡. Zhishi pian 知实篇)<sup>71</sup>

*ze sui gan yi fan shuo*  
 then although sweet meaning complicated theory  
*zhong bu xian xin*  
 people NEG show trust

Then although the good proposition is elaborately described, people do not show their trust [in it]. →  
 Then although the good proposition is elaborately described, people do not trust [it]

94. 少加孤露，母兄见骄。(Yu Shan Juyuan juejiao shu 舆山巨源绝交书)

*shao jia gu lou*  
 young addition orphaned exposed  
*mu xiong xian jiao*  
 mother elder-brother show indulge

[When I was] young, I was orphaned and weak. My mother and elder brother showed me lots of  
 indulge. → [When I was] young, I was orphaned and weak. My mother and my elder brother indulged  
 me.

Concerning these development stages for *xian<sub>2</sub>*, stage (3) has been largely ignored in previous studies, as evidenced by the fact that the character 见 in the above examples had previously been dominantly pronounced *jian* (see *jian<sub>2</sub>* in Section 4.2.1). However, these types of analyses make no sense as the subject *zhong* 众 “people” and *mu xiong* 母兄 “mother and brother” are definitely agents rather than patients. In contrast, the meanings of the sentences are clear if 见 is pronounced as *xian<sub>2</sub>*. In sum, the development of an active *xian<sub>2</sub>+V* structure is not only possible but also an advantage.

<sup>71</sup> The context is shown here.

*Fan lun shi wei shi, bu yin xiao yan, ze sui gan yi fan shuo, zhong bu jian xin* 凡论事违实，不引效验，则虽甘义繁说，众不见信。(Lunheng 论衡. Zhishi 知实) “Most people will not believe it even if they say a lot of things that are contrary to the facts and do not test them.”

The active *xian*<sub>2</sub>+V structure was argued to occur quite late in the Wei Jin periods; however, Fan Ning, a Jin dynasty scholar, commented that the character 见 in the active 见 V structure as *xian bian fan* 贤遍反 “being pronounced as *xian*” in *Guliangzhuan* 谷梁传, which was a much earlier text, as shown in (95) and (96).

95. 日归, 见知弑也。(Guliangzhuan 谷梁传. Xianggong 襄公)

*ri gui xian zhi shi ye*  
day return manifest know assassination FIN

[The text records] the day of his return, [in order to] make the fact that he knew about the assassination manifest.

96. 秦人弗夫人也, 即外之弗夫人而见正焉。(Guliangzhuan 谷梁传. Wengong 文公)

*qin ren fu fu-ren ye*  
qin people NEG madam FIN  
*ji wai zhi fu fu-ren er xian zheng ye*  
mean foreign PART NEG madam then manifest correct FIN

The people of Qin did not call [lady Cheng Feng] *fu-ren* (i.e., madam) and this proves the hypothesis that the foreign people did not treat Cheng Feng as *fu-ren* is correct.

Yao even argued that some 见 V *yu* N examples, which are often thought of as passive “*jian* V *yu* N” structures, were actually “*xian* V *yu* N”, in pre-Qin Chinese, as shown in (97) and (98).

97. 民和, 见士于周。(Shangshu 尚书. Kanggao 康诰)

*min he xian shi yu Zhou*  
people harmonious XIAN serve PREP NAME

The people are living in harmony and [all] serve the Zhou.

98. 隹(惟)公大史见服于宗周年。(Zha ce hu wei you 乍册虬 (畏)卣)

*wei gong-da-shi xian fu zong-zhou nian*  
only NAME XIAN serve NAME year

The year that Gongdashishi (i.e., official name) served in Zong Zhou.

Yao’s argument was supported by Liu (1994) to some degree. If the character 见 in these examples were really pronounced *xian*<sub>2</sub>, then the active *xian*<sub>2</sub>+V structure may have occurred much earlier than originally thought. Yao further claimed that the

active *xian* V structure was derived from *xian* V *yu* N by deleting *yu* N. However, this does not seem feasible as the active *xian*<sub>2</sub>+V structure is a natural development of *xian*<sub>2</sub> as an outward-directed verb, as shown above.

Therefore, this new hypothesis also explains some of the complications associated with the “见 V” structure, such as the meanings of some examples with V-O phrases after 见, which are difficult to understand if treated as *jian*.

99. 韩甚疏秦，然而见亲秦。<sup>72</sup>(*Zhan Guo ce* 战国策. Hansan 韩三)

*Han shen shu qin ran-er xian qin Qin*  
 NAME very disaffect NAME but show close NAME

Han is in truth very disaffected with Qin, but wants to show/manifest closeness to it.

100. 可以见教之不死之道。(Baopuzi 抱朴子. Qinqiu 勤求)

*ke-yi xian jiao zhi bu si zhi dao*  
 can show teach PRON NEG die PART doctrine

[The spiritual leader] can show and teach him the way of immortality.

The elements after 见 in the above examples, are V-O phrases: *qin qin* 亲秦 “be intimate/close to the state of Qin” and *jiao zhi bu si zhi dao* 教之不死之道 “teach him the way of immortality”, respectively; both of which cannot be interpreted as passives. In example (99), the subject can only be recovered as *Han* 韩 “state of Han”, and in example (100), only *de dao zhe* 得到者 “spiritual leader” can be recovered as the subject. Therefore, if the pronunciation is *jian*, the semantic relationships in these sentences are confusing; however, if the character 见 were defined as *xian*<sub>2</sub>, these sentences make sense.

In sum, analyzing 见 as *xian*<sub>2</sub> is not only possible, but also has advantages.

Therefore, why is it not analyzed as *xian*<sub>2</sub>? In the following, it is proven that the nature of 见 can be more easily defined when it is analyzed as *xian*<sub>2</sub>.

<sup>72</sup> The context is shown here.

秦，大国也。韩，小国也。韩甚疏秦。然而见亲秦。

Qin is a great state and Han a small one. Han is in truth very disaffected with Qin but wants to pretend to be close to her.

#### 4.2.2.3 The nature of *xian*<sub>2</sub> in the *xian*<sub>2</sub> V structure

In the above examples, *xian*<sub>2</sub> could be interpreted as “show”; however, this interpretation does not work in all examples, as shown in (101) and (102).

101. 生孩六月，慈父见背。(Chenqing biao 陈情表)

sheng        hai    liu    yue        ci    fu        xian        bei  
give-birth    baby    six    month    kind    father    XIAN    pass-away

My father passed away when I was six months old.

102. 管仲所以见告桓公者。(Han Feizi 韩非子. Nanyi 难一 )

Guan-zhong    suo-yi        xian        gao    huan    gong    zhe  
NAME        therefore    XIAN    tell    NAME    lord    NOM

What Guan Zhong told to Lord Huan.

In the above examples, as interpreting *xian*<sub>2</sub> as “show” is not justified, how should *xian*<sub>2</sub> be defined? According to the study in Section 3.3.2, it is proposed that *xian*<sub>2</sub> can be grammaticalized as an *outward* marker, that is, indicating that the subject is the agent, which means that the nature of *xian*<sub>2</sub> in the active structure is explainable.

After analyzing the natures of both *jian* and *xian*<sub>2</sub> in the *jian/xian*<sub>2</sub> V structure, it can be seen that the functions for *jian* and *xian*<sub>2</sub> in the *jian/xian*<sub>2</sub> V structures basically conform to an inward-directed & an outward-directed verb hypothesis. In detail, they are inward-directed verb & outward-directed verb when the objects after 见 are nouns, and therefore, when the referential verbs are treated as verbs, can be further grammaticalized as *inward* marker and *outward* marker rather than passive markers and referential personal pronoun markers.

Following this hypothesis, the character 见 in 见 V structure could be pronounced differently. Here two very commonly discussed phrases 见教 and 见谅 are taken as examples. First, two examples for 见教 are given in (103) and (104).

103. 鄙人固陋，不知忌讳，乃今日见教，谨闻命矣。(Shiji 史记. Wuwuzi zhuan 武五子传)

bi-ren    gu            lou            bu    zhi        ji- hui



Therefore, similar to 见教, the 见谅 examples (105) and (106) depict the same situation but have two opposite directional phrases: *jian liang* “receive forgiveness” and *xian<sub>2</sub> liang* “show forgiveness to other people” .

However, based on the new proposed hypothesis outlined in Section 4.2.2, these differences are understandable. What should be kept in mind is that although *see* in English and *jian* in Chinese are similar as perception verbs indicating visual action, they have different paths of grammaticalization, as unlike *jian*, *see* has not been grammaticalized as an inward or outward marker.

## 5. CONCLUSION

*Jian* “see” is a verb that expresses a visual perception and therefore according to Viberg (1983) its subject should be an experiencer, or, according to Fillmore (1968), a dative because it has uncontrollable, un-volitional, and un-intentional features compared with another visual perception verb *kan* “look.” However, these features only refer to *jian* when has the visual perception verb meaning “see”, but do not refer to the other commonly found semantic item “visit,” which does not express visual perception.

The character 见 has two different pronunciations, *jian* and *xian*, which are respectively associated with voiceless and voiced consonants. The pronunciation *jian* is normally used in the transitive structure: “somebody+*jian*+N”: while the pronunciation *xian* is used in two different syntactic structures: N+*xian* and *xian*+N. For convenience, the intransitively used *xian* in this chapter was defined as *xian<sub>1</sub>*, and the transitively used *xian* was defined as *xian<sub>2</sub>*. Generally, all previous studies that have sought to determine a more consistent explanation for the relationships between *jian* and *xian* have been unconvincing as *xian<sub>1</sub>* and *xian<sub>2</sub>* were not distinguished.

Therefore, to clearly understand the differences between *jian* and *xian*, this chapter analyzed the relationships step by step: (1) *jian* & *xian<sub>1</sub>*, (2) *xian<sub>1</sub>* & *xian<sub>2</sub>*, and (3) *jian*

& *xian*<sub>2</sub>. After examining numerous examples, the relationships in (1) to (3) were respectively summarized as: (1) action & resultant state, (2) non-causative & causative and (3) inward-directed verb & outward-directed verb. The first two have been widely studied; however, this was the first time the relationships in (3) have been elucidated. Although the hypothesis presented in this study appears to lack the morphological evidence represented by pairs such as *mai* 买 “buy” & *mai* 卖 “sell” in which the inward-directed verb has a non-*qu* tone and the outward-directed verb has a *qu* tone, this can be explained. The (1) *jian* & *xian*<sub>1</sub> and (2) *xian*<sub>1</sub> & *xian*<sub>2</sub> pairs were shown to have direct relationships and the (3) *jian* & *xian*<sub>2</sub> pair was shown to have an indirect relationship as deduced from (1) and (2). Therefore, although *jian* and *xian*<sub>2</sub> had inward-directed & outward-directed verb relationships, it is understandable why they do not have the non-*qu* tone & *qu* tone relationships that similar verbs have.

The relationship observed in (3) provides an innovative solution for the nature of 见 in the 见 V structure; that is, it is hypothesized that as the object development for both *jian* and *xian*<sub>2</sub> are quite similar — (1) concrete objects, (2) abstract objects and (3) referential verbs that can also be interpreted as nouns — the character 见 can be either *jian* or *xian*<sub>2</sub> with the resulting *jian* V and *xian*<sub>2</sub> V structures respectively expressing passive and active meanings. Traditionally, the active 见 V structure has been analyzed as a *jian*<sub>2</sub>+V structure to differentiate it from the passive *jian*<sub>1</sub>+V structure. However, this analysis was found to poorly explain how the active *jian*<sub>2</sub>+V construction was derived or the nature of *jian*<sub>2</sub>. However, if 见 is analyzed as *xian*<sub>2</sub>, it is easier to understand.

Therefore, in conclusion, the function of 见 in the 见 V structure needs to be reanalyzed based on the interpretation of the referential verbs, that is, the nouns or verbs in stage (3). If interpreted as nouns, then *jian* or *xian*<sub>2</sub> are still *inward* & *outward* verbs respectively meaning “suffer/receive” or “show/manifest”, but if interpreted as verbs, then *jian* and *xian*<sub>2</sub> are grammaticalized as *inward* & *outward* markers rather than passive & personal pronoun markers. Therefore, the meaning of the 见 V structure in Ancient Chinese appears to have depended on the context, and

suggests that there was no fixed syntactic structure for the passive voice in Ancient Chinese.



# CHAPTER 3: THE *BEI* PASSIVE IN ANCIENT CHINESE

While the *bei* construction appeared later than the *yu*, *jian*, and *wei* constructions,<sup>73</sup> it has become the dominant construction for the expression of the so-called passive in modern Mandarin.

This chapter hypothesizes that *bei* could be interpreted as a ditransitive verb in the following two meanings: (1) “put on/ wear” and (2) “cover”. The “ditransitive verb” hypothesis links these two semantic items well, and especially the semantic item “cover” for which the ditransitive hypothesis explains why both a theme (i.e., DO) and a recipient (i.e., IO) are able to appear in the subject position, and to rethink the passive vs. active relationship hypothesis between these two cases.

This chapter also tries to explore a perennial problem: how *bei* A V was shaped? It should not simply be an analogical development of *wei* A V but be quite relevant to the *bei* A *zhi* V and *bei qi* (i.e., A+*zhi*) V structures, in which A *zhi* V as a whole is a genitive nominal phrase, with A representing the agentive information of V.

The most important content is that should *bei* V and *bei* A V patterns be interpreted as passives. Basically, I believe that although the high frequency of use enabled such a kind of interpretation, they can also be interpreted as actives. Even in modern Mandarin, the status of *bei* as a passive marker is still questioned by some scholars (e.g., Davis 1983: 291).

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*Bei* originally had full semantic meanings, that is, it was a noun meaning “blanket”

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<sup>73</sup> Note that some examples in this chapter are taken from the Middle Chinese period since *bei* appeared quite late and was frequently used from the Six dynasties onward. Although the corpus of the *bei* chapter dates from these later periods, (1) the *bei* passive was assumed to be so important for the study of Chinese passive constructions that it could not be ignored in this work and (2) the emphasis is mainly on its formation period and the early stage use. Its development during later stages is not dealt with in this thesis.

and a verb meaning “cover”, as in the following examples:

107. 王见之，去冠、被。(Zuozhuan 左传. Zhaogong 昭公 12)

wang jian zhi qu guan bei  
king interview him remove cap cape

When the king interviewed him, he removed his cap and cape.

108. 以其烟被之,则凡水虫无声。(Zhouli 周礼. Qiuguan 秋官)

yi qi yan bei zhi ze fan shui chong wu sheng  
using its smoke cover it then all water moth no voice

Using the smoke to cover it, then all water moths have “no voice” (i.e., will die).

However, two different views have been proposed for the *basic* meaning of the *bei* construction.

(i) Most scholars believe that the noun was the basic meaning (e.g., Wang 1957, Peyraube 1989, Zhang 2005, Li 2007, Zhao 2008, Wei 2010<sup>74</sup>) because of the following arguments:

*Bei* 被 was initially a noun meaning “the cover used when sleeping” and this type of semantic item survives even in modern Mandarin, such as in *beizi* 被子 “quilt.” Then, *bei* began being used as a verb meaning “cover” as a cover is used during sleep.

Many of the scholars in this group often referred to the gloss in *Shuowen Jiezi* 说文解字 “Explaining Graphs and Analyzing Characters” as evidence, compiled by Xu Shen in 121 A.D..

*Bei, qin yi, chang yi shen you ban, cong yi pi sheng* 被, 寝衣, 长一身有半, 从衣皮声。 “*Bei*, is a kind of quilt which is normally one and a half the length of the body. Its radical is *yi* 衣 and its sound/pronunciation is similar to *pi* 皮.”

(ii) Another group of scholars believed that the verb was the basic meaning (Zhang 2003, Schuessler 2006: 160).<sup>75</sup> For example, Zhang (2003b) argued that the original

<sup>74</sup> In Wei’s (2010) work, he often presents specific etymologies for the characters recorded.

<sup>75</sup> Sometimes when scholars stated that “*bei* was originally a verb”, it does not mean that the verbal use

meaning for *bei* was “cover” and that this was the original graphic form of the verb *pi* 批 “cover.”<sup>76</sup> Therefore, the later nominal use was derived from the initial verbal use.

Generally, the initial nominal meaning has been the most favored by Chinese linguists, possibly because it conforms to specific cognitive features, that is, it is more likely that the concrete and objective thing is the first use after which an abstract thing (i.e., a related action) is derived, rather than vice versa. However, this belief lacks corpus evidence as the earliest example of the nominal *bei* was in *Zuozhuan* while the verbal use was in a much earlier text *Shijing*. Therefore, while the verbal use is confirmed in the corpus, this is not in line with the “cognitive principle” often referred to by Chinese scholars, namely, that a concept about a concrete item would appear prior to a concept about an abstract action relating to the concrete item. In sum, although the nominal use dominates current linguistic supposition, there is insufficient current evidence as to whether the nominal or verbal use was the initial use. However, this question is not pursued in this chapter as the *passive bei* construction is not relevant to its nominal use. Therefore, in this chapter, the focus is mainly on the verbal uses of *bei*.

Several semantic items have been found when *bei* functions as a verb, with attempts to clarify the relationships between these semantic items seen in almost every article on the grammaticalization of *bei*; however, no consistent conclusions have been come to. This chapter innovatively (1) distinguishes the semantic item “wear/put on” from the semantic item “cover”; and (2) further divides the semantic item “cover” into “theme subject sentences” and “recipient subject sentences”, with the semantic relationship between these shown to be consistent if *bei* is treated as a ditransitive verb. See detail in Section 2.

The *bei* in a “recipient subject sentence” can further develop into the semantic

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was more basic than the nominal use. Probably, what they mean is that *bei* was originally a verb and then developed into a passive marker. For example, Hashimoto (2003: 226) stated that “*bei* was originally a verb” and then continued to discuss the passive *bei*. Therefore, he did not mean that *bei* was etymologically first a verb. What was emphasized was that the passive *bei* was derived from the verbal *bei*.

<sup>76</sup> As in the example *pi fa wen shen* 被发文身 “crop the hair, decorate the body”, 被 tends to be analyzed as 批.

meanings “receive”, “encounter” or in some malefactive cases, “suffer”, all of which have *inward* (i.e., in-bound) features. The so-called passive marker *bei* was grammaticalized from semantic items that had this feature when the following element was verbal. However, as in the development of *jian*, *bei* V is always ambiguous in V-O and passive interpretations. See detail in Section 3.

Besides the *bei* V pattern, *bei* A V is another structure that expresses a passive meaning, the patterns for which have attracted significant research attention. Most studies have claimed that the *bei* A V pattern was derived from an analogical development of the *wei* A V pattern (e.g., Peyraube 1989); however, this hypothesis may be incorrect, as discussed in Section 4.

It has been commonly accepted that both the *bei* V and *bei* A V patterns became passive constructions in the Six dynasties. However, while these patterns do express a passive meaning, it is still questionable as to whether *bei* is a passive marker because of its unique grammatical behavior, as discussed in Section 5.

Section 6 concludes this chapter.

## **2. GRAMMATICALIZATION OF BEI FROM A DITRANSITIVE VERB TO A PASSIVE-LIKE MARKER**

In this section, the verbal uses of *bei* are discussed. Generally, the semantics of *bei* as a verb have been classified into two groups: (1) “put on/wear”; and (2) “cover.” In the first case, the emphasis is on putting something on somebody, but the second case is much more complex as both a theme and a recipient can appear in the subject position.

### **2.1 *Bei* meaning “put on/wear”: agent subject**

The semantic meaning “put on/wear” is normally a “somebody (a typical agent)+*bei*+something (e.g., clothes/weapons)” context as in examples (109) and

(110).<sup>77</sup>

109. 乃祖吾离被苫盖。(Zuozhuan 左传. Xianggong 襄公 14)

*nai zu Wu-Li bei shan-gai*  
your ancestor NAME wear coir-raincoat  
Your ancestor Wu Li wore rushes.

110. 夫差不贯不忍，被甲带剑。(Guoyu 国语. Wuyyu 吴语)

*fu-chai bu shi bu ren bei jia dai jian*  
NAME NEG borrow NEG tolerate wear armor wear sword  
Fu Chai did not tolerate (such kind of thing), [he] put on armor and sword.

Sometimes, the *bei* in these semantic contexts appears to be ditransitive, that is somebody puts clothes on somebody else as in (111).

111. 相被冕服。(Shangshu 尚书. Zhoushu 周书)

*xiang bei mian-fu*  
assistant put-on cap-and-robe  
The assistants put the cap and the robe [on the king].

Although *xiang* 相 “assistant” is a human being in example (111), he is not the person who is going to wear the *mian fu* 冕服 “cap and robe” but is the person who puts the “cap and robe” on somebody else (i.e., the king); i.e., he is the agent-subject of the sentence. Therefore, in this sentence, *bei* appears to be a ditransitive verb with the indirect object *wang* 王 “king” omitted, that is, the complete sentence should be *xiang bei wang mian fu* 相被王冕服, which could also be rephrased as *xiang yi mian fu bei wang* 相以冕服被王. If this is true, then the *bei* in examples (109) and (110) could also be interpreted as “someone puts clothes/armor on himself” with the indirect object *ji* 己 “oneself” omitted. If so, the semantic meaning “put on” could be conventionalized as “wear”, the “ditransitive” features for which are less clear. Although examples such as *bei*+N<sub>IO</sub>+V<sub>DO</sub> are not commonly found, hypothesizing that *bei* is a ditransitive verb is important when seeking to link this semantic meaning to the semantic item “cover”, which is discussed further in Section 2.3.

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<sup>77</sup> *Bei* in such a case could be pronounced as *pi* like 批.

## 2.2 *Bei* meaning “cover”

The semantic meaning “cover” can be elaborated from two aspects: agent subject sentences and a non-agent subject sentences.

### 2.2.1 *Agent subject*

The meaning “cover” appeared quite early. When it has an agent subject, the object is not restricted to “clothes.” See an example from *Shijing* in (112).

112. 天被尔禄。(Shijing 诗经. Daya 大雅)

<i>tian</i>	<i>bei</i>	<i>er</i>	<i>lu</i>
heaven	cover	you	blessing

Heaven covers you with blessings.

*Bei* in this example also performs as a ditransitive verb as it appears in an “agent+V+indirect object (hereafter IO)+direct object (hereafter DO)” structure, which was common in pre-Qin times, such as *Yu zhi bi* 与之璧 “[He] gave him the jade” (*Zuozhuan* 左传). Therefore, example (112) could be treated as a ditransitive structure. Further, example such as (108), which is renumbered (113) here, also indicates that *bei* can behave as a ditransitive verb; moreover, a contrastive example is given in (114).

#### *Yi+N<sub>1</sub>+bei+N<sub>2</sub>*

113. 以其烟被之。(Zhouli 周礼. Qiuguan 秋官)

<i>yi</i>	<i>qi</i>	<i>yan</i>	<i>bei</i>	<i>zhi</i>
using	its	smoke	cover	it

Using its smoke to cover it.

#### *Bei+N<sub>1</sub>+yi+N<sub>2</sub>*

114. 被之以刑。(Yizhoushu 逸周书. Zhouzhujie 周祝解)

*bei zhi yi xing*  
cover it with criminal-law

[You] cover (i.e., affect/control) them with criminal law.

Example (115) below is a complete ditransitive structure for *bei* as it can be seen that *jun* 君 “you” is the agent and *hou de shan zheng* 厚得善证 “great kindness and good government” is the object of *yi* 以 as well as the theme for *bei*.

115. 君无厚德善政以被诸侯。(Yanzi chunqiu 晏子春秋. Nei pian 内篇)

*jun wu hou de shan zheng yi bei zhu-hou*  
king NEG great kindness good government use cover feudal-lord

King [You] does not have great kindness and good government to use to cover (i.e., deal with/control) the feudal-lords.

However, as the agent+*bei*+N<sub>IO</sub>+N<sub>DO</sub> example is uncommon, typical agent-subject examples are rare as *bei* in such cases more commonly appears with a topic-subject (i.e., non-agent subject) as shown in Section 2.2.2 below.

### 2.2.2 Topic subject

Under the premise that *bei* is a ditransitive verb, both the DO (i.e., theme) and IO (i.e., recipient) can be found in the subject position, which here are defined as Type 1 and Type 2. While this distinction has not been made in the past, it is useful in understanding the nature of the two semantic items discussed in the following.

Type1: T(heme)+*bei*+indirect object

There are some examples in which the subjects are always non-human and there is no agentive feature, as in the following two examples.

116. 泽被生民。(Xunzi 荀子. Chen dao 臣道)

*ze bei sheng min*  
benefit cover living things

Benefits are provided which can be extended to all living things.

117. 功被天下。(Xunzi 荀子. Youzuo 宥坐)

*gong*                      *bei*                      *tian-xia*  
meritorious-deed      cover                      world

Meritorious deeds cover the whole world.

In these examples, the subjects are abstract nouns without volition and do not align with the action “cover.” A closer analysis shows that these subjects could correspond to the DO mentioned above, that is, something that an agent will use to cover. In these examples also, the objects after *bei* could be seen as a type of IO as mentioned above; therefore, they could be reconstructed as follows.

泽被生民    →    [Agent]被生民泽 or [Agent]以泽被生民  
功被天下    →    [Agent]被天下功 or [Agent]以功被天下

However, when the subject is a theme, it should be something that can be used to cover something else and have certain features, such as (1) big size or (2) extendable. Therefore, *ze* 泽 “benefits” and *gong* 攻 “achievement” here actually pragmatically imply *hou ze* 厚泽 “great beneficence” and *da gong* 大功 “great achievement.”

Type 2: R(ecipient)+*bei*+theme (positive)

Although the subjects in such cases are commonly people, they are not the agents who carry out the “cover” action; rather, they are a type of recipient.

118. 万民被其利。(Mozi 墨子. Shangxian shang 尚贤上)

*wan-min*    *bei*                      *qi*                      *li*  
people      receive                  that                      benefit

The people received the benefit.

119. 子孙被其泽。(Guanzi 管子. Xingshijie 形势解)

*zi*              *sun*                      *bei*                      *qi*                      *ze*  
son      grandson      receive                  that                      benefit

Their sons and grandsons enjoyed their benefits.

After close analysis, it is possible that the subject in such cases corresponds to the IO



mentioned above, that is, it is a kind of recipient who is receiving the action “cover”, with the object being something like the “benefit” or DO mentioned above. Based on this hypothesis, it would therefore be acceptable to reconstruct these sentences as follows;

万民被其利。 → [Agent]被万民利 or [Agent]以利被万民  
子孙被其泽。 → [Agent]被子孙泽 or [Agent]以泽被子孙

When comparing Type 1 with Type 2, it can be seen that the semantic roles in the examples in these two sections are completely reversed, that is, in the Type 1 sentences, what is being affected is the object after *bei*, but in the Type 2 sentences, it is the subject preceding *bei*.<sup>78</sup> Some ditransitive verbs that have similar performances were listed in Zhang (2013) and are discussed in Section 2.3.

In the following, more evidence is provided for the ditransitive hypothesis.

## 2.3 Further evidence for the ditransitive hypothesis

In this section, four more pieces of evidence are provided to support the ditransitive hypothesis.

(1) Ditransitive verbs are transfer verbs that have three arguments: an agent subject, a recipient IO (hereafter R), and a theme DO (hereafter T). Most typical ditransitive verbs are verbs involving physical transfer, such as *yu* 与 “give” and *jie* 借 “lend”, and describe a scene in which an agent participant causes an object to pass into the possession of an animate receiver (= recipient). The situation is similar for *bei*, that is, the subject is always an agent (people or heaven) who carries out the action “cover”, the IO is almost always a person, who is the recipient of this action, and the DO is always a constituent that is acted upon (the theme of action “cover”). Zhang (1999) claimed that *the core feature* of a ditransitive verb was that it had a “recipient” as well

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<sup>78</sup> As for the relationship between these two semantic items, it is commonly accepted that the latter one is derived from the former one. However, both semantic items were common in pre-Qin times. It is difficult to find the diachronic evidences.

as a “transferred direct object” (转移物). In *bei* constructions, there are definitely recipients, i.e., human beings like *wang min* 万民 “people” and *zi sun* 子孙 “sons and grandsons”. Meanwhile, *ze* 泽 “benefit”, *gong* 功 “achievement”, and *li* 利 “benefit” indeed perform like a transferred direct objects. Therefore, treating *bei* as a type of ditransitive verb could be acceptable.

(2) The link between “wear/put on” (i.e., examples in Section 2.1) and “cover” (i.e., examples in Section 2.2) can be tentatively explained from two perspectives. (a) If *bei* is acknowledged as a ditransitive verb and the indirect object *ji* 己 “oneself” is omitted after *bei*, as in (3) and (4), then the semantic meaning “wear” basically equals the meaning “cover.” However, (b) if the ditransitive hypothesis is rejected, the semantic meaning “wear/to put on” appears to have nothing to do with “cover.” While it could be speculated that “wear/put on” is a passive form of “cover” (i.e., “be covered”), this speculation is impossible as the *shan gai* 苫盖 “coir-raincoat” or *jia* 甲 “armor” are not being covered by somebody else in relation to the subjects; rather, the subjects are covering themselves. Moreover, it could therefore be further speculated that *bei* is a more action-oriented verb and *yi* 衣 “wear/wearing” is a more state-oriented verb. In other words, although both verbs are focused on “wearing clothes”, the *bei* emphasizes the action “put on” while *yi* emphasizes the state “wearing.” Therefore, the meaning “be covered” would be more likely to be expressed using *yi* 衣, e.g., *qi tu shu shi ren, jie yi he* 其徒数十人,皆衣褐 “He has several dozens of disciples who are all dressed in dark,” which indirectly verifies the ditransitive hypothesis.

(3) Traditionally, the Type 2 semantic meaning for *bei* was explained as a passive form of Type 1. However, this assumption could be incorrect as no element is backgrounded as *an oblique* in Type 2, which is quite different from other so-called passives in Ancient Chinese, which again indicates that the ditransitive hypothesis could be more accurate. Quan (2017) claimed that “in English ditransitive construction, only the indirect object can be moved to the subject position to shape a passive sentence, while in Chinese, only the direct object can.” Such a statement needs further attention. As for English, I have checked with English native speakers concerning the following three examples: (a) John gave Mary a book; (b) A book was

given to Mary by John; and (c) Mary was given a book by John. They think “the first two are grammatical while the third sentence is uncommon / unidiomatic but still grammatically correct.” For Mandarin, the situation is similar: (a). *Zhangsan gei le Lisi yi ben shu* 张三给了李四一本书 “Zhangsan gave a book to Lisi;” (b). *nabenshu bei gei le Lisi* 那本书被给了李四 “A book was given to Lisi;” and (c). *Lisi bei gei le yibenshu* 李四被给了一本书 “Lisi was given a book.” Among these three examples, (a) and (b) are more common, while (c) is not idiomatic but grammatically possible. The indirect object is not definitely “forbidden” in Mandarin in this construction.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, different from Quan’s statement, both in English and Mandarin, the direct object is more grammatical to be a subject (topic) in a passivized ditransitive verb sentence, while the indirect object is less grammatical. However, Quan’s opinion that “if the direct object is indefinite, then it cannot be passivized with a DO subject” could be right. For example, *yibenshu bei gei le Lisi* 一本书被给了李四 is less grammatical than *nabenshu bei gei le Lisi* 那本书被给了李四 “That book was given to Li Si.” This topic is not discussed further here, due to the limited scope of this thesis. If *bei* in Ancient Chinese were a ditransitive verb, then the situation would be little bit different and it would indeed perform similar to ditransitive verbs in English. Zhang (2013: 28) claimed that topic subject sentences, including both  $N_R+V+N_T$  and  $N_T+V+N_R$  structures, were ditransitive-related structures, and gave 12 examples for the  $N_R+V+N_T$  structure and 7 examples for the  $N_T+V+N_R$  structure in pre-Qin texts. However, the verbs Zhang listed in these two structures were different and it was not mentioned whether there were any verbs that could be used in both structures (see the *fourth* point below). However, Zhang acknowledged that although the frequency was quite low, there were some ditransitive verbs in Ancient Chinese that acted in a similar way to English ditransitive structures, with *bei* being one of these verbs.

(4) *Ren* 任 “appoint” has been recognized as a ditransitive verb in some studies (e.g., Liao 1998, Zhang 2013), and its behavior is quite similar to *bei*.

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<sup>79</sup> For example, *Jiaolian fa le Zhang San yizhang huangpai* 教练罚了张三一张黄牌 “The coach fined Zhang San one yellow card.” It is quite grammatical to say *Zhang San bei jiaolian fa yi zhang huang pai* 张三被教练罚了一张黄牌 “Zhang San was fined a yellow card by the coach.”

**(1) V+N<sub>IO</sub>+N<sub>DO</sub>**

120. 举舜鬲亩，任之天下。(Xunzi 荀子·Cheng xiang 成相)

*ju Shun quan mu ren zhi tian-xia*  
raise NAME ditch field entrust PRON world

He raised Shun up from the ditches and fields, and entrusted to him the rule of the world.

**(2) V+N<sub>IO</sub>+yi+N<sub>DO</sub>**

121. 而任之以国。(Hanfeizi 韩非子·Shuo yi 说疑)<sup>80</sup>

*er ren zhi yi guo*  
then entrust PRON PREP state

[They] then put him in charge of the state.

**(3) Yi+N<sub>DO</sub>+V+N<sub>IO</sub>**

122. 以九职任万民。(Zhouli 周礼·Tianguan 天官)

*yi jiu zhi ren wan-min*  
PREP nine position entrust people

Using nine positions to entrust the common people.

**(4) N<sub>IO</sub>+V+N<sub>DO</sub>**

123. 故愚者不任事。(Hanfeizi 韩非子·Bashuo 八说)

*gu yu zhe bu ren shi*  
therefore stupid NOM NEG entrust affair

Therefore, the stupid do not get responsibility for public affairs.

**(5) N<sub>DO</sub>+V+N<sub>IO</sub>**

While this structure was not attested for *ren*, Zhang (2013) found an example of *gui* 归 “give as a gift.”<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Another example is *yan wang qing wu ren su qin yi shi* 燕王请毋任苏秦以事。(Zhanguo zhonghengjia shu 战国纵横家书) “King Yan required not to appoint Su Qin any official position.”

<sup>81</sup> 归 here is pronounced as *kui* meaning “give as a gift.” For example:

1. 归公乘马。(Zuozhuan 左传·Mingong 闵公 2)

*kui Gong sheng-ma*  
give duke team-of-horse

He also sent to the duke a team of four horses.

124. 罪生甲，祸归乙。(Hanfeizi 韩非子·Yongren 用人)

*zui sheng jia huo gui yi*  
crime come-from X disaster give Y

If the crime arises from X and the disaster was given to Y (i.e., hits Y).

In sum, the behavior of *bei* was quite similar to *ren*, with the only difference being that *ren* was not used in the  $N_{DO}+V+N_{IO}$  structure. Therefore, the *bei* and *ren* comparison also indicates that *bei* could be a type of ditransitive verb.

To conclude, *bei* was treated as an atypical ditransitive verb in this chapter because: (1) unlike the typical ditransitive verb *yu* 与 “give”, *bei* does not appear frequently in  $V+IO+DO$  structures; but (2) *bei* displays some ditransitive verb features. Generally, hypothesizing *bei* to be a ditransitive can assist in understanding the relationships between all its verbal semantic items, especially as it provides a new explanation as to why *bei* could be used spontaneously in Type 1 and Type 2 sentences and the relationships between them. Under this reasoning, therefore, Type 2 is not the passive form of Type 1 as previously stated; rather, Type 1 and Type 2 could be respectively explained as  $N_{IO}+V+N_{DO}$  and  $N_{DO}+V+N_{IO}$ .

However, only Type 2 is relevant to a passive interpretation — somebody (i.e., the recipient) receives something (i.e., the theme) — as discussed in Section 3.1. The ambiguity between V-O and passive interpretations, however, is an important feature of the so-called *bei* passive, as further discussed in Section 3.2.

### 3. BEI PASSIVE AND AMBIGUITY

Previously, scholars such as Dong (1989) and Wang (2005) stated that the semantic item “suffer” was a metaphorical extension of the meaning “drape something over something” or “be covered” by claiming that when A was covered with B, it implied an adversative sense, that is, A “suffers” from B. However, this view could be seen to be overly vague. First, it is questionable which semantic item “suffer” is derived from, as the description given in this chapter that the semantic “receive” has an *inward* feature in Type 2 sentences is more accurate. Second, when A is covered with B, it

does not necessarily generate the meaning “suffer.” For example, in Type 2 above, *bei* is interpreted as “enjoy”; therefore, *bei* only explains “suffer” in negative contexts as discussed in the following.

### 3.1 Experiencer+*bei* “suffer”+patient (negative)

When *bei* was used in a negative context, it was usually interpreted as a verb meaning “suffer/undergo”, as in the following examples.

125. 身被疾而不闲兮。(Chuci 楚辞. Zibei 自悲)

*shen bei ji er bu xian xi*  
body suffer illness but NEG idle FIN

My body suffered the illness but [I was] not idle.

126. 秦被其劳，而赵受其利。(Zhanguo ce 战国策. Zhaoyi 赵一)

*Qin bei qi lao er Zhao shou qi li*  
Qin suffer GEN labor CONJ Zhao enjoy GEN benefit

The state of Qin suffered from its labor but the state of Zhao enjoys its benefits.

In the above examples, *ji* 疾 “illness” and *lao* 劳 “labor” have negative meanings and the *bei* meaning “be covered with” is therefore conventionalized as “suffer.” Similar to the situation in Type 2, *bei* and *ji* 疾 “illness”/*lao* 劳 “labor” are definitely in a V-O relationship.

Therefore, this stage shows a similar development to Type 2, with the only difference being that the element after *bei* tends to be neutral or positive in Type 2 while it is negative in these examples. In other words, the concept *zao shou dong ci* 遭受动词 “verb expressing ‘suffer’” only refers to cases in which the subject receives something negative. However, regardless of whether they are positive, neutral or negative, these types of examples have two important features — (1) the semantics of *bei* has an *inward* feature; and (2) the subjects are affected — which is why it has been frequently claimed that *bei* is a passive marker when followed by a verbal element, as in the following example.

127. 薄者被毀丑。(Mozi 墨子. Guiyi 贵义)

<i>bo</i>	<i>zhe</i>	<i>bei</i>	<i>hui</i>	<i>chou</i>
slighter	NOM	suffer	destroy	uglify

In the slighter case he suffered suspicion/was suspected.

However, this passive interpretation is not the only possibility, as an active interpretation is also acceptable because when *bei* is followed by a verb-like element, it is quite ambiguous whether it is a verb expressing “suffer” or a marker for the passive.

### 3.2 Functional ambiguity of *bei*: between a verb expressing “suffer” and a marker for passive

This ambiguity for the interpretation of *bei* relates to an important phenomenon in (Ancient) Chinese related to the fuzzy parts of speech of some words (see the discussion in Part 1), as shown in the following examples.

128. 遂卒被分。(Hanfeizi 韩非子. Yulao 喻老)

<i>sui</i>	<i>zu</i>	<i>bei</i>	<i>fen</i>
then	finally	suffer/PASS	carved-up

And then in the event, to finish with, he was carved up. (tr. based on TLS)

129. 管夷吾被囚。(Liezi 列子. Liming 力命)

<i>Guan-Yiwu</i>	<i>bei</i>	<i>qiu</i>
NAME	suffer/PASS	embarrment

Guan Zhong was imprisoned.

These examples can be interpreted in different ways: (1) analyzing the words such as *fen* 分 “separation” and *qiu* 囚 “imprisonment” that follow *bei* as abstract nouns; or (2) due to the absence of contextual indicators to the contrary in these sentences, analyzing the words following *bei* as verbs “depart” and “confine” — which is similar to the earlier discussion of the so-called *jian* passive (Chapter 2, Part 3). The similarities between *jian* and *bei* can be most clearly seen when examined in (130) in parallel.

130. 信而见疑，忠而被谤。(Shiji 史记. Qu Yuan liezhuan 屈原列传)

*xin er jian yi zhong er bei bang*  
 faithful but suffer/PASS doubt loyal but suffer/PASS slander

To be faithful and yet suffer doubt, to be loyal and yet suffer slander.

Although the *bei* and *jian* development process was quite similar, there is an interesting difference: the *verb-like elements* after *bei* are limited to negative elements as shown in Table 17, whereas the V after *jian* can be either positive or negative (see details in Chapter 2, Part 3).

**Table 17: Verbs used in the *bei* construction**

Example	Pinyin	Transitive verb	Abstract noun
毁	<i>Hui</i>	To destroy	Destruction
兵	<i>Bing</i>	To take military action	Military, army
刑	<i>Xing</i>	To punish	Punishment
侵	<i>Qin</i>	To invade	Invasion
攻	<i>Gong</i>	To attack	Attack
创	<i>Chuang</i>	To wound, to cut	Wound
寇	<i>Kou</i>	To rob, plunder	Bandit, thieves
谤	<i>Bang</i>	To slander, speak ill of	Slander
讥	<i>Ji</i>	To ridicule, make fun of	Ridicule
辱	<i>Ru</i>	To disgrace	Disgrace
害	<i>Hai</i>	To harm	Harm

Note: this table is based on Wu (2007)

To revisit the topic *gan qing se cai* 感情色彩 “emotional coloring” (i.e., positive or negative emotional affectedness of the subjects) in the Chinese passive, based on the Type 2 analysis and Section 3.1 above, similar to *jian*, it could be expected that the V-like elements that appear after *bei* could be both positive and negative. However, *bei* did not develop like this as shown in Table 17, which indicates that initially, *bei* may have only expressed the subject negativity.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>82</sup> However, in Modern Mandarin, *bei* can be used with verbs expressing either negative or positive connotations.



The following examines this “ambiguity” by providing (1) evidence for passive; and (2) evidence for the non-passive, respectively.

### 3.2.1 Evidence for the passive

Zhang (2005) defined the *bei* in 3.1 above as a *mental verb*, and based on this postulation, claimed that the *bei* in (131) was a passive marker as the subject (i.e., *guo* 国 “state”) of this sentence is *inanimate* whereas a mental verb always requires an *animate* subject.

131. 国一日被攻。(Zhanguoce 战国策. Qice 齐策)

guo yi ri bei gong  
country one day suffer/PASS attack

On the day your country is attacked [you might wish to acknowledge Qin, but then it could no longer be done].

While this claim was supported by some other scholars (e.g., Zhang 2017, Zhu 2017), it should be treated with caution. Li (2007), for example, argued against this assumption for the following reasons.

First, a verb that has the meaning “suffer/undergo” does not necessarily need an animate subject,<sup>83</sup> and second, the *gong* in (131) could be a noun, and if so, *bei* should be interpreted as a verb meaning “suffer.”

Further, as there were only a few instances of *bei* being used as a passive marker at the end of the Warring States, it seems rather unnatural to treat it as a passive.

Along the same lines, referring to *bei* as a “mental verb” is also unjustified because if it is defined as a mental verb, then the subject must be animate as only animate subjects have mental activity; however, not only animate subjects can “suffer.”

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<sup>83</sup> This point is obvious in Modern Mandarin. For example, *Huanjing zaoshou pohuai* 环境遭受破坏 “The environment was destroyed,” and *Zhuangjia zao shui yan le* 庄稼遭水淹了 “The crops were flooded.” *Huanjing* 环境 “environment” and *zhuangjia* 庄稼 “crops” are definitely not animate.

Therefore, it is not necessarily accurate to define the *bei* meaning “suffer” as a mental verb, which means that example (131) is not evidence for a passive reading. However, it is true that animate subjects were more frequently observed than inanimate subjects in Ancient Chinese, which is quite different from the *bei* passive in modern Mandarin (see more discussion in “Subject with high animacy” in Part 5).

Further evidence can be given by the presence of the “*yu* phrase” in a *bei* structure, as exemplified in (132).

132. 万乘之国被围于赵。(Zhanguoce 战国策. Qice 齐策)

wan            shen      zhi      guo      bei            wei            yu    zhao  
ten-thousand chariot    MODI    country    suffer/PASS    besiegement    at    NAME  
A country of ten thousand chariots suffers besiegement at Zhao.

The above example is never an obligatory passive as *yu zhao* could also be a phrase indicating location rather than an agent.

Generally, *bei* has been interpreted as a passive marker because some words following *bei* can be interpreted as either a verb or a noun especially when the subject is inanimate or there is a *yu* phrase. However, *bei* should not be seen as a passive marker before the Han dynasty. While there is no obvious evidence to refute the passive hypothesis, there is also no evidence to refute the V-O interpretation, which is similar to the situation for *jian* (see the discussion in Chapter 2, Part 3).

### 3.2.2 Evidence for the non-passive

The fact that there is no evidence to refute the V-O interpretation is verified because there is: (1) no sufficient reason to refute *bei* as a verb in these examples; (2) no obvious reason to refute the element after *bei* as a noun; and (3) the low frequency in general.

In terms of (1), there are still many examples from the Han dynasty in which *bei* clearly means “suffer”, such as *bei shui zai* 被水灾 “suffered the flooding disaster”

(*Shiji* 史记), *bei ji* 被疾 “suffered disease” (*Hanshu* 汉书), *bei qi ku* 被其苦 “suffered grief” (*Yantielun* 盐铁论). Liu (2012) claimed that the verbal use of *bei* was evident from the pre-Qin period to the end of the Qing dynasty. However, this should not be used as evidence to refute the passive hypothesis because of the “layering” principle of grammaticalization proposed by Hopper and Traugott (1993: 124): “Within a broad functional domain, new layers are continually emerging; in the process the older layers are not necessarily discarded, but may remain to coexist with and interact with new layers” (cf. Hopper 1991: 22). However, it should be emphasized that it is still justifiable for *bei* to be interpreted as a verb meaning “suffer” in this period, as there is also no sufficient reason to refute this point.

In terms of (2), as discussed in Part 1, the so-called referential verbs were used freely as nouns in some contexts without any changes, as exemplified in the following.

133. 秦王复击轲，被八创。(Zhanguoce 战国策. Yance 燕策)

*Qin-wang fu ji ke bei ba chuang*

The-king-of-Qin again attack NAME suffer eight wound

The king attacked Jing *ke* again, Jing Ke suffered eight wounds.

In the above, as it is modified by the numeral *ba* 八, it is more appropriate to treat *chuang* 创 as a noun rather than a verb. Therefore, the whole sentence should be clearly interpreted as active; however, if there are no numerals, then *chuang* could be interpreted as either a verb (“was wounded”) or a noun.

Therefore, based on these two observations, it could be concluded that there is no evidence to refute the V-O interpretation hypothesis; however, it should be at least admitted that this structure is ambiguous. Bennett (1981) claimed that many of the early *bei* sentences had more than one analysis, and Wei (1994) also claimed that many of the words following *bei* in the so-called *bei* passive were still open to interpretation as either abstract nouns or transitive verbs in the Han period, which is also mentioned in the *jian* chapter and later in the *wei* chapter.

134. 虽万被戮，岂有悔哉！(*Hanshu* 汉书. Sima Qian zhuan 司马迁传)

*sui wan bei lu qi you hui zai*

although ten-thousand suffer insult how have regret FIN  
Although I suffered insult so many times, how can I have regrets!

Therefore, *frequency* is an important factor to determine whether and when *bei* V was a passive construction or a V-O construction. In reality, *bei* V was rarely found in the pre-Qin era, and as Tang and Zhou (1985) explained, of the 169 passive examples found in the late Warring States period, only 5 had been formed with *bei*. Further, in the Western Han period (206 BC - 24 AD), the construction “*bei*+V” was rarely used, with Tang (1987: 221) reporting that of the 399 passives found in this period, only 7 were in the “*bei*+V” form, which means that even in the Western Han period, it is better to analyze *bei* as a lexical verb meaning “suffer” rather than a passive marker.

However, it is commonly accepted that the pattern *bei* V was not a real passive construction marked with a syntactic device before the Six dynasties period (Li 2007). As the *bei* V examples greatly increased during the Six dynasties, this justifies Li’s arguments that *frequency* indeed plays an important role in any reanalysis of the *bei* V construction. Hopper and Traugott (1993) examined both synchronic and diachronic empirical studies of frequency and found that the reanalysis was especially relevant for the diachronic frequency studies because such studies start from the assumption that the increased frequency of a construction over time is *prima facie* evidence of grammaticalization (Hopper and Traugott 1993: 129). Therefore, frequency is a justifiable criterion. This point is also applicable for *jian*. As for the detailed frequency overview, see *normalized frequency* study in Section 5, Chapter 7, Part 3.

#### 4. BEI+A+V PATTERN

*Bei* A V is another commonly discussed pattern to express a passive meaning; however, it is still unresolved as to how this pattern was formed. The most common discussions have treated *bei* A V as an analogical development of *wei* A V<sup>84</sup> (e.g., Peyraube 1989) because the “long” *bei* construction has the same underlying structure as the “long” *wei* construction. However, why did *bei* develop analogically as *wei*? As

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<sup>84</sup> All aspects concerning the *wei* constructions mentioned here are studied in the subsequent chapters, i.e., *wei* chapters.

there is no explanation for this in current studies, it appears that this analogical development was perceived to be a natural progression. However, this then raises the question as to why *jian* V has never developed a *jian* A V pattern and it is also strange that *bei* A V could have been analogically developed from the marginal and declining *wei* A V structure. The most important observation in this relationship is that the “A+V” phrases after *wei* and *bei* have different relationships. Specifically, the “A+V” phrase after *wei* is a *relative clause* meaning “the one that A ‘has V+ed’ or ‘will+V’.” In Ancient Chinese, the relative clause was normally marked with *suo* 所 and *zhe* 者; therefore, the *wei* A V structure was marginal as the relative clause here was unmarked (see discussion in Part 3, Chapter 4), while *wei* A *suo* V (with the marker *suo* 所) was widespread (see discussion in Part 3, Chapter 5). In contrast, the hypothesis that the “A+V” phrase after *bei* is a *suo you ge jie gou* 所有格结构 “genitive structure” is examined in the following.

#### 4.1 Genitive “A+V” phrase after *bei*

The hypothesis that treats the “A+V” after *bei* as having a genitive relationship has been evidenced using two observations.

First, the existence of a *bei* A *zhi* V pattern, as in (135) and (136).

135. 被众口之譖。(Hanfeizi 韩非子. Jianjie shichen 奸劫弑臣)

*bei*    *zhong*    *kou*    *zhi*    *zen*  
suffer    many    month    PART    slander

[He] suffered slander from a large number of people.

136. 有独智之虑者，必被庶人之恐。(Zhanguoce 战国策. Zhaoce 赵策)

*you*    *du*    *zhi*    *zhi*    *lü*    *zhe*  
have    alone    wisdom    PART    conceive    NOM

*bi*    *bei*    *shu*    *ren*    *zhi*    *kong*  
definitely    suffer    common    people    PART    fear

A man, who would conceive thoughts which he alone can envision, will suffer being an object of fear to common men.

In these kinds of examples, two points need special attention:<sup>85</sup> (1), “A+zhi+V” is semantically equal to “A+V” as *zhi* here only functions as a particle that transfers the *verbal element* to a *nominal element*; therefore, *zhong kou zen* 众口譖 is semantically equal to *zhong kou zhi zen* 众口之譖 and *bei shu ren kong* 被庶人恐 is semantically equal to *bei shu ren zhi kong* 被庶人之恐; (2) A here implies V’s agentive information regardless of whether it is “A *zhi* V” or “A V”; therefore, *zhong kou* 众口 is the agent of *zen* 譖 in both *zhong kou zen* 众口譖 and *zhong kou zhi zen* 众口之譖. Similarly, *shu ren* 庶人 is the agent in both *shu ren kong* 庶人恐 and *shu ren zhi kong* 庶人之恐.

Second, *bei* is frequently followed by a “*qi* 其 V” phrase in which *qi* 其 is a pronominal genitive, that is, *qi* can be resolved as an “agent+zhi”, as shown in the *bei qi hai* 被其害 “suffer somebody’s harm” in the following example.

137. 往者匈奴数为边寇，百姓被其害。(Hanshu 汉书. Xuandi ji 宣帝纪)

<i>wang</i>	<i>zhe</i>	<i>xiong-nu</i>	<i>shu</i>	<i>wei</i>	<i>bian-kou</i>
past	NOM	NAME	several	do	invade
<i>bai-xing</i>	<i>bei</i>	<i>qi</i>	<i>hai</i>		
people	suffer	its	harm		

In the past, Xiongnu invaded the borders several times, and the local people suffered that/its/their harm.

In the above example, *qi* 其 in *bei qi hai* 被其害 can be interpreted in two ways: as a demonstrative meaning “that” or as a pronominal genitive meaning “its.” Clearly, it is impossible that *hai* can be explained as a verb in any case, which again proves that the verb-like element after *bei* is an ambiguous part of speech. If *qi* 其 is interpreted as a pronominal genitive, then *bai xing bei qi hai* 百姓被其害 is the same as *bai xing bei xiong nu zhi hai* 百姓被匈奴之害, and in such a case, *qi* also reveals the agentive information and a genitive relationship.

<sup>85</sup> It has to be distinguished from another similar structure *bei* N *zhi* N in the following.

1. 百姓无被兵之患。(Zhanguo ce 战国策)

<i>bai-xing</i>	<i>wu</i>	<i>bei</i>	<i>bing</i>	<i>zhi</i>	<i>huan</i>
people	neg.	suffer	war	part.	distress

The people avoid the distress of war.

In the above example, *bing* 兵 “war” is not the agent of *huan* 患 “distress” and they are just in a modifier-modified relationship.

Therefore, it could be concluded that the “A+V” phrase after *bei* should be a genitive structure that implies agentive information in most examples, which is quite different from *wei* and explains why the “*wei qi V 为其V*” example is not attested while many “*bei qi V 被其V*” examples have been found.

## 4.2 Omission of *zhi* in *bei A zhi V*

When examining “the formation of the *bei A V* structure”, Wang (1957: 11) speculated that the omission of *zhi* 之 in *bei zhong kou zhi zen 被众口之谮* “[He] suffered slander from a large number of people” could result in *bei zhong kou zen 被众口谮* “[He] suffered slander from a large number of people.” Similarly, *bei shu ren kong 被庶人恐* “suffer being an object of fear to common men” could be derived from *bei shu ren zhi kong 被庶人之恐* “suffer being an object of fear to common men” by deleting *zhi* 之. Therefore, it is proposed that *bei A V* probably formed because of the omission of *zhi* in “*bei A zhi V*” examples such as (135) and (136).

However, what could have been the motivations for this omission? Three motivations have been observed.

(1) As mentioned, *bei A V* and *bei A zhi V* are semantically equal, which could have been the prerequisite for the omission of *zhi*.

(2) Wang (1987) stated that “N *zhi V*” changed into “N *V*” with the decline of *zhi* in the Eastern Han dynasty. Therefore, as *zhi* declined, this gave rise to the appropriate conditions that paved the way for the omission of *zhi* in *bei A zhi V*. Note that, *bei A V* in such cases could still be interpreted as a “V (i.e., *bei*)+O (i.e., AV)” structure; however, it is surmised that there were few *bei A V* examples as there were few *bei A zhi V* examples.

(3) The increased use of the *bei A V* structure may be relevant to the increase in the *bei V* example. As mentioned in Section 3.2.2, the relatively high frequency of the *V*

following *bei* should be an important consideration for the reinterpretation of the *bei*+V as a passive construction.<sup>86</sup> The *bei* V was probably interpreted as a construction that expressed a passive meaning from the Six dynasties. However, if the *bei* V was analyzed as a passive pattern, this suggests that the element after *bei* was a verbal element without ambiguity. Therefore, the V in the *bei* A V (with the *zhi* omitted) structure should also be treated as a verb and the *bei* in *bei* A V was also analogically reanalyzed as a passive marker. If this were so, the frequency of *bei* A V would be expected to have increased dramatically.

Meanwhile, if this is true, then the *bei* A V structure should not have appeared any earlier than the Six dynasties, which is basically confirmed in the corpus, that is, the *bei* A V structure did not appear until the Six dynasties, with the most commonly earliest accepted example being in the *Shi shuo xin yu* 世说新语 “New Accounts of Old Episodes” (ca. 420-581 AD).

138. 亮子被苏峻害。(Shi shuo xin yu 世说新语. Fangzheng 方正)<sup>87</sup>

Liang-zi	bei	Su-Jun	hai
NAME	suffer/PASS	NAME	harm

Liang Zi suffered Sun Jun's harm.

However, opposite opinions have been found: when *bei* A V becomes a passive construction, then *bei* V can also be analogically reanalyzed as a passive (Zhang 2003b, Ji 2008). Zhang (2003b)'s explanation is taken as representative of this opinion:

The *bei* in the *bei* V pattern is always a verb meaning “suffer”, and it is always more justifiable to analyze “*bei* V” as a V-O structure even in modern times. In contrast, *bei* is a preposition in the *bei* A V pattern and is much easier to be grammaticalized as a passive marker. *Bei* became an auxiliary verb when A was omitted in the *bei* A V due to some reasons (e.g., economic principle).

<sup>86</sup> According to the normalized frequency analysis, the frequency of *bei* in Middle Chinese was actually not high, although it was higher than in Ancient Chinese. See details in “normalized frequency” in conclusion of Part 3.

<sup>87</sup> Another example is shown below.

1. 民被其毒。(foshuo bojing chao 佛说孛经抄)

min	bei	qi	du
people	suffer	he	poison

The people suffered harm from him.



Zhang analyzed the part of speech of *bei* from three different aspects: (1) *bei* V in a V-O relationship; (2) *bei* A V; and (3) *bei* V with the A omitted. Accordingly, the development paths of (1) *bei* V and (2) *bei* A V patterns are independent and the passive *bei* is only relevant to (2) and (3). Here, it is agreed that *bei* V and *bei* A V developed independently; however, there are shortcomings: (i) Zhang did not discuss how the *bei* A V pattern was formed; (ii) Zhang did not discuss how to distinguish (1) from (3); and (iii) the hypothesis for the omission of A in the *bei* A V pattern was questionable, that is, if A is omitted, then *bei* should also be omitted as in English, as “by” cannot be retained when there is no agent; for example, *He was murdered by* is ungrammatical.

Therefore, it is concluded that the formation of *bei* A V was due to the omission of *zhi* in the *bei* A *zhi* V construction. More importantly, *bei* A V was not initially a passive construction due to its source: therefore, the reanalysis process should have been motivated by: (1) the influence from the *bei* V pattern; and (2) the high frequency of use. After the Six dynasties period, *bei* A V became a relatively popular pattern for expressing the passive meaning, as in (139) and (140).

139. 臣被尚书召问。(Bei shou shi biao 被收时表)

chen bei shang-shu zhao wen

I bei official call ask

I was called and asked by the high official.

140. 吾被皇太后征。(San guo zhi 三国志. Gaogui xianggong zhuan 高贵乡公传)

wu bei huang-tai-hou zheng

I bei queen-mother conscript

I was conscripted by the queen mother.

However, based on the evidence presented in Section 3.2, these examples could also be interpreted as active: I suffered question from the high official/I suffered conscription from the queen mother.

So far, the chapter has explained how the *bei* V and *bei* A V patterns were shaped and what the conditions were for the passive interpretation. Although *bei* V and *bei* A V could also be passively reinterpreted since the Six dynasties, it is not conclusive as to

whether *bei* is a passive marker.

## 5. PARTICULARITIES OF THE *BEI* PASSIVE

Compared to the English passive, the so-called *bei* passive has many particularities. However, in this section, only two aspects — (1) the V in the *bei* V or *bei* A V constructions can take objects; and (2) *bei* has many variations besides *bei* V and *bei* A V — are discussed as these two are also found for other so-called passives in Ancient Chinese.

### 5.1 Main predicate in the *bei* construction can take objects

Wang (1958 [1980]) once claimed that the main verb in passive constructions could not take any objects. While this is basically true for passives in languages such as English, it is not the case in Chinese, which led to a changed opinion in Wang's later works. Lü's (1999a) comprehensive research titled *Bei zi ju, ba zi ju dai bin yu* 被字句、把字句动词带宾语 “*Bei* sentences and *ba* sentence take objects” on this topic laid the foundation for research of the veracity of this statement in other periods. However, mistaken claims can still be seen in some works (e.g., Jiang and Ren 1984: 115).<sup>88</sup> With respect to *bei* in this chapter, the situation is the same, that is, the main predicate verb in the *bei* V or *bei* A V can take an NP complement (i.e., object), as shown in the following Six dynasties' examples.

141. 青亦被矢贯咽。(Houhanshu 后汉书. Zhang Pu zhuan 张酺传)

qing yi bei shi guan yan

NAME also *bei* arrow pierce throat

Qing's throat was also pierced through by the arrow.

142. 未尝被呼名。(Nanshi 南史. Zhangji zhuan 张稷传)

wei-chang bei hu ming

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<sup>88</sup> The phenomenon that the V in the so-called passive construction takes an object is not solely found in the *bei* construction. Actually, in the notional passive sentence, or the so-called *yu*, *wei* and *jian* constructions, this phenomenon was also common, see discussion in Part 5.



patient) movement of the main V as in English. Note that, besides the internal predicate arguments, non-subcategorized elements indicating location, result, duration, or direction also occur post-verbally in the *bei* construction and have become common forms since the Tang dynasty. However, this is not further pursued here.

## 5.2 Different variations

Besides the *bei V* and *bei A V* patterns, as *bei* also occurs with many other passive markers, there are many diverse patterns (hereafter, called *variations* for convenience). The different variations are listed below; however, most have low frequencies.

### *Bei V yu A*

145. 邾娄人常被兵于周。(Gongyangzhuan 公羊传. Zhaogong 昭工)

Zhu-lou ren chang bei bing yu zhou  
NAME people often suffer military from NAME

The Zhulou people often suffered the military attack from the state of Zhou.

### *Bei A suo V*

146. 常被元帝所使。(Yan shi jia xun 颜氏家训. Zayi pian 杂艺篇)

chang bei yuan di suo shi  
often bei NAME emperor suo impel

[I] was often impelled by the emperor Yuan.

### *Bei A zhi suo V*

147. 处于生，不被生之所留。(Guzunsu yulu 古尊宿语录)<sup>89</sup>

chu-yu sheng bu bei sheng zhi suo liu  
when alive NEG bei life ZHI suo detain

When alive, I will not be detained by the life.

### *Bei A jian V*

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<sup>89</sup> This is an example from a late Buddhist text (Song Dynasty). More examples can be also found in earlier Buddhist scriptures, such as *Guo bei zhong ren zhi suo guai xiao* 果被众人之所怪笑。(Baiyujing 百喻经) “As a result, I was laughed at by other people.”

148. 被人见诉。(Taiping guangji 太平广记. Zaisheng 再生)

*bei*    *ren*    *jian*    *su*

BEI    people    *jian*    accuse

[I] was accused by someone.

Why Ancient Chinese had so many different passive markers and why they were able to be freely assembled like “building blocks” has motivated diverse opinions regarding the so-called passive constructions, as detailed in the discussion in Part 5. Besides the particularities discussed here, the *bei* construction still has many other particular features.<sup>90</sup> However, except for the two that shared by other so-called passive markers in pre-Qin times, the other particularities are not explored further due to limited space. Based on the limited scope of this thesis, and its focus on Ancient Chinese, the manifold use of *bei* sentences in Buddhist translation literature is not dealt with here.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on the verbal uses of *bei*, with the *bei* in verbal semantic items such as (1) “wear or put on” and (2) “cover” showing that *bei* could be interpreted as a ditransitive verb. This “ditransitive verb” hypothesis links these two semantic items well, and especially the semantic item “cover” for which the ditransitive hypothesis explains why both a theme (i.e., DO) and a recipient (i.e., IO) are able to appear in the subject position, and to rethink the passive vs. active relationship hypothesis between Type 1 and Type 2. When *bei* was a recipient subject sentence, it was interpreted as either “receive/enjoy” or “suffer”, depending on the positive or negative feelings of the subject. When *bei* was followed by a verb-like element, it was reinterpreted as a passive marker. However, because there is insufficient evidence to refute the V-O interpretation, *bei* was never a passive before the Han dynasty, and the *bei* V probably became a passive construction from the Six dynasties onward, as attested by its increased frequency.

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<sup>90</sup> See more in Dong (1989), Li (1994b), and so on.

Meanwhile, *bei* A V is not simply an analogical development of *wei* A V but is also quite relevant to the *bei* A *zhi* V and *bei qi* (i.e., A+*zhi*) V structures, in which A *zhi* V as a whole is a genitive nominal phrase, with A representing the agentive information of V. Because of: (1) the semantic similarity between *bei* A *zhi* V and *bei* A V; (2) the decline of *zhi* between N and V; and (3) the influence of the highly frequently used *bei* V pattern: *zhi* could be omitted, which resulted in the *bei* A V pattern.

Note that although the high frequency of use enabled the *bei* V and *bei* A V patterns to be interpreted as passives, they can also be interpreted as actives because: (1) the V in the *bei* V or *bei* A V patterns can be followed by an object (i.e., object retained); and (2) *bei* can also be assembled with other so-called passive markers. Even in modern Mandarin, the status of *bei* as a passive marker is still questioned by some scholars (e.g., Davis 1983: 291), which is discussed further in the conclusion of part 2.

## CHAPTER 4: THE FORMATION OF THE COPULA FUNCTION OF WEI AND THE NATURE OF THE WEI V CONSTRUCTION

This chapter aims to explain the development of the copula function of *wei* 为 and to show that *wei* in the “*wei* V” construction is a *copula* during pre-Han times, rather than a passive marker. Therefore, in essence, the “*wei* V” construction is a copula construction rather than a passive construction. In this analysis, I pay special attention to the “*yi* 以 X *wei* 为 Y” construction and draw the following conclusions: (1) the generalized copula function of *wei* derives from the “*yi* X *wei* Y” construction because of the disposal function of *yi*, and because *wei* absorbed the characteristics of the “*yi* X *wei* Y” construction. This conclusion is based on the observation that the unique features of *wei* as a copula are congruent with its function in the “*yi* X *wei* Y” construction, and that the change from “V *yi wei*” to “V *wei*” indicates that *wei* replaced “*yi wei*” to a certain degree. (2) “X *wei* V” is an alternative pattern of “*yi* X *wei* V” when a causer (C) does not appear in the same clause with *wei*. These observations are supported by the fact that “*yi* X *wei* V” and “X *wei* V” have the same (low) frequency, and are both very limited in their semantic range, and that their exchangeability does not have any influence on their semantics. (3) “*Wei* A V” is formed through the omission of *yi* in the “*yi* X *wei* A V”, whereas “*wei* A (*zhi*) *suo* V” is the consequence of “A (*zhi*) *suo* V” replacing “A V” in “*wei* A V.” Therefore, although some of them were convenient to be translated as passive in both Modern Mandarin and English, none of the *wei* constructions in pre-Qin should be regarded as syntactically functioning as passive constructions. Rather, “*wei* A *suo* V” became a common passive construction only in the Han dynasty.

# 1. INTRODUCTION<sup>91</sup>

The function of *wei* in pre-Han Chinese remains a topic of intense debate in Chinese linguistic studies.<sup>92</sup> As early as in the 1930s, Wang (1937: 15) argued that *wei* is not a true copula because it functions as such only on rare occasions, while in most cases it functions as a kind of copula based on its verbal features.<sup>93</sup> Twenty years later, Hong (2000: 30-31) insisted that both *wei* 为 and *shi* 是 are true copulas. Finally, Yu (2005: 106), adopting an intermediary position, concluded that *wei* was a verb that was in the process of becoming a copula, so it functioned as such to some degree. Generally, *wei* is treated as a “special” copula by most scholars (sometimes referred to as “semi-copula” or “quasi-copula”). However, the question of the special features of *wei* needs further study. More importantly, *wei*’s development into a special copula remains something of a mystery. Wang (1937: 9) concluded that it is difficult to determine precisely how this process occurred in a diachronic perspective since all of its functions appeared at a very early stage. In this chapter, I will address both the formation of the copula function of *wei* and the special features of *wei*.

As for the term “copula”, Peyraube and Wiebusch (1994: 383) have provided a useful definition in the Chinese context: “For Chinese, we suggest the following definition: a copula in Chinese is an overt word which, when used in equational sentences, links the subject and a nominal predicate; it is regarded as semantically empty and it can express: a) an equivalence meaning (relation of identity), b) a property or classificatory meaning (relation of membership of a set or inclusion).” Moreover, in the framework of this chapter I will also operate with the term “semi-copula” which syntactically and semantically shares many features with “real” copulas and “occupy an intermediate position between copulas and full verbs in that they show similarities with both lexeme types” (Pustet 2003: 6), in order to accommodate the meaning “become” of the verb *wei*. In particular, in this

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<sup>91</sup> It is an expanded version of the published paper (Zeng and Anderl 2019).

<sup>92</sup> In this paper, *wei* refers to the Chinese character 为; “*yi X wei Y*” refers to “以 X 为 Y”; “*wei A suo V*” refers to “为 A(gent) 所 V”; and “*wei A zhi suo V*” refers to “为 A(gent) 之所 V.”

<sup>93</sup> In a later book, *Hanyu shi gao* 汉语史稿 (1958 [1980]: 350), Wang Li even claimed that *wei* is essentially a verb but not a copula. Note that the term “copula” is referred to both semi-copula (i.e., “become”) and copula (i.e., “be”) in this chapter.



chapter the term “semi-copula” is used when I emphasize “a change of state” indicated by *wei*.

Regarding the features of the “*wei V*” constructions, two main views have been proposed: one group of scholars views them as copula constructions (e.g., Ma 1898 [2007], Wei 1994, Lü [1959]2002, Aldridge 2013), whereas others identify them as passive constructions (e.g., Wang 1958[1980], Peyraube 1989). At present, the latter opinion holds sway, and it is asserted that “*wei V*” was a popular passive construction as early as the pre-Qin era. However, several scholars have argued against this view (e.g., Yao 1998, Fang 2002, Jiang 2012a). For instance, Yao (1998: 539-541) concludes that there is no difference between the “*wei N*” and “*wei V*” constructions for two reasons: the “*wei V*” construction can be used together with the “*wei N*” construction in a parallel context; and in both the “*wei V*” and the “*wei N*” constructions the preposition *yi* can be added to form the “*yi X wei Y*” construction,<sup>94</sup> in which only the referential interpretation is possible. Similarly, Fang (2002: 48-50) provides eight parallel examples that include both “*wei N*” and “*wei V*” in order to refute the passive construction argument. Finally, Jiang (2012a: 41-44) argues that, since the other constructions (e.g., *wei suo V*, *wei N V*, *wei N zhi V*, *wei A suo V*, *wei A zhi suo V*) do not form passives with *wei*, it is unlikely that “*wei V*” would form a passive.<sup>95</sup>

Overall, then, although most scholars have accepted the passive construction argument, alternative views have appeared in several scholarly publications. However, these studies usually focus simply on presenting evidence that refutes the passive hypothesis. By contrast, the features and origins of the “*wei V*” construction itself have been largely ignored. Such an approach turns out to be unconvincing; therefore, I will attempt to rectify this oversight through a thorough analysis of the “*yi X wei Y*” construction. Our study is based on two hypotheses:

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<sup>94</sup> Keep in mind that the “*yi X wei Y*” construction refers to both the “*yi X wei N*” and the “*yi X wei V*” constructions.

<sup>95</sup> It is obvious that the passive interpretation is quite relevant to its copula function according to these discussions. However, Shi (2005a) has a different opinion: the passive implication of *wei* was derived from the preposition *wei* indicating a reason (i.e., *yin wei* 因为) since *an agent can be treated as a reason for the occurrence of an action*. Basically, Shi’s opinion is unconvincing, as no more evidence in semantic and syntactic for his claim was found. By contrast, this chapter elaborates on the *relationship* between the copula and passive interpretations.

the copula function of *wei* originated from the “*yi X wei Y*” construction, and *wei* functions as a “special” copula because it has absorbed the characteristics of the “*yi X wei Y*” construction; and “*X wei V*” was an alternative pattern of the “*yi X wei V*” construction in the specific context, i.e., a causer is not present with *wei* in the same clause. Accordingly, I will show that *wei* in the “*wei V*” construction is a copula, rather than a passive marker.

## 2. THE SEMANTIC AND SYNTACTIC FEATURES OF *yi* 以

*Yi* developed into a disposal marker at a very early stage because of its specific semantic and syntactic features.

### 2.1 The Semantic Features of *yi* 以

The famous Han dynasty dictionary *Shuowen jiezi* 说文解字 defines the primary meaning of *yi* as “use.” However, both Qiu (1992: 106) and Guo (1998: 1) have argued that *yi* initially meant “take or carry something,” according to the shape of the Oracle Bones Inscription (OBI) graph, although the latter acknowledges that it is difficult to find examples of this original meaning in texts. In OBI, *yi* normally means “pay tribute” or “lead somebody.” However, the former meaning had disappeared by the time of the Bronze Inscriptions (BI) of the Western Zhou dynasty, whereas the latter continued to be used frequently. Moreover, a new meaning – “use something” – often can be found in the BI, too. Thereafter, similar usage is found in the Spring and Autumn period.

### 2.2 The Syntactic Features of *yi* 以

When meaning “lead,” *yi* is often placed at the first verb position in serial verb constructions, with early examples appearing in the BI. Moreover, according to

Zhao's (2005: 227) study, when meaning "lead," *yi* invariably appears at the first verb position in all of the 254 examples from *Zuozhuan*. See example (149) below.

149. 齐侯以诸侯之师侵蔡。(Zuozhuan 左传. Xigong 僖公 4)

*Qi-hou yi zhu-hou zhi shi qin Cai*  
Qi-marquis lead feudal-lords MODI army invade NAME

The marquis of Qi led the feudal lords' army to invade the state of Cai.

Similarly, when *yi* means "use," it appears more often in serial verb constructions, as opposed to single verb constructions. However, in contrast to the "lead" meaning of *yi*, the positions of *yi* and the other verb are not stable in the sentences in which *yi* means "use", since the *yi* phrase can occur either before or after the other verb. When used in this sense, *yi* can easily be reinterpreted as an instrumental marker (hereafter this process is marked by "→"). This is illustrated in the following two examples:<sup>96</sup>

150. 公以戈击之。(Zuozhuan 左传. Xiangong 襄公 18)

*gong yi ge ji zhi*  
lord use→INS dagger strike PRON

Lord [Jin Li] used a dagger to strike him. → Lord [Jin Li] struck him with a dagger.

151. 击之以戈。(Zuozhuan 左传. Zhaogong 昭公 1)

*ji zhi yi ge*  
strike PRON use→INS dagger

Struck him using the dagger. → Struck him with the dagger.

Besides marking the instrumental, *yi*'s function is further generalized into introducing the "object" with which something is done, including people or abstract things. In the following examples (152) and (153), *yi*'s function can be interpreted not only as "instrumental" but also as a kind of disposal marker of the direct object of the ditransitive *qi* "marry somebody to someone else":

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<sup>96</sup> I think the instrumental use (i.e., prepositional use) mainly refers to the case where the noun phrase following *yi* is *not* the object of the verb (cf. examples 150 and 151). For the position of instrumental *yi*, see Sun (1991). He concludes that the position of prepositional phrases (i.e., PP's) in Classical Chinese could be either post-verbal or preverbal. On text-count level, PP's (e.g. *yi*) of the two types are about equally distributed.

152. 季康子以其妹妻之。(Zuozhuan 左传. Aigong 哀公 8)

*Ji-Kangzi yi qi-mei qi zhi*  
NAME INS→DISP his-younger-sister marry-to PRON

Ji Kangzi married his younger sister to him (i.e., the Lord Qi Dao).

153. 虞思于是妻之以二姚。(Zuozhuan 左传. Aigong 哀公 1)

*Yu-Si yu-shi qi zhi yi er Yao*  
NAME then marry-to PRON INS→DISP two NAME

Yu Si then gave his two daughters in marriage to him (i.e., Shao Kang).

In our opinion, examples (152) and (153) indicate a transitory stage as *yi* develops into a disposal marker.<sup>97</sup>

## 2.3 The Disposal Function of *yi* 以

Later, *yi* appears frequently in conjunction with typical disposal verbs: that is, ditransitive verbs with both direct and indirect objects. In this function, *yi* introduces the direct object fronting the verb. Typically, this appears in the four constructions, namely, “*yi* 以 *obj*<sub>1</sub> *yu* 与 /*rang* 让 *obj*<sub>2</sub>” meaning to give something to somebody (Example 154), “*yi* 以 *obj*<sub>1</sub> *gao* 告/*yu* 语 (+*yu* 于) *obj*<sub>2</sub>” meaning to tell something to somebody (Example 155), “*yi* 以 *obj*<sub>1</sub> *shi* 示 *obj*<sub>2</sub>” meaning to show something to somebody (Example 156) and “*yi* *obj*<sub>1</sub> V+G” meaning to dispose of/move something from/to some place (Example 157).<sup>98</sup>

154. 以其田与祁奚。(Zuozhuan 左传. Chenggong 成公 8)

*yi qi-tian yu Qi-Xi*  
DISP his-field give-to NAME

Gives his field to Qi Xi.

155. 伯州犁以公卒告王。(Zuozhuan 左传. Chenggong 成公 16)

<sup>97</sup> Different from the prepositional use, the disposal use mainly refers to the case where the noun phrase following *yi* is the object of a ditransitive verb (cf. examples 152-157). The disposal use is more common in “preverbal” position (see Table 18).

<sup>98</sup> Peyraube (1987: 349-350), when studying the double-object construction in *Lunyu* and *Mengzi*, concluded that the “*yi*+DO+V+IO” structure seems to be reserved to “lexical” datives (i.e., ditransitive) and the IO is never a pronoun except when it precedes *yi*. Our study of *Zuozhuan* seems to support his conclusion to some degree.

Bo-Zhouli yi gong zu gao wang  
 NAME DISP lord soldier tell to king

Bo Zhouli reported the position of [the lord of Jin Li's] soldiers to the king [of Chu].

156. 以示玉人，玉人以为宝也。(Zuozhuan 左传. Xianggong 襄公 15)<sup>99</sup>

yi shi yu-ren  
 DISP show-to jade-specialist  
 yu-ren yi wei bao ye  
 jade-specialist think being treasure FIN

[I] have shown [this jade] to a jade specialist, and he thinks it is a treasure.

157. 复以弟子一人投河中。(Shiji 史记. Huaji liezhuan 滑稽列传)

fu yi di-zi yi-ren tou he zhong  
 again DISP disciple one-person throw-into river middle

Furthermore, [Xi Menbao] threw one of the disciples into the river.

The function of *yi* in all of these examples (i.e., ditransitive constructions) is still much debated among scholars. One group believes that *yi* functions as a preposition (e.g., Liu 2002). On the other hand, some linguists (e.g., Chen 1983, Zhang 1992) argue that these examples should be regarded as “disposal constructions,” since *yi*'s function is very similar to the disposal marker *ba* 把 in Late Medieval and Modern Chinese. Based on these discussions, notwithstanding the ongoing debates and disagreements over whether *yi* is the precursor of later disposal constructions, many scholars accept that it functions as a kind of disposal marker in Ancient Chinese (e.g., Bennett 1981, Mei 1990, Wei 1997, Wu 2003).<sup>100</sup> I agree with this view.

<sup>99</sup> Here the object (i.e., jade) is not mentioned after *yi*.

<sup>100</sup> After *yi* had developed the disposal function, several other verbs initially meaning “take” or “grasp” – such as *chi* 持, *jiang* 将 and *ba* 把 – were also grammaticalized into disposal markers during the medieval period (Cao and Long 2005: 322-325). In addition, the grammaticalization of disposal markers in the Bouyei language (*Buyi yu* 布依语) spoken in Guizhou 贵州 province is also in support of the path of grammaticalization from this semantic field. According to Zhou (1999: 84-91), in most of the Bouyei 布依 areas,  $\text{ʔau}^1$  and  $\text{ku}\text{ə}^6$  are used as the markers in the disposal construction and  $\text{ku}\text{ə}^6$  grammaticalized from a verb meaning *zuo* 做 “do.” Moreover, the disposal marker  $\text{ziu}^3$  of the Bouyi language spoken in Wangmo 望谟 county grammaticalized from a verb meaning 提/拿 “take with the hands; carry,” and the disposal marker  $\text{ɰu}^2$  in Pingba 平坝 county grammaticalized from a verb meaning *na/dai* 拿/带 “bring; to take.” However, this matter will not be pursued further here.

Indeed, when *yi* is used with typical disposal verbs, it often appears at the first verb position, introducing the “direct object.” See Table 18. The table including texts from the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States periods shows that *yi* in second verb position in disposal construction is used in certain texts (e.g., *Zuozhuan*, *Guoyu*, *Mozi*) but that this pattern has a very low frequency.

**Table 18** The frequency of different word order of *yi* with disposal verbs (i.e., ditransitive verbs)

	<i>yi...yu...</i>	<i>yu...yi</i>	<i>yi...gao...</i>	<i>gao...yi...</i>	<i>yi...shi...</i>	<i>shi...yi...</i>
	以...与	与 ...	以...告	告...以	以...示	示...以
		以				
<i>Shijing</i>	0	0	3	0	0	0
<i>Zuozhuan</i>	12	0	82	3	16	0
<i>Lunyu</i>	0	0	10	0	0	0
<i>Guoyu</i>	1	0	20	0	1	1
<i>Mozi</i>	0	0	4	2	0	1

According to Table 18, it is clear that the pattern *yi* X *yu/gao/shi* Y is more frequent than *yu/gao/shi* Y *yi* X.<sup>101</sup> This is quite different from the case when *yi* is used as an instrumental: *yi* X V Y and V Y *yi* X are about equally distributed.

Besides the examples given above, another popular disposal construction is “*yi* obj<sub>1</sub> *wei* obj<sub>2</sub>” (referred to as “*yi* X *wei* Y” in other parts in this chapter). This will be discussed in the next section.

<sup>101</sup> For a thorough study of the various patterns of double-object constructions in the *Lunyu* and *Mengzi*, see Peyraube (1987). According to the author, there is only one “general” construction with two objects: V+X (direct object)+*yu* 于+Y (indirect object). All constructions with *yi* underly several “restrictions” (Peyraube 1987: 355). Leslie (1964) also provides a detailed account of double-object constructions with a variety of ditransitive verbs, such as *gao* 告 (both *yi*+X+*gao*+Y and *gao*+Y+*yi*+X are rare in *Lunyu* and *Mengzi*; see Leslie 1964: 186). In *Zhuangzi*, *Mozi*, *Xunzi*, *shi* 示+Y+*yi*+X have a relatively higher frequency, whereas *yi*+X+*shi*+Y is the common construction in the *Zuozhuan* (*ibid.*: 194). For a more general account of the prepositions used with various verbs, see the appendix to Leslie 1964 (196–228).

### 3. THE DISPOSAL CONSTRUCTION “*YI X WEI Y*” AND THE COPULA FUNCTION OF *WEI*

*Wei* is primarily a semantically full verb, and its meaning is analyzed in the context of specific examples.

158. 颜渊问为邦。(Lunyu 论语. Weilinggong 卫灵公)

Yan-Yuan      wen      wei      bang

NAME          ask-to      rule      country

Yan Yuan asked about [how to] rule a state.

159. 子游为武城宰。<sup>102</sup> (Lunyu 论语. Yongye 雍也)

Zi-You          wei      Wu-cheng          zai

NAME          hold      Wu-city          senior-official

Zi You holds the senior official position of the city of Wu.

*Yi* can also be used with *wei*. See examples (160), (161) and (162) below.

160. 曾孙之穉，以为酒食。(Shijing 诗经. Xiaoya 小雅)

zengsun          zhi          se          yi          wei      jiu      shi

descendant      POSS      cereal      use→INS      make      wine      food

The cereal of the descendant, using it to make wine and food.

161. 为国以礼。(Lunyu 论语. Xianjin 先进)

wei      guo                  yi                  li

rule      country              use→INS          ritual

[Zi Lu] rules the state with ritual.

162. 以羽为巢。(Xunzi 荀子. Quanxue 劝学)

yi                  yu                  wei                  chao

use>INS      feather          make                  nest

[The bird] builds its nest with the feathers.

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<sup>102</sup> “*Wei*+official rank” was very commonly used in pre-Qin times. I think that *wei* in such cases should be interpreted as a verb meaning *dan ren* 担任 “hold a position” rather than a copula. The semantics of a copula indicating identity would be rather expressed by the pattern NP(X)+NP(Y)+*ye* 也, such as in *zi, guo qing ye* 子, 国卿也. “You are the minister of the state.” (*Zuozhuan* 左传). However, it is admitted that the meaning “hold a position” is an important step in *wei*’s development into a semi-copula.

In the above three examples, *yi* is used with *wei*: *yi* has no disposal meaning but can be interpreted either as verb meaning “use” or instrumental preposition “by; with,” while *wei* should be interpreted as a full verb (and not as copula) meaning “make,” “rule,” or “build.” In such cases, the position of *yi* X and *wei* Y is not fixed (see Table 19).

**Table 19** The frequency of the non-disposal construction *yi* X *wei* Y and *wei* Y *yi* X

	A: <i>yi</i> X <i>wei</i> Y	B: <i>wei</i> Y <i>yi</i> X
<i>Shijing</i>	2	0
<i>Zuozhuan</i>	3	1
<i>Lunyu</i>	3	2
<i>Guoyu</i>	0	0
<i>Mozi</i>	19	2

Accordingly, I find that the non-disposal *yi* X *wei* Y and *wei* Y *yi* X examples are rare (with the exception of *Mozi* which frequently discusses the construction of fortifications). In the following section, I will discuss a more frequently used construction: disposal *yi* X *wei* Y.

### 3.1 Disposal Construction “*yi* X *wei* Y”

When *yi* functions as a disposal marker, it is often followed by the “result” of the disposal. This step is quite important in the development of the “*yi* X *wei* Y” construction, as well as the semi-copula and copula functions of *wei*. The disposal construction “*yi* X *wei* Y” can be divided into two groups: objective/concrete disposal and subjective/abstract disposal.

#### 3.1.1 Objective/concrete disposal



Objective/concrete disposal (i.e., the disposal process occurs in the objective world) has eventive characteristics and always displays a disposal result that can be either positive or negative. The basic meaning of the disposal construction is as follows: the causer (subject) acts on and affects X (the initial state), resulting in a “new state/situation” that is expressed by Y. The new state could be “positive” or “negative.” In the case of disposal with positive results, X is always a human agent and Y is a rank or official position. The whole construction often means “make somebody hold a position” and usually indicates a promotion, as shown in (163).

163. 郑伯将以高渠弥为卿。(Zuozhuan 左传. Huangong 桓公 17)

<i>Zheng-bo</i>	<i>jiang</i>	<i>yi</i>	<i>Gao-Qumi</i>	<i>wei</i>	<i>qing</i>
NAME	will	DISP	NAME	hold→become	minister

Lord Zheng will make Gao Qumi hold the ministerial position (i.e., promote Gao Qumi to minister).

In example (163), the subject (Lord Zheng) is a figure of authority who has the power to appoint people to specific positions. Here, *wei* can be interpreted as either a full verb (i.e., hold) or a semi-copula “become” (i.e., change from non-ministerial to ministerial) and this process is demonstrated by “→” in the glossing.

The meaning “hold a position” is important in *wei*’s development into a semi-copula verb, because somebody holding an official position implies that he or she *becomes* an official (from a non-official) or has attained a certain rank (from a lower rank). When *wei* is used together with *yi* (which has a disposal function) in this context, it is syntactically possible for the former to be interpreted as a semi-copula “become”.

In the case of disposal with negative results, X also has a human aspect, but Y seems to have the features of a verbal phrase. It is important to note that this construction is used in a specific pragmatic context and usually conveys an unlucky or unfortunate occurrence (i.e., the first object X, with its human aspect, is

negatively affected); the whole construction usually means “make somebody undergo something.”<sup>103</sup> This is illustrated in (164).

164. 必以仲几为戮。(Zuozhuan 左传. Dinggong 定公 1)

*bi yi Zhong-Ji wei lu*

definitely DISP NAME become someone who deserves to die

Certainly, [the king] will make Zhong Ji become the one who deserves to die (i.e., delinquent).<sup>104</sup>

In example (164), the subject (the king) has the power to condemn somebody to an undesirable state or situation. The only differences from the positive construction are that the negative disposal emphasizes the causative meaning and *wei* functions more like a semi-copula (i.e., indicating a change of state/transition from positive to negative). It is impossible to interpret *wei* as either a full verb or a passive marker here.

### 3.1.2 Subjective/abstract disposal (conative meaning)

The subjective/abstract disposal (i.e., the disposal process occurs in the mind) has non-eventive characteristics and mainly conveys a mental activity (attitude) that does not have a direct impact on a physical object. The basic meaning of the subjective disposal is as follows: the agent (i.e., the subject) subjectively thinks

<sup>103</sup> Wu (2003: 3) mentions that in the “causative disposal” construction, the object of *jiang* 将 or *ba* 把 is not the patient of the verb, but the agent or experiencer, and the whole construction has causative meaning. He argues that “causative disposal” emerged during the late Tang dynasty and the Five dynasties, and that it is restricted to *jiang* 将 or *ba* 把. However, I think that *yi* in the negative disposal construction functions similarly to the “causative disposal” as defined above: the object of *yi* is the experiencer and the whole construction has causative meaning (see example 164).

<sup>104</sup> I am aware of that “become the one who deserves death” sounds awkward. However, this specific usage of *lu* in the phrase is notoriously difficult to convey in English. Other possible translations would be “become somebody bound to die,” “become a culprit”, etc., basically anything which avoids a “passive” reading of the phrase (i.e., “be killed”) since such a reading would be off the point. I also have to consider that *lu* might be used idiomatically here, referring to a state of disgrace rather than referring to the result of actually being executed. The phrase *wei lu* poses great difficulties to translators and examples of translations in TLS (accessed on 28<sup>th</sup> Aug. 2017) include the following: *Jun qi jiang yi wei lu* 君其将以为戮 “...meet out the due death penalty (when the time comes),” *Gao bo qi wei lu hu* 高伯其为戮乎! “...deserved an evil end,” *Yi wu wei lu* 以吾为戮 “took me for a trespasser,” *Gua jun zhi yi wei lu* 寡君之以为戮 “...may execute me!” *Jiang wei lu hu* 将为戮乎? “are you going to execute him,” *Gua jun zhi yi wei lu* 寡君之以为戮 “should my ruler there order me to execution,” *Tong zi yan yan, jiang wei lu yi* 童子言焉, 将为戮矣! “If a boy like you talk about it so, you will get into disgrace.”

that X has an identity relation with Y. It can generally be divided into two groups: “think of/consider/regard A as B” and “take A as B.” Both emphasize the relation of membership of a set or inclusion (see Peyraube and Wiebusch 1994). Here, *wei* functions similarly to a copula (i.e., to be). For more details, see below.

#### Think of A as B (> consider/regard A as B)

165. 先君以寡人为贤。(Zuozhuan 左传. Yingong 隐公 3)

*xian jun yi gua-ren wei xian*  
previous king DISP me be wise-person

The previous king regarded me as (i.e., to be) a wise person.

#### Take A as B

166. 与孟孙以壬辰为期。(Zuozhuan 左传. Dingong 定公 8)

*yu Meng-Sun yi ren-chen wei qi*  
and NAME DISP TIME be date

[Chu Fu] and Meng Sun take Ren Chen as (i.e., to be) the date.

Based on an examination of the corpus, I have found that the subjective/abstract disposal occurs more frequently than the objective/concrete disposal (see Table 20 below).

**Table 20 The frequency of positive disposal/negative disposal and conative disposal**

Disposal	Object/concrete disposal subjective		Subjective/abstract disposal
	Positive disposal	Negative disposal	Conative disposal
Texts			
<i>Shijing</i>	0	2	6
<i>Zuozhuan</i>	39	1	120
<i>Lunyu</i>	2	0	23
<i>Guoyu</i>	17	2	55
<i>Mozi</i>	7	1	74

To summarize, although *wei* does not function in the same way as typical disposal verbs, such as *gao* “tell” and *shi* “show”, the “*yi X wei Y*” construction does indicate a disposal meaning (i.e., objective/concrete or subjective/abstract disposal). In light of the analysis in sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2, above, I summarize the development of “*yi X wei Y*” in the following way.

- (i) Initially, the positions of *yi* and *wei* are not fixed. “*Yi X wei Y*” or “*wei Y yi X*” can be found at the same time. *Wei* should be interpreted as a full verb, although there are few examples of this as shown in Table 19.
- (ii) Positive disposal “*yi X wei Y*”: *wei* can be interpreted as a full verb or semi-copula and *wei* indicates the change from a lower to a higher social position.
- (iii) Negative disposal “*yi X wei Y*”: *wei* should be interpreted as a semi-copula; Y is the new state of X; the construction has strong causative meaning. *Wei* indicates the change to an undesirable state/situation.
- (iv) Conative disposal “*yi X wei Y*”: *wei* should be interpreted as a copula; the speaker subjectively equates X with Y; the construction has strong conative meaning.

The development from (i) to (iv) shows that the “*yi X wei Y*” construction underwent a progression from objective/concrete to subjective/abstract. Meanwhile, the sequence of *yi* and *wei* as a construction became increasingly conventionalized. Noting that although this was a diachronic development, I acknowledge that it is difficult to precisely date different stages based on the current texts since all these functions seem to have been established at quite an early time, following the conclusion of Wang (1937). For example, all usages can be found in the quite early texts *Shijing* (1046BC-771BC) and *Shangshu* (772BC-476BC). See in Table 21 below. However, I think it is safe to say that the concept “disposal” firstly refers to “concrete things” rather than “abstract things”, since the development from “concrete/objective” to “abstract/subjective” is logically justified.

**Table 21 The usages of *yi X wei Y* in *Shijing* and *Shangshu***

Text	Function	Example
	Serial verb construction	(a) <i>Zengsun zhi se, yi wei jiu shi</i> 曾孙之穉，以为酒食“Lit: The cereal of the descendant, using it to make wine and food.”
<i>Shijing</i> (1046 BC -771 BC)	Conative disposal	(b) <i>Ren zhi wu liang, wo yi wei jun</i> 人之无良，我以为君 “You are not good, I regarded you as a gentle man [but you are not].”
	Negative disposal	(c) <i>Wo yan wei fu, wu yi wei xiao</i> 我言维服，勿以为笑 “My words should be carried out, do not make my words become a matter of laughter (i.e., ridicule).”
<i>Shangshu</i> (772 BC -476 BC)	Positive disposal	(d) <i>Cai Zhong ke yong zhi de, zhou gong yi wei qing shi</i> 蔡仲克庸祗德，周公以为卿士 “Cai Zhong restrained his glory and respected virtue, Lord of Zhou made him hold the ministerial position.”

In the process, *wei* developed from a full verb to a semi-copula and subsequently to a copula.<sup>105</sup> Therefore, I conclude that the copula function of *wei* derives from the “*yi X wei Y*” construction. In order to support this conclusion, I will first summarize the principal features of the “*yi X wei Y*” construction and analyze how these characteristics determine the features of *wei*.

<sup>105</sup> There is no doubt that the copula *wei* originated from its use as a full verb (Wang 1937). However, it is speculated that there was a transitional stage of the “*yi X wei Y*” construction – between the verbal use and the copula use – rather than the copula *wei* deriving *directly* from its verbal function. I try to explain this by comparing the difference between *Gao Qumi wei qing* 高渠弥为卿 and *Zheng bo jiang yi Gao Qumi wei qing* 郑伯将以高渠弥为卿. In *Gao Qumi wei qing* 高渠弥为卿, the sentence describes only a state or a fact that “Gao Qumi holds the ministerial position.” Of course, as Gao Qumi holds the ministerial position, this automatically implies that he *is* the minister. However, this hypothesis is based only on the semantic correlation; there is no syntactical evidence to support it. By contrast, in *Zheng bo jiang yi Gao Qumi wei qing* 郑伯将以高渠弥为卿, there is both semantic *and* syntactical evidence. The focus of the sentence has changed to “the causer Lord Zheng makes Gao Qumi hold the ministerial position.” Thus, it indicates that an *external factor* affects Gao Qumi, whose status consequently changes from “non-minister” to “minister.” This marks the development from *implied* semi-copula function to *real* semi-copula function.

## 3.2 The Relationship between the Characteristics of “*yi X wei Y*” and the Features of *wei*

Based on the above analysis, I summarize the characteristics of the “*yi X wei Y*” construction as follows: in the object/concrete disposal, there is a “*causer*” to initiate this action (agent-induced aspect; 3.2.1); very importantly, it implies a *change of state* (3.2.2); and in the subjective/abstract disposal, it indicates a *subjective judgment* (3.2.3). Interestingly, as I explain below, it is found that these characteristics are also present when *wei* is used as a copula. I speculate that this is because “*yi X wei Y*” is used so frequently that its features have transferred to *wei* (i.e., *wei* has absorbed the features of the construction “*yi X wei Y*”).

### 3.2.1 *Causer*

The agent-induced aspect is demonstrated by the fact that a human action verb often occurs with *wei*,<sup>106</sup> suggesting that a human agent-induced factor is part of the change of state. See example (167) below.

167. (郑人) 立子产为卿。(Zuozhuan 左传. Xianggong 襄公 19)

(Zheng ren)	li	Zi-Chan	wei	qing
Zheng people	establish	NAME	be	minister

[The people of Zheng] made Zi Chan (i.e., to be) a minister.

### 3.2.2 *Change of state*

Previously, Duan (1988: 222) stated that “when there is a change, we can use *wei*.” (*fan you suo bianhua yue wei* 凡有所变化曰为). This is actually a very good summarization of the dynamic features of *wei*. The fact that *wei* often indicates a change of state can be verified by the observation that a verb indicating the change

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<sup>106</sup> I use “human action verbs” to indicate actions that are often performed by human agents (such as *cheng* 称 “say,” *fen* 分 “divide,” *ding* 定 “define,” *yu* 誉 “praise,” *pin* 聘 “engage,” *feng* 封 “choose,” *feng* 奉 “respect” and *shi* 视 “see”). In Modern Chinese, *wei* is rarely used independently; it usually appears with an agent-oriented action verb (e.g., *cheng wei* 称为, *fen wei* 分为, *yu wei* 誉为 and so on).

of state (e.g., *hua* 化 “change”) often precedes the verb *wei*. See example (168) below.<sup>107</sup>

168. 其神化为黄熊。(Zuozhuan 左传. Zhaogong 昭公 7)

<i>qi</i>	<i>shen</i>	<i>hua</i>	<i>wei</i>	<i>huang-xiong</i>
his	soul	change	become	yellow-bear

His soul changed into a yellow bear.

### 3.2.3 Subjective judgment

The copula *wei* also has subjective features because it is always used in parallel sentences containing two or more contrastive items in order to highlight their differences. See example (169) below.

169. 夫兽三为群，人三为众，女三为集。(Guoyu 国语. Zhouyu 周语)

<i>fu</i>	<i>shou</i>	<i>san</i>	<i>wei</i>	<i>qun</i>
INI	animal	three	be	flock
<i>ren</i>	<i>san</i>	<i>wei</i>	<i>zhong</i>	
person	three	be	crowd	
<i>nü</i>	<i>san</i>	<i>wei</i>	<i>ji</i>	
woman	three	be	gathering	

Three animals together are (i.e., constitute) “a flock,” three people together are “a crowd,” and three women together are “a gathering.”

In example (169), *shou* “animal”, *ren* “people”, and *nü* “woman” are clearly distinguished by the *wei* phrases.

170. 民为贵，社稷次之，君为轻。(Mengzi 孟子. Jinxin zhangju xia 尽心章句下)

<i>min</i>	<i>wei</i>	<i>gui</i>		
people	be	important		
<i>she-ji</i>		<i>ci</i>	<i>zhi</i>	
the god of the land and grain		next	it	
<i>jun</i>	<i>wei</i>	<i>qing</i>		
sovereign	be	light		

<sup>107</sup> “State change verb” refers to a verb that indicates a change of situation or state, such as *hua* 化, *bian* 变 or *gai* 改, all three of which can be translated as “change/transform”.

The people are the most exalted [in a state]; the gods of the land and grain are next; the sovereign is the least.

In example (170), the speaker subjectively expresses his opinion about the relative importance of the three items by using three “*wei*” constructions in parallel.

The examples presented in sections 3.2.1, 3.2.2 and 3.2.3 encapsulate almost all of the ways in which *wei* may be used in both Ancient and Modern Chinese. In other words, its use is always related to the characteristics of the “*yi X wei Y*” construction.<sup>108</sup> In light of this, the hypothesis that the features of this construction have transferred to *wei* is convincing.

For further evidence supporting this hypothesis, I will discuss another interesting construction: “C[auser] V *yi wei Y*.”<sup>109</sup> This construction combines “C V (X)” and “*yi (X) wei Y*.” *Li 立* will be chosen as an example in this discussion since *li* is quite frequently used together with *wei*. According to Onishi Katsuya (2005: 89), there are three examples of “C *li (X) yi wei Y*” in *Zuozhuan*. See below.

171. 立舟之侨以为戎右。 (*Zuozhuan* 左传. Xigong 僖公 28)

*li*                    *Zhou-Zhiqiao*            *yi*            *wei*                    *rong-you*

<sup>108</sup> Another *wei* N construction (in which N is a person’s name) demands more attention. Two examples are listed below.

1. 余为伯鯨。余，尔祖也。 (*Zuo zhuan* 左传. Xuangong 宣公 3)

*yu*      *wei*      *Bo-Tiao*      *yu*      *er*      *zu*                    *ye*  
I      call      NAME      I      you      ancestor              FIN

My name is Botiao. I am your ancestor.

2. 桀溺曰：“子为谁？”曰：“为仲由。” (*Lun yu* 论语. Weizi 微子)

*Jie-Ni*      *yue*      *zi*                    *wei*      *shei*      *yue*      *wei*                    *Zhong-You*  
NAME      say      you              call      who      say      call              NAME

Jie Ni asked: “What is your name?” [He] answered: “My name is Zhong You.”

In these two examples, Xie (2012) speculates that *wei* 为 might be equivalent to *wei* 谓 meaning *jiao zuo* 叫做 “be called,” which is frequently used to express an appellation. In fact, *wei* 谓 and *wei* 为 are often used in parallel sentences in Ancient Chinese. See an example below.

1. 如此者直臣也，是为六正也...如此者亡国之臣也，是谓六邪。 (*Shuo yuan* 说苑. Chenshu 臣术)

*ru*      *ci*                    *zhe*                    *zhi*                    *chen*                    *ye*  
like      such              NOM                  frank                  minister              FIN

*shi*      *wei*      *liu-zheng*              *ye*  
this      call      six-integrities      FIN

*ru-ci-zhe*      *wang*      *guo*      *zhi*                  *chen*                  *ye*                  *shi*      *wei*                  *liu-xie*  
like-such      destroy      country      POSS                  minister              FIN      this      call      six-evils

People like this are loyal ministers; these six people are called the “six integrities” ... People like this are the people who will destroy the country; these six people are called the “six evils.”

<sup>109</sup> Causer will be simplified as C in this chapter.



establish NAME DISP become official name

[He] made Zhou Zhiqiao become the Rong You (i.e., established him as high official).

172. 晋立太子州蒲以为君。(Zuozhuan 左传. Chenggong 成公 10; quoted from Onishi 2005: 89)

*Jin li tai-zi Zhou-pu yi wei jun*

Jin-state establish prince NAME DISP become king

The state of Jin made the prince Zhou Pu the king of the state.

173. 使孔成子、宁惠子立敬姒之子衎以为太子。(Zuozhuan 左传. Chenggong 成公 14; quoted from Onishi 2005: 89)

*shi Kong-Chengzi Ning-Huizi li jing-si*

order NAME NAME establish Jing-lady

*zhi zi Kan yi wei tai-zi*

MODI son NAME DISP become prince

[The duke of Cheng] ordered Kong Chengzi and Ning Huizi to establish the son of Lady Jing as the prince (i.e., make him the prince).

There is also one example of “C *li* (X) *wei* Y” (without *yi*):

174. (郑人) 立子产为卿。(Zuozhuan 左传. Xianggong 襄公 19; quoted from Onishi 2005: 89)

*(Zheng ren) li Zi-Chan wei qing*

Zheng people establish NAME be minister

(The people of Zheng) established Zi Chan as their minister (i.e., to be the minister).

Onishi (2005: 90) speculates that “C *li* (X) *wei* Y” results from the omission of *yi* in “C *li* (X) *yi wei* Y.” I agree with his opinion. In order to show this development, a statistic of the use of V (X) *yi wei* and V (X) *wei* is provided in Table 22. I choose *li* 立 “establish” as a representative verb.

**Table 22 The development from *li* (X) *yi wei* Y to *li* (X) *wei* Y**

	<i>li</i> (X) <i>yi wei</i> Y	<i>li</i> (X) <i>wei</i> Y	Ratio
<i>Zuozhuan</i>	3	1	3:1
<i>Guoyu</i>	3	0	3:0
<i>Mozi</i>	7	9	1:1.3
<i>Xunzi</i>	2	1	2:1
<i>Zhanguo</i>	5	19	1:3.8
<i>Shiji</i>	1	259	1:259

Note: The data of *Shiji* are based on Onishi (2005: 90).

In Table 22 it is shown that *li* (X) *yi wei* Y was used more frequently than *li* (X) *wei* Y in pre-Qin times, but in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. the ratio gradually became reversed and by the time of the *Shiji* the construction *li* (X) *yi wei* Y had become nearly obsolete whereas “C *li* (X) *wei* Y” had a very high frequency (259 occurrences).

The development from “C *li* (X) *yi wei* Y” to “C *li* (X) *wei* Y” indicates that *wei* equates to “*yi wei*” to a certain degree. Therefore, the notion that *wei* absorbed the features of the “*yi X wei* Y” construction is feasible. In fact, “V (X) *yi wei* Y” was increasingly simplified into “V (X) *wei* Y” (e.g., *li* 立, *feng* 封, *ju* 举, etc.). Note that *wei* in “C *li* (X) *wei* Y” (Example 174) functions more like a copula than it does in “C *li* (X) *yi wei* Y” (Examples 171, 172, 173).

The relationship between the characteristics of the “*yi X wei* Y” construction and *wei*’s copula function is not accidental; rather, it indicates that there is a close link between the development of the “*yi X wei* Y” construction and the formation of *wei*’s copula function. Xie (2012: 63) concludes that several paths of grammaticalization might have led to *wei*’s development into a copula. I believe that the “*yi X wei* Y” construction was at least one of those paths.

#### **4. THE FEATURES OF “WEI V” AND THE RELATED WEI COPULA CONSTRUCTIONS**

In the previous section, I showed that *wei* developed into a copula in parallel with the development of the “*yi X wei* Y” disposal construction. Usually, *wei* – when used as a copula – should be followed by a nominal element. However, on occasion, verbal elements are also observed after *wei*. This phenomenon has resulted in many scholarly debates. One group of linguists argues that it constitutes a copula construction just like “*wei* N,” i.e., the verbal element after *wei* is nominalized; another group views it as a passive construction. In an attempt to resolve this issue, I will first discuss the arguments in the “*yi X wei* Y” construction.

## 4.1 The Arguments in the “*yi X wei Y*” Construction

The three arguments involved in the “C[auser] *yi X wei Y*” construction are determined by both *yi* and *wei* (Wei 1997: 563). The relationships between these arguments are as follows: C is the subject of *yi*; X is the object of *yi* as well as the subject of *wei*; and Y is the object of *wei* (Onishi 2005: 80). Therefore, when C is presented, *yi* must appear. However, when C is not presented, the presence of *yi* is optional. This is illustrated in the following examples.

175. 郑伯将以高渠弥为卿。(Zuozhuan 左传. Huangong 桓公 17)

*Zheng-bo*      *jiang*      *yi*      *Gao-Qumi*      *wei*                      *qing*  
 NAME C      will      DISP NAME      hold→become      minister

Lord Zheng will make Gao Qumi hold the ministerial position (i.e., make Gao Qumi the minister).

Example (175) is an example of an integrated “C *yi X wei Y*” construction.

176. [襄] 王德狄人，将以其女为后。(Guoyu 国语. Zhouyu 周语)

[Xiang] *wang*                      *de*                      *Di-ren*  
 [Xiang] king C                      be-thankful                      Di-people  
*jiang*      *yi*      *qi-nü*                      *wei*                      *hou*  
 will      DISP      his-daughter                      hold→become                      queen

King Xiang thanks the Di people, and he will make his daughter hold the position as the queen (i.e., make her the queen).

In (176), although *yi* is present, the causer does not appear in the second part of the sentence.

177. 曲沃武公伐翼，次于陘庭，韩万御戎，梁弘为右。(Zuozhuan 左传. Huangong 桓公 3)

*qu-wo*                      *Wu-gong*                      *fa*      *yi*  
 place name      lord-Wu C                      attack      NAME  
*ci*      *yu*                      *Jing-ting*  
 stop      PREP                      NAME  
*Han-Wan*                      *yu-rong*                      *Liang-Hong*                      *wei*                      *you*  
 NAME                      APP                      NAME                      hold→become                      APP

Lord Wu from Qu Wo is going to attack Yi, and the troops are stationed at Jing Ting, [Lord Wu makes] Han Wan hold the *yu* Rong position (i.e., makes Han Wan *yu* Rong), [Lord Wu makes] Liang Hong hold the You position (i.e., makes Liang Hong You).

In Example (177), the duke of Wu is the causer, and the causative notion is very strong in this sentence. However, there is no *yi* because the causer does not occur with *wei* in the same clause.

Another example from the later *Shiji* text illustrates this convention even more clearly:

178. 怀王乃以宋义为上将军，项羽为次将，范增为末将，北救赵。(Shiji 史记. Gaozu benji 高祖本纪)

<i>Huai-wang</i>	<i>nai</i>	<i>yi</i>	<i>Song-Yi</i>	<i>wei</i>	<i>shang-jiang-jun</i>
Huai-king C	then	DISP	NAME	hold→become	chief-commander
<i>Xiang-Yu</i>				<i>wei</i>	<i>ci-jiang</i>
NAME				hold→become	second-commander
<i>Fan-Zeng</i>				<i>wei</i>	<i>mo-jiang</i>
NAME				hold→become	final-commander
<i>bei</i>	<i>jiu</i>	<i>zhao</i>			
north	rescue	Zhao-country			

King [Chu] Huai then made Song Yi hold the chief commander position (i.e., become the chief commander); [made] Xiang *yu* hold the second commander position (i.e., become the second commander); [and made] Fan Zeng hold the final commander position (i.e., become final commander), and go to rescue the state of Zhao in the north.”

Here, in the first part of the passage, there is an integrated “C *yi* X *wei* Y” construction, while in the second and third parts there is just “X *wei* Y (i.e., without C and *yi*).” Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the full structures of *Xiang Yu wei ci jiang* 项羽为次将 “Xiang Yu hold the second commander position” and *Fan Zeng wei mo jiang* 范增为末将 “Fan Zeng hold the final commander position” should be *Huai wang yi Xiang Yu wei ci jiang* 怀王以项羽为次将 “King (Chu) Huai made Xiang Yu hold the second commander position (i.e., become the second commander)” and *Huai wang yi Fan Zeng wei mo jiang* 怀王以范增为末将 “King (Chu) Huai made Fan Zeng hold the final commander position (i.e., become final commander),” respectively.

From the above analysis, I suggest that there are three possibilities (a, b and c below) in both the positive and the negative disposal constructions, depending on the position of the causer (i.e., C): a) when the causer occurs with *wei* in one clause, then *yi* is obligatory to form the “C *yi* X *wei* Y” construction; when the causer is mentioned in the context but does not occur with *wei* in the same clause, there are two further possibilities, namely, b) “C, ..., *yi* X *wei* Y”; and c) “C, ..., X *wei* Y.”

Generally, only when the causer co-occurs with *wei* in the same clause, then *yi* is obligatory; otherwise, *yi* is optional. Therefore, b and c are two equal options based on the specific context, but not necessarily two usages of a “diachronic” development.

## 4.2 The Relationship between the “*yi* X *wei* V” Construction and the “X *wei* V” Construction

In the above section, I outlined three possibilities depending on whether the causer is present with *wei* in the same clause. The situation is the same for the “*yi* X *wei* Y” negative disposal. See (179-181) below.

179. 楚人将以叔孙穆子为戮。(Guoyu 国语. Luyu 鲁语)

<i>Chu-ren</i>	<i>jiang</i>	<i>yi</i>
Chu-people C	will	DISP
<i>Shu-Sunmuzi</i>	<i>wei</i>	<i>lu</i>
NAME	become	someone who deserves to die

The people of Chu will make Shusun Muzi become somebody destined to die.

180. 必以仲几为戮。(Zuozhuan 左传. Dinggong 定公 1)

<i>bi</i>	<i>yi</i>	<i>Zhong-Ji</i>
certainly	DISP	NAME
<i>wei</i>	<i>lu</i>	
become	someone who deserves to die	

Certainly, [the king] will make Zhong Ji become the one who deserves to die (i.e., delinquent).

181. 晋人，虎狼也，若背其言，臣死，妻子为戮。(Zuozhuan 左传. Wengong 文公 13)

<i>Jin-ren</i>	<i>hu</i>	<i>lang</i>	<i>ye</i>		
Jin-people C	tiger	wolf	FIN		
<i>ruo bei</i>	<i>qi</i>	<i>yan</i>	<i>chen</i>	<i>si</i>	
if disobey	his	swear	servant	die	
<i>qi-zi</i>	<i>wei</i>	<i>lu</i>			
wife-child	become	someone who deserves to die			

The people of Jin [are] tigers and wolves, if [you] go against his oath, your servant (i.e., I) will die, my wife and children will become the ones who deserve to die.

Accordingly, I hypothesize that “X *wei* V” is an alternative of “*yi* X *wei* V” when the causer does not appear with *wei* in the same clause.<sup>110</sup> I find three additional evidences to support this hypothesis. First, “*yi* X *wei* V” and “X *wei* V” have the same low frequency: no more than fifty examples of “*wei* V” have been found in the ten pre-Qin works, indicating that these constructions were not as popular as previous scholars had claimed. The same can be said of the “*yi* X *wei* V” construction (see Table 23). Second, the V in “*yi* X *wei* V” and especially in “*wei* V” is extremely limited in semantic range. For instance, in the latter construction, *wei lu* and *wei xiao* (*lu* 戮 “kill,” *xiao* 笑 “laugh”) account for 70 percent of all examples,<sup>111</sup> while *wei you* and *wei huan* (*you* 忧, *huan* 患 both “worry”) account for another 20 percent. A number of other verbs appear only once or twice. A similar pattern is evident in the use of the “*yi* X *wei* V” construction (see Table 23). Third, the “*yi* X *wei* V” and “*wei* V” constructions are so closely related to each other that almost all of the “*wei* V” examples could be expressed in the “*yi* X *wei* V” construction without changing the core meaning.

<sup>110</sup> Wei (1994: 305) and Yao (1998: 536–555) have a similar viewpoint. *Wei* hypothesizes that the latter construction (X *wei* V) may have originated from the former (*yi* X *wei* V). Similarly, Yao also states that “X *wei* V” may be related to “*yi* X *wei* V.” Both of them realized the close link between the two constructions, but they ignored the special context which is elaborated on here. Moreover, none of them provided persuasive evidence for this surmise but merely mention this point briefly.

<sup>111</sup> In this section, I use *lu* 戮 as a representative verb because it occurs with relatively high frequency. The characters *lu* 戮 and *lu* 𠄎 seem to be interchangeable in many texts.

**Table 23** The frequency of “*yi X wei V*”, “*wei V*” and “*wei A V*” in pre-Qin texts

pattern V	<i>Yi X wei V</i>	<i>Yi wei V</i>	<i>Wei V</i>	<i>Wei A V</i>	Total	Ratio
<i>Lu</i> 戮	5	6	24	9	44	0.372
<i>Xiao</i> 笑	0	4	2	21	27	0.228
<i>Huan</i> 患	3	0	9	0	12	0.101
<i>Yong</i> 用	2	0	0	8	10	0.084
<i>Qin</i> 禽/擒	0	0	3	4	7	0.059
<i>You</i> 忧	0	1	2	0	3	0.025
<i>Ru</i> 辱	2	0	0	0	2	0.016
<i>Kun</i> 困	0	0	0	1	1	0.008
<i>Huo</i> 获	0	0	0	1	1	0.008
<i>Shi</i> 食	0	0	0	1	1	0.008
<i>Lie</i> 裂	0	0	0	1	1	0.008
<i>Ge</i> 割	0	0	2	0	2	0.016
<i>Yi</i> 役	1	0	0	0	1	0.008
<i>Shi</i> 弑	2	0	0	0	2	0.016
<i>Tao</i> 讨	0	1	0	0	1	0.008
<i>Qing</i> 请	0	1	0	0	1	0.008
<i>Zai</i> 载	0	0	0	1	1	0.008
<i>Yu</i> 愚	1	0	0	0	1	0.008
Total	16	13	42	47	118	1

*Note:* Most of the examples are from the ten pre-Qin texts.

If the hypothesis is correct, then “*wei V*” is a copula construction rather than a passive construction. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that “*wei V*” is used in parallel with “*wei N*.” This is illustrated in the following example.

182. 其为圣人于晋而为戮于秦也。(Hanfeizi 韩非子. Shuonan 说难)

<i>qi</i>	<i>wei</i>	<i>sheng-ren</i>	<i>yu</i>	<i>Jin</i>	<i>er</i>	
he	be	sage	PREP	Jin-country	but	
<i>wei</i>		<i>lu</i>		<i>yu</i>	<i>Qin</i>	<i>ye</i>
become		someone who deserves to die		PREP	Qin-country	FIN

He was a sage in [the state of] Jin, but became someone deserving death in Qin.

Tang and Zhou (1985: 283) interpret an example like *wei lu yu qin* 为戮于秦 as “*wei* V *yu* N” structure, in which *wei* is a passive marker. However, this is a parallel sentence and the first part – *wei sheng ren yu jin* 为圣人于晋 – is unquestionably a copula sentence, so *wei lu yu qin* 为戮于秦 should be regarded as a copula sentence, too. Indeed, translating it into “was killed in Qin” would be misleading, because the emphasis in the sentence is on the *change of situation* and the contrast between *sheng ren* 圣人 “sage” and *lu* 戮 “somebody deserving to die.” As such, it is tempting to translate it as a noun phrase in order to maintain the parallel structure. The semantics of the sentence in its context *do not suggest* that the sage had been actually killed at the time of the speech act (as a passive interpretation would indicate); interpreting *wei* as a passive marker and the phrase as passive construction distorts its meaning.

183. 子鱼曰：“射为背师不射为戮，射为礼乎。”(Zuozhuan 左传. Xianggong 襄公 14)

<i>Zi-Yu</i>	<i>yue</i>	<i>she</i>	<i>wei</i>	<i>bei</i>	<i>shi</i>
NAME	say	shooting	be	disobey	teacher
<i>bu</i>	<i>she</i>	<i>wei</i>	<i>lu</i>		
not	shooting	become	someone who deserves to die		
<i>she</i>	<i>wei</i>	<i>li</i>	<i>hu</i>		
shooting	be	ritual	FIN		

Zi yu said: “Shooting will be disrespectful to my teacher; not shooting, I will become somebody deserving to die. Is it ritually correct if I shoot?”

In example (183), there are three parallel constructions that are more complex than in the previous sentence: the first phrase after *wei* is a “V-O” construction (“turn one’s back to the teacher”); then, in the second and third parts, *wei* is clearly linking elements together. Therefore, simply treating *wei* as a passive marker and “*wei* V” as a passive construction is very inappropriate here. This sentence also neatly illustrates that in *Zuozhuan* the element after *wei* can be a complex phrase.



Moreover, there are also several examples (in *Guoyu*, *Hanfeizi*, *Shiji*, etc.) where *lu* is modified by the adjective *da* 大 “large, great.” In TLS,<sup>112</sup> *da lu* is correctly translated nominally as “large-scale public execution” or “great punishment” as illustrated in (184).

184. 斩司马子反以为大戮。(Hanfeizi 韩非子. Shiguo 十过)

<i>zhan</i>	<i>Sima-Zifan</i>	<i>yi</i>	<i>wei</i>	<i>da</i>	<i>lu</i>
chop	NAME	DISP	become	big	execution

He had Sima Zifan cut up in a large-scale public execution. (tr. based on TLS)

Given all of the evidence outlined above, I am firmly convinced that *wei* is a (semi-) copula in the “*wei V*” construction rather than a passive marker. Therefore, “*wei V*” is, in essence, a copula construction, not a passive construction. Although the “*wei V*” construction has potentiality to become a passive, that is, it can be translated as passive in English and Modern Mandarin, it could not develop into a real passive marker because its relationship with “*yi X wei V*” was so close that it could not avoid its continued influence. The conclusion that *wei V* is not a specific syntactic construction for passive voice is further proven by the use of the *wei V* construction in active sentences.

### 4.3 The *wei V* construction in active sentence

The *wei V* construction can also be used in sentences with agent subjects, as shown in the following two contrasting examples from Xu (2006: 104).<sup>113</sup>

185. 弗胜为笑。(Zuozhuan 左传. Xianggong 襄公 10)

<i>fu</i>	<i>sheng</i>	<i>wei</i>	<i>xiao</i>
NEG	win	wei	laugh

If we do not win the battle, we will be laughed at by others.

<sup>112</sup> Example 184 is taken from TLS, accessed on May 10<sup>th</sup> 2016 at <http://tls.uni-hd.de/procSearch/procSearchLexEntryAtt.lasso>.

<sup>113</sup> As already mentioned, sometimes *wei V* is more convenient to be translated as passive in English translation, however, it is unjustified to be defined as passive marker.

186. 赵为号，秦为笑。(Shiji 史记. Zhao shijia 赵世家)

Zhao wei hao Qin wei xiao

Zhao be cry Qin wei laugh

The state of Zhao cries while the state of Qin laughs.

While the N+wei+xiao structure is in both examples (185) and (186), in example (185), the subject is the patient of xiao 笑, while in (186), the subject is definitely an agent of xiao 笑.

Although Xu's observation is interesting, there are two problems. First, the definitions for the nature of wei in both sentences were somewhat inaccurate. The wei in Example (185) is not necessarily a passive marker as discussed before and the wei in Example (186) cannot justifiably be defined as "be or become" as it is a verb that has the full but generalized meaning "act" with the following element being a zhi cheng hua cheng fen 指称化成分 "referential component." Second, while Xu gave this example, the occurrences were not systematically examined. After examining large amounts of data, such occurrences were found to be quite common.

Another example is wei zhi 为制. In this section, all examples are classified into two groups: (a) examples in which the subject is the patient; and (b) examples with an agent subject.

Group (a): Patient subject. Only the underlined part is translated word by word due to limited space.

187. 秦少出兵，则晋、楚不信也；多出兵，则晋、楚为制于秦。(Zhanguo ce 战国策. Qince 秦策)

Jin Chu wei zhi yu Qin

NAME NAME wei control yu NAME

If Qin contributes only a few troops to the undertaking, then Jin and Chu will not trust it, and if it contributes a large number of troops, then Jin and Chu will become the countries that state Qin controls  
→ Jin and Chu will be overshadowed by Qin.

188. 如是而听之，则臣为制也。(Yanzi chunqiu 晏子春秋. Jianshang si 谏上四)

ze chen wei zhi ye

then I wei control FIN

If I listen to his suggestions, then I will become the one he controls [not to drink any more]. → then I will be controlled [not to drink any more by him].

### Group (b): Agent subject<sup>114</sup>

189. 而道涂宋、卫为制。(Zhanguoce 战国策. Weice 魏策)

er dao tu Song Wei wei zhi  
then road road NAME NAME wei control

States Song and Wei are taking control of all roads to it.

190. 昨日之事子为制；今日之事我为制。(Lüshi chunqiu 吕氏春秋. Cawei 察微)

zuo-ri zhi shi zi wei zhi  
yesterday PART assignment you wei control  
jin-ri zhi shi wo wei zhi  
today PART assignment I wei control

You took control of the assignment for yesterday; I will take control of the assignment for today.

Interestingly, the group (b) examples are more common than the group (a) examples.

Another example is *wei hai* 为害, as shown in the following contrasting examples.

191. 此所以为之也。大(夫)有臣甚大, 将反为害。(Guanzi 管子. Chimi 侈靡)

fan jiang wei hai  
in-contrast will wei harm

This is the way to handle the situation. “Now,” said the duke, “as a minister becomes more important, so he becomes a more likely target for harm.” → he will be harmed.

192. 暖气早来, 虫螟为害。(Liji 礼记. Yueling 月令)

nuan qi zao lai chong ming wei hai  
hot air early come caterpillar insect wei harm

The hot airs would come too early; and caterpillars and other insects would harm the grain.

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<sup>114</sup> More examples are shown below.

1. *Ze shi fu ren wei zhi ye* 则是妇人为制也。(Yanzi chunqiu 晏子春秋. Neipian 内篇) “This suggests that the woman is taking control of the country.”
2. *Duo yong zhe ze wei zhi er yi* 多勇者则为制耳矣。(Lüshi chunqiu 吕氏春秋. Shenxing lun 慎行论) “The brave ones will take control of the un-brave ones.”
3. *Ling chen yi wai, wei zhi yu nei* 令臣以外, 为制于内。(Hanfeizi 韩非子. Bajian 八奸) “One allows the ministers, on the basis of external considerations, to take control of matters within the country.”

In example (191) the subject is the target of *hai* 害, while in (192) the subject is the agent of *hai*.

Even the “*wei* V+*yu*+N” structure, i.e., the *wei* V construction followed by the *yu* phrase, behaves similarly. The three following contrasting examples prove that “*wei* V *yu* N” is generally presented in sentences with active meanings.

193. 帅群不吊之人，以行乱于王室。(Zuozhuan 左传. Zhaogong 昭公 6)

*yi*            *xing*    *luan*            *yu*    *wang*    *shi*  
in-order-to   act        disorder    *yu*    royal    house

They thus led on their merciless cliques, and threw the royal house into disorder.

194. 周儋翩率王子朝之徒，因郑人将以作乱于周。(Zuozhuan 左传. Dingong 定公 6)

*yin*    *Zheng*    *ren*    *jiang*    *yi*            *zuo*    *luan*    *yu*    *Zhou*  
rely-on   NAME    people   will   in-order-to   act   disorder   *yu*   NAME

Tan Pian of Zhou had led on the adherents of king (King’s) son Chao and endeavored by the assistance of Zheng to raise an insurrection in Zhou.

195. 庆丰为乱于齐而欲走越。(Hanfeizi 韩非子. Shuolin shang 说林上)

*Qing-Feng*    *wei*    *luan*            *yu*    *Qi*        *er*    *yu*    *zou*    *Yue*  
NAME        act        disorder    *yu*    NAME    and    plan    flee    NAME

Qingfeng had organized a political upheaval in Qi and wanted to flee to Yue.

In (195), *wei* 为 has a function that is similar to *xing* 行 “act” and *zuo* 作 “act.” Therefore, *wei luan yu Qi* 为乱于齐 “organized a political upheaval in Qi” definitely has an active meaning, just like Examples (193) and (194).

The following pair of contrasting examples for “*wei* V *yu*” respectively express an active meaning and a passive meaning.

196. 秦少出兵，则晋、楚不信也；多出兵，则晋、楚为制于秦。(Zhanguoce 战国策. Qince 秦策)

*Jin*            *Chu*        *wei*    *zhi*            *yu*    *Qin*  
NAME    NAME    *wei*    control    *yu*    NAME

If Qin contributes only a few troops to the undertaking, then Jin and Chu will not trust it, and if it contributes a large number of troops, then Jin and Chu will be overshadowed by Qin.

197. 令臣以外，为制于内。(Hanfeizi 韩非子. Bajian 八奸)

*wei zhi yu nei*  
act control *yu* inside

If one allows the ministers, on the basis of external considerations, take control of matters within the country.

In the above examples, both examples have “N+*wei* V+*yu*+N” structure; however, (196) has a passive meaning, but (197) is used in an active context.<sup>115</sup>

Summing up, the *wei* V is not justified to be analyzed as a passive construction in Ancient Chinese, as elaborated in Sections 4.1 and 4.2. Meanwhile, the presence of *wei* before V does not trigger a passive reading, as shown in Section 4.3. Therefore, the passive reading is dependent on the context, which further proves that *wei* V could not justifiably be defined as a specific syntactic structure for the passive voice in Ancient Chinese. As analyzed before, the degree of grammaticalization of *wei* to be a passive marker is quite low, which suggests that *wei* V should still be interpreted as a copula construction in Ancient Chinese.

#### 4.4 Related *wei* Copula Constructions

Clearly, then, “*wei* V” functions equally with “*yi* X *wei* V” when the causer appears with *wei* in the same clause, which means that *wei* should be interpreted as a copula. Below, several constructions that are closely related with “*wei* V” are explored that have also been interpreted as passives in previous studies; however, here, a different view is proposed.

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<sup>115</sup> Note that the presence of *wei* does not really influence the semantic of sentences with active meanings. See the following two contrasting examples.

a. 齐...攻于楚也。(Zhanguoce 战国策. Hance yi 韩策一)

*Qi gong yu chu ye*  
NAME attack *yu* NAME FIN

The state of Qi attacked the state of Chu.

b. 欲为攻于魏。(Zhanguoce 战国策. Chuce yi 楚策一)

*yu wei gong yu wei*  
plan *wei* attack *yu* NAME

[I] plan to attack the state of Wei.

According to the two contrasting examples above, we know that the presence or absence of *wei* does not change the meaning of the sentence.

#### 4.4.1 Wei A V construction

Scholars (e.g., Jiang 2012a: 42)<sup>116</sup> have speculated that the “wei A V” construction was formed by adding A into a “wei V” construction to emphasize the agent. While such a hypothesis seems plausible, there is a problem, that is, what is the mechanism and motivation for such an addition? Actually, the agent could be introduced by using *yu* as in the *jian* construction (i.e., *jian* V+*yu*+agent), which does not develop a *jian* A V structure. Therefore, this speculation may be not true.

“Wei A V” probably also derived from the “*yi* X *wei* Y” construction, because I find some examples of “*yi* X *wei* A V” in the texts.

198. 以为天下诸侯僇。(Mozi 墨子. Minggui xia 明鬼下)

*yi wei tian-xia zhu-hou lu*

DISP become world feudal execution

[King Wu] made [him (i.e., king Zhou)] become a person that the feudal lords in the world execute.  
→ become the disgrace of the feudal lords.

A passive reading will be mistaken here. There is no concrete agent and “be killed by (all) the feudal lords of the world” does not make sense. What is clearly meant here is that he will turn into a person whom everybody will regard as deserving death (i.e., a serious decline in social status). This is also evidenced by the sentence below which has an identical construction.

199. 杀无罪以为诸侯笑。(Guoyu 国语. Jinyu 晋语)

*sha wu zui yi wei zhu-hou xiao*

kill NEG guilty DISP become feudal-lord laugh

[Lady Li] killed an innocent person and made [Lord Jinxian] become a person that the feudal lords laugh at. → become the laughing stock of the feudal lords.

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<sup>116</sup> The original resource is shown here.

只有把“为”看做动词，将“戮”看做名词，才能较好地解释“为戮”结构中加名词现象的产生。Accordingly, we know that he treated *wei* A V as a process of “adding noun” into the structure “*wei* V”.

In Examples (198) and (199), two possible interpretations are provided: (1) relative clause interpretation and (2) genitive relationship interpretation. Accordingly, *wei* A V equals to *wei* A *suo* V in (1), while in (2) *wei* A V equals to *wei* A *zhi* V. Interpretation (1) is easy to understand, while interpretation (2) requires the justification of the fact that *xiao* 笑 can be explained as a noun meaning “laughing stock” and *lu* 戮 can be explained as a noun meaning “disgrace / somebody deemed to be executed”. Since *xiao* 笑 is commonly used as a noun meaning “laughing stock”, it is not discussed any further. Here, I mainly focus on whether *lu* 戮 can be interpreted as a noun meaning “disgrace”. That it indeed can have this meaning is proved by the fact that *lu* 戮 can be modified by an adjective. See example (200).

200. 然而身死国亡，为天下大僇。(Xunzi 荀子. Feixiang 非相)

*ran-er shen si guo wang wei tian-xia da lu*  
 but body die state perish become world big disgrace

But I will die and the state will perish, becoming the world’s large-scale disgrace. (TLS: “They are now regarded as the greatest of criminals”)

Three similar examples occur in *Xunzi* 荀子, with *zhi* 之 appearing between *tian xia* 天下 and *da lu* 大戮 in each case. See example (201).

201. 身死国亡，为天下之大戮。(Xunzi 荀子. Wangba 王霸)

*shen si guo wang wei tian-xia zhi da lu*  
 body die state perish become world PART big disgrace

I will die and the state will perish, it will become the world’s big disgrace. (TLS: “became the greatest objects of scorn in the whole world”)

In such cases, *lu* 僇 as a noun meaning “disgrace” or “dishonor” is obvious. Actually, it is also justified to interpret *lu* as a noun (or nominalized verb) in many of the examples that appear in this chapter.<sup>117</sup> Therefore, A+V in *wei* A V could be

<sup>117</sup> It should be noted that an object or a complementizer can follow V in some examples. For instance:

1. 今为赤弟子斩之，故哭。(Shiji 史记. Gaozu benji 高祖本纪)  
*jin wei chi di zi zhan zhi gu ku*  
 Now PASS red emperor son cut PRON therefore cry  
 Now [my son Baidizi] is killed by Chidizi, therefore, I am crying.

in a genitive relationship, this is why *wei* A V is commonly thought as a precursor of *bei* A V.

However, A and V in the *wei* A V construction are not always in a genitive relationship. In some examples, the “A+V” phrase after *wei* is a nominalized *relative clause* meaning “the one that A ‘has V+ed’ or ‘will+V’ .” For example:

202. 不为酒困。(Lunyu 论语. Zihan 子罕)

*bu wei jiu kun*

neg. *wei* wine get-into-trouble

[I will never] become the one that the wine troubles (> I will never be troubled by wine).<sup>118</sup>

In such a case, *wei* A V is actually equal to *wei* A *suo* V. In Ancient Chinese, the *relative clause* is normally marked with *suo* 所 and *zhe* 者, thus the unmarked *wei* A V structure was quite marginal. By contrast, *wei* A *suo* V (with the marker *suo* 所) was widespread. Based on this fact, as well as the characteristics of the development of all related *wei* constructions, I prefer to analyze A+V in a relative clause relationship, which is different from A+V in *bei* A V construction (see more discussion in Chapter 3, Part 3).<sup>119</sup>

Similar to the “*wei* V” construction, there are a very few examples of “*wei* A V” in the corpus, employing a very small number of verbs. Noting that, the A in this construction is limited to *tian xia* 天下 “world,” *zhu hou* 诸侯 “feudal lords” and *ren* 人 “people,” most of which are quite general (i.e., non-specific). Hence, it

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However, such examples appear in no texts prior to *Shiji* (Han dynasty). I believe these examples are influenced by the “*wei* A *suo* V” construction which became a real passive since the period of the *Shiji*. Therefore, they are not antagonistic to the hypothesis that pre-Qin era “*wei* A V” constructions are copula constructions. This point is studied more in the discussion and conclusion of part 2.

<sup>118</sup> However, *wei* in this example can also be interpreted as meaning “because”, therefore the sentence should translate as “I do not get into trouble on account of wine.” A clearer example should be the following one.

道术将为天下裂。(Zhuangzi 庄子. Tianxia 天下)

*dao shu jiang wei tian-xia lie*

Daoism arts will become world divide

The techniques of the Dao will be divided by the world.

<sup>119</sup> As mentioned in the *bei* chapter, the A+V phrase in the *bei* A V structure was only possible in a “genitive relationship”.



is very difficult to find concrete and specific agents in this construction. For instance:

203. 若为诸侯戮者，鲁诛尽矣。(Guoyu 国语. Jinyu 晋语)

*ruo wei zhu-hou lu zhe*  
if become feudal lords die/expose as criminal NOM

*Lu zhu jin yi*  
Lu-country massacre finish FIN

If [I] become the one whom the feudal lords kill, [then] the massacre of the Lu country will end.

204. 夫听所信之言而子父为人僇。(Hanfeizi 韩非子. Neichushuo shang 内储说上)

*fu ting suo xin zhi yan*  
INI believe NOM believe MODI word

*er zi-fu wei ren lu*  
therefore son-father become people someone who deserves to die

Now, if one listens to words one trusts, then both the father and the son become those people exposed as criminals (i.e., they become someone people regard as criminals and who will be put to death).

#### 4.3.2 Wei A (zhi) suo V constructions

With respect to the “wei A (zhi) suo V” structure, *suo*’s function should be investigated first. In the pre-Qin period texts, *suo* is an important nominalizer that is placed before the verb and refers to the object of the verb: for example, *suo wen* 所闻 “what somebody hears” or *suo shuo* 所说 “what somebody says.”

“*Suo V*” is never used independently; it is always combined with other elements. There are three possible constructions, the first of which is “agent+*suo V*” (Example 205).

205. 鱼，我所欲也；熊掌，亦我所欲也。(Mengzi 孟子. Gaozi shang 告子上)

*yu wo suo yu ye*  
fish I NOM want FIN

*xiongzhang yi wo suo yu ye*  
bear’s paw also I NOM want FIN

I want fish; I also want bear’s paw.

The second construction is “agent+*zhi*+*suo* V” (Example 206).

206. 丘之所言，皆吾之所弃也。(Zhuangzi 庄子. Daozhi 盗跖)

*Qiu zhi suo yan jie wu zhi suo qi ye*  
NAME PART NOM say all I MODI NOM discard FIN

What Confucius said are all the things that I discard.

The third construction is “*suo* V+*zhe*” (Example 207).

207. 所乐者，身安厚味美服好色音声也。所下者，贫贱夭恶也。(Zhuangzi 庄子. Zhile 至乐)

*suo le zhe shen-an hou-wei*  
NOM like NOM healthy-body delicious-meal  
*mei-fu hao-sheng-yin ye*  
beautiful-clothes sweet-sound FIN  
*suo xia zhe pin jian yao wu ye*  
NOM dislike NOM poverty vulgarity short-life evil FIN

What people like are a healthy body, a delicious meal, beautiful clothes and a sweet sound; the things that people dislike are poverty, low status, a short life and evil.

Both “A *suo* V” and “A *zhi suo* V” can replace “A V” in the “*wei* A V” construction.<sup>120</sup> Therefore, “*wei* A *suo* V” and “*wei* A *zhi suo* V” can be found in pre-Qin period texts. See Examples (208) and (209) below.

208. 申徒狄谏而不听，负石自投于河，为鱼鳖所食。(Zhuangzi 庄子. Daozhi 盗跖)

*Shen-Tudi jian er bu ting*  
NAME counsel but not hear  
*fu shi zi tou yu he*  
hold stone self jump PREP river  
*wei yu bie suo shi*  
become fish turtle NOM eat

Shen Tudi gave advice, but he was not heeded; carrying a stone on his back, he jumped into the river, [where he] became the person whom the fish and turtles ate.

209. 故乐之所由来者尚也，非独为一世之所造也。(Lüshi chunqiu 吕氏春秋. Guyue 古乐)

<sup>120</sup> Again, if the A+V phrase in the *wei* V structure is not in a genitive relationship, then the replacement hypothesis is unjustified.

*gu yue zhi suo you-lai zhe shang ye*  
 so music MODI NOM originate NOM long FIN  
*fei du wei yi shi zhi suo zao ye*  
 not only is one generation PART NOM create FIN

Therefore, the origin of music lies in ancient times; it is not the creation of one generation.

Although “*suo V zhe*” is also a nominal phrase, and theoretically a nominal phrase could be placed after *wei*, there are no “*wei suo V zhe*” copula constructions in the pre-Qin texts.<sup>121</sup>

In this chapter, all of the *wei* constructions (i.e., “*wei V*,” “*wei A V*,” “*wei A suo V*” and “*wei A zhi suo V*”) have been analyzed as copula constructions, in which *wei* should be analyzed as a copula. Nevertheless, in later periods (from *Shiji* onwards), the “*wei A suo V*” construction developed into a kind of passive construction, in which *wei* was reanalyzed as a passive marker (a process which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter).

## 5. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have analyzed the development of the disposal function of *yi*, and have established that this was very important in the development of the copula function of *wei* in the “*yi X wei Y (N/V)*” construction. Furthermore, there are two main reasons for concluding that the copula function of *wei* derives from the “*yi X wei Y*” construction: first, the unique features of *wei* as a copula (i.e., human agent-induced, dynamics, subjective), which are congruent with its function in the “*yi X wei Y*” construction; and, second, the change from “*V yi wei*” to “*V wei*” (e.g., 立以为 to 立为) indicates that “*wei*” can replace “*yi wei*” to a certain degree.

<sup>121</sup> I found one example of “*wei suo V zhe*” in a pre-Qin text:

1. 为所后者之祖父母、妻。(Yili 仪礼. Sangfu 丧服)

*wei suo hou zhe zhi zu fu mu\qi*  
 for NOM heritage NOM MODI grandfather\grandmother\wife

Mourn] for the grandfather, grandmother and wife of the people from whom you are descended. Obviously, though, this example differs from the construction I discuss in this paper.

Additionally, I have concluded that the “X *wei* V” construction can be viewed as an alternative of the “*yi* X *wei* V” construction when the causer does not occur with *wei* in the same clause. This conclusion is further supported by three observations: both “*yi* X *wei* V” and “X *wei* V” occur infrequently in the texts; the Vs in both “*yi* X *wei* V” and “*wei* V” are similarly limited in semantic range; and the exchangeability between “*yi* X *wei* V” and “*wei* V” constructions will not impact their semantics. Therefore, “X *wei* V” should be regarded as a copula construction that can be used in parallel with “*wei* N” sentences. Although it is also possible and convenient to interpret “X *wei* V” as a patient subject sentence when *yi* is omitted, “*wei* V” never managed to escape the influence of the “*yi* X *wei* V” construction. That is why “*wei* V” failed to become a popular passive in pre-Han times.

In addition to the “*wei* V” construction, I have analyzed several other, related *wei* constructions. I have established that “*wei* A V” may be also formed by the omission of *yi* in *yi* X *wei* A V. Several examples of “*wei* A (*zhi*) *suo* V” date from the latter part of the Spring and Autumn period, and I believe that these emerged when “A *suo* V” replaced “A V” in “*wei* A V,” not because *suo* was added to the “*wei* A V” construction.

Overall, none of the *wei* constructions mentioned above syntactically indicates passive in the pre-Qin period. Nevertheless, “*wei* A *suo* V” did develop into a very common construction expressing passive meanings during the Han dynasty. This reanalysis was also facilitated by the semantic environment the construction appeared in, i.e., a change of situation into an unfavorable state somebody is subjected to or affected by. However, this development will be traced in the following chapter.

# CHAPTER 5: THE FUNCTIONAL EVOLUTION OF THE *WEI A SUO V* CONSTRUCTION

This chapter discusses the development of the *wei A suo V* construction from a copula construction to a passive construction. It has been assumed that the pre-Qin's *wei A suo V* construction was a copula construction, with the passive construction becoming more common during the Han dynasty. This assumption was supported by two observations. First, because (a) the copula function for *wei* was formed during pre-Qin times, and (b) *A suo V* was commonly used as a nominalized phrase in pre-Qin phrase, it was highly possible that *wei A suo V* was formed from the combination of the semi-copula *wei* and the nominalized phrase *A suo V*. Second, the *wei A suo V* construction initially appeared in a context that expressed a strong contrast and conveyed a negative state change; however, many factors favored its development into a passive construction: (1) the semantic similarity; (2) the patient subject in the syntax; and (3) the decreased use of a “strong contrast” and a “negative change of state” context. At the beginning of the Western Han dynasty, a transition stage from a copula to a passive was observed; however, from *Shiji* onward, the situation changed completely and the “*wei A suo V*” construction began to behave more like a passive construction than a copula construction as: (1) it was used much more freely without any X-R-X' context constraints; and (2) it has many new manifestations, that is, it could be followed by a location complement and a result complement and the V was modified by an adverb, which meant it could no longer appropriate be interpreted as a copula construction. However, it is doubtful that the *wei A suo V* construction is a fixed syntactic passive construction because of its: (1) object retention; and (2) combination with different passive markers.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The *wei A suo V* construction that originated in pre-Qin times and was used commonly during the Han dynasty has incited intense discussions in the field of Chinese linguistics. However, there is still no consistent conclusion as to the function

of the *wei* A *suo* V construction, with three main views being propounded in current studies.

The first view argues that this is a copula construction (Ma 1898 [2007], Lü [1959]2002, Li 1982, Yu 1987), which probably started with Ma's (1898 [2007]) example, *wei tai zi wei jiang chong suo bai* 卫太子为江充所败 (*Hanshu* 汉书. Huo Guang zhuan 霍光传), and the claim that *jiang chong suo bai* 江充所败 was a predicative element for the copula *wei*, that is, the *wei-suo* form is a “*wei* and a free relative clause form containing *suo*”; therefore, *wei* is treated either as the copula “be” or as the semi-copula “become” and *suo* in such constructions is as the *suo* in relative clauses (hereafter referred to as a “nominalizer”).<sup>122</sup> Therefore, this example would have the following reading:

210. 卫太子为江充所败之人。

<i>Wei tai-zi</i>	<i>wei</i>	<i>Jiang-chong</i>	<i>suo</i>	<i>bai</i>	<i>zhi</i>	<i>ren</i>
Wei prince	<i>wei</i>	NAME	<i>suo</i>	defeat	PART	person

The prince of *wei* was the person that Jiangchong defeated.

Lü ([1959]2002) supports Ma's conclusions, claiming that although *wei* A *suo* V can be interpreted as a passive in Modern Chinese, it should be regarded as a copula construction in Ancient Chinese as *suo* was a nominalizer and not an auxiliary before the verb. Li (1982) also supported the copula hypothesis and stated that *wei* was a verb but not a preposition or a conjunction, and *suo* was a nominalizer and not an auxiliary before a verb. The copula hypothesis is desirable as it does not seem to require any additional mechanism and explanation for the behavior of *wei* and *suo* in a *wei* A *suo* V construction. However, this hypothesis does not explain all examples, such as the new uses in *Shiji* and *Hanshu* in which the *wei* A *suo* V was followed by a complement (i.e., location, numeral) or the V in *wei* A *suo* V was followed by an object. In these cases, the passive sense becomes more pronounced while the copula interpretation is less appropriate, which is discussed in more detail in Section 5.

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<sup>122</sup> The definition for the function of *suo* is complex. In either approach, the function of *suo* results in a transformation of the *suo* V sequence into a nominal, which is construed as an object, locative, reason or manner expression associated with the predicate preceded by *suo*. In this chapter, I prefer to use the terminology “nominalizer” for the sake of convenience.

Because of the shortcomings of the copula approach, many scholars have taken the passive approach (Wang 1958 [1980], Peyraube 1989, Liu 1992, Zhang 2010, Han 1985, Sun 1992, Wei 1997, Zhang and Zhang 2003, Dong 1998), saying that the *wei* A *suo* V passive was formed based on the *wei* A V passive, which would make the *wei* A *suo* V passive similar to other passive types, e.g., *jian* V passive. For example:

211. 卫太子见败于江充。

*Wei tai-zi jian bai yu Jiang-chong*

Wei prince *jian* defeat *yu* NAME

The prince of *wei* was defeated by Jiangchong.

The passive approach can avoid the problems associated with the copula approach, with examples that cannot be explained using the copula approach able to be conveniently interpreted as passives. However, the question is, how is the *suo* function in this construction defined? There have been two main arguments for the function of *suo* in the passive approach depending on the interpretation. The first group, represented by Wang (1958 [1980]), believes that *wei* A *suo* V originated from the pre-Qin *wei* A V passive through the addition of *suo* in front of the V. Wang claimed that *suo* was not an auxiliary until it was added to the *wei* A V passive structure. However, the disadvantage of this argument is that the assumption of an abrupt functional change in *suo* from a nominalizer to an auxiliary does not follow the gradual-change language development principle. The second group, represented by Sun (1992), claimed that *wei* A *suo* V = *wei* A V + *suo* V, in which the “*suo* V” indirectly expressed the passive. However, there are very few examples in which a passive auxiliary *suo* is verified. In contrast, some scholars have explicitly stressed that *suo* could *not* have been a passive until the *wei* A *suo* V passive occurred;<sup>123</sup> therefore, this hypothesis is also unacceptable.

Based on the insufficiency of these copula and passive approaches, many scholars realized that the *wei* A *suo* V construction should be studied from a diachronic perspective (Bian 2002, Gao 2002, Fang 2002, Jiang 2012a), that is, the *wei* A *suo* V was initially a copula construction and later became a passive construction. Bian

<sup>123</sup> Zhu (1995) thought that *suo* V passive was frequently used in Buddhist scriptures and that it was very difficult to find in non-Buddhist scriptures.

(2002) assumed that the copula *wei* and nominalized entity A *suo* V combination resulted in the copula construction *wei* A *suo* V,<sup>124</sup> and suggested that all *wei* A *suo* V examples were copulas in the pre-Qin as *wei* was a copula and *suo* V functioned as a nominal phrase. As the *wei* A *suo* V was significantly influenced by the *wei* A and *wei* A V passives, it gradually assumed a passive function. This hypothesis avoids the problems mentioned in the passive and the copula approaches; however, Bian's opinion failed to attract linguistic attention because: (1) the explanation as to why *wei* A *suo* V was initially a copula construction was not convincing; and (2) the conclusion that the *wei* A *suo* V copula became a passive because of the influence of *wei* V and *wei* A V passives was doubtful as it had been proven that *wei* V and *wei* A V were not passives in pre-Qin times (e.g., Zeng and Anderl 2019). Therefore, this chapter examines why *wei* A *suo* V had been an initial copula construction in Ancient Chinese, and then explains why it developed into a passive construction in the Han dynasty.

This chapter is organized as follows. Section 2 examines two aspects as to why *wei* A *suo* V became a copula construction by: (1) studying the possibility of the copula *wei* and the nominalized element combination; and (2) further proving this observation through a specific X-R-X' context.<sup>125</sup> Section 3 examines the conditions needed for *wei* A *suo* V to develop into a passive construction and also describes the transitory stage from the copula construction to the passive construction at the beginning of the Western Han dynasty. Section 4 examines the occurrences in *Shiji* and *Hanshu*, concludes that *wei* A *suo* V became a construction expressing the passive meaning from the time of the *Shiji* onward, and reviews the many new construction developments in these two texts. Section 5 elucidates the advantages of this hypothesis, Section 6 introduces some particularities of the *wei* A *suo* V passive construction, and Section 7 concludes this chapter.

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<sup>124</sup> Represented by Bian (2002), it was assumed that copula *wei*+nominalized entity A (*zhi*) *suo* V resulted in the copula construction *wei* A (*zhi*) *suo* V. Accordingly, Bian also assumed that the *wei* A *zhi* *suo* V construction consisted of the copula *wei* and the nominalized element A *zhi* *suo* V. However, in this chapter, the focus is only on the *wei* A *suo* V construction. Therefore, the *wei* A *zhi* *suo* V in Bian's statement is not dealt with.

<sup>125</sup> This context means that the initial state X becomes a new state because of R. In this chapter, the X-R-X' context expresses a strong contrast between X and X', as well as a negative change from X to X'. For more information, see Section 2.2.



## 2. WEI A SUO V WAS A PRE-QIN COPULA CONSTRUCTION

This statement can be verified by discussing (1) a possible copula *wei*/nominal phrase *A suo V* combination and (2) the special context.

### 2.1 A possible copula *wei*/nominal phrase *A suo V* combination

Because copula sentences with nominal predicates were commonly found in Ancient Chinese, it would be expected that “X, *A suo V* ye” could be replaced by “X, *wei A suo V*.” While *wei* was not obligatory in a copula sentence, it was not “impossible.” However, if *wei A suo V* originated from the combination of the copula *wei* and the nominalized phrase *A suo V*, then two questions need to be answered: (1) when did *wei* become a copula; and (2) when did *suo* begin to be commonly used as a nominalizer?

Many scholars believe that the pre-Qin *wei* functioned only as a quasi-copula rather than a real copula and had the meaning “regard as” or “take as” (Wang 1980, Chu 1987, Wei 1994), and as *wei* does not behave in the same way as the copula *shi* 是 in Modern Chinese, this chapter is in agreement. However, it is possible that *wei* was already being frequently used as a semi-copula with the meaning “become” in Ancient Chinese, as exemplified in the following:

212. 高岸为谷，深谷为陵。(Shijing 诗经. Shi yue zhi jiao 十月之交)

*gao an wei gu shen gu wei ling*  
high bank become valley deep valley become hill

The high bank becomes the valley; the deep valley becomes the hill.

The original and most common use of *suo* was in relative-clause-like constructions as in (213).

213. 仲子所居之室，伯夷之所筑乎？(Mengzi 孟子. Tengwengong xia 滕文公下)

*Zhong-zi suo ju zhi shi*

NAME suo live PART room  
 Bo-yi zhi suo zhu hu  
 NAME PART suo build FIN

The room that Zhongzi lives in, [is it] the place Bouyi built?

Therefore, in the Spring and Autumn period texts, *suo* was already being used as an important nominalizer.

However, “*suo* V” was never used independently but was always combined with other elements. Besides the use shown in Example (213), there were three other possible constructions, the first of which was “agent+*suo* V;” for example:

214. 鱼，我所欲也；熊掌，亦我所欲也。(Mengzi 孟子. Gao Zi Shang 告子上)

yu wo suo yu ye  
 fish I NOM want FIN  
 xiong-zhang yi wo suo yu ye  
 bear’s paw also I NOM want FIN

Fish, [is] what I want; bear’s paw, [is] also what I want.

The second construction was “agent+*zhi*+*suo* V;” for example:

215. 丘之所言，皆吾之所弃也。(Zhuangzi 庄子. Daozhi 盗跖)

Qiu zhi suo yan jie wu zhi suo qi ye  
 NAME PART NOM say all I PART NOM discard FIN

What Confucius said, all [are] the things that I discard.

The third construction was “*suo* V+*zhe*,” for example:

216. 所乐者，身安厚味美服好色音声也。所下者，贫贱夭恶也。(Zhuangzi 庄子. Zhile 至乐)

suo le zhe shen-an hou-wei  
 NOM like NOM healthy-body delicious-meal  
 mei-fu hao-sheng-yin ye  
 beautiful-clothes sweet-sound FIN  
 suo xia zhe pin jian yao wu ye  
 NOM dislike NOM poverty vulgarity short-life evil FIN

What people like are a healthy body, a delicious meal, beautiful clothes and asweet sound; the things that people dislike are poverty, vulgarity, a short life and evil.

Based on these facts, a combination *wei* and *suo* V phrase was possible. However, *wei* could not be combined with “*suo* V *zhe*” as *suo* V *zhe* always appeared at the beginning of a sentence (functioning as a grammatical subject or topic) while *wei* as a copula always appeared in the middle of a sentence (i.e., between the 判词和断词). Therefore, *wei* could only be combined with A *suo* V and A *zhi suo* V as shown in Examples (217) and (218) respectively.

217. 申徒狄谏而不听，负石自投于河，为鱼鳖所食。(Zhuangzi 庄子. Daozhi 盗跖)

<i>Shen-tu-di</i>	<i>jian</i>	<i>er</i>	<i>bu</i>	<i>ting</i>	
NAME	counsel	but	not	hear	
<i>fu</i>	<i>shi</i>	<i>zi</i>	<i>tou</i>	<i>yu</i>	<i>he</i>
hold	stone	self	jump	PREP	river
<i>wei</i>	<i>yu</i>	<i>bie</i>	<i>suo</i>	<i>shi</i>	
become	fish	turtle	NOM	eat	

Shen Tudi gave advice, but he was not heeded; carrying a stone on his back, he jumped into the river, [where he] became the person whom the fish and turtles ate (i.e., became food for fish and turtles).

218. 故乐之所由来者尚也，非独为一世之所造也。(Lüshi Chunqiu 吕氏春秋. Guyu 古乐)

<i>gu</i>	<i>yue</i>	<i>zhi</i>	<i>suo</i>	<i>you-lai</i>	<i>zhe</i>	<i>shang</i>	<i>ye</i>	
so	music	PART	NOM	originate	NOM	long	FIN	
<i>fei</i>	<i>du</i>	<i>wei</i>	<i>yi</i>	<i>shi</i>	<i>zhi</i>	<i>suo</i>	<i>zao</i>	<i>ye</i>
not	only	is	one	generation	PART	NOM	create	FIN

So the origin of music lies in ancient times; it is not the creation of one generation.

This chapter mainly focuses on *wei* A *suo* V constructions, with the *wei* A *zhi suo* V constructions mentioned only when necessary. Besides the possibility of the copula *wei* and nominalized phrase A *suo* V combinations, there are also pragmatic reasons to support the copula hypothesis (see below).

## 2.2 The X-R-X' context as evidence

In the above section, it was concluded that the copula *wei* and the nominalized phrase A *suo* V combination was a possibility. Therefore, *wei* A *suo* V initially was a copula construction. In this section, a pragmatic perspective is taken to further prove this

conclusion. Wang (1982) claimed that there were six *wei A suo V* examples during pre-Qin times, with all these examples expressing a *negative change of state* and a strong *contrast* between the initial state X and the new state X'. As the reason (R) for the change was also observed, this specific context is referred to as an X-R-X' context in this chapter and serves as evidence to prove that *wei A suo V* should be interpreted as “X becomes X'” rather than a passive construction.<sup>126</sup> This hypothesis is supported by the translations provided in the *Thesaurus Linguae Sericae* (TLS).

219. [孙卿...] 德若尧、禹，世少知之；方术不用，为人所疑。(Xunzi 荀子. Yaowen 尧问)

X	[孙卿...]_德若尧、禹，	The virtue [of Xunzi] is as good as King Yao's and King Yu'
R	世少知之；方术不用	but very few people know him. His methods and procedures went unused
X'	为人所疑	rather <i>he became the person that people doubt</i>

为人所疑

*wei*            *ren*            *suo*            *yi*  
**BECOME**    people    **NOM**    doubt  
 He becomes *the person that people doubt*.

In example (219), there is a strong contrast between “a man of honor” and “the man that people doubt” and it also conveys a change of state from positive to negative.

Compare the translation in TLS.

为人所疑    What he did in the interest of others *raised suspicions*.

220. (世之所谓贤士,申徒狄谏而不听, 负石自投于河,为鱼鳖所食 (X') )。(Zhuangzi 庄子. Daozhi 盗跖)

X	世之所谓贤士	[As for] the so-called sages in the world:
R	申徒狄谏而不听, 负石自投于河	Shen Tudi gave advise, but he was not heeded, (he) carried a stone onto his back and threw himself into the river;
X'	为鱼鳖所食	(he) <i>became the person that fish and turtle eat</i> .

为鱼鳖所食

*wei*            *yu*            *bie*            *suo*            *shi*  
**BECOME**    fish            turtle    **NOM**    eat

<sup>126</sup> In this part of the chapter, most examples are rather long as the X-R-X' context that consists of three parts is demonstrated. Based on space considerations, only the word-by-word translations for the “*wei A suo V*” structure is given, while for the other parts only the translation is provided.

Became the person that fish and turtle eat.

In (220), the contrast between “the sage” and “the person that fish and turtle eat” is also clear, and also implies a positive to negative change (i.e., from an advisor to somebody who commits suicide). Compare the translation in TLS:

负石自投于河 he loaded a stone onto his back and threw himself into a river,  
为鱼鳖所食 where *the fish and turtles feasted on him*.

221. 范文子喜直言，武子击之以杖：“夫直议者，不为人所容。”(Hanfei zi 韩非子. Waichushuo xia 外储说下)

X	范文子喜直言	Fan Wenzhi liked talking straightforwardly
R	武子击之以杖：“夫直议者	Wu Zi (i.e., his father) struck him with a stick and said : “The one, who speak straightforwardly
X'	不为人所容	Will not <i>become the person that people do not tolerate</i>

不为人所容

bu wei ren suo rong

NEG BECOME people NOM tolerate

[He] will not become the person that people tolerate.

In (221), the contrast is between an “honest person” and an “outcast person” with the change being from positive to negative and the R being clear. Compare the translation in TLS:

夫直议者 As for direct discussion

不为人所容 this is something *that others cannot put up with*.

222. 大国命弊邑封郑之后，弊邑不敢当也。弊邑为大国所患。(Lüshi chunqiu 吕氏春秋. Shenyinlan 审应览)

X	大国命弊邑封郑之后	(Your) large state [Wei] commands (our) small state [Han] to confer the king of the ruined state of Zheng,
R	弊邑不敢当也	we cannot accept.
X'	弊邑为大国所患	Then our state [of Han] becomes <i>the one that your large state [of Wei] is frightened of</i> .

弊邑为大国所患

*bi-yi*            *wei*            *da-guo*            *suo*            *huan*  
 small-country **BECOME** big-country **NOM** frighten

Then our state [of Han] becomes the one that your large state [of Wei] is frightened of.

In (222), there is a contrast between “a small state” and “a state that a large state is afraid of”, which is also a change from the positive to the negative, that is, if a small state is regarded as a threat to a large state, then the large state will try to destroy it. R is also made explicit in this example. There is no translation of this passage in the TLS.

223. 王徙东北，保于陈城。楚遂削弱，为秦所轻。 (*Zhan guo ce* 战国策. Qinsi 秦四)

X		
R	王徙东北，保于陈城。楚遂削弱	The king (of Chu) [was forced to] move to the northeast, and found protection in the city of Chen. Consequently the state of Chu was weakened
X'	为秦所轻	<i>and became the country that the state of Qin despised</i>

为秦所轻  
*wei*            *qin*            *suo*            *qing*  
**BECOME** Qin-country **NOM** despise  
 [It] became the country that the state of Qin despised.

In (223), the initial state “X’ is not directly retrievable from the immediate context; however, the wider context implies that Chu was once a powerful country and that Qin was a very weak country. Therefore, Chu’s decline from “a powerful state” to “a state that the weak state despised” also shows a contrast and negative change. The R can be identified in the example. Compare the translation in TLS.

楚遂削弱    Being so weakened,  
 为秦所轻    Ch’u thereafter *became an object of Ch’in’s scorn,*

224. 王举臣于羈旅之中，使职事，天下皆闻臣之身与王之举也。今愚惑或与罪人同心，而王明诛之，是王过举显于天下，而为诸侯所议也。 (*Zhan guo ce* 战国策. Qinsan 秦三)<sup>127</sup>

X	王举臣于羈旅之中，使职事， <u>天下皆闻臣之身与王之举也</u>	The king of You recommended me for an important military position when I was wandering abroad. People in the world all
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<sup>127</sup> Although *Zhanguoce* 战国策 was probably compiled later than the *Shiji*, it was probably compiled on the basis of earlier sources, some of which can be traced back to the Warring States period.

		know my (low) social status and the king's recommending [me].
R	今愚惑或与罪人同心， 而王明珠之	Now I was ignorant and confused and cooperated with the enemy, and you, the king, are obviously going to kill me.
X'	是王过举显于天下， 而为诸侯所议也	This means you are going to reveal your unwise to the world, and you will <i>become the person that feudal-lords gossip about</i> .

而为诸侯所议也

*er wei zhu-hou suo yi ye*  
so **BECOME** feudal-lord **NOM** gossip FIN

You will become the person that feudal-lords gossip about.

Example (224) describes a contrast between “a king with no dispute” and “a disputed king”; therefore, this change is certainly negative and R can be observed. Compare the translation from TLS.

是王过举显于天下     you will reveal to the empire that you chose unwisely  
而为诸侯所议也     and will *be the object of much criticism by the other Lords*.

In the light of the X-R-X' context, it is clear that the *wei* A *suo* V construction *was not intended to convey a passive* in these examples. The use of this construction is highly specific and pragmatic and expresses a negative change of state/situation, which is marked by the semi-copula *wei* followed by a nominalized verbal phrase. The *wei* in this context appears to have two semantic features: (1) a negative *change* of state; and (2) a *contrast* of the states. Just because of such a specific context, *wei* was rarely combined with A *suo* V in pre-Qin (only six examples in total), although there was the possibility of a copula *wei* and nominalized phrase A *suo* V combination. A purely passive reading of the passages above would therefore be misleading and even wrong as these constructions do not convey the specific functions (i.e., the two semantic features) of *wei*. Interestingly, none of the TLS examples were translated as passives, and the translations integrated in the database sensibly avoided a passive reading. However, as there were some similarities to passive constructions because the subject/topic was negatively affected by something, this feature may have enabled the later development into a somewhat more generalized passive function with an increasing frequency of use.

### 3. DEVELOPMENT FROM A COPULA CONSTRUCTION INTO A PASSIVE CONSTRUCTION IN THE HAN DYNASTY

As shown, the *wei A suo V* was a copula construction during the Warring States period and had the potential to develop into a passive. This section examines the concrete conditions for this functional evolution from semantic, syntactic and pragmatic perspectives. The period at the beginning of the Western Han dynasty is the main focus as this was an important *wei A suo V* transition period from a copula to a passive construction.

#### 3.1 Conditions for *wei A suo V* to develop from a copula construction to a passive construction

##### 3.1.1 Semantic condition: similarity of meaning

In pre-Qin times, the *wei* in the *wei A suo V* pattern had the semi-copula meaning “become”, as well as indicating a negative change of state (X becomes/changes into X’), the X-R-X’ context at that time showing a strong contrast between X and X’. However, these dynamic and negative features also conformed to the features of the Chinese passive, that is, “become+relative clause *A suo V*” was semantically similar to a passive. For example:

(He) becomes the person that people doubt → (he) is doubted by people;

(He) becomes the person that fish and turtle eat → (he) is eaten by fish and turtle;

(He) will not become the person that people tolerate. → (he) is not tolerated by people;

(Our) small state become the state that the large state is afraid of → (our) small state is feared by the large country;

(Chu) becomes the state that Qin country despises → (Chu) is despised by Qin;



### 3.1.2 Syntactic condition: patient subject

*Suo* is commonly recognized as a nominalizer, with the entire *suo* V construction referring to the object of V (i.e., the patient):

225. 鱼，我所欲也；熊掌，亦我所欲也。(Mengzi 孟子. Gaozi shang 告子上)

yu wo suo yu ye xiong-zhang yi wo suo yu ye  
fish I NOM want FIN bear's paw also I NOM want FIN

Fish, (is) what I want; bear's paw (is) also what I want.

In this example, *wo suo yu* 我所欲 means “what I want” and constitutes the object of the verb and the topic *yu* 鱼 “fish” is the concrete object (i.e., patient) of the verb *yu* 欲 “wish.” Generally, the subject of a *wei* A *suo* V example is always the patient. As summarized in Section 1, Part 5, a patient subject is an important syntactic precondition for passive.

### 3.1.3 Pragmatic condition: the decline of the X-R-X' context

As shown in 2.2, *wei* A *suo* V was not frequently used in pre-Qin times and was always related to the X-R-X' context. Based on a search in three early Han texts: the *Xinyu* 新语, *Chunqiu Fanlu* 春秋繁露, and *Huainanzi* 韩非子: this situation was also the same in the Western Han period. Therefore, the use of *wei* A *suo* V at the beginning of the Western Han was still limited to an “X (R) X'” context and was still infrequently used (only five examples in these three texts). However, when compared to the Warring States material, there were some differences: R was positioned after X', and the X-R-X' context was applied somewhat less rigidly. Nevertheless, this suggested that the development of the *wei* A *suo* V construction was still impeded by the specific context (i.e., X-R-X'). However, an important change in the X-R-X' context was observed in the *Shiji*, as only one example of 77 examples had the X-R-X' context,<sup>128</sup> indicating that the previous pragmatic restriction had been lost and the construction generalized from the *Shiji* onward.

<sup>128</sup> In the texts after *Shiji*, the X-R-X' context can be found very occasionally. Even in the X-R-X' context, it is more conventionalize to be explained as passive after *Shiji*.

226. 缪公与麾下驰追之，不能得晋军，反为晋军所围。(Shiji 史记. Qinbenji 秦本纪)

X	缪公与麾下驰追之	King Mu and his troops chased (after) the Jin troop,
R	不能得晋军	They could not catch king Jin,
X'	反为晋军所围	On contrary, his troops become the one that Jin's troop surround.

反为晋军所围

*fan wei jin jun suo wei*  
 contrary become Jin troop NOM surround

On the contrary, his troops become the one that Jin's troop surround.

In the above example, the pragmatic context discussed above remained; however, no X-R-X' context was found in any of the other examples. For instance:

227. 其季父项梁，梁父即楚将项燕，为秦将王翦所戮者也。(Shiji 史记. Xiangyu benji 项羽本纪)

His uncle is Xiang Liang, and Xiang Liang's father is the General of Chu named Xiang Yan. He is the one killed by Wang Jian.

为秦将王翦所戮者也

*wei qin jiang wang-jian suo lu zhe ye*  
 wei Qin-state general NAME suo kill NOM FIN

He is the one killed by Wang Jian.

228. 大宛以为然，遣骞，为发导驛，抵康居，康居传致大月氏。大月氏王已为胡所杀，立其太子为王。(Shiji 史记. Dawan liezhuan 大宛列传)

[The state of] Da Wan thought that [Qian] is right. Therefore, they sent Qian out, and assigned him as guide and translator. Qian arrived in the state of Kang Ju, and [then] transferred to the state of the Great Yuezhi. At that time, the king of the state of the Great Yuzhi had been killed by the Xiongnu, and they installed his son as the king.

大月氏王已为胡所杀

*Da-yue-zhi wang yi wei hu suo sha*  
 State-NAME king already wei hu-people suo kill

The king of the state of the Great Yuzhi had been killed by the Xiongnu.

Therefore, it could be concluded that the *wei A suo V* construction was more likely to be interpreted as a passive construction from the *Shiji* onwards. There were also new developments that made the copula interpretation less suitable after *Shiji*.

### 3.2 New developments in *wei A suo V* in *Shiji* and *Hanshu*

All the above examples are simple *wei A suo V* structures, that is, there were no additional elements before or after it. However, three new developments were observed in *Shiji* and *Hanshu* that made the *copula interpretation* less possible.

#### 3.2.1 The *wei A suo V* construction was followed by a location complement.

229. 汉王追楚，为项籍所败固陵。<sup>129</sup> (*Shiji* 史记. Weibao Pengyue liezhuan 魏豹彭越列传)

*Han wang zhui chu wei xiang-ji suo bai gu-ling*

Han king pursue NAME *wei* NAME *suo* defeat NAME

The king of Han chased after the troops of Chu. He was defeated by Xiang Ji *at Guling*.

230. 救郑，为楚所败河上。(Shiji 史记. Shier zhuhou nianbiao 十二诸侯年表)

*jiu Zheng wei Chu suo bai yu he shang*

save NAME *wei* NAME *suo* defeat *yu* river on

[He] went to save the state of Zheng, and he was defeated by the state of Chu *near the Yellow river*.

In such examples, the copula sense faded while the passive reading becomes increasingly dominant.

#### 3.2.2 The *V* in the *wei A suo V* was modified by an adverb

231. 吏当广所失亡多，为虏所生得，当斩。<sup>130</sup> (*Shiji* 史记. Lijiangjun liezhuan 李将军列传)

*li dang guang suo shi-wang duo*

<sup>129</sup> In *Shiji*, there is no preposition before a location. See another example below:

1. 复以弟子一人投河中。(Shiji 史记. Huaji liezhuan 滑稽列传)

*fu yi di-zi yi-ren tou he zhong*  
again DISP disciple one-person throw-into river middle

Furthermore, [Xi Menbao] threw one of the disciples into the river.

Such phenomenon is related to the decline of the use of preposition *yu*.

<sup>130</sup> It is a derogatory term used for nomadic people in the northern part in Ancient China.

official think NAME NOM lose-die many  
*wei lu suo sheng de dang zhan*  
 WEI xiong-nu suo live catch should kill

The official thinks that the number of the lost and dead people of Guang's troop was very large, and he himself was caught alive by the Xiongnu; therefore, Guang should be killed.

232. 初，吕母子为县吏，为宰所冤杀。(Hanshu 汉书. Wang mang zhuan xia 王莽传下)

*chu lü-mu zi wei xian-li*  
 early lü-mum son hold county-official  
*wei zai suo yuan sha*  
 WEI prime-minister suo wrong kill

In the beginning, the son of Empress Lü held a position as official in the state, and he was wrongfully killed by the prime minister.<sup>131</sup>

When *wei A suo V* was interpreted as a copula construction, there was normally no adverb appearing before the main verb. Therefore, the copula interpretation of the above examples is not feasible anymore, while the passive interpretation is very likely.

### 3.2.3 The *wei A suo V* construction was followed by a verbal complement.

233. 赵幽王为吕后所幽死。<sup>132</sup> (Zhaoming wenxuan 昭明文选. Shangshu wuwang 上书吴王)

*Zhao-you wang wei lü hou suo you si*  
 NAME king wei NAME queen suo imprison die

King Zhaoyou was imprisoned to die by Queen Lü.

234. 是以兵破士北，为秦所禽灭。(Shiji 史记. Zhang Shizhi Feng Tang liezhuan 张释之冯唐列传)

*shi-yi bin po shi bei*  
 so military defeat soldier defeat  
*wei qin suo qin mie*

<sup>131</sup> The V in *wei A suo V* are disyllabic verbs in some cases in *Hanshu*.

1. 为刺史所举奏。(Hanshu 汉书. Jingshisanwang zhuan 景十三王传)

*wei chi-shi suo ju-zou*  
 WEI governor suo expose-an-offence

(He) was exposed [of having committed] an offence by the governor.

2. 为臣下所侵辱。(Hanshu 汉书. Zhongshanjingzhu zhuan 中山靖主传)

*wei chen-xia suo qin-ru.*  
 WEI lower-man suo infringe-upon-insult

(I) was infringed upon and insulted by the lower man.

<sup>132</sup> Ying Zhao 应劭 (153 Ad—196AD), an eastern Han scholar.

WEI NAME suo overrun destroy

As a result, the troops were defeated and the soldiers escaped, and the state was overrun and destroyed by Qin.

235. 臣门宗二百余口，为孟德所诛略尽。(Sanguozhi 三国志. Ma Chao zhuan 马超传)

chen men-zong er bai yu kou  
my family two hundred more CLAS  
wei Mengde suo zhu lue jin  
WEI NAME suo kill almost exhaust

More than two hundred people in my family were killed off by Mengde.

It is also more appropriate to analyze these cases as passive constructions.

In sum, in the above examples, a copula interpretation for the *wei A suo V* construction is not so convenient and indicates that *wei A suo V* was already developing into a construction expressing the passive meaning.

Different from the *wei V* structure discussed above, which can be used with either a patient subject or an agent subject (see the discussion in Chapter 4 of this part), the subject of *wei A suo V* here cannot function as an agent because if the subject of the *wei A suo V* is an agent, then *wei* is normally a full verb meaning “do/act” rather than a functional verb with no actual meaning.<sup>133</sup>

<sup>133</sup> *Wei A suo V* indeed can be used with an agent subject as in the following examples.

1. 桀纣者善为人所恶也，而汤武者善为人所好也。(Xunzi 荀子. Qiangguo 强国)

Jie-Zhou zhe shan wei ren suo wu ye  
NAME people good do people NOM dislike FIN  
er Tang-Wu zhe shan wei ren suo hao ye  
but NAME people good do people NOM like FIN

Jie Zhou is the person who is good at doing what people dislike, while Tang Wu is the person who is good at doing what people like.

2. 臣闻吴王悔之甚，愿王孰虑之，无为吴王之所悔。(Shiji 史记. Huainan hengshan liezhuan 淮南衡山列传)

wu wei wu wang zhi suo hui  
NEG do NAME king PART NOM repent

I heard that King Wu is so regretful about that. I wish your majesty think about it carefully and do not do what King Wu regretted.

3. 吾不忍为公所为，公所为不合古。(Shiji 史记. Shusun tong zhuan 叔孙通传)

wu bu ren wei gong suo wei  
I NEG endure do duke NOM do

We could never bring ourselves to take part in what you are doing, for what you are doing is not in accord with the ways of antiquity.

4. 王曰：“然则何为涕出？”曰：“臣为王之所得鱼也。”(Zhanguoce 战国策. Weice 魏策)

chen wei wang zhi suo de yu ye  
I for king part. Nom. catch fish FIN.

In summary, the use of *wei A suo V* in *Shiji* and *Hanshu* was *no longer limited to any special pragmatic contexts* as the features of a “negative change of state and strong contrast” had become weakened or had even disappeared. In these new pragmatic contexts an interpretation as copula construction is often not feasible anymore.<sup>134</sup> Therefore, by the late Western Han dynasty, it is surmised that *wei A suo V* had already developed into a kind of passive construction. In my opinion, the *wei A suo V* construction was the first and only construction in which the functional change from a copula to a passive could be discerned from a clear context change.<sup>135</sup> Based on this observation, it could be inferred that the other so-called *wei* passives could not have appeared earlier than *wei A suo V*, which in turn indirectly proved that none of the *wei* constructions were passives in pre-Qin times.

In the following, the advantages of this hypothesis are discussed.<sup>136</sup>

## 4. ADVANTAGES OF THE NEW HYPOTHESIS

Many related controversial issues can be explained by this new hypothesis: (1) the functions of *wei* and *suo*; (2) the co-occurrence of the copula and passive functions for “*wei A suo V*” construction; and (3) the function of *zhi* in *wei A zhi suo V*.

### 4.1 Functions of *wei* and *suo*

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“Then why do you weep?” “I weep because of the fish your majesty may catch.”

However, the *wei* in these examples are verbs with full meanings. Therefore, this phenomenon is not sufficient to prove that the “*wei A suo V*” construction can be used with both agent and patient subjects.

<sup>134</sup> Some *wei A suo V* examples have been found in *Shiji* with no context. For example, five examples *wei quan rong suo sha* 为犬戎所杀 “is killed by Quanrong” are found in *Shiji* volume 14: 十二诸侯年表 (Chronological table of the twelve feudal princes, second part).

<sup>135</sup> The V in *wei A suo V* is positive in some cases.

1. 为四方所归也。(Shiji 史记. Sanwang shijia 三王世家)

<i>wei</i>	<i>si-fang</i>	<i>suo</i>	<i>gui</i>	<i>ye</i>
WEI	world	suo	pledge-allegiance	FIN

(You) will be pledged allegiance by the world.

<sup>136</sup> Note that only the “contexts” and “sentence translations” are stressed but the verbatim translation trying to define the topic (i.e., context) is omitted in this section.

Diachronically, the functions of *wei* and *suo* in *wei A suo V* can be analyzed from two perspectives. In the pre-Qin and the Western Han dynasty, all *wei A suo V* examples could be explained as “become+a relative clause including *suo*”, but since *Shiji*, they tended to function as passives as the pragmatic context had changed (see above).

In the *wei A suo V* copula construction, *wei* is a semi-copula meaning “become” and *suo* is a nominalizer that transforms “V” into a nominal element. After *wei A suo V* changed into a passive construction, the *wei-suo* acted together as the passivizing element. In summary, along with the changing function of the *wei A suo V* construction, the *wei* and *suo* functions were also evolving.

## **4.2 Relationship between the copula construction *wei A suo V* and the passive construction *wei A suo V***

Many linguistic scholars have claimed that *wei A suo V* can be treated as either a copula or a passive construction; however, little attention has been paid to the relationships between these two interpretations. Recently, Yue (2012) concluded that the copula “*wei A suo V*” construction was not related to the passive construction. However, in this chapter, it is shown that the passive construction originated from the copula construction because of: (1) the possibility of combining the copula *wei* with the nominalized element *A suo V* and the supporting X-R-X’ context; and (2) the semantic, syntactic and pragmatic conditions for its development into a passive construction. Therefore, there is definitely a relationship between the copula and the passive constructions.

## **4.3 New insights into the function of *zhi* in *wei A zhi suo V***

Three hypotheses have been proposed for the *zhi* in the “*wei A zhi suo V*” construction.

The first assumes that *wei A zhi suo V* originated from *wei A suo V* by adding *zhi* (Wang 1958 [1980], Yang and He 2001, Wang 1984b, Liu 1985), and a number of

scholars believed that the *zhi* functioned as a “harmonizer of syllables” (Shuai 2008, Wu 1985). However, Gao (2002) suggested that *zhi* could not be just a “harmonizer of syllables” (i.e., *chenyin* 衬音) without having any concrete function or meaning.

The second hypothesis states that the *wei A zhi suo V* is the *tong yi fu yong* 同义复用 “synonymous (redundant) double-function” of *wei A suo V* and *wei A zhi V* because the passive *wei A suo V* was equal to the passive *wei A zhi V* (Tang 1987, Yang and He 2001, Sun 1992). Tang (1987) postulated that combining these two passive constructions to emphasize (i.e., intensify) the passive meaning; however, if this assumption were true, why was it only used in the Buddhist scriptures?

The third hypothesis is a combination of the copula *wei* and the nominalized element *A zhi suo V*, and is similar to the formation of *wei A suo V* discussed earlier in this chapter.

These three hypotheses are structured as follows:

- (1) *wei A suo V+zhi = wei A zhi suo V*
- (2) *wei A suo V+wei A zhi V= wei A zhi suo V*
- (3) *wei+A zhi suo V= wei A zhi suo V*

In the first hypothesis, *zhi* is added into the *wei A suo V* structure as an isolated element, which means that there is only a focus on *zhi* when the difference between *wei A suo V* and *wei A zhi suo V* is analyzed; however, this method was useless. In contrast, in the second hypothesis, the clue is hidden in the *wei A zhi V* structure as the function of *zhi* as a modifier in *wei A zhi V* is clear. Unfortunately, to be in agreement with the *tong yi fu yong* 同义复用 “double uses of synonymous” theory, the *wei A zhi V* was inferred as a passive. However, the function of *zhi* has never been related to the passive in its diachronic developments. In the third hypothesis, the situation is much clearer, with the clue being observed in *A zhi suo V*, in which *zhi* is a modifier.



#### **4.4 No derivational relationship between *wei A suo V* and *wei A V/wei V* constructions**

It was previously commonly thought that there was a continuous “accumulative” relationship between the three constructions, that is *wei V+A* = *wei A V*, *wei A V+suo* = *wei A suo V*. However, based on the hypothesis proposed in this chapter, these three constructions are not in a simple additive relationship, as each had its own independent path of development. In detail, *wei V* was formed by omitting the *yi* in *yi X wei V*, *wei A V* was formed by omitting *yi* in *yi X wei A V*, and *wei A suo V* was formed by replacing *A V* with *A suo V*. A recent paper (Zeng and Anderl 2019) proved that all three constructions were copula constructions rather than passive constructions in pre-Qin times and that only *wei A suo V* developed into a kind of passive construction during the Han dynasty.

However, although the *wei A suo V* construction expresses passive meanings, it is still questionable as to whether *wei A suo V* was a fixed syntactic structure for the passive voice in Ancient Chinese because of certain particularities, which are discussed in the following section.

### **5. THE PARTICULARITIES OF THE *WEI A SUO V* CONSTRUCTION**

The particularities of the *wei A suo V* construction as a passive construction are related to: (1) the object retention; and (2) the combinations with different passive markers, which are also observed in other passive markers.

#### **5.1 The V in *wei A suo V* was followed by an object**

Normally, the V in passive constructions is intransitive; however, the V in the *wei A suo V* structure can be followed by an object.

236. 单于怒浑邪王、休屠王居西方为汉所杀虏数万人。<sup>137</sup> (*Shiji* 史记. *Xiongnu liezhuan* 匈奴列传)

*Chan-yu nu-hun-xie wang\ xiu-tu wang ju xi-fang*

Chief NAME lord \ NAME lord live west

*wei han suo sha lu shu wan ren*

WEI state-Han *suo* kill catch several ten-thousand people

The chief of the Xiongnu was angry with King Hunxie I and King Xiutu because several ten thousand people of them had been killed (by Han).

237. 公孙敖出代郡，为胡所败七千余人。( *Shiji* 史记. *wei jiangjun piaoji liezhuan* 卫将军骠骑列传)

*Gong-sun-ao chu dai jun*

NAME go place-NAME country

*wei hu suo bai qi qian yu ren*

WEI hu-people *suo* defeat seven thousand more people

Gong Sun'ao went to the state of Dai; more than seven thousand people of his troops were killed by the Hu people ('barbarians').

238. 为汉使月氏而为匈奴所闭道。( *Hanshu* 汉书. *Zhang Qian zhuan* 张骞传)

*wei Han shi yue-zhi er*

for country-NAME emissary country-NAME but

*wei xiong-nu suo bi dao*

WEI country-NAME *suo* block way

(I) hold the position of emissary of Han to the Yuezhi; however, my way was blocked by the Xiongnu.

239. 食于道旁乃为乌所盗肉。( *Hanshu* 汉书. *Huang Ba zhuan* 黄霸传)

*shi yu dao-pang nai wei wu suo dao rou*

eat PREP roadside then *wei* crow *suo* steal meat

(You) ate at the roadside, then your food was stolen by the crow.

Interestingly, *wei* A *zhi suo* V can also be followed by an object.

240. 自以本非岩穴知名之士，恐为海内人之所见凡愚。( *Sanguozhi* 三国志. *Rangxian zi ming ben zhi ling* 让县自明本志令)

*kong wei hai nei ren zhi suo jian fan yu*

afraid *wei* sea inside people PART *suo jian* common stupid

I myself think that I am not a famous scholar who lives in the caves. By contrast, I am afraid that I am a common ignorant person that the people within the (four) seas see (i.e., regard as an ignorant person).

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<sup>137</sup> *Chanyu* 单于 is the chief of the *Xiongnu* 匈奴.

This is quite similar to the *bei* passive in modern Mandarin, as shown in the example from LaPolla (1990: 72) in (241).

241. 母鸡被狼吃了一只小鸡儿。

*muji bei lang chi le yi zhi xiao jir*  
 mother-hen *bei* wolf eat ASP one CLAS little chick

The mother hen had one of her chicks eaten by a wolf.

LaPolla claimed that the *muji* “mother-hen” was neither the “subject” nor the “direct object” of *chi* “eat”, and was only affected by the action of the wolf eating the chick. See a more detailed discussion in Part 5, Section 3.2.

## 5.2 Variants of *wei A suo V*

After *wei A suo V* became a passive construction, it was a fashionable construction for a very long time and dominated the passive expressions in which the agent was present. Later, it has developed many variants, as illustrated below. After the Sui dynasty, *bei (A) V* replaced *wei A suo V* and became a very popular passive.<sup>138</sup>

*Wei A zhi suo V*

242. 夏则为大暑之所暴炙，冬则为风寒之所侵薄。(Hanshu 汉书. Wang Ji zhuan 王吉传)

*xia ze wei da shu zhi suo pu zhi*  
 summer then *wei* great hot PART *suo* dry bake  
*dong ze wei feng han zhi suo yan bao*  
 winter then *wei* wind cold PART *suo* repress weak

<sup>138</sup> Previously, *wei A zhi V* was also argued to be a passive marker. However, I think *wei A zhi V* is definitely a copula construction. See an example below.

1. 员不忍称疾辟易，以见王之亲为越之擒也。(Guoyu 国语. Wuyu 吴语)

*wang zhi qin wei yue zhi qin*  
 king PART personally become NAME PART capture

I cannot bear that I pretend to be sick in order to avoid the conflict and see you personally become the capture of state of Qin.

In this example, *wei* is definitely a main verb as it is modified by the adverb *qin* 亲 “personally.”

Therefore, *wei* in this example should have the copula meaning “become” rather than being a passive marker.

In the summer, it is dried and baked by the great heat while in the winter it is repressed and weakened by the wind and cold.

*Wei A jian V*

243. 烈士为天下见善矣。(Zhuangzi 庄子· Zhile 至乐)

lie-shi            wei    tian    xia    jian    shan    yi  
man-of-ardor    wei    heaven    below    jian    goodness    FIN

Men of ardor are regarded by the world as good.

*Wei A suo jian V*

244. 臣国先时人众殷盛，不为诸国所见陵迫。(Songshu 宋书· Yiman 夷蛮)

bu    wei    zhu    guo    suo    jian    ling        po  
NEG    wei    all    states    suo    jian    intimidate    compel

My state was previously prosperous with a large population and it was not intimidated and compelled by all the other states.

*Bei 被 A suo 所 V*

245. 其王本姓温，月氏人也。旧居祁连山北昭武城，因被匈奴所破，西逾葱岭，遂有其国。

(Houhanshu 后汉书. Xiyuzhuan 西域传)

yin            bei            xiong-nu        suo        po  
because    bei            huns            suo        defeat

Their king's family name was originally Wen, [and they were] Yuezhi people. In the past, they lived in the city of Wu in the north of the Qilian Mountain. Because they were defeated by the Huns, they crossed the Pamirs to the west, and consequently had their [own] state.

*Wei 为 V yu 于 N*

246. 伍子胥父兄为戮于楚。(Shiji 史记· Wu Zixu zhuan 伍子胥列传)

Wu Zixu    fu    xiong        wei        lu        yu        chu  
NAME    father    brother    wei        kill        yu        NAME

Wu Zixu's father and brother were killed by the state of Chu.

*A suo V*<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Zhu (1995) studied this topic at length. He concluded that many “suo V” examples are found in the Buddhist scriptures and their function equals to the “wei A suo V” in Chinese texts. Meanwhile, he admitted that “suo V” is indeed rarely found in Chinese literature.

247. 譬如有牛……若依于地，地虫所食。(刘宋求那跋陀罗译(杂阿舍经)15, 2/1 0 2c)

*ruo yi yu di di chong suo shi*  
if lean-on PREP land land insect suo eat

For example, there is a cow……if it lies down on the land, then it becomes what the earth worms eats (is eaten by the earth worms).

These variations suggest that although *wei A suo V* was a more fixed syntactic passive construction in Middle Chinese, it did not behave like “V-ed+by” in English, which does not have any variations.<sup>140</sup> In my opinion, the phenomenon that *wei A suo V* has so many variations indirectly proves the conclusion made above, that is, that the Chinese passive is pragmatically rather than syntactically determined.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This chapter reviewed the previous studies on the *wei A suo V* construction, pointed out the advantages and disadvantages, and gave support to the diachronic view that *wei A suo V* was a copula construction in pre-Qin times and later developed into a passive construction during the Han dynasty. To make this hypothesis more convincing, the possibility of the combination of the copula *wei* and *A suo V* was mooted because: (1) the copula function of *wei* formed during pre-Qin times; and (2) *A suo V* was commonly used as a nominalized phrase in pre-Qin times. Then, special attention was paid to the X-R-X' context, which was shown to provide the idiomatic context for the construction. All six examples of the *wei A suo V* expressed a change of state as well as a strong contrast (the initial state X turns into a new state X') and sometimes, the reason (R) for the change could be observed. Because of this specific context, *wei A suo V* was very infrequently used in pre-Qin; however, the copula construction had the *potential* to develop into a passive because of: (1) the semantic similarity between “become the object of V (being an action)” and the passive; (2) the patient subject syntax; and (3) the decreased use of the “contrast” and “change of state” context when the construction was used in more general contexts.

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<sup>140</sup> Toyota (2008: 151) summarized three different auxiliaries for the English passive, i.e., *beon/wesan* ‘be’, *weorðan* ‘become’, and *get*. The historical development of these auxiliaries is also discussed (see Toyota 2008: 152). However, these three auxiliaries were never combined at any stage.

At the beginning of the Western Han dynasty, *wei A suo V* transitioned from a copula to a passive, although the X-R-X' context was maintained to some degree, and the construction was still rarely used. However, the transitional stage did not last very long time as *wei A suo V* became frequently and freely used from the time of the *Shiji*, and many examples in which a copula interpretation is not appropriate are found in *Shiji* and *Hanshu*. Therefore, the conclusion that *wei A suo V* developed into a passive construction in the latter part of the Western Han dynasty was shown to be convincing. Since that time, *wei A suo V* has been used primarily to express a passive meaning. Personally, I think *wei A suo V* was the most prototypical passive construction in Ancient Chinese, since there was no semantic limitation of V used in it and it was used in much higher frequency. However, claiming that *wei A suo V* was a fixed syntactic construction for the passive voice in Middle Chinese is questioned because: (1) the object was retained; and (2) of the combination with other different passive markers. These particularities indicate that the passive meaning was probably still determined by pragmatic rather than syntactic features, which could also be the case for other so-called passives in Ancient Chinese. Wei (1994) claimed that the reason *wei A suo V* was replaced by other passive construction around the time of the Sui dynasty was because of the decline of *suo* in relative pronouns; for example, *suo* had become less used as a patient pronoun and had disappeared from the preverbal position.

# CHAPTER 6: THE NATURE OF *YU* IN ANCIENT CHINESE

All the markers studied above, i.e., *jian*, *bei* and *wei*, can appear before verbs. However, the *yu* studied in this chapter does not perform in this way but basically appears before a noun in a preposition-like manner. This is why *jian*, *bei* and *wei* have been studied in a sequence above, and *yu* will be focused on in this chapter. In this chapter, the special features of *yu* relevant for our discussion are studied, (1) the “*yu*+agent” phrase also appeared in active sentences; (2) there were examples with the same structure but with opposite meanings; (3) the feature of *yu* before an agent appeared to be optional; (4) there were no “*yu*+agent” phrases in some examples with passive meaning; (5) *yu* appeared before the object; (6) the contrast between V+*yu*+location and V+location; (7) *yu* introduced indirect objects in double object structures; and (8) the contrast between V+*yu*+IO and V+IO, in order to explain whether *yu* or *yu*+agent is determinant for passive and what is the real function of *yu*.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In Ancient Chinese, two graphs for *yu*, i.e., 于 and 於, have been found, with two general ideas for the relationship between them having been provided, the first of which was by Karlgren (1936[2015]) and Pulleybank (1986). Karlgren conducted detailed research on the prepositions 于 and 於 and concluded that there was a clear distinction between them, with 于 being used in limited situations, and 於 being compatible with almost all verbs and had a wide range of meanings. The second interpretation was suggested by Wen (1984) and Zhang (2009), who believed that these graphs had only slightly different functions and were different because they had been used in different periods; for example, only 于 was found in the Oracle Bone inscriptions.<sup>141</sup> Xu (2006), however, observed that 于 was almost exclusively used in elevated contexts, that is, it tended to introduce words that referred to significant

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<sup>141</sup> *Yu* 于 is a frequently used word in the Oracle Bone Inscriptions. According to Guo (1997: 134), there are more than 9000 *yu* 于 uses in *Yinxu jiagu keci moshi zongji* 殷墟甲骨刻辞摹释总集 “The Collection of the Explanations of the Oracle Bone Inscriptions from the Yin ruins.”

objects such as “state” in the inscriptions on ritual vessels (e.g., *hu* 壺), or was used in expressions related to sacrifices, while the preposition 於 was not found until the bronze inscriptions and was initially used as an exclamation 於, as in *yu hu* 於呼 “oh,” in less formal contexts. Based on the bronze inscriptions and excavated texts, Xu (2006: 77-85) concluded that: (1) the graph 於 may have begun to replace the graph 于 in the late third century;<sup>142</sup> and (2) the relationship between 于 and 於 was only lexical, that is, it was represented with different graphs, but there were no differences in syntactic distribution. Therefore, as the second opinion is more convincing, hereafter, *yu* is used to refer to both graphs without distinction.

The preposition *yu* is multifunctional, with its most common functions being: to introduce a location, including the start place of an action, the occurrence site of an action, or the goal of an action; to introduce an agent, a receipt, a beneficiary or an object to be compared; and most interestingly, to introduce a patient. Many scholars (e.g., Dong 2006, Pan 2008) have attempted to find consistent explanations for its functions.

Dong (2006: 2) concluded that “*yu* was basically a marker for non-patient elements, i.e., it could introduce all kinds of elements except the patient.”<sup>143</sup> However, this explanation is unconvincing as *yu* was commonly found before an object (i.e., patient) in Ancient Chinese. Dong (2006) further argued that the object introduced using *yu* was not a true object as the V transitivity in these cases was quite weak.<sup>144</sup> However, this study proves that this is not true, as *yu* also appeared before the objects of some verbs that had strong transitive features, such as *jie* 劫 and *qiang* 戕.

Pan (2008) also explored the grammatical meanings for *yu* from a cognitive grammar perspective and defined *yu* as a *dibiao* 地标 “landmark” that was not affected by any

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<sup>142</sup> In *Lunyu* 论语, 8 于 and 162 於 were found, respectively; in *Mengzi* 孟子, 于 appeared 28 times, while 於 appeared 436 times. In *Baoshan zhujian* 包山楚简 “Chu bamboo slips for Baoshan”, 於 appeared 119 times while no 于 was found.

<sup>143</sup> The source texts are shown here: 可以用来引进除典型受事以外的任何与动词有关的名词性成分.

<sup>144</sup> The source texts are shown here: 通过观察这些用例,我们发现,“于/於”引进的并不是典型的受事成分。这表现在以下事实上:“于/於”前动词的动作性比较弱,“于/於”后名词性成分的具体性比较低,“于/於”前动词对“于/於”后名词性成分的影响度比较低。



transmission of force during its conceptualization process. Pan's (2008) argument was based on the fact that *yu* could appear after verbs that had opposite vector features (i.e., orientation), such as *chu yu xia* 出于柙 “take out from the box” and *ru yu shi* 入于室 “enter into the room.” Pan (2008) believed that the vector feature (i.e., orientation) of *yu* was determined by the verbs *chu* and *ru* but was irrelevant to *yu*. In these two examples, Pan's statement appeared to be plausible.

In this chapter, a definition that covers all the multiple functions of *yu* is given and justified (see Section 5). However, the main focus is on whether *yu* acted as a passive marker when introducing an agent. While *yu* has often been analyzed as a passive marker for introducing an agent (Hong 2000, Pan 1982, Tang and Zhou 1985, Wang 1958[1980], Yang and He 2001, and others), there have been recent discussions as to the veracity of this conclusion. For example, Wang (2005: 273) corrected the conclusions made in his 1958[1980] (420-421) paper as follows:

In the past, I thought *yu* in the P+V+*yu*+Agent construction was a passive marker. Now, I correct my conclusion: the function of *yu* in the so-called passive construction is no different to the *yu* in the *locative prepositional structure*.

This opinion has also been accepted by many others (Guo 1997, Hong 2009, Ma 1898 [2007], Sun 2005, Xiang 2000). However, these two concepts: the *passive meaning* and the *passive marker* must be distinguished; therefore, using various examples, this chapter seeks to prove that when *yu* introduced an agent, it was expressing a passive meaning in some examples, but that the *yu* even in a “*yu* agent” phrase cannot be defined as a passive marker (see Section 4). In order to make this point clear, first, a brief discussion on the grammaticalization of *yu* is given as analyzing the grammaticalization of *yu* also provides a clue to understanding the nature of *yu* when it was used to introduce an agent.

## 2. GRAMMATICALIZATION OF *YU*

There have been three recent views on the path of grammaticalization of *yu*.

First, Zhao (1964) surmised that the preposition *yu* could have been derived from a *fansheng* 泛声 “harmony sound,”<sup>145</sup> which was mainly based on the following three observations: (1) the *yu* in examples such as *Huang niao yu fei* 黄鸟于飞 “Yellow birds fly” (*Shijing* 诗经. Getan 葛覃) was a kind of *zhuci* 助词 (“auxiliary”) and had no specific/actual meaning rather than a verb or a preposition as the object for *yu* was not attested; (2) the optional feature of *yu* before an object, such as *guan hai* 观海 “watching the sea” and *guan yu hai* 观于海 “watching the sea”; and (3) the preposition *yu* functioned differently from other prepositions (e.g., *yi* 以 or *yu* 与) (see more discussion in Zhao 1964: 105-106).

The second observation was also attested by Shi (2003b: 343), in which it was proposed that *yu* possibly originated from a case-auxiliary word (i.e., *ge zhuci* 格助词) in proto-Chinese. Similar to ancient-Tibetan, proto-Chinese was possibly also an SOV language in which there were no prepositions (i.e., 前置词) and the *case-auxiliary* was used to mark the status of the nominal elements and its relationship with the other elements. Generally, Shi (2003b) believed that the function of *yu* equated with the function of *la* in ancient-Tibetan language, which could be added after the end of a noun, a pronoun, or any nominal elements to indicate a patient, a dative, a location, a time, and so on. This hypothesis explained why the use of *yu* was so casual in Ancient Chinese.

However, as Mei (2004) has pointed out: “Shi’s view is new but has one problem: if *yu* were derived from a case-auxiliary word (i.e., *ge zhuci* 格助词) in proto-Chinese, how could the verbal use of *yu* in the Oracle Bone Inscriptions be explained?” Zhao’s supposition also could not answer this question, and Shi’s opinion had a further

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<sup>145</sup> Zhao (1964) thought that there were two sources for prepositions: most prepositions are grammaticalized from verbs (e.g., *zi* 自 “from,” *yu* 与 “and,” *yi* 以 “with”) while some are grammaticalized from *fansheng* 泛声 “harmony sounds” (e.g., 于, 於, and 乎), in order to enhance the rhythmic features of the sentence (i.e., semantically, these elements were very weak). *Fansheng* 泛声 “harmony sound” is basically a term borrowed from music, concerned with the structure and combinations of chords. This term used here mainly emphasizes that it has no real semantic meaning but only functioned as a “coordination” element.

problem: The theory about the SOV word order in proto-Chinese is doubted by most scholars (e.g., Zhang 2009: 21), as stated by Luo (2007).

The third hypothesis raised by Guo (1997) was that the prepositional *yu* was grammaticalized from its verbal use as meaning “go.” The verbal use of *yu* is exemplified in the following;

248. 壬寅卜，王于商。(Jiaguwen heji 甲骨文合集, 33124)

renyin bu wang yu shang  
TIME divine king go NAME

Divining at the time Ren Yin, the king went to the place Shang.

In the sentence *Wang yu shang* 王于商, besides *yu*, no other predicate is attested, indicating that *yu* in this case could be a verb meaning “go.” Based on Gong (1995), Mei (2004) surmised that the prepositional *yu* was derived from a verb *gro*, meaning “walk, to go (i.e., 行, 走)” in proto-Sino-Tibetan. Guo (2005: 341-342) disagreed with Mei (2004) from both phonetic and semantic perspectives, stating that the *yu* meaning “go” was a single-oriented verb with one single, clear vector, that is, the object of *yu* was usually a destination. For example, *Shang* is the goal of the movement in the sentence *Wang yu Shang* 王于商 “The King went to the place Shang.”

However, *yu* was also used after verbs that had different vector features (i.e., orientations); for example, even though the vector features for the movement verbs *wang* 往 “go toward” and *lai* 来 “come from” are opposites,<sup>146</sup> both were used with the verb *yu*.

249. 王往于田。(Jiaguwen heji 甲骨文合集, 557)

wang wang yu tian  
king go-toward go-to field

The king went to the field.

Cf.

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<sup>146</sup> I admit that the definition of orientation mentioned at the beginning is not suitable for movement verbs, such as *lai* and *wang*, as they are not about a “receiver.” In contrast, it is more close to type (1).

250. 方其来于沚? (*Jiaguwen heji* 甲骨文合集, 6728)

*fang*      *qi*      *lai*      *yu*      *zhi*  
NAME    PART    come    from    NAME

Did Fang come from Zhi?

Note that both *wang* and *lai* were true intransitive verbs in Ancient Chinese and had only an external argument, i.e., agent (Yin 2009, Zhang and Yin and Chen 2009, Zhang 2013), which explains why they were always used with *yu*: when the location of the movement was emphasized, the use of the preposition *yu* was required.<sup>147</sup>

As Guo (1997) pointed out, the semantic features for a V before *yu* was a major determinant for the development of the preposition *yu*, that is, when *yu* was used with *wang*, which has the same moving vector, then *yu* still functioned as a verb, and the *wang+yu+location* could be analyzed as a type of serial verbal construction;<sup>148</sup> however, if *yu* was used with verbs such as *lai*, which has an opposite moving vector, then *yu* was usually not interpreted as a verb, which seems to be a reasonable supposition. Therefore, it is proposed that the vector feature for V before *yu* also influenced the vector feature of *yu*, which in turn implies that *yu* developed as a preposition that had different vector features, with its vector feature in each sentence being determined by the context.<sup>149</sup> In other words, the semantic features for “*yu+location*” were determined by the context (i.e., the semantic of the verb of motion), and the location of *yu* could be pragmatically either a start point or an end point. Therefore, based on this observation, it is further proposed that the preposition *yu* was a type of “double-orientation preposition” that could express “to/toward” and “from.” This hypothesis also explains why *yu* was able to introduce both an agent and a patient (i.e., see discussion in Sections 4.1 and 4.2), a feature of *yu* that made it significantly different from other prepositions. Zhang (2014: 146) observed that besides *yu*, both *zi* 自 “from” and *zhi* 至 “to” were also grammaticalized as

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<sup>147</sup> Guo (2005) surmised that *yu* was a synonym of *wang* as both expressed an action of movement from location A to location B. However, *wang* more emphasizes a wish/volition to move from location A to B while *yu* is focused more on the process associated with moving from location A to location B. Therefore, *wang* normally does not take an object while *yu* must take an object.

<sup>148</sup> Note that I do not mean that *wang yu+location* is absolutely a serial verbal construction, however, I project that there should be a stage like this in its diachronic development.

<sup>149</sup> I believe that the prepositional function to indicate location is the base for the other functions of *yu*.

prepositions in the Oracle Bone Inscriptions. However, *zi* only indicated a start location and *zhi* only indicated an end point.

In conclusion, it is commonly accepted that the prepositional *yu* originated from verbal use and initially developed as a preposition indicating a location. During this process, *yu* appeared to have also developed to become a double-orientation preposition because it was used after different verbs that indicated opposite directions (“from” and “to”).<sup>150</sup> However, it has also been argued that *yu* acted as a passive marker when introducing an agent, as shown in Section 3.

### 3. PASSIVE SENTENCES WITH *YU* INTRODUCING AN AGENT

There are some passive meaning examples in which *yu* introduced an agent; however, these were not as common as has been previously argued (e.g., Cao 2012). The passive meaning examples were classified into two types: (1) a “P+V+*yu*+agent” construction without any special context; and (2) a “P+V+*yu*+agent” construction that had special contexts: (i) parallel, (ii) contrastive, and (iii) negative.

#### TYPE 1 THE “P+V+*YU*+AGENT” CONSTRUCTION WITHOUT ANY SPECIAL CONTEXT

There are a few examples of the typical “P+V+*yu*+agent” construction without any special contexts. In the following, the verbs *shang* 伤 and *qie* 劫 are taken as examples.

With the verb *shang* 伤 “wound”:

251. 郤克伤於矢。(Zuozhuan 左传. Chenggong 成公 2)

*Xi-Ke shang yu shi*

NAME wound PREP arrow

Xi Ke was wounded by an arrow.

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<sup>150</sup> Note that since the Han dynasty, the multiple functions of *yu* were gradually replaced by other prepositions because of its ambiguity indicating directions.

With the verb *jie* 劫 “threaten”:<sup>151</sup>

252. 秦挟韩而攻魏，韩劫于秦，不敢不听。(Zhanguoce 战国策. Weice 魏策)

*Qin xie Han er gong Wei*

NAME carry NAME then attack NAME

*Han jie yu Qin bu gan bu ting*

NAME threaten PREP NAME NEG dare NEG obey

The state of Qin would seize the state of Han in an attack on Wei, Han was so threatened by Qin, that the state of Han did not dare not to follow.

## TYPE 2 THE “P+V+YU+AGENT” CONSTRUCTION WITH SPECIAL CONTEXTS

The special contexts in this section are: (i) parallel, (ii) comparative, and (iii) negative.

### (i) Parallel context

In the first parallel context case, the verbs *jie* 劫 and *mie* 灭 are taken as examples.

With the verb *jie* 劫 “coerce”:<sup>152</sup>

253. 桓公劫于鲁庄，闵王毁于五国。(Xunzi 荀子. Wangzhi 王制)

*Huan gong jie yu Lu Zhuang*

NAME duke coerce PREP NAME NAME

*Min wang hui yu wu guo*

NAME king crush PREP five state

Duke Huan was *coerced* by [Duke]Zhuang of Lu. King Min [of Qi] was *crushed* by the five states.

With the verb *mie* 灭 “destroy”:

254. 燕子哱贤子之而非孙卿，故身死为僇；夫差智太宰嚭而愚子胥，故灭於越。(Hanfeizi 韩非

<sup>151</sup> Verb *jie* 劫 has many examples. Other examples are listed here with only translation. *Wuling wang bu yi shen gong qin sha sheng zhi bing, gu jie yu Li Dui* 武灵王不以身躬亲杀生之柄，故劫于李兑。(Hanfeizi 韩非子. Waichushuo you xia 外储说右下) “King Wuling did not personally hold the handle of life and death, and as a result he was kidnapped by Li Dui.”

<sup>152</sup> Another example is *Fei qin yu zhu hou, bi qie yu bai xing* 非侵于诸侯，必劫于百姓。(Shangjun shu 商君书. Shenfa 慎法) “Then, if the country is not annexed by the feudal lords, it will be robbed by the people.”

子. Nansan 难三)<sup>153</sup>

*Yan Zi-Kuai xian Zi-Zhi er fei Sun-Qing*

NAME NAME wise NAME but NEG NAME

*gu shen si wei lu*

therefore body die become slaughter

*Fu-Chai zhi Taizai- Pi er yu Zi-Xu*

NAME wise NAME but fool NAME

*gu mie yu Yue*

therefore destroy PREP NAME

Zikuai of Yan considered Zizhi as talented, and he disapproved of Sun Qing. And as a result, he died and *was slaughtered*. Fuchai considered Taizai Pi as intelligent, and he regarded Zixu as stupid. And therefore he *was destroyed* by Yue.

### (ii) Contrastive context

The second “contrastive context” case has many examples; here the verb *zhi* 治 is taken as an example.

255. 劳心者治人，劳力者治于人。(Mengzi 孟子. Tengwengong shang 滕文公上)

*lao xin zhe zhi ren*

labour heart NOM control people

*lao li zhe zhi yu ren*

labour strength NOM control PREP people

Those who work with their mind control the people, while those who work with physical labor are controlled by people.

In the above example, *lao xin zhe* 劳心者 “those who work with the mind” and *lao li zhe* 劳力者 “those who work with physical labor” are contrastive, as is *zhi ren* 制人 “control other people” and *zhi yu ren* 制于人 “be controlled by other people.” This PV structure was more frequently observed in this kind of context as the contrastive context seemed to be a motivation for the P+V+*yu*+agent structure. More examples are given in Appendix 1.

### (iii) Negative context

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<sup>153</sup> Whether *wei* should be interpreted as a passive marker or not is discussed in the *wei* chapter.

The third case appeared in a negative context. The negation and PV (+*yu* agent) structure seemed to have a natural correlation in Ancient Chinese; here, the verb *rong* 容 is taken as an example.

256. 有臧武仲之知，而不容于鲁国。(Zuozhuan 左传. Xianggong 襄公 23)

*you*    *Zang-Wuzhong*    *zhi*    *zhi*  
 have    NAME                    PART    wise  
*er*    *bu*    *rong*    *yu*    *Lu*    *guo*  
 but    NEG    stay    PREP    NAME    state

There was the wise Zang Wuzhong, and yet he was not allowed to remain in the state of Lu.

For many verbs, the PV construction appears more frequently in negative PV examples than in positive PV examples. Additional examples are given in Appendix 2.

Previous studies have also included the following examples.

257. 唐鞅戮於宋，奚齊戮於晋。(Xunzi 荀子. Jiebi 解蔽)

*Tang-Yang*    *lu*    *yu*    *Song*    *Xi-Qi*    *lu*    *yu*    *Jin*  
 NAME    kill    PREP    NAME    NAME    kill    PREP    NAME

Tang Yang was executed in Song, and Xiqi in Jin.

In this example, Song and Jin here are countries that could be interpreted as either agents or locations. However, in current passive studies, these kinds of examples are treated as passives, with the “*yu*+agent” taken for granted.<sup>154</sup>

Traditionally, it has been argued that there were several passive markers in Ancient Chinese, with *yu* being one of the earliest. However, the following seeks to prove that *yu* and even the “*yu*+agent” phrase were not passive markers because as the passive meaning is never determined by the use of *yu* or the “*yu*+agent” phrase, *yu* and “*yu*+agent” cannot be passive markers.

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<sup>154</sup> He (2004) examined the occurrences of *yu* in *Zuozhuan*, finding that *yu* 于 NP and *yu* 於 NP appeared 2976 times in total after V, with *yu* introducing *location*, *people* and *others* being 1828, 941, and 207, respectively. Therefore, this appears to indicate the introducing a location is the most important function of *yu*, while introducing an agent is less important.



## 4. YU IS NOT A PASSIVE MARKER

The above section listed some “*yu*+agent” phrase examples that appeared to express a passive meaning. However, this section seeks to show that as the passive meaning was definitely not dependent on *yu* or the *yu*+agent, neither *yu* or *yu*+agent acted as passive markers, as verified by the following four observations: (1) the “*yu*+agent” phrase also appeared in active sentences; (2) *yu* or the “*yu*+agent” phrase appeared in the same structures with opposite meanings; (3) the *yu* before an agent was optional; and (4) the “*yu*+agent” phrase was sometimes absent.

### 4.1 The *yu*+agent phrase appeared in active sentences

The “*yu*+agent” phrase appeared to be compatible with both passive and active sentences. For example:

258. 少姜有宠于晋侯. (*Zuozhuan* 左传. *Zhaogong* 昭公 2)

*Shao-Jiang*    *you*    *chong*    *yu*    *jin*    *hou*  
NAME        have    favor    PREP    state    marquis

She obtained favour with the marquis

Examples like this are quite interesting as even though 于晋侯 could be interpreted as “*yu*+agent,” the sentence is not a passive. Therefore, it could be concluded that the “*yu*+agent” phrase did not always engender a passive reading of the sentence. Note that the verb *chong* 宠 “love” was always used in the pattern “*you chong* 有宠+*yu* 于+human being.” Therefore, it cannot be categorically claimed that *yu* or *yu*+agent were specific passive markers.

### 4.2 Same structure with opposite meanings

Based on two observations: (1) *yu* could introduce an agent (see discussion in Section 3); and (2) *yu* could introduce a patient (see discussion in the Introduction in this chapter and later in Section 5.1), it could be inferred that some sentences could have

the same syntactic structure but opposite semantic meanings, a phenomenon that was quite common, as shown in the following contrastive examples.

259. 初, 王姚嬖于庄王。(Zuozhuan 左传. Zhuangong 庄公 19)

*chu*        *Wang-Yao*    *bi*                *yu*    *Zhuang*    *wang*  
beginning NAME        (be-)favour    by    NAME        king  
At the beginning, Wang Yao was favoured by the King Zhuang

Cf.

260. (帝纣) 嬖于妇人。(Shiji 史记. Yin benji 殷本纪)

(*Di Zhou*)        *bi*                *yu*        *furen*  
(emperor Zhou) (be-)favour    PREP    women  
(The Emperor Zhou) favours women (*not*: was favoured by women).

While both examples have an N+V+yu+N structure, the *yu* in the first Example (259) introduces the source of the love (i.e., agent) while in the second Example (260) indicates the goal of the love (i.e., patient).

Another pair of contrastive examples is shown below.

261. 信人, 则制於人。(Hanfeizi 韩非子. Beinei 备内)

*xin*    *ren*        *ze*    *zhi*        *yu*        *ren*  
trust    others    then    control    by    others  
If he (the ruler) trusts others, he will be controlled by others.

Cf.

262. 夫制於燕者, 苏子也。(Zhanguoce 战国策. Yance 燕策)

*fu*    *zhi*        *yu*        *Yan*    *zhe*    *Su-zi*        *ye*  
INI    control    PREP    Yan    ZHE    NAME        PART  
The person who will control the state of Yan is Su Zi.

In (261), *zhi yu* 制于 expresses the passive meaning “be controlled,” while in (262) the same structure changes its orientation and the sentence is the active meaning “control.” Therefore, (261) and (262) show that in Ancient Chinese the same structure

could have varied voices, which further proves that the preposition *yu* did not play a role in indicating voice.

### 4.3 Optional feature of *yu* before an agent

Sentences such as “P+V+*yu*+Agent” are normally taken to be typical passive constructions. However, in some cases, the expected preposition *yu* was absent, as in the following examples:

263. 纵有姊姁，以医幸王太后。(Shiji 史记. Kuli liezhuan 酷吏列传)

zhong you zi xu yi yi xing wang-tai-hou  
NAME have sister NAME PREP leechcraft favor queen-mother

Zhong had a sister named Xu and she was favored by the queen mother because of her leechcraft.

264. 天下有道，小德役大德，小贤役大贤；天下无道，小役大，弱役强。(Mengzi 孟子. Lilou shang 离娄上)<sup>155</sup>

tian-xia you dao xiao de yi da de  
world have morals small virtue control big virtue

xiao xian yi da xian  
small worthy control big worthy

tian-xia wu dao xiao yi da ruo yi qiang  
world NEG morals small control big weak control stronger

When there is the Way in the world, the small virtue is controlled by the great virtue, the small worthy is controlled by the great worthy; when there is no moral in the world, the small one is controlled by the big one, and the weak one is controlled by the powerful one.

Yao (1999) stated that this was a common occurrence in the Oracle Bone inscriptions, and believed that *yu* was initially not a necessary element when an agent was present and that the use of *yu* before an agent was a result of language development, which was similar to the earlier opinion by Liu (1989). Some examples from the Oracle Bone inscriptions are shown below.

265. 我吏其伐方? 我吏弗其伐方? (Yinxu wenzi bing bian 殷墟文字丙编,<sup>156</sup> 69)

<sup>155</sup> See the commentary in *Zhao Qi zhang ju* 赵岐章句 “Zhao Qi’s explanations for chapters and sections”: 有道之世，小德、小贤乐为大德、大贤役服于贤德也；无道之时，小国、弱国畏惧而役于大国、强国也。The interpretation is totally similar to mine.

*wo li qi fa fang?*  
 my official particle attack NAME  
*wo li fu qi fa fang*  
 my official NEG PART attack NAME  
 Will my official be attacked? Will my official be not attacked?

266. 贞:方其伐我吏? 贞:方弗伐我吏? (*Yinxu wenzi bing bian* 殷墟文字丙编, 69)

*zhen: fang qi fa wo li*  
 divine: NAME PART attack my official  
*zhen: fang fu fa wo li*  
 divine: NAME NEG attack my official  
 Will the state of Fang attack my official? Will the state of Fang not attack my official?

Liu (1989) noted that (265), which is passive, and (266), which is active, were expressing the same content in two different ways. What should be noted, however, is that the agent was not introduced by *yu* in (265). If Liu (1989) and Yao's (1999) observations are correct, that is, that initially the agent did not need to be introduced by *yu*, then it indirectly supports Guo's grammaticalization hypothesis, that is, that the preposition *yu* was grammaticalized from a verb and was initially developed as a preposition to indicate a location, with its prepositional function later expanded to indicate a time and an object that was compared with an agent.

Another example is given below.

267. 申舟以孟諸之役惡宋。(Zuozhuan 左傳. Xuangong 宣公)

*Shen-Zhou yi Meng-Zhu zhi yi wu Song*  
 NAME because NAME PART battle detest NAME  
 Shen Zhou knew that he was hated in the state of Song because of the part he had played at Meng Zhu.

In this example, the state of Song is the source of the "hate" (i.e., agent); however, *yu* is not placed before it. Additional examples are given in Appendix 3. These examples further demonstrate that the passive meaning was not related to the presence of *yu* and that placing *yu* before the agent was not essential.

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<sup>156</sup> This example is taken from Zhang (1957-1992).

## 4.4 Absence of a *yu*+agent phrase in passive sentences

Cross-linguistically, most agent phrases are optional, which implies that the phrase “*yu*+agent” was not the key to the passive meaning, which can be seen from some notional passives. As observed in Part 2, most PV examples merely express a resultant state rather than a passive and very few can be justifiably interpreted as passive when translated, as in the following examples.

268. **Transitive:** 围邯郸。(Lüshichunqiu 吕氏春秋. Shironglun 士容论)

*wei han-dan*

besiege NAME

[The state of Wei] besieged the capital city of Zhao Handan.

269. **Object fronting:** 邯郸围。(Zhuangzi 庄子. Quqie 祛箧)

*han-dan wei*

NAME besiege

[The capital city Han-tan] is besieged.

270. **Transitive:** 韩献子将斩人。(Guoyu 国语. Jinyu 晋语)

*han-xianzi jiang zhan ren*

NAME will cut-down someone

Han Xianzi was about to cut down someone.

271. **Object fronting:** 昔者龙逢斩。(Zhuangzi 庄子. Quqie 祛箧)

*xi-zhe long-feng zhan*

past NAME cut down

In times past, Long Feng was cut down.

Examples (269) and (271) appear to have passive meanings and none of them has a “*yu*+agent” phrase. However, it is clear that the passive interpretation is not reliant on the presence of *yu* or the *yu*+agent phrase. For clarity, further examples of these different structures with the verb *ju* 拘 are given.

272. V+OBJ

阳虎拘季孙。(Gongyangzhuan 公羊传. Dinggong 定公 8)

*yang-hu ju ji-sun*

NAME      arrest      NAME

Yang Hu arrested Ji Sun.

273. V+OBJ+*yu*+LOC

是故拘宛春于卫。(Guoyu 国语. Jinyu 晋语)

*shi-gu      ju      wan-chun      yu      wei*  
therefore   arrest   NAME      OBL      state

Therefore, Lord Jinwen arrested Wan Chun in the state of Wei.

274. P+V

女多拘无夫。(Mozi 墨子. Ciguó 辞过)

*nü              duo      ju              wu              fu*  
woman      most      arrest      NEG      husband

Most women were arrested and they did not have husbands.

275. P+V+*yu*+LOC

昔出公之後声氏为晋公，拘於铜鞮。(Lüshichunqiu 吕氏春秋. Shenyīng lán 审应览)

*xi              chu-gong      zhi      hou              sheng-shi*  
formerly      chu-lord      PART      offspring      sheng-surname  
*wei      jin-gong      ju              yu              tong-di*  
hold      jin-lord      arrest      OBL      NAME

Formerly, the offspring of the lord of Chu (i.e., Family Sheng) became the king of Jin, but [he was] arrested in Tong Di.

276. P+V+*yu*+Agent

苏秦拘于魏。(Zhanguoce 战国策. wei ce 魏策)

*su-qin      ju              yu              wei*  
NAME      arrest      PREP      NAME

Su Qin was arrested in the state of Wei.

It can be seen that the *yu*+location functions in the same way in sentences (273) and (275); however, in sentences (275) and (276), the *yu*+location functions in the same way as *yu*+agent, which elucidates the relationship between *yu*+location and *yu*+agent, that is, the latter was probably further grammaticalized from the former (in English, the by-agent was probably grammaticalized from by-instrument). As the passive meaning can be expressed without the *yu*+agent phrase, it could be speculated that the PV construction is the necessary and sufficient condition for the passive. However, there are some verbs for which there is no PV but only PV+*yu*+agent examples. For

example, the verb *qu* 屈 “bent” does not have a “P+*qu*” example, but does have a “PV+*yu*+agent” example.

277. 物必不屈於欲。(Xunzi 荀子. Lilun 礼论)

*wu*    *bi*        *bu*    *qu*        *yu*    *yu*  
good definite NEG exhaust PREP desire

Goods would not be exhausted by the desires.

Similarly, the verb *wu* 惡 “hate” does not have any “P+*wu*” examples, but does have some “PV+*yu*+agent” examples.

278. 不则恐恶於赵。(Hanfeizi 韩非子. Neichushuo shang 内储说上)

*bu*    *ze*    *kong*    *wu*    *yu*    *Zhao*  
NEG then fear hate PREP NAME

If he did not speak up he feared he would incur the hatred of Zhao.

However, none of these examples, including those with *qu* and *wu*, have been translated as passives in TLS, which indicates that even when the structure of the sentence was a “P+V+*yu*+agent,” it was not necessarily interpreted as having a passive meaning. Moreover, if this observation is true, that is, that some verbs do not have the PV structure but have the PV+*yu*+agent structure, and then the PV structure is not a necessary or sufficient condition for the passive. More importantly, as discussed in Part 2, most PV examples are intransitive sentences involving labile verbs (i.e., unaccusative sentences), which are not normally treated as passives, which further suggests that the PV structure is not a sufficient condition for the passive.

Therefore, it could be concluded that the passive meaning was basically motivated by the context. Even though “V-ed+by” is a syntactic structure for a passive meaning and is a passive marker in English, this does not justify the conclusion that the “V+*yu*+agent” was a syntactic structure for passive in Ancient Chinese or that *yu* or *yu*+agent was a passive marker. Gao (1948[2011]: 226-227) argued that the oldest form of what is now referred to as a “passive” (i.e., the *yu* passive) was actually not a separate construction with a passive meaning; rather, the passive reading was an interpretation of the structure based on the context and the semantics of the referents.

Cikoski (1978: 3) claimed that the *yu* passive “is not a genuine passive at all, but a congeries of active-voice idioms mistakenly lumped together.” Therefore, neither *yu* nor the “*yu*+agent” phrase can be defined as passive markers as the passive interpretation in examples including *yu*+agent are basically dependent on the context. Further evidence that *yu* was not a passive marker is that it was used with other so-called passive markers (e.g., *wei* and *jian*) to form *jian...yu* and *wei...yu* constructions (see discussion in Chapters 2 and 3 in this part). This observation indirectly proves that there was no fixed syntactic passive. However, if there were, how would they be mixed together? Therefore, it is better to analyze the passive in Ancient Chinese from a pragmatic view: foregrounding the patient and backgrounding the agent, with the passive meaning being dependent on the context.

On this point, further evidence can be derived from comparative structures with *yu*. Guan (1981) claimed that the “N<sub>1</sub>+Adj.+*yu*+N<sub>2</sub>” appeared since from the *Shangshu* 尚书 and was the oldest comparative structure. However, this became a quite common comparative structure in pre-Qin times, as shown in the following.

279. 季氏富于周公。 (*Lunyu* 论语. Xianjin 先进)

<i>ji-shi</i>	<i>fu</i>	<i>yu</i>	<i>zhou-gong</i>
Ji-family	rich	PREP	zhou-lord

The Ji family is richer than the lord Zhou.

Generally, while the “N+Adj.” alone does not express a comparative meaning, the “Adj.+*yu*” is sufficient for a comparative meaning. Therefore, observations that *yu* was a comparative marker and the “Adj.+*yu*” structure was a comparative structure have not been widely questioned.

Given these many observations, is it possible to give a consistent definition for the multiple functions of *yu*? I suggest that perhaps “oblique marker” would be a good option.

## 5. YU IS AN OBLIQUE MARKER



As mentioned, *zi* 自, *zhi* 至 and *yu* are all prepositions of location in the Oracle Bone Inscriptions. However, *zi* only indicates a start point and *zhi* only indicates an endpoint, whereas *yu* can indicate both. Therefore, it could be speculated that *yu* is a “double-oriented” preposition. Moreover, as location is normally an oblique element rather than an internal element, *yu* was probably further grammaticalized to become an oblique marker indicating an “indirect/loose/marginalized” relationship or some other additional information (e.g., location, agent, object of comparison).

The most direct evidence for this supposition is that: (1) *yu* intervenes between V and its object; (2) the contrast between V+*yu*+location and V+location; (3) *yu* introduces the indirect object in a double object structure; and (4) the contrast between V+*yu*+IO and V+IO.

## 5.1 Optional feature of *yu* before an object

Normally, a transitive verb should be followed directly by an object without *yu*. However, there are some particular cases in which *yu* was used between a transitive verb and its object.

This phenomenon was discussed by He (2004), who believed that *yu* was added before the object to emphasize the *object* or functioning similar to an emphatic modal marker or strengthen a mood (i.e., *jiaqiang yuqi de zuoyong* 加强语气的作用), as in the following example.

280. 公孙无知虐于雍廩。(Zuozhuan 左传. Zhuangong 庄公 8-9)

<i>gongsun-wuzhi</i>	<i>nue</i>	<i>yu</i>	<i>yonglin</i>
NAME	oppress	OBL	NAME

Gongsun Wuzhi oppressed Yong Lin.

He (2004: 102-103) believed that the use of *yu* here indicated that the speaker’s “sympathy” was being paid to the object Yong Lin 雍廩 (person’s name). However, Sugita (1994) disagreed, and argued that the use of *yu* was related to the “living state (i.e., being alive)” of Yong Lin, that is, the object for *nue* 虐 in other cases normally

died (i.e., were not alive), but in Example (280) Yong Lin still survived. Therefore, Sugita (1994) concluded that *yu* was a marker for the “imperfective” and divided the “imperfective” into a “conative aspect,” an “inchoative aspect,” a “progressive aspect,” and an “irrealis modality” (see more discussion in Sugita 1994: 126-128). However, Sugita’s (1994) explanation does not work for all examples, as shown in the following.

281. 仲见于齐侯而请之。(Zuozhuan 左传. Wengong 文公 18)<sup>157</sup>

zhong jian yu qi-hou er qing zhi  
NAME meet OBL Qi-marquis and ask PRON

Zhong met with marquis of Qi and asked him [to establish Lord Xuan as the king].

Cf.

282. 若使烛之武见秦君，师必退。(Zuozhuan 左传· Xigong 僖公 30)

ruo shi zhu-zhiwu jian qin jun shi bi tui  
if send NAME meet NAME king military surely retreat

If [you] send Zhu Zhiwu to meet with the king of Qin, [the Qin’s] military will surely retreat.

283. 乃观于殷政.<sup>158</sup> (Yizhoushu 逸周书. Dajujie 大聚解)

nai guan yu yin zheng  
so view OBL NAME politic

Thus, [king Wu] contemplated about the politics of the state of Yin.

Cf.

284. 然吾观国人。(Guoyu 国语. Luyu 鲁语)

ran wu guan guo-ren  
but I view country-people

<sup>157</sup> To show that the use of *yu* is not related to “incompleteness/imperfective,” the whole context is presented here: 文公二妃敬嬴生宣公。敬嬴嬖而私事襄仲。宣公长而属诸襄仲，襄仲欲立之，叔仲不可。仲见于齐侯而请之。齐侯新立而欲亲鲁，许之。“Jin Ying, the second wife of Lord Luwen, gave birth to Lord Xuan. Jing Ying was spoiled by Lord Luwen and she privately associated with Xiang Zhong. Jing Ying committed Lord Xuan to Xiang Zhong’s care. Xiang Zhong planned to establish Lord Xuan as the king, but Zhong Shu refuted. Zhong Shu went to visit Lord Qihui and asked him not to establish Lord Xuan as the king. Lord Qihui was newly established and he wanted to make close relationship with the state of Lu, so he agreed with Zhong Shu.”

From the above context, it is clear that the action *jian* 见 “visit” is completed rather than incomplete.

<sup>158</sup> The context is shown here: 维武王胜殷，抚国绥民，乃观于殷政，告周公旦曰 “After king Wu annihilated the state of Yin, he inspected the government policies in the state of Yin to stabilize the country and set down the people in this country and said.” According to this context, I do not feel any implication of imperfective aspect. In other words, the action of *guan* 观 “inspect” is completed.

But I contemplate on the people in this country.

The use of *yu* in these examples does not make the actions *jian* 见 “visit” and *guan* 观 “inspect” *incomplete* (see the *contexts* in the footnotes). More importantly, if Sugita’s (1994) opinion is correct, then all transitive sentences including those with *yu* 欲 “plan” and *jiang* 将 “will” should have had *yu* before their objects. Obviously, this was not the case.<sup>159</sup> Therefore, Sugita’s opinion is also unconvincing.

Dong (2006) concluded that *yu* was a non-patient marker and could introduce all kinds of elements except a typical patient, that is, the object following *yu* was not a “typical” patient, as in the following example.

285. 为宫室，不斫于丘木。(Liji 礼记. Quli 曲礼)

*wei gongshi bu zhan yu qiu mu*  
make palace NEG chop OBL grave tree

When the gentleman makes a palace, he will not build it by chopping the trees on a tomb.

Dong (2006) stated that when there was a *yu* before the *qiu-mu* 丘木 “the tree on tomb,” then the *qiu-mu* 丘木 “the tree on the tomb” was the *scope* rather than the typical patient. While this opinion is acceptable to some degree, this explanation does not work well in the following examples.

286. 故欲诛于祝、史。(Zuozhuan 左传. Zhaogong 昭公 20)

*gu yu zhu yu zhu shi*  
therefore wish execute particle priest historiographer

Therefore, they wished to execute the shamans/priests and historians.

287. 将戕于余。(Zuozhuan 左传. Dinggong 定公 14)

*jiang qiang yu yu*  
will kill PART I

He would kill me.

288. 以讨于蔡。(Zuozhuan 左传. Xiangong 襄公 8)

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<sup>159</sup> For example, *ruo sha furen* 若杀夫人 “If I had killed the marchioness.” This example is a hypothetical sentence. If Sugita (1994) is right, then we should expect the presence of *yu* before *fu ren* 夫人 “marchioness.” However, this is not the case.

*yi*            *tao*      *yu*          *cai*  
in-order-to   punish   PART   NAME  
In order to punish the state of Cai.

In these examples, it is not possible to say that the “*yu*+patient” phrase could be reinterpreted as “*yu*+scope” as the object (i.e., patient) is a concrete/specific/definite noun rather than a general/collective noun. It is also difficult for Dong to explain why these objects (i.e., patient) above are not *typical*.

These examples are also counterexamples to Xu’s (2006) hypothesis, which is summarized below.

Regarding these examples in which *yu* is optional before an object, one easily notices that the meaning is not really affected by the presence/absence of the preposition *yu*. In other words, *yu* is an optional preposition. When the semantic features of these verbs are closely examined, it will be seen that almost all of them express a feeling, an impression, or a sense of perception, i.e., *nu* 怒 “be furious,” *gui* 贵 “appreciate,” *li* 利 “be beneficial to,” *huan* 患 “be worried about,” *cong* 从 “follow,” *shan* 善 “be kind to,” *ling* 令 “order,” and *hai* 害 “hurt, to be harmful.” In short, the degree of transitivity is very weak in these verbs. The action does not have a direct effect on the object. This partially explains why the preposition *yu* can, in this position, introduce a “direct object.”

Obviously, the examples above (286, 287 and 288) cannot be explained using Xu’s hypothesis, either.

This phenomenon, however, can be explained by the hypothesis that *yu* was a double-orientation preposition that could introduce both an agent and a patient. As such, if the *yu* in the *yu*+agent phrase could be interpreted as a passive marker, then the *yu* in the *yu*+patient phrase should be interpreted as an active marker; however, such an interpretation has never been declared. Therefore, the function of *yu* was basically that of a preposition whose object could be either an agent or a patient. When *yu* was used before an object, it functioned as an oblique marker to indicate that the relationship between V and O was looser or more indirect, and it could be speculated that the stronger the transitivity, the closer the relationship between the V and O, and the less possible that *yu* would be inserted. This hypothesis is similar to

Xu's to some degree, but does not neglect the fact that *yu* indeed can be used before some strong transitive verbs.<sup>160</sup>

## 5.2 Contrast between V+*yu*+location and V+location

All movement verbs such as *ju* 居 “live” and *ru* 入 “enter” could be followed directly by a location or by *yu* followed by a location.<sup>161</sup>

289. 公居於长府。(Zuozhuan 左传. Zhaogong 昭公 25)

*gong ju yu chang-fu*  
lord live OBL NAME

Lord [Zhao] lived in Changfu.

Cf.

290. 使太子居曲沃。(Zuozhuan 左传. Zhuangong 庄公 28)

*shi tai-zi ju qu-wo*  
send prince live NAME

[He] sent the prince to dwell in Quwo.

291. 宋成公如楚，还，入於郑。(Zuozhuan 左传. Xigong 僖公 24)

*song-cheng gong ru chu huai ru yu zheng*  
NAME lord go NAME return enter OBL NAME

Lord Cheng of the state of Song went to the state of Chu, when he returned, he entered the state of Zheng.

Cf.

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<sup>160</sup> One might see it also the other way round: as *yu* is the oldest and most grammaticalized preposition, its functional realm is rather broad (e.g., in, at, from), whereas the other prepositions are still semantically restrained. However, one could not explain why *yu* can be used before an object as discussed before.

<sup>161</sup> Actually, the *yu* before a time word can also be omitted. See examples below:

1. 晋公子，姬出也，而至于今。(Zuozhuan 左传. Xigong 僖公 23)

*jin gong-zi ji chu ye er zhi yu jin*  
NAME prince NAME born FIN but till PRE now

Yet this prince of Jin, though born of a mother of the Ji surname, has been able to come this far.

2. 自是至今，亦皆循之。(Zuozhuan 左传. Xiangong 襄公 28)

*zi shi zhi jin, yi jie xun zhi*  
from that till now also all follow it

From that time till now, the practice has been followed all the time.

292. 宋、卫既入郑。(Zuozhuan 左传. Yingong 隐公 10)

song            wei            ji            ru            zheng  
 NAME        NAME        already    enter       NAME

After the states of Song and Wei had entered the state of Zheng.

In early Archaic Chinese, the constructions V+*yu*+location and V+location had the same frequency of use, as shown in Table 24.

**Table 24 Frequency of the two structures in Zuozhuan<sup>162</sup>**

	+location	+ <i>yu</i> location
<i>zhi</i> 至	183	228
<i>tian</i> 田	8	12
<i>ru</i> 入	108	148

Note: Data were extracted from Li (1994b).

This equal use observation has generated debate on which of these constructions was the “original” structure (see for example Ma (1898 [2007] ), Yang (1959), and Sun (2000)). Ma (1898 [2007] ) claimed that as there was no *yu* between V and the location initially, cases with *yu* before the location should be regarded as special, that is, “V+*yu*+LOC” developed based on the original V+LOC. Sun’s (1993/2000) comparison of classical texts from pre-Qin times and commentary literature from the Eastern Han dynasty also supported Ma’s opinion, as it was found that there was no *yu* before the location in the original texts but there was a *yu* before the location in the commentaries. Therefore, Sun (1993/2000) concluded that the development was from V+location to V+*yu*+location, which suggested that the grammatical relations were expressed *more explicitly*.

However, Ma’s supposition was criticized by Yang (1959), who claimed the opposite, that is, “V+*yu*+location” was the original structure and “V+location” developed by deleting the *yu* from the “V+*yu*+location” structure. Fang (2000: 70-73) supported Yang by arguing against Sun from two angles: (1) Firstly, Sun’s conclusion is not

<sup>162</sup> Maybe we also have to consider that the style of the historical works is sometimes very idiomatic and concise (historians’ idiom).

convincing since the commentary text did not comment every sentence in the original text. Just like Sun himself emphasized: although it is proposed that there was the development from V+location to V+*yu*+location, it does not mean that *yu* had never been used before a location in pre-Qin times, nor that it had become obligatory in the Eastern Han dynasty; rather, the difference was in the *usage frequency* during the different periods; (2) Secondly, in addition a gradual change was taking place, as Sun has pointed out; with respect to *yu*, although it was still frequently used in *Zuozhuan*, it indeed tended to be omitted in some contexts.

Returning to the discussion on the grammaticalization of *yu*, Guo (1997) claimed that as *yu* was grammaticalized in the serial verb construction “V+*yu*<sub>verb</sub>+location” (see the discussion in Section 2), “V+*yu*+location” could have been the original structure; therefore, the suggestion that “V+*yu*+location” was the addition of *yu* to “*yu*+location” was unjustified. Accordingly, Yang’s (1959) and Fang(2000)’s suppositions are more likely, with the process being as follows:

(i) V+*yu*<sub>verb</sub>+location      (ii) V+*yu*<sub>prep</sub>+location      (iii) V+location

However, the reason for the omission of *yu* is not clear. Commenting on the differences between V+*yu*+location and V+location, He (2004: 106) speculated that the *yu* possibly not only introduced a location but also indicated the “perfective aspect.”<sup>163</sup> However, because the “perfective aspect” is expressed by the context of the whole sentence rather than by *yu* alone, He (2004) was not totally convinced of this observation. In particular, as the aspect of a sentence is different when *jiang* 将 “will,” *bi* 必 “must,” *qing* 请 “request,” *qiu* 求 “beg” are present with *yu*, He’s (2004) argument that *yu* expressed the “perfective aspect” is even less convincing.

Here, it is believed that *yu* has a function similar to an *oblique marker*, and that the relationship between the location and V is somewhat “looser” in the V+*yu*+location structure than in the V+location structure. As the omission of *yu* promotes the location after *yu* from a *prepositional* object to a *verbal* object, the omission of *yu*

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<sup>163</sup> The original resource is shown here: subject+V+*yu*+location 这种句式常在表示动作行为处所的同时，兼表在时态上已经完成。

suggests that the oblique location tended to be an internal element when the location was the sole element after movement verbs.

### 5.3 *Yu* introducing the indirect object in double object structure

A majority of the examples of the double object construction in Archaic Chinese had an “indirect object (i.e., IO)+direct object (i.e., DO)” word order, as shown in the following examples.<sup>164</sup>

293. 公賜之食 (Zuozhuan 左传. Yingong 隱公 1)

*gong ci zhi shi*  
duke offer PRON food

The Duke offered him food.

294. 奪之牛 (Zuozhuan 左传. Xuangong 宣公 11)

*duo zhi niu*  
rob PRON buffalo

[The people] robbed him of the buffalo.

There were also some instances when the IO followed the DO, with the classical Chinese expressions with this word order always being paraphrased using the preposition *yu* for the IO.

295. 叶公问孔子於子路。(Lunyu 论语. Shuer 述而)

*Ye-gong wen kong-zi yu zi-lu*  
NAME ask Confucian PREP NAME

Ye Gong asked Zi Lu about Confucian.

296. 丁未，獻楚俘于王。(Zuozhuan 左传. Xiongong 僖公 28)

*ding-wei xian chu fu yu wang*  
TIME offer NAME capture PREP king

On the day DingWei, the state of Jin presented the Chu capture to the King of Zhou.

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<sup>164</sup> For detailed studies on ditransitive constructions in Ancient Chinese, see Peyraube (1986, 1987).



Therefore, it could be surmised that the IO could be marked or not marked by *yu* depending on the word order. However, when both indirect and direct objects appeared, *yu* never introduced the DO, that is, examples such as V+*yu*+DO+IO or V+IO+*yu*+DO were not attested. Compared to the DO, the IO could be seen to have been a more external element that had an “indirect/loose/marginalized” relationship with the verb. *Therefore, yu always introduced some elements that had “indirect/loose/marginalized” relationships with the verb.* However, the general double object construction trend was that *yu* gradually disappeared.

## 5.4 Contrast between V+*yu*+IO and V+IO

*Yu* was normally used before an indirect object in a double object construction when both direct and indirect objects appeared (see above). However, when the direct object was not present, then the indirect object became the only object of the verb and in these cases *yu* was sometimes inserted and sometimes not inserted, that is, there were both V+IO and V+*yu*+IO constructions; for example:

297. 韩宣子问于叔向曰。(Zuozhuan 左传. Zhaogong 昭公 13)

*han-xuanzi wen yu shu-xiang yue*  
 NAME ask OBL NAME say

Han Xuanzi asked Shuxiang and said.

Cf.

298. 韩宣子问叔向曰。(Shiji 史记. Chushijia 楚世家)

*han-xuanzi wen shu-xiang yue*  
 NAME ask NAME say

Han Xuanzi asked Shuxiang and said.

299. 子玉使宛春告于晋师曰。(Zuozhuan 左传. Xigong 僖公 28)

*zi-yu shi wan-chun gao yu jin-shi yue*  
 NAME make NAME tell OBL Jin-military say

Ziyu made Wanchun tell [something to] the military of Jin and said.

Cf.

300. 子玉使宛春告晋。(Shiji 史记. Jinshijia 晋世家)

zi-yu shi wan-chun gao jin

NAME make NAME tell NAME

Ziyu made Wanchun tell [something to] the state of Jin.

Based on a thorough study of the “tell” verbs in Ancient Chinese, Yang (2012: 144) concluded that the development from V+yu+G to V+G was an obvious trend. See the detailed statistics in Table 25 below.

**Table 25 Use of wen 问 “ask” in the V+yu+G to V+G structures**

	<i>Lun</i> <i>yu</i>	<i>Zuo</i> <i>Zhuan</i>	<i>Guo</i> <i>Yu</i>	<i>Meng</i> <i>zi</i>	<i>Han</i> <i>feizi</i>	<i>Zhan</i> <i>guoce</i>	<i>Huai</i> <i>nanzi</i>	<i>Shi</i> <i>ji</i>	<i>Lun</i> <i>heng</i>
wen+ yu+G	24	95	55	6	27	6	18	19	19
Wen+G	2	11	5	9	62	21	20	158	112

*Note:* Data were from Yang (2012), which used the term goal (i.e., G) to represent the indirect object (i.e., IO).

Therefore, it is concluded that V+IO was an omission of *yu* from the V+yu+IO structure, with the difference between the two structures being that the V and the indirect object had a closer relationship in V+IO (i.e., G) than in V+yu+IO (i.e., G). In other words, *the omission of yu promoted the IO from a prepositional object to a verbal object when the IO was the sole element after V.*

Based on the four main observations given above, a general trend can be observed that the use of *yu* gradually declined, with the indirect relationship tending to become a direct relationship.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, it was shown that even though some examples that included the agent marker *yu* had passive meanings, stating that *yu* or *yu*+agent were “passive markers”

is unjustified because: (1) the “*yu*+agent” phrase also appeared in active sentences; (2) there were examples with the same structure but with opposite meanings; (3) the presence of *yu* before an agent appeared to be optional; and (4) there were no “*yu*+agent” phrases in some examples with passive meaning. The passive reading was an interpretation of the structure based only on the context and the semantics of the referents rather than some markers or a fixed syntax. Therefore, based on these four observations — (1) *yu* appeared before the object; (2) the contrast between V+*yu*+location and V+location; (3) *yu* introduced indirect objects in double object structures; and (4) the contrast between V+*yu*+IO and V+IO — defining *yu* as an *oblique marker* is more suitable as it covers all its functions.

However, there is another question that needs to be considered: what is the relationship between the notional passive and the *yu* passive? It is possible the *yu* passive was an unaccusative verb construction in which the *yu* functioned as an agent-introducing preposition. In Part 1, it was speculated that a *yu* agent occurrence was less possible in **Type1** and more possible in **Type2**. Therefore, claiming that *yu* was a passive marker when it introduced an agent was a misinterpretation of its function.

APPENDIX 1: ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES FOR A CONTRASTIVE CONTEXT  
(the examples here are listed for further evidence and will not be specifically analyzed or commented on)

- (1) 吾闻用夏变夷，未闻变于夷者也。(《孟子·滕文公上》)
- (3) 治于人者食人，治人者食于人。《孟子·滕文公上》
- (4) 君子役物，小人役于物。《荀子·修身》
- (5) 通者常治人，穷者常治于人。《荀子·荣辱》
- (8) 物物而不物于物，则胡可德而累邪!《庄子·山木》
- (9) 夫破人之与破于人也，岂可同日而言之哉!(《战国策·赵二》)
- (10) 以养人之欲，给人之求，使欲必不穷乎物，物必不屈于欲。《荀子·礼论》)
- (11) 势在下，则君制于臣矣；势在上，则臣制于君矣。(《管子·法》)
- (12) 鲁卫逼(逼)于齐而亲于晋。(《春秋左氏传·昭公四年》)
- (13) 内困于父母，外困于诸侯，是重困也。
- (14) 妇人在家制于父，既嫁制于夫。
- (15) 是以上不渎于民，下不褻于上。

APPENDIX 2: NEGATIVE CONTEXT

- (1) 君子是以知出姜之不允于鲁也。(《春秋左氏传·文公四年》)
- (4) 不轻寡，不劫于敌，慎终若始(《孙臆兵法·将德》)
- (5) 是以不诱于誉，不恐于诽。(《荀子·非十二子》)
- (7) 居下位而不获于上，民不可得而治也。(《孟子·离娄上》)
- (8) 获于上有道，不信于友，弗获于上也。(《孟子·离娄上》)
- (9) 悦亲有道，反身不诚，不悦于亲矣。(《孟子·离娄上》)
- (11) 信于友有道，事亲弗悦，弗信于友矣。(《孟子·离娄上》)
- (12) 吾不試，故藝。(論語)
- (13) 忠臣不用，(管子)  
民用，則天下可致也。(管子)
- (14) 臨事不信於民者，則不可使任大官；

### APPENDIX 3: OPTIONAL FEATURE OF YU BEFORE AN AGENT

1. 颂其万年臂寿，吮臣天子。(《颂壶》)
2. 所亡秦者。(战国纵横家书)
3. 所亡乎秦者。(戰國策)
4. 天下苦秦久矣。
5. 子比用【于】郑，比以严莅人。(韩非子)
6. (舜)既月乃日，覩四岳群牧，班瑞于群后。(《尚书·舜典》)
7. 舜臣尧，宾于四门。(《左传·文公十八年》)
8. 比干剖心，孔子拘匡。(《荀子·尧问》)
9. 夫燕之所以屺屺被兵者，以赵之为蔽龄南也。(《战国策·燕一》)

# CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Compared to the notional passive, the so-called marked passives appeared at a later date. They are not found in Oracle Bone inscriptions but began to appear in pre-Qin times. The analysis of each passive marker and the constructions they appear in reveals that (1) most of them have an “inward” semantic meaning (i.e., “receive/suffer”) (see Section 1), (2) nearly all of them are followed by elements with negative connotations (see Section 2), none is consistently accepted by scholars as a passive marker (see Sections 3 and 4) and (3) they share some particularities (see Section 5). Meanwhile, the relative frequency of these markers is discussed in Section 6 and Section 7 concludes this chapter.

## 1. THE “INWARD” SEMANTIC FEATURE AND PASSIVE

As mentioned, all the so-called passive markers are grammaticalized from action verbs with full semantic meanings. Interestingly, during their grammaticalization processes, both *jian* and *bei* underwent a stage revealing the double-orientation feature, i.e., with both inward and outward semantic features, to some degree.

Although both *jian* and *bei* have the double-orientation feature, only the one denoting the *inwardly directed feature* is directly relevant to the development of the so-called passive marker. Concerning this inward semantic feature, they can be interpreted as either “receive” or “suffer,” depending on whether the context is positive or negative. See discussion in Section 2 below.

The *yu* passive is also relevant for the inward semantic feature: it is treated as passive marker only when it introduces an agent after V and the whole sentence has an inward semantic interpretation with a patient in the subject position. In contrast, *yu* before a patient (i.e., object) is never relevant to a passive interpretation.

## 2. NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE ELEMENTS AFTER *JIAN*, *BEI* AND *WEI*

Actually, although a few positive contexts are found, almost all the elements that appear after the words are negative.

### (1) Verbal expressions following *jian*:

**Negative:** *qin* 禽 “capture”, *xiao* 笑 “laugh”, *wu* 恶 “hate”, *wu* 污 “smudge”, *yi* 疑 “doubt”, *shang* 伤 “hurt”, *hai* 害 “harm”, *fa* 罚 “punish”, *qi* 欺 “cheat”, *zui* 罪 “punish”, *wu* 侮 “slight”, *xing* 刑 “torture”, *qin* 侵 “invade”, *yong* 用 “use”, *shi* 弑 “murder”, *sha* 杀 “slaughter”, *fa* 伐 “attack”, *pou* 剖 “cut open”, *bi* 闭 “close”, *dan* 惮 “dread”, *qie* 劫 “raid”

**Positive:** *ai* 爱 “love”, *shang* 赏 “bestow”

### (2) Verbal expressions following *bei*:

**Negative:** *ru* 辱 “insult”, *xing* 刑 “torture”, *qin* 侵 “invade”, *hui* 毁 “ruin”, *bang* 谤 “slander”, *ji* 讥 “mock”, *hai* 害 “harm”, *bing* 兵 “kill”, *gong* 攻 “attack”, *chuang* 创 “wound”, *kou* 寇 “invade”

**Positive:** none

In the data, *ai* 爱 and *shang* 赏 are occasionally found after *jian*. Apart from these two, the other words that follow *jian* are all negative. This explains why the Chinese passive is linked to a negative connotation: both *jian* and *bei* are thought to have developed into passive markers on the basis of their semantic meaning “suffer/undergo.”

As described, *wei* developed into a passive marker based on its semi-copula function. As such, it is an anomaly in comparison to the two passive markers above. Theoretically, the element after *wei* could be either positive or negative. However, the elements are nearly all negative, as shown below.

### (3) Verbal expressions following *wei*:

**Negative:** *xiao* 笑 “laugh”, *qin* 擒/擒 “capture”, *huan* 患 “worry”, *you* 忧 “worry”, *ru* 辱 “insult”, *kun* 困 “surround”, *huo* 获 “capture”, *shi* 食 “eat”, *lu* 戮 “kill/punish/humiliate”, *lie* 裂 “cut”, *yong* 用 “use”, *ge* 割 “cut”, *yi* 役 “serve”, *shi* 弑 “murder”, *tao* 讨 “condemn”, *qing* 请 “inquire”, *zai* 载 “record” and *yu* 愚 “deceive”

**Positive:** none

Meanwhile, as observed, the V in the *yu* construction also mainly expresses a negative connotation as displayed below.

#### (4) V in *yu* construction

**Negative:** *shang* 伤 “wound”, *jie* 劫 “threaten”, *mie* 灭 “destroy”, *hui* 毁 “destroy”, *po* 破 “break”, *zhi* 制 “control”, *zhu* 诛 “kill”, *ju* 拘 “restrain”, *yi* 役 “enslave”, *qiong* 穷 “control”, *bi* 逼 “compel”, *kun* 困 “besiege”, *lu* 戮 “kill”, *shi* 试 “employ”, *yong* 用 “employ”

**Positive:** *xin* 信 “trust”, *bi* 嬖 “love”

Among these words, very few (see the “positive” ones above) express neutral or positive meanings. However, it is important to note that the neutral or positive ones are normally used with the negators *bu* 不 and *fu* 弗 preceding them. Therefore, the entire phrase expresses a negative connotation (i.e., to be affected in a negative way).

In the discussion of the passive in Chinese, *gan qing se cai* 感情色彩 “emotional coloring” is an inevitable topic. However, most studies of this topic are based on a Modern Mandarin corpus. For example, Hashimoto (1987) described that *bei* sentences mainly express the “inflictive voice,” and Shen (2002) argued that “expressing the inflictive/unpleasant experience” is the typical semantic feature of passives in Chinese. This theme has also been developed by Li (1986), Ma (1997), Sugimura (2003), and others. In the case of the so-called passive in Ancient Chinese, I believe this point is even more evident. This point is further studied in Part 5.

However, as demonstrated, none of the so-called passive markers has been given a



consistent explanation, and each is ambiguous in passive and V-O interpretations.

### 3. AMBIGUITY BETWEEN V-O AND PASSIVE INTERPRETATIONS

As mentioned, the situation of *yu* is different from *jian*, *bei*, and *wei*, the reasons for refuting *yu* as a passive marker are mainly based on the following observations: (1) *yu*'s function as a preposition to introduce an agent is quite marginalized, and (2) besides introducing an agent, *yu* can also appear before an object (see Chapter 6, Part 3). While the ambiguity of *jian*, *bei* and *wei* structures is quite similar in some respects, the complex features of these constructions are summarized below.

As discussed, the appearance of verb-like elements (see the lists above) after *jian*, *bei*, and *wei* further motivated their reanalysis as passive markers. However, the passive marker hypothesis is increasingly doubted because there is insufficient evidence to prove that the elements after markers should be treated as verbs in these structures. The reason is that the word categories “noun” and “verb” are not overtly marked in Ancient Chinese, and the interpretation that a word is one or the other heavily depends on word order and context. This topic is traditionally studied in terms of *zizhi* 自指 “self-reference” and *zhuanzhi* 转指 “transferred-reference” by Chinese scholars (e.g., Zhu 1983) (for more discussion, see Part 1). As such, the word category shift between noun and verb is frequently unmarked.

As described in every chapter, most of the elements that follow *jian*, *bei*, and *wei*, are actually frequently used as either a noun or a verb *without overt marking*, such as *you* 忧, *qin* 禽, *ru* 辱, and *xiao* 笑. Therefore, in such cases, it is insufficient to argue that *jian*, *bei*, and *wei* are passive markers, since it cannot be proved that the elements following them are consistently verbal.

Moreover, the use of verb-like elements in these constructions is rather limited. This limitation can be construed from two angles. Firstly, the number of verbs of this type is limited. To prove this, some articles specifically on verbs are searched and *data on*

*the amount of frequently used verbs in Ancient Chinese texts* are collected. Guo (2003) found 310 verbs in total in Oracle bone inscriptions. Zhang (2003) listed 2,266 verbs in the *Zuozhuan*. Dai (2018) found 1,044 verbs in the *Guoyu*, and Li (2012) found 1,111 verbs in the *Lüshi chunqiu*. Compared to these numbers, the number of verb-like elements that can appear after the so-called passive markers (see the summary in Section 2) is indeed quite small. Secondly, the semantics are also limited; namely, they are largely related to killing, capture, insult, and worry.

Lastly, I speculate that *these structures* (i.e., *jian* structure, *bei* structure and *wei* structures) themselves have the function of nominalizing (*zhi cheng hua* 指称化) the predicative elements (*wei ci xing cheng fen* 谓词性成分); that is, they change a verbal element into a nominal one. For example, in the “X *wei* Y” structure, if either X or Y is a predicative (i.e., verbal) element, it can be nominalized easily because of the characteristic of the (semi-) copula *wei*.

Accordingly, some scholars (as reviewed in Chapter 1 in this part) have begun to rethink the passive hypothesis: why should these words definitely be classified as passives? Interpreting “*wei* V” as a (semi-)copula construction and “*jian/bei* V” as a structure meaning “suffer+something,” respectively, is quite acceptable, if we interpret the elements after them as nouns. In summary, the unmarked transformation from a verb to a noun is the key for the divergence between the passive and non-passive interpretations. Therefore, it has become popular in recent literature to label these constructions as *ambiguous structures*.

*Jian* and *bei* are often described as being similar to *zao* 遭, *yu* 遇 and *shou* 受, which typically have the meaning “receive/suffer” (i.e., with an inward semantic feature). Section 4 discusses some similarities between *jian/bei* and *shou* 受 “receive/suffer.”

#### **4. SIMILARITIES TO *SHOU***

In pre-Qin times, *shou*, as a verb meaning “receive/suffer,” was normally followed by

nouns, as illustrated in (301) and (302).

301. 满招损，谦受益。(Shangshu 尚书. Dayu mo 大禹谟)

man            zhao            sun            qian            shou            yi  
conceited    provoke    lose    humble    receive    benefit

The conceited attitude will provoke loss while the humble attitude will bring benefit.

302. 王亲释其缚，受其璧。(Zuozhuan 左传. Zhaogong 昭公 4)

wang    qin            shi            qi            fu            shou            qi            bi  
king    in-person    release    his    bonds    receive    his    jade

The king personally released his bonds, and received his Bi jade.

Similar to the so-called passive markers (i.e., *jian*, *bei* and *wei*), *shou* can also be followed by a verb-like element, for example, *shang* 赏 “a reward/to reward” in (303).

303. 故当功以受赏，当罪以受罚。(Lüshi chunqiu 吕氏春秋. Lisulan 离俗览)

gu            dang            gong            yi            shou            shang  
therefore    should    achievement    because    receive    reward  
dang            zui            yi            shou            fa  
should    crime    because    receive    punish

Therefore, [people] should be rewarded/receive reward because of [their] achievement; while [people] should be punished/suffer a punishment because of [their] crimes.

Interestingly, *shang* 赏 can be modified by an adjective *zhong* 重 “generous” in the following example.

304. 贤材者处厚禄任大官；功大者有尊爵受重赏。(Hanfeizi 韩非子. Bajian 八奸)

xian    cai    zhe    chu    hou    lu            ren    da            guan  
wisdom talent NOM at high salary as senior official  
gong            da    zhe            you    zun            jue  
achievement high NOM have high order-of-feudal-nobility  
shou    zhong    shang  
receive great reward

Those who have wisdom and are talented receive ample salaries and are appointed as senior officials; those who have great achievements have honorary positions and receive high rewards.

However, unlike *jian shang* 见赏, which is ambiguous in the analysis concerning whether it is a passive or a V-O construction (for more discussion, see Chapter 2, Part 3), both *shou shang* 受赏 in (303) and *shou zhong shang* 受重赏 in (304) are commonly interpreted as V-O structures. In other words, although *shou shang* and *shou zhong shang* are justified to be interpreted as “be rewarded” and “be highly rewarded,” respectively, from the perspective of translation; *shang* 赏 after *shou* 受 is preferably interpreted as a nominalized element in most cases.

Examples (305) and (306) use the transitive action verb *zhu* 诛 “kill” as an example. *Shou* 受 can also be followed directly by *zhu* 诛 or with *qi* 其 inserted between them.

305. 先人父鯀功之不成受诛。(Shiji 史记. Xiabenji 夏本纪)

*xian-ren fu Gun*

ancestor father NAME

*gong zhi bu cheng shou zhu*

achievement PART NEG achieve receive killing

His ancestor father Gun suffered execution because of no achievement.

Cf.

306. 善者得其佑，恶者受其诛。(Bingfa 兵法. Sanlue 三略)

*shan zhe de qi you e zhe shou qi zhu*

good NOM receive POSS bless bad NOM receive POSS killing

The kind one receives his blessing, while the bad one is subjected to execution.

Different from *bei zhu* 被诛, which can be interpreted as either the passive (i.e., “be killed”) or a V-O structure (i.e., “suffer a killing/execution”) (for more discussion, see Chapter 3, Part 3), *shou zhu* and *shou qi zhu* are normally interpreted as V-O structures. Therefore, even though the element after *shou* is a typical action verb, it is still a nominalized element (i.e., *zhi cheng hua cheng fen* 指称化成分). The difference is that it is not marked in the former (i.e., *shou zhu*) but marked with *qi* in the latter (i.e., *shou qi zhu*).

More contrasting examples are listed below.

*shou ci* 受赐 “be bestowed/receive bestowment” (13)

*shou qi ci* 受其赐 “receive the bestowment” (3)

*shou zhu* 受诛 “be killed/suffering the killing”(10)

*shou qi zhu* 受其诛 “suffer the execution” (1)

*shou luan* 受乱 “be disturbed/suffer the chaos” (2)

*shou qi luan* 受其乱 “suffer the chaos” (2)

*shou hai* 受害 “be destroyed/suffer the destruction” (1)

*shou qi hai* 受其害 “suffer the destruction” (2)

*shou bai* 受败 “be defeated/suffer defeat” (0)

*shou qi bai* 受其败 “suffer the defeat” (1)

*shou shang* 受赏 “be rewarded/receive a reward” (4)

*shou qi shang* 受其赏 “receive the reward” (0)

*shou lu* 受戮 “be humiliated/suffer the humiliation” (0)

*shou qi lu* 受其戮 “suffer the humiliation” (1)

*shou tao* 受讨 “be attacked/suffer the attack” (0)

*hou qi da tao* 受其大讨 “suffer the serious attack” (1)

*Qi* 其 in Ancient Chinese is a multi-functional word. Wang (1990b), a scholar of the Qing dynasty, summarized 10 uses of *qi* in the *Jingzhuan shici* 经传释词 “Explanation of Words in the Classics and Historical Records.” Concerning the function of *qi* in the above examples, three possible explanations are presented here: demonstrative, pronoun, or linking word before a *zhi cheng dong ci* 指称动词 “referring verb” (Ma 2012). No matter which interpretation we adopt, the verb-like elements in these examples are very likely to have transformed into nominal expressions.

The situation is similar with *bei*. See some contrastive examples below:

*bei yang* 被殃 “be destroyed/suffer destruction” (2)

*bei qi yang* 被其殃 “suffer the calamity” (1)

*bei hai* 被害 “be damaged/suffer a damage” (20)

*bei qi hai* 被其害 “suffer the damage” (1)

*bei xing* 被刑 “be punished/suffer a punishment”(19)

*bei qi xing* 被其刑 “suffer the/his punishment”(1)

*bei zui* 被罪 “be accused/suffer an accusation”(1)

*bei zui* 被其罪 “suffer the accusation”(1)

As observed, both *shou* and *bei* can be followed directly by V or with *qi* between them. When *qi* is present, both “*bei qi V*” and “*shou qi V*” are interpreted as V-O structures. However, without *qi*, “*bei V*” is ambiguous in the passive and V-O interpretations, while “*shou V*” is most frequently analyzed as a V-O structure.

This refers to another difference: *bei* tends to be followed by V directly, while *shou* is more frequently followed by “*qi V*,” as shown above. In other words, “*bei V*” occurs more frequently than “*bei qi V*.” However, the situation is opposite with *shou*: “*shou V*” is less frequent than “*shou qi V*.”

The interesting is that there are no “*jian qi V*” constructions in the data.

Such difference reveals that the verbal features of *shou* are stronger than those of *bei* and *jian*. In other words, the degree of the grammaticalization of *jian* and *bei* is relatively higher than that of *shou*. This is why *shou*, which is likewise on the verge of developing into a passive marker, just as *jian* and *bei* did, is rarely analyzed as a passive marker. The only possible explanation is that *shou* is so specific in expressing “receive/suffer” that it is more difficult for it to be reanalyzed as a passive marker, as compared to *jian* and *bei*. Actually, *shou* in Modern Chinese is still a typical verb that expresses “receive/suffer” and is followed by a noun.

Let us return to the idea that the change of category between noun and verb may be unmarked. If *shou* is treated as a verb rather than a passive marker, as concluded above, then all the V-like elements after it actually should be interpreted as nouns. This fact perfectly proves that the V-like elements indeed can be nominalized without any marker. If V can be nominalized in “*shou* V,” why not in “*bei* V” and “*jian* V?” At least, we have to admit the ambiguity in these constructions. Especially, as already shown, the number of V-like elements following them is not large and the semantic content is rather restricted. These facts definitely strengthen the V-O approach to these constructions. Therefore, although the degree of grammaticalization of *jian*, *bei* and *wei* is relatively higher as compared to *shou*, it still should be regarded as a low degree.

In summary, in the previous literature, some researchers regard *jian*, *bei*, and *wei* as passive markers, while others do not agree. In my opinion, all of them are ambiguous as to passive and non-passive interpretations, for three reasons: (1) the shift of categories between noun and verb is unmarked, (2) the frequency of the use of verb-like elements in these constructions is rather low, and (3) the semantic range of the elements inserted after the verb is also limited; most convey a negative meaning such as “kill,” “capture,” “insult,” or “worry.”

In this part of the thesis, another important factor is proposed: frequency. Only if the frequency is high, then reanalysis as a passive marker is much more likely to occur. Otherwise, it is difficult to *refuse the V-O interpretation*. As already shown, except for the “*wei* A *suo* V” structure, all the so-called passive structures were used quite infrequently. However, even the frequently used structure “*wei* A *suo* V” faces problems when analyzed as passive structures as summarized below.

#### **4. PARTICULARITIES AND EXPLANATION**

Three particularities of the behavior of the so-called passive markers deserve attention.

Firstly, all of them can appear in either an agent subject sentence or a patient subject

sentence. Hence, they can indicate either an active or a passive interpretations. For this reason, using the same structure to indicate the two voices is defective and inefficient.

In the structure *V+yu*, the preposition *yu* is quite multi-functional and can introduce a cause, location, patient, argument of a comparative structure, indirect object, object, or agent. Among these, the last two are quite interesting for our discussion: when it introduces an object (i.e., *yu* appears between a verb and its object), the subject of the sentence is definitely an agent; by contrast, when it introduces an agent like an oblique preposition, then the subject of the sentence is normally a patient. Therefore, the *V+yu* structure does not suffice *in itself* to form a passive structure, and the passive meaning is only generated based on the pragmatic context.

The structure *jian+V* is similar: it can express “suffer” or “manifest,” representing a passive reading and active reading, respectively. Therefore, the *jian+V* structure is also not a sufficient precondition for the passive interpretation. The passive interpretation is mainly determined by pragmatic information.

The structure *wei+V* can mean “be done by” or “do” with a patient subject and agent subject, respectively. Therefore, the passive meaning of *wei+V* is not triggered by the *wei+V* structure alone, but likewise only together with other pragmatic factors.

On the other hand, it is noteworthy that the structure *bei+V* *never appears with an agent subject*. This may be why it eventually developed into the dominant passive structure in Late Medieval Chinese and Modern Mandarin.

Secondly, *V* can still take an object when it is passivized in these so-called passive structures. It is generally thought that the passive construction is formed through fronting the object to the subject position, and thus the passivized *V* does not take an object anymore. This opinion is especially popular in transformational grammar. See examples (307) and (308) below.

307. The boy broke the window.

308. The window<sub>i</sub> was broken<sub>[i]</sub> by the boy.



309. 那孩子打碎了窗户。

*nage haizi da-sui le chuanguhu*  
that kid broke ASP window

That kid broke the window.

310. 窗户 i 被那孩子打碎了 t i

*chuanguhu bei nage haizi da-sui le*  
window bei that kid broke ASP

The window was broken by that kid.

Such an opinion may hold true in English and for some constructed examples in Chinese. However, many counterexamples can be found in both Ancient Chinese and Modern Mandarin. As already shown, V in almost all the so-called passive constructions in Ancient Chinese can take an object. The object may be in a *possessive* or *part-whole relationship* with the subject or may be just a direct object of V that has no relationship with the subject. This phenomenon is even commonly observed in Modern Mandarin, as noted by numerous articles (e.g., Ma 2016, Xiong 2017) on the topic *bao liu bin yu bei dong ju* 保留宾语被动句 “object retained passive in Chinese.” The common explanation for this phenomenon is that the so-called passive markers in such cases only emphasize the “unpleasant experience” of the subject. This point is further discussed in Part 5, as this feature is also shared by notional passive.

Thirdly, all passive markers can be freely assembled like building blocks, resulting in multi-layered passive constructions. Generally, in Ancient Chinese, the passive meaning can be realized by marking either the verb or the agent, or by marking both of them. Concretely, *yu* can mark the agent (i.e., *yu+agent*) and *jian* can mark the verb (i.e., *jian+V*), while *wei* and *bei* can mark both the agent and verb (i.e., *wei+V* and *wei+A+V*; *bei+V* and *bei+A+V*). Among them, *jian* and *yu* can be assembled into the new structure *jian+V+yu+A*, e.g., *Cai ze jian zhu yu zhao* 蔡泽见逐于赵 (*Zhanguoce* 战国策. *Qinsan* 秦三) “State Cai suffered banishment in state Zhao.” This kind of construction should not be a surprise to us. Interestingly, *wei* and *bei* can also be combined with *yu*, resulting in *wei+V+yu+A* and *bei+V+yu+A* respectively, as seen in *Wu Zixu fuxiong wei lu yu chu* 伍子胥父兄为戮于楚 “Wu Zixu’s father

and brother were killed by the state of Chu” (*Shiji* 史记. *Wuzixu liezhuan* 伍子胥列传) and *Bei wei yu zhao* 被围于赵 “was surrounded by state Zhao” (*Zhanguo ce* 战国策. *Qiliu* 齐六). Theoretically, *wei* and *bei* should not be combinable with *yu* since they themselves are able to introduce the agent. Besides, *wei* and *bei* has many other surprising constructions listed below.

**Wei+A+jian+V**,<sup>165</sup> e.g., *chen cheng kong wei chai lang heng jian shi shi* 臣诚恐为豺狼横见噬食 (*Houhanshu* 后汉书. *Kourong zhuan* 寇荣传) “I really am afraid of being eaten by jackal.”

**Wei+A+suo jian+V**, e.g., *jin cheng jun xi wei han sui suo jian tu bo* 金城郡昔为韩遂所见屠剥 (*Sanguozhi* 三国志. *Weishu* 魏书) “Jin Cheng city was slaughtered by Han Sui.”

**Wei+A+zhi suo jian+V**, i.e., *kong wei hai nei ren zhi suo jian fan yu* 恐为海内人之所见凡愚 (*Sanguozhi* 三国志. *Weishu* 魏书) “I am afraid that I am a common stupid one that people inside the sea often see.”

**Wei suo V**,<sup>166</sup> i.e., *ruo shu jie qie wei suo lu* 若属皆且为所掳 (*Shiji* 史记. *Xiangyu benji* 项羽本纪) “You and all of us will end up as his prisoners.”

**Bei A suo V**, i.e., *chang bei yuan di suo shi* 常被元帝所使 (*Yan shi jia xun* 颜氏家训) “[I] was often impelled by the emperor Yuan.”

**Bei A zhi suo V**, i.e., *chu-yu sheng, bu bei sheng zhi suo liu* 处于生，不被生之所留 (*Guzunsu yulu* 古尊宿语录) “While alive, I will not be detained by life.”

**Bei A jian V**, i.e., *bei ren jian su* 被人见诉 (*Taiping guang ji* 太平广记) “[I] was accused by someone.

Although these composite structures were not used frequently and some of them were used very rarely, they convey two important messages: (1) the combination of the markers suggests that they have something in common, and this commonness consists of their ability to convey passive meaning in some contexts (i.e., together with clear

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<sup>165</sup> The earliest example is *lie shi wei tian xia jian shan* 烈士为天下见善. As shown in Section 3.3, I guess this example may be not passive.

<sup>166</sup> Zhu (1995) studied this topic at length. He concluded that many “*suo V*” examples are found in the Buddhist Scriptures, and their function is equal to the “*wei A suo V*” in Chinese literature. Meanwhile, he admitted that “*suo V*” is indeed rarely found in Chinese literature.

pragmatic information); (2) this clearly suggests that the passive in Ancient Chinese was not expressed by a *fixed syntactic* structure, but that it was still in a “flow.”

## 5. NORMALIZED FREQUENCY

Xiao, McEnery and Qian (2006) conducted a corpus-based contrastive study of passive constructions in English and Chinese, the most enlightening results of which were the calculations for the “normalized frequencies (per 100K words)” for Chinese and English passives, as shown in Tables 26 and 27, respectively.

**Table 26 Normalized frequency of the *be*-passive and *get*-passive in English per 100K words**

Corpus	Be passive		Get passive	
	Frequency	Per 100K words	Frequency	Per 100K words
FLOB <sup>167</sup>	9908	854	59	5
BNCdemo <sup>168</sup>	5001	101	1300	26
Total	14909	955	1374	31

Data collected from Xiao, McEnery and Qian (2006: 112).

Accordingly, 8.54 (i.e.,  $854/100= 8.54$ ) “*be* passives” can be found in a 1000-word English paragraph.<sup>169</sup>

**Table 27 Normalized frequency of *bei*-passive in Chinese per 100K words<sup>170</sup>**

Genre	Bei passive	per 100K words
A	149	per 100K words
B	95	per 100K words
C	38	per 100K words
D	206	per 100K words
E	73	per 100K words

<sup>167</sup> The Freiburg–LOB corpus (i.e., FLOB) is an update of LOB (Lancaster–Oslo–Bergen corpus of British English) which sampled texts published in 1991–1992.

<sup>168</sup> BNCdemo is the demographically sampled component of the British National Corpus, which contains approximately four million words of conversational data sampled during 1985–1994 in the UK.

<sup>169</sup> BNC demo is conversation material, I will not consider this here.

<sup>170</sup> They included passives like *bei*, *wei*...*suo*, *gei*, *jiao*, *rang*, *ai*, *shou*, *zao*. However, only *bei* is considered here.

F	128	per 100K words
G	177	per 100K words
H	51	per 100K words
J	105	per 100K words
K	156	per 100K words
L	221	per 100K words
M	138	per 100K words
N	134	per 100K words
P	118	per 100K words
R	70	per 100K words
S	6	per 100K words
Written	127	per 100K words
All	99	per 100K words

Data collected from Xiao, McEnery and Qian (2006: 137).

Therefore, the ratio of *bei* passives per 1000 words in Chinese is  $2091/1800 = 1.12$ .<sup>171</sup> In other words, there are 1.12 “*bei* passives” in a 1000-word paragraph in modern Mandarin.

Inspired by Xiao, McEnery and Qian (2006), the normalized frequency of passives in Ancient and Middle Chinese are also calculated, the results for which are reported in this section. The calculation involved an examination of (1) the frequency of the passive occurrences; and (2) the number of the words in the examined texts. Relevant data were extracted from Cao’s (2012) work (Table 28), in which the corpus was divided into five stages — (1) the Spring and Autumn period and the Warring States period; (2) the Western Han dynasty; (3) the Eastern Han dynasty; (4) the *wei* Jin dynasties; and (5) the Southern and Northern dynasties — of which the first two were classified as Ancient Chinese and the last three as Middle Chinese.

**Table 28 Frequency of the different passives in the different stages**

Stages	Passives	<i>Yu</i>	<i>Wei</i>	<i>Jian</i>	<i>Bei</i>
Spring and Autumn period and Warring States		410	177	84	3

<sup>171</sup> Step 1:  $149+95+38+206+73+128+177+51+105+156+221+138+134+118+70+6+127+99=2091$   
Step 2:  $18*100=1800K$

Period				
Western Han dynasty	185	190	116	10
Eastern Han dynasty	110	427	144	32
Wei Jin dynasties	73	517	216	96
Southern and Northern dynasties	21	386	220	95

The general passive used in Ancient and Middle Chinese is shown in Table 28. However, normalized frequency analyses also require an examination of (1) the texts Cao (2012) cited; and (2) the word-numbers in each text. Cao (2012) clearly listed the corpus that was used, and the number of words in each text was collected from downloaded digital versions. The data are shown in Table 29.

**Table 29 Texts and word-number**

	Texts	Number of words	Total
Spring and Autumn period and Warring States Period	1. <i>Laozi</i> 老子	5056	1117.310K
	2. <i>Lunyu</i> 论语	11750	
	3. <i>Guoyu</i> 国语	92500	
	4. <i>Sunbin bingfa</i> 孙臆兵法	10646	
	5. <i>Chunqiu zuoshi zhuan</i> 春秋左氏传	196845	
	6. <i>Mozi</i> 墨子	76516	
	7. <i>Guanzi</i> 管子	154275	
	8. <i>Mengzi</i> 孟子	34685	
	9. <i>Zhuangzi</i> 庄子	80400	
	10. <i>Xunzi</i> 荀子	90800	
	11. <i>Yanzi chunqiu</i> 晏子春秋	38696	
	12. <i>Hanfeizi</i> 韩非子	106131	
	13. <i>Liji</i> 礼记	99010	
	14. <i>Zhanguoce</i> 战国策	120000	
Western Han dynasty	1. <i>Shiji</i> 史记	526500	1404.956K
	2. <i>Xinshu</i> 新书	52616	
	3. <i>Huainanzi</i> 淮南子	130840	
	4. <i>Yantielun</i> 盐铁论	340000	
	5. <i>Xinxu</i> 新序	355000	

Eastern Han dynasty	1. <i>Wuyue chunqiu</i> 吴越春秋	48587	1802.971K
	2. <i>Hanshu</i> 汉书	903026	
	3. <i>Lunheng</i> 论衡	260076	
	4. <i>Qianfulun</i> 潜夫论	45219	
	5. <i>Xinlun</i> 新论	166400	
	6. <i>Fengsu tongyi</i> 风俗通义	379663	
Wei Jin dynasties	1. <i>Sanguozhi</i> 三国志	842873	2319.603K
	2. <i>Baopuzi neipian</i> 抱朴子内篇	102321	
	3. <i>Soushenji</i> 搜神记	72311	
	4. <i>Xinji soushenji</i> 新辑搜神记	850000	
	5. <i>Huayang guozhi</i> 华阳国志	452098	
Southern and Northern dynasties	1. <i>Shishuoxinyu</i> 世说新语	79794	1152.821K
	2. <i>Nanqishu</i> 南齐书	364140	
	3. <i>Songdishu</i> 宋书 (81–90 卷)	179440	
	4. <i>Shuijingzhu</i> 水经注	379663	
	5. <i>Yanshiji axun</i> 颜氏家训	41334	
	6. <i>Qimingyaoshu</i> 齐名要术	108450	

The ratios for the use of *jian*, *bei*, *wei*, and *yu* in the different stages were then calculated (i.e., number of occurrences is divided by the total number of words in the texts), and are shown in Table 30.

**Table 30 Normalized frequency (per 1000 words) of the different passives during different stages**

	Stages	<i>Yu</i>	<i>Wei</i>	<i>Jian</i>	<i>Bei</i>
Ancient Chinese	Spring and Autumn period and Warring States period	0.367	0.158	0.075	0.003
	Western Han dynasty	0.312	0.135	0.083	0.007
Middle Chinese	Eastern Han dynasty	0.061	0.237	0.080	0.018
	Wei Jin dynasties	0.031	0.223	0.093	0.041
	Southern and Northern dynasties	0.018	0.335	0.191	0.082

From Table 30, it can be seen that the use of *yu* declined continually, the use of *bei* increased continually, and *wei* and *jian* had a slower but increasing trend. However, except in the Spring and Autumn and Warring states periods when *yu* was dominant,

the use of *wei* (specifically *wei A suo V*) was most dominant, which confirmed the earlier speculation that “*wei A suo V*” was the most prototypical passive in Ancient Chinese.

This thesis has emphasized in many places that the frequency and the grammaticalization degree of passives in Ancient Chinese were low, which is supported by the “extremely low normalized frequency” shown in Table 31.

**Table 31 Normalized frequency of passives in Ancient Chinese, Middle Chinese, Modern Mandarin and English per 1000 words.<sup>172</sup>**

	<i>Yu</i>	<i>Wei</i>	<i>Jian</i>	<i>Bei</i>	Be
Ancient Chinese	0.339	0.146	0.079	0.005	
Middle Chinese	0.037	0.265	0.121	0.047	
Modern Mandarin				1.12	
English					8.54

In summary, the frequency of the so-called passive in Ancient Chinese was quite low, and *wei* had a relatively higher frequency, particularly because of the dominance of the *wei A suo V* construction.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Based on the above facts, the following conclusions are formed. In the study of marked passives in Ancient Chinese, so-called passive constructions cannot be explained based solely on their syntactic features. In other words, it is impossible to form a passive by means of transformation or moving the object to the subject position. Seeing the passive in Ancient Chinese as a syntactic operation does not explain why the words can be used with both an agent subject and a patient subject, why V can still take an object, or why the different markers can be assembled freely. As such, there should be no fixed syntactic pattern expressing the passive in Ancient Chinese. Therefore, the passive meaning is *pragmatically determined* rather than

<sup>172</sup> The average number of “Spring and Autumn period and Warring States period” and “Western Han dynasty” is taken for Ancient Chinese and the average number of “Eastern Han dynasty,” “Wei Jin dynasties” and “Southern and Northern dynasties” is taken for Middle Chinese, in this table.

syntactically marked. If we regard the Ancient Chinese passive as pragmatically determined, then all the particularities mentioned above can be convincingly explained. Moreover, this explains well the *ambiguity* between the passive and V-O interpretations: the passive in Ancient Chinese indeed mainly emphasizes the *suffering experience* of the subject, and the markers still strongly convey the lexical meaning “suffer.” Therefore, none of these markers can be convincingly analyzed as a *grammatical structure* conveying the passive and as a grammaticalized passive marker, since none of them with sufficient certainty ensures the passive reading. Only when the pragmatic information is focused, then the passive reading is generated.

I think it is important to differentiate between the *passive voice* and *passive sense*. For reasons of communication, it can be assumed that every natural language can express the passive sense or passive meaning. However, not every language has a mature passive voice. Given the studies discussed, it is unconvincing to argue that there was a passive voice in Ancient Chinese because of the three particularities noted above. However, from the *perspective of translation*, some of the examples with the so-called passive structures indeed seem to express a passive meaning, and they are translatable as such.



## PART 4: MIDDLE AND PASSIVE

Haspelmath (1994) studied the use of *passive participles* in several languages and concluded that while passive participles are typically resultative (i.e., “past”), there are also non-past passive participles that more commonly have modal (potential/necessitative) or future meanings. Although Chinese does not have participles, the situation of passive in English and Ancient Chinese has some similarities: On one hand, the primary focus of verbs in a PV notional passive construction is on the resultant state rather than the action that led up to this state (See in Part 2). As discussed in Part 3, marked passives also express resultant (perfect) states. These studies tend to indicate that the passive is mainly relevant to a resultative (i.e., “past”) state. On the other hand, however, the *ke* 可, *nan* 难, *yi* 易, and *zu* 足 constructions (hereafter *these constructions*),<sup>173</sup> which are also studied under a *passive* head by some scholars, never express resultant states; rather, they emphasize the potentiality of the event inherent in the entity. Therefore, Haspelmath’s (1994) observation also works for Chinese.

Haspelmath then defined the non-past passive participles as “eventualities,” that is, they are irrealis non-stative events that are nevertheless time-stable enough to characterize an object because they are unrealized and potentially realized for some time. Similar to results, eventualities are attributed to the participant undergoing the event, that is, the theme/patient. However, affectedness does not seem to be the basis for this structure as there are no systematic exceptions for the affected agents; for example, *edible* never means “having/being able to eat,” and *learnable* never means “having/being able to learn.” Modal passive participles are not always passive, however, as they can sometimes be used with unaccusative intransitive verbs. Haspelmath (1994) cited some examples from Horn (1980): a. *washable*, *solvable*, *drinkable*, *readable*, etc.; and b. *perishable*, *(un)shrinkable*, *variable*, *changeable*, *\*sneezable*, *\*danceable*, *\*barkable*, etc. The *ke*, *nan*, *yi*, and *zu* constructions discussed in this part are similar to the non-past participles examined by Haspelmath (1994), with some “*ke+V*” examples being able to explained in a way that is similar to the “adjective in -able”; for example, “*ke+wei* 违” means “avoidable” and “*ke+chu* 除” means “removable.” (In Late Medieval Chinese these constructions would be

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<sup>173</sup> Note that “these constructions” in this chapter only refer to *ke*, *nan*, *yi* and *zu* constructions, while not referring to *ke yi*, *nan yi*, *yi yi* and *zu yi* constructions.

fully grammaticalized, with many extended meanings developing.) In Chinese linguistic studies, these constructions are commonly defined as tough construction or middles.

This chapter examines whether the *ke* construction was a passive construction by examining the formation of the *ke* and *ke yi* constructions in Archaic Chinese. Some similar Ancient Chinese constructions, such as *nan* 难 “be difficult to V,” *yi* 易 “be easy to V,” and *zu* 足 “be sufficient to V” constructions, were also studied. Specifically, the following five questions were examined.

- (1). What was the grammatical status of *ke*, *nan*, *yi*, and *zu* in these constructions?
- (2). From where was the passive meaning derived?
- (3). Can an actor phrase be expressed in these constructions?
- (4). Is a generic reading relevant to the passive?
- (5). What was the grammatical status of these constructions in the passive field.

# CHAPTER 1: THE FORMATION OF THE *KE* 可 AND *KE YI* 可以 CONSTRUCTIONS<sup>174</sup>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The *ke* construction has aroused great interest among linguists because of its particular features. Most studies have focused on its modality use (Liu 2000, Li 2001, Li 2004, Meisterernst 2008). Additionally, the verb following *ke* having a passive meaning has also attracted considerable attention (Ma 1898/1983, Bai 1997, Liu 2000, Li 2001, Wang 2005, Wang 2011, Ding and Zhang 2012). However, a more central issue has remained insufficiently investigated: how was the *ke* construction *formed*? Only two studies have attempted to explain this issue. Wang (2011) proposed that the *ke* construction is a middle voice by treating the *ke* sentence as a whole.<sup>175</sup> Yet, this study merely compared the syntactic and semantic characteristics of the *ke* construction with the definition of middle voice in English, while totally ignoring its formation process. By contrast, Ding and Zhang (2012) did attempt to characterize the formation process of the *ke yi* and *ke* constructions in terms of the “extraposition” and “tough-movement theories”, respectively.<sup>176</sup> However, this hypothesis is ad hoc to the

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<sup>174</sup> This chapter is based on the published version (Zeng, Anderl, and Heirman 2018), with additional contents added in Section 5.

<sup>175</sup> The middle voice lies somewhere between the active and passive voices. Thus it is different – to some extent – from both. Jan-Wouter Zwart (1997) defined middle constructions by the following characteristics:

1. The external argument of the verb is not expressed.
2. The verb has active morphology.
3. The action denoted by the verb is predicated over by an adverb.
4. The verb is of the activity class, and the sentence as a whole is non-eventive.

Examples are given below:

- (i) This book reads quickly.
- (ii) This pen writes easily.
- (iii) Bureaucrats bribe easily.

<sup>176</sup> Extraposition is a mechanism of syntax that alters word order in such a manner that a relatively heavy constituent appears to the right of its canonical position. In this paper, I refer only to the it-extraposition, such as the change in the following structure:

- (i) [To please John] is easy. →
- (ii) It is easy [to please John].

For more information, see Yoon-Suk Chung (2001: 60).

In formal syntax, tough movement refers to sentences in which the syntactic subject of the main verb is logically the object of an embedded non-finite verb, such as the change in the following:

- (i) It is easy [to please John].
- (ii) John is easy [to please].

tough movement in English, while it totally ignores the language facts of Ancient Chinese, thus it is refuted in Section 3.

The research into the *ke* construction has always been associated with the *ke yi* construction. Concerning the relationship between them, Wang's (2005) view may be taken as representative. He argued that (1) *ke yi* is the omission of *zhi* 之 "it" in *ke yi zhi* 可以之 "can use this" before its lexicalization;<sup>177</sup> (2) when *ke yi* was lexicalized as a compound word, then the *ke yi* construction had opposite syntax as compared to the *ke* construction. Wang summarized this *opposite syntax* as follows: (a) the verb following *ke* has passive meaning, whereas the verb following *ke yi* has active meaning; (b) the V following *ke yi* can take an object, whereas the verb following *ke* cannot.<sup>178</sup> Although Wang's opinion is commonly accepted, point (1) is questioned by Liu (2000) and Li (2001) because they did not find any example where *yi* takes an object (i.e., *ke yi zhi* 可以之). In my opinion, I feel that Wang's view is reasonable. As for the question of Liu (2000) and Li (2001), it will be explained in Section 4.1. Based on Wang's opinion, the *ke yi* in (1) is referred to as the *ke yi*<sub>1</sub> construction, while the *compound word* in (2) is defined as the *ke yi*<sub>2</sub> construction in this chapter. Note that Wang's opinions are just descriptions of a phenomenon; he does not address the problem of how the constructions were formed. Therefore, the formation of the *ke yi* construction is studied inadequately, too. See more discussions in Section 4.

Summing up, this chapter attempts to explain the long-standing unsolved questions concerning the formation of the *ke* and *ke yi* constructions in a unified way. Before moving on, the contexts that *ke* commonly appears in are introduced and the general features of the *ke* constructions are extracted in Section 2. Then, in Section 3, I refute some previous hypotheses, especially the left movement hypothesis for the formation of the *ke* construction; and propose a new solution in accordance with the corpus data. Using the same method, I try to shape the formation of *ke yi* construction in Section 4 and some similar constructions in Section 5. The ultimate goal is to explore the relationship between these structures and passives discussed before in this dissertation based on their formation process.

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<sup>177</sup> *Zhi* 之 "it" is a frequently used third-person pronoun in Archaic Chinese.

<sup>178</sup> See Section 4.2 for more details.

## 2. THE WORD *KE* AND THE *KE* CONSTRUCTION

In this section, I introduce some contexts in which *ke* was used and summarize the features of the *ke* construction.

### 2.1 The main contexts in which *ke* was used<sup>179</sup>

In general, *ke* was frequently used in the following three contexts:

1. Agent+(*bu*) *ke*
2. ‘V-patient’+(*bu*) *ke*
3. Patient+(*bu*) *ke*+V

It functions as an intransitive verb in both (1) and (2), and as an auxiliary verb in (3). These usages are explained below.

#### 2.1.1 Intransitive verb meaning “agree/consent”

According to the early etymological and analytical dictionary *Shuowen jiezi* 说文解字 “Explaining Graphs and Analyzing Characters”; 100 AD, *ke* 可 is related to *ken* 肯, which is a variant form of the character *ken* 肯, meaning *tongyi* 同意 “agree/consent”. It normally describes whether somebody agrees or disagrees (i.e., approve; permit; allow) with a previously mentioned action. See two examples below.

311. 楚人伐郑，郑伯欲成。孔叔不可。(Zuozhuan 左传. Xigong 僖公 3)

<i>chu</i>	<i>ren</i>	<i>fa</i>	<i>zheng</i>	<i>zheng-bo</i>	<i>yu</i>	<i>cheng</i>
chu	people	attack	NAME	Lord-Zheng	plan	pacification
<i>kong-shu</i>	<i>bu</i>	<i>ke</i>				
NAME	NEG	agree				

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<sup>179</sup> Besides the main contexts discussed in the paper, there are some other rarely used constructions. However, I will not pursue this since they are not related to passive topic.

The people of Chu attacked the state of Zheng and Lord Zheng planned to sue for peace. Kong Shu did not agree [to this].

312. 仲欲立之，叔仲不可。(Zuozhuan 左传. Wengong 文公 18)

zhong yu li zhi shu-zhong bu ke

NAME plan choose PRON NAME NEG agree

Xiang Zhong planned to choose [Lord Xuan] as King, [but] Shu Zhong did not agree [to this].

Similar examples are found frequently in pre-Qin texts.

### 2.1.2 Intransitive verb meaning “suit/fit”

The meaning “agree/ consent” generated a semantic expressing the suitability of an intended action.<sup>180</sup> In such cases, *ke* is normally used to make a comment on a proposition (i.e., an action comprised by V and patient). For example:

313. 臣之罪大，尽灭桓氏可也。(Zuozhuan 左传. Aigong 哀公 14)

chen zhi zui da jin mie huan-shi ke ye

my PART crime great completely eliminate Huan-family reasonable FIN

My crime is so serious that your majesty’s [plan to] eliminate the Huan family is completely reasonable.

314. 师而伐宋可矣。(Zuozhuan 左传. Xianggong 襄公 11)

shi er fa song ke yi

dispatch-troop and crusade NAME appropriate/fine/OK FIN

The act of dispatching troops and attacking the state of Song is appropriate/fine/OK.

In examples (313) and (314) it is found that the comment on an action mainly focuses on the “V-patient” part (without notable agent),<sup>181</sup> with the sentences emphasizing

<sup>180</sup> The semantic change of *ke* from “agree” to “suit/fit” is easy to infer.

<sup>181</sup> Note that I find some cases where *ke* seems to be used to comment on a human subject rather than on a VP comprised of “V+O”. See an example below.

*Guan Zhong jing nuo, yue: “gong yu xiang shei.” Gong yue: “Bao Shuya ke hu?”* 管仲敬诺，曰：“公谁欲相？”公曰：“鲍叔牙可乎？”“Guan Zhong respectfully answered and said: “Whom do you plan to assign the prime minister position to?” Lord Qihuan said: “Is Bao Shuya ok?” (i.e., “is Bao Shuya suitable to become prime minister?”).” (*Guigong* 贵公, *Lüshi chunqiu* 吕氏春秋)

In this example, I think “*Bao Shuya ke hu* 鲍叔牙可乎” should be “*xiang Bao Shuya ke hu* 相鲍叔牙可乎”. Therefore, *ke* in such a case comments on the VP “*xiang Bao Shuya* 相鲍叔牙 (i.e., assigning the prime minister position to Bao Shuya)” rather than the subject “鲍叔牙 (i.e., Bao Shuya)” only.

*eliminating the Huan family and dispatching troops and attacking the state of Song*, respectively. Accordingly, I hypothesize the underlying structure of the *ke* construction as follows.

### **The underlying structure of the *ke* construction**

“V-patient”+*ke/bu ke*: no agent<sup>182</sup>

In the examples mentioned above, *ke* is the core predicate expressing the suitability of an action. Concerning the function of *ke* in such case, it is normally defined as an *adjective* (Bai 1997: 211, Liu 2000: 82, Li 2001: 72). However, I prefer to define it as an intransitive verb, since *ke* does not (and cannot) qualify simple nouns (i.e., there are no examples of *ke*+N). Although *ke* is defined as an intransitive verb in Chinese, however, its corresponding English translation is definitely an adjective (see the translations above).

#### *2.1.3 Auxiliary verb expressing root modality*

*Ke* was commonly used as an auxiliary verb expressing modality in Archaic Chinese. According to Peyraube (1999), *ke* in Archaic Chinese is basically deontic. In his opinion, the epistemic reading emerged later in the Chinese language and probably derived from the deontic meaning. Furthermore, Meisterernst (2008) concluded that in the Han period *ke* predominantly expressed root possibility values; deontic values are mainly confined to the negative; and epistemic (evidential) values are almost non-existent and confined to verbs that license an evidential interpretation. After analyzing pre-Qin texts, I think that these conclusions are basically right: *ke* was non-epistemic in pre-Qin times. For convenience, I use the terminology “root modality” which is defined by Haan (1997: 7) as referring to a wider domain than deontic modality, namely, to all non-epistemic modal notions. Root modality may be divided into root possibility and deontic.

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<sup>182</sup> The structure “V-O”+*ke* consists of “an action that will be commented on” and the “appraisal verb”. I feel this structure conforms well to the frequently used topic–comment structure. It should occur at a very early stage, but there are no examples in *Shijing* 诗经 (the first anthology of poetry in ancient China), probably because of the style of that text (i.e., poetic). One more example from *Zuozhuan* is provided here: *shui sheng huo fa jiang ze ke* 水胜火，伐姜则可。”Water overcomes fire. [According to this], attacking the Jiang is OK.”(*Zuozhuan* 左传. Aigong 哀公 9)



*Root possibility: indicating possibility ('can')*

315. 乃言底可绩。(Shangshu 尚书. Shun dian 舜典)

nai yan di ke ji  
your speech accomplished able yield-result

[The emperor said: "Come, Shun, in the affairs on which you have been consulted, I have examined your words], your words (i.e., wishes) will finally be realized."

316. 弗慎厥德，虽悔可追？(Shangshu 尚书. Wuzi zhige 五子之歌)

fu shen jue de sui hui ke zhui  
NEG careful be-short-of virtue although repent able chase-after

We have not been careful of our virtue; and though we repent, how could we redeem [the past]?

*Deontic: indicating permission/obligation ('can = must/should')*

317. 时哉弗可失！(Shangshu 尚书. Tai shi shang 泰誓上)

shi zai fu ke shi  
time PART NEG should lose

[Do you aid me, the One man, to cleanse forever all within the four seas.] Now is the time! It should not be lost. (Translation based on TLS)

318. 民可近，不可下。(Shangshu 尚书. Wuzi zhige 五子之歌)

min ke jin bu ke xia  
people should close NEG should look-down-upon

[It was the advice of our great ancestor:] the people should be cherished, not looked down upon.

319. 吾亦不可复见吾君矣。(Gongyangzhuan 公羊传. Xuangong 宣公 6)

wu yi bu ke fu jian wu jun yi  
I also NEG can again meet my king FIN

[Although because of this], I cannot [return to] face my king again.

As seen in the above examples, when *ke* functioned as a modal auxiliary verb in Archaic Chinese, it often appeared in patient subject sentences (i.e., Examples 315, 316, 317, 318) and these cases are defined as the *ke construction* in this chapter. Occasionally, *ke* is also found in agent subject sentences (i.e., Example 319), and this is treated as a special use since it is extremely unusual, appearing only in specific

contexts (for more details, see Onishi 2008: 22-24) and very rarely in pre-Qin texts (relatively higher frequencies are found after the Han dynasty).<sup>183</sup> Below, I summarize the basic features of the *ke* construction.

## 2.2 Features of the *ke* construction

Many scholars have recognized that the *ke* construction has passive meaning because the role of the subject accords with the role of the object of the V (see examples above). Besides this passive meaning, however, the *ke* construction has three additional features:

1. The *ke* construction is *not* compatible with an agent (i.e., an agent can *never* be found in the *ke* construction);<sup>184</sup>
2. the V in the *ke* construction is rarely followed by a patient; and
3. the *ke* construction never co-occurs with passive meaning markers, such as *wei* 为, *jian* 见, *yu* 于 and *bei* 被 discussed in Part 3.

These features have prompted scholars to reflect on the following questions:

- Why does the *ke* construction have these special features?
- How was the *ke* construction formed (i.e., how was the modality function of *ke* generated)?

I attempt to answer these questions below.

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<sup>183</sup> Example (319) is the earliest example in which *ke* appears in an agent subject sentence when functioning as a modal verb. More examples can be found in texts dating from the Han dynasty. Wang (2005), Yao (2003) and Onishi (2008) all argued that these examples featured the omission of *yi* in the *ke yi* construction.

<sup>184</sup> Although I have already defined the *ke* construction as “patient subject”, this does not automatically mean that the agent should be excluded. In fact, in many “patient subject” sentences, the agent can be inserted in other places by using prepositions (e.g., *yu* 于). Therefore, the absolute absence of an agent should still be considered as an important feature of the *ke* construction.

### 3. HOW WAS THE *KE* CONSTRUCTION FORMED?

Generally, the approach to the formation of the *ke* construction can be divided into two types: (1) non-movement hypothesis and (2) movement hypothesis.

#### 3.1 Inaccuracy of the “non-movement” hypothesis

The non-movement hypothesis can be further divided into two subtypes, i.e., (1) “adding” hypothesis and (2) “reanalysis” hypothesis.

The first one, represented by Zhang (2010), suggested that the *ke* construction is a notional passive. I believe this is unjustified, since it rests on the assumption that the *ke* construction was formed by adding the modal auxiliary verb *ke* to a notional passive. However, this was unlikely because: Firstly, Liu (2006) concluded that only stative verbs and a small number of action verbs that imply a result may be used in a notional passive construction (see a more detailed discussion of the notional passive in Part 2).<sup>185</sup> However, the verb in the *ke* construction is not related to any result. Secondly, the notional passive mainly focuses on the *status* of the subject after it is disposed of or affected by V, while the *ke* construction focuses on the *possibility* and *suitability* to dispose of *an entity* (i.e., the subject/topic). Thirdly, if the *ke* construction is formed by adding a modal auxiliary verb to a notional passive, then the following question remains: how did the modality functions of *ke* develop? Moreover, if the modal auxiliary verb *ke* can be inserted into a notional passive, why is it not inserted into other types of sentences, such as active sentences? Therefore, I think that the *ke* construction is not formed by the addition of *ke* to a notional passive.

The second hypothesis (e.g., Liu 2000, Li 2001) assumes that the modality use of *ke* is derived from its intransitive verbal use in the “*ke*+V” structure in which *ke* is reanalyzed from an intransitive verb to an auxiliary modal verb. I agree with this opinion, but this explanation ignores the following important questions: how can *ke* co-occur with another V and why does it have so many special features. Therefore, I think it is not *solely* reanalysis which is responsible for the formation of the *ke* construction.

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<sup>185</sup> The stative verb is the verb which expresses a state, such as *ruo* 弱 “be weak” in example (320), while the action verb that implies a result is a verb that describes an action but also implies a result, such as *ge* 割 “cede”/*xiao* 效 “offer”/*jue* 绝 “cut off” in example (320).

In sum, the non-movement hypotheses cannot explain the formation of the *ke* construction. Many scholars have recognized that the formation of the *ke* construction is related to some sort of movement, with the prevailing opinion being that it is formed by object fronting. However, as explained in Section 3.2 below, I feel that this hypothesis is insufficient.

### 3.2 Inaccuracy of the “object fronting” hypothesis

Ding and Zhang (2012) argued that “V+patient’+*ke* is an underlying structure and “V+patient” as a whole is moved back (i.e., extraposition) in order to avoid the top-heavy problem.<sup>186</sup> Meanwhile, the conjunction *yi* should be added after *ke*, just as “it” is added in English during this process. See the diagram below.

- (1) underlying structure: “V+patient” + *ke* →  
(2) extroposition: [Agent]+ *ke* + [*yi*] + “V+patient” →  
resulting in the *ke yi* construction

As for the formation of the *ke* construction, Ding and Zhang argued that it is the result of tough movement based on the *ke yi* construction. This process includes the object fronting and the omission of *yi* as illustrated below.

- (3) object fronting: patient + *ke* + V →  
resulting in the *ke* construction

However, their hypothesis faces the following problems:

- (i) The authors failed to convincingly demonstrate why *yi* should be added during the extraposition process as in (2) above; and  
(ii) while the “it” subject is added in the tough construction in English (e.g., it is difficult to please John), an agent subject is added in the *ke yi* construction (see many examples in Section 4); and

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<sup>186</sup> A top-heavy sentence is a long subject sentence in which information is loaded at the beginning: e.g., “Finding John is difficult.”

(iii) if the *ke* construction is formed on the basis of the *ke yi* construction, then how could *yi* be omitted in this process?

All these points not sufficiently addressed, thus they remain unexplained in Ding and Zhang (2012). Ding and Zhang's object fronting hypothesis discussed above is relatively complex and a more general and simpler idea about "object fronting" hypothesis of the formation of the *ke* construction is shown below.

A. 伐宋可。 (cf. examples 313–314)

*fa*            *song*        *ke*  
attack    NAME    suitable/ok

Attacking the state of Song is acceptable.

B. [Agent]可伐宋。 (cf. example 319)

*ke*        *fa*        *song*  
can    attack    NAME

Someone can attack the state of Song.

C. 宋可伐 (cf. examples 315–318)

*song*        *ke*        *fa*  
NAME    can        attack

The state of Song can be attacked.

The scholars who hold this opinion explicitly or implicitly argue that a movement occurs from A to B, and then to C. Obviously, this hypothesis is a copy of the hypothesis of the *tough construction* (or raising construction) in English. However, besides the short comings mentioned above, several other problems arise when it is used to explain the *ke* construction in Chinese.

Firstly, B appears later than both A and C.<sup>187</sup> Of course, one would expect B to appear later than A, but it should not appear later than C.

Secondly, if the hypothesis of the change from A to B and then from B to C were correct, then B would constitute the same well-formed construction as C. However, as

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<sup>187</sup> See more explanations in footnote 170.

mentioned in many places, examples like B (i.e., Agent+*ke*+V+patient) are rarely attested and C has overwhelming dominance when compared to B. Then how could C be formed through object fronting of B?

Thirdly, both A and C are incompatible with an agent, while B is compatible with an agent. Example 319 is renumbered as 320 below.

320. 吾亦不可复见吾君矣。(Gongyangzhuan 公羊传. Xuangong 宣公 6)

wu yi bu ke fu jian wu jun yi  
I also NEG can again meet my king FIN  
[Because of this], I cannot [return to] face my king again.

Here, we can think reversely: if the object is fronted in (320), then two possible sentences, namely, passive sentence and topicalized sentence, could be resulted in, as shown below.

#### Passive sentence

321. ★吾君亦不可复见[于吾]。

wu jun yi bu ke fu jian yu wu  
my king also NEG. can again visit YU me  
My king also cannot be visited [by me] again.

#### Topicalized sentence

322. ★吾君，吾亦不可复见。

wu jun, wu yi bu ke jian  
my king I also NEG. can visit  
My king, I also cannot visit him again.

As for this type of passive sentence, it is not attested in the corpus, since *yu*+agent, as well as other passive markers discussed in Part 3, are never found in the *ke* construction. This point has also been mentioned in Section 2.2 above.

As for the topicalization sentence, it also seems to be impossible. According to Dong (2005), when the object has high accessibility in the context,<sup>188</sup> it normally recurs in

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<sup>188</sup> Dong (2005) does not define the notion *ke ji xing* 可及性 “accessibility” clearly. I assume that the phrase mainly refers to the clarity of the object of the verb. So, in example (325), the clarity of the

the form of the anaphoric *zhi* 之 in Archaic Chinese, while it is often an *empty category* in Modern Chinese. See the difference between Examples (323) and (324).

323. 子曰：“丘也幸，苟有过<sub>i</sub>，人必知之<sub>i</sub>。” (*Lunyu* 论语. *Shu'er* 述而)

*zi*            *yue*    *qiu*    *ye*    *xing*  
 Confucius    say    name    PART    lucky  
*gou* *you* *guo<sub>i</sub>*    *ren*    *bi*            *zhi*    *zhi<sub>i</sub>*  
 if    have    mistake    people    definitely    know    it

Confucius said: “I am so fortunate; if [I] have made a mistake, people will certainly know it.”

The corresponding Modern Chinese is (324).

324. 孔子说：“我真幸运，如果有错<sub>i</sub>，人家一定会知道 [empty category]<sub>i</sub>。”

*Kongzi* *shuo*    *wo*    *zhen*    *xing-yun*  
 name    say    I    really    lucky  
*ru-guo*    *you*    *cuo*    *ren-jia*    *yi-ding*    *hui*    *zhi-dao*  
 if    have    mistake    people    definitely    will    know

Confucius said: “I am so fortunate; if [I] have made a mistake, people will certainly know it.”

In the case “N, *ke*+V”, N is obviously a high-accessibility object, i.e., the V-O relationship of N and V can be easily identified. See Example (325) below.

325. 天作孽，犹可违；自作孽，不可逭。 (*Shangshu* 尚书. *Taijia* 太甲)

*tian*    *zuo*    *nie*            *you*    *ke*    *wei*  
 heaven    make    calamity    still    may    avoid  
*zi*    *zuo*    *nie*            *bu*    *ke*    *huan*  
 self    make    calamity    NEG    may    escape

Calamities sent by Heaven may be avoided; but there is no escape from those brought on by oneself.  
 (Translation based on TLS)

According to Dong (2005), an example like (326), i.e., the anaphoric *zhi* appearing after *wei* 违 “avoid” and *huan* 逭 “escape” respectively, should be acceptable.

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object of verb *zhi* 知 is very high, which means that readers can infer the object (i.e., *guo* 过 “mistake”) of *zhi* 知 very easily.

326. ★天作孽<sub>i</sub>, 犹可违[之]<sub>i</sub>; 自作孽<sub>i</sub>, 不可追[之]<sub>i</sub><sup>189</sup> (constructed sentence)

*tian zuo nie you ke wei zhi*  
heaven make calamity still may avoid it

*zi zuo nie bu ke huan zhi*  
self make calamity NEG may escape it

Calamities sent by Heaven may be avoided; but there is no escape from those brought on by oneself.

However, such a sentence is not attested, either. Just because of the non-verifiability of these two structures (i.e., passivization and topicalization), I speculate that there should be no object fronting in the *ke* construction. Therefore, I strongly dispute the object fronting hypothesis. More evidences for arguing against the object fronting hypothesis are from *nan* 难 “difficult” and *yi* 易 “easy” constructions, both of which are not possible to be derived from object fronting due to the lack of B examples, as studied in Section 5.

In Sections 3.1 and 3.2, I have examined the inconsistencies of several hypotheses proposed by previous scholars, especially the unjustified claim of the object fronting hypothesis. Next, I propose another possible solution: remaining the sentential subject with an embedded object N and moving the remaining portion of the embedded clause to the end of the V in the matrix sentence. For the reader’s convenience, it is referred to as “verb moving backward”.

### 3.3 New proposition: moving the core verb of the action backward

I hypothesize that the backward movement of the verb occurred from A to C:

A. 伐宋可。(cf. examples 313–314)

*fa song ke*  
attack NAME suitable/ok

Attacking the state of Song is OK.

C. 宋可伐。(cf. examples 315–318)

*song ke fa*

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<sup>189</sup> In this thesis “★” means that this sentence is a correspondingly “constructed” sentence.



NAME can attack

The state of Song is OK to be attacked. → The state of Song can be attacked.

I summarize the formation of the *ke* construction as follows:

### **The formation of the *ke* construction**

“V-patient’+*ke* → patient+*ke*+V

Differing from the object fronting hypothesis above, I did not posit an intermediate derivational stage involving extraposition (i.e., example B in Section 3.2). My movement analysis applies directly from A to C without the intervening B. It replaces the sentential subject with an embedded object N, moving the remaining portion of the embedded clause to the end of the V in the matrix sentence.<sup>190</sup> Such a hypothesis is not commonly seen in secondary literature, however, it is proposed on the basis of the Chinese corpus after the exclusion of other previous hypotheses.

This hypothesis (i.e., movement directly from A to C) clearly explains how *ke* can co-occur with another V. After the backward movement of V, the function of *ke* as a matrix verb is definitely weakened. Then, *ke* is gradually reanalyzed as a modal auxiliary verb, because:

1. *Ke* is immediately followed by a verb (e.g., *ke+fa* 伐 “attack”);
2. If “something is *suitable* to be done” (i.e., A), this suggests that “something is *allowed* to be done” (i.e., C), or “something *can* be done” (i.e., C).

Heine and Kuteva (2002) have provided two grammaticalization paths for the words that mean “be fitting/be suitable” from a typological perspective:

1. suitability > ability;
2. suitability > obligation.

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<sup>190</sup> Note that the evidence of the developing process from A to C is not diachronically obvious, since A has a top-heavy problem that will be automatically solved by transferring to C. Therefore, the fact that A is relatively rare is also reasonable, since A is a problematic (i.e., top-heavy) structure.

After investigating the *ke* modal auxiliary verb, I offer a third possibility:

3. suitability > permission.

Besides explaining how *ke* can co-occur with another V and how *ke* is reanalyzed as a modal auxiliary verb, another advantage of this hypothesis is that it can explain almost every feature of the *ke* construction.

Firstly, why is the *ke* construction always a patient subject sentence? Because the patient of V remained in its original position while V moved backwards. With respect to the rare agent subject cases, I think this should be regarded as a function that developed after *ke*'s modality function had been established.

Secondly, why is the agent always absent? According to the verb moving backward hypothesis, there is no agent in the underlying structure "V-patient'+*ke*. Furthermore, the intransitive *ke* is used to comment on the suitability of an action. Therefore, it is reasonable to interpret that this action in the *ke* construction is *non-eventive*. That is, the projected action has not yet occurred. Hence, the agent is not important; and in many cases the agents are not clear (see also Meisterernst 2008).

Thirdly, why can the V after *ke* not take any patient, including the anaphoric *zhi*? As mentioned, the patient of the V remains in the subject position and only the V is moved back. Therefore, there is no patient after V. Moreover, as I have already refuted the object fronting hypothesis, then it is natural that an anaphoric *zhi* is not allowed after V. Meanwhile, this phenomenon can also be explained from another perspective. I think this is related to the second point above: the absence of an agent. Jiang (2012b) concludes that sentences such as Example (323) often have an agent between the patient and the verb, such as *ren* 人 "people". Even when there is no obvious agent, it can be recovered in the interpretative process. In other words, *the presence of the patient of V implies the existence of the agent of V*, and vice versa.<sup>191</sup> However,

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<sup>191</sup> This point is quite different from the passive discussed in Part 3 (with objects after the verb). As for the *ke* sentence, if there is an object after V, there should be also an agent in the subject position and the whole sentence is to be considered as active rather than passive. In such a case, the *ke* sentence is probably a *ke yi* sentence in which *yi* was mistakenly deleted.

according to our hypothesis, no agent is allowed in the *ke* construction. Thus, it is justified that the anaphoric object *zhi* is not allowed after V.

Fourthly, why is *ke* indispensable in the *ke* construction? This is because, besides the modal auxiliary verb function, *ke* has absorbed the syntactic feature of the construction (i.e., movement from A to C). This is supported by two facts: (1) *ke* is incompatible with other passive meaning markers in the pre-Qin era<sup>192</sup> (also see the third point in Section 2.2); (2) if *ke* were omitted, this would probably result in a misunderstanding of the semantic role. The higher the degree of animacy of the patient, the less acceptable is the omission of *ke*. I rephrase Example (318) as (327) below.

327. ★ 民近，不下。(constructed sentence)

*min jin bu xia*  
people close NEG look-down-upon

People should cherish [it], but not look down upon [it].

The omission of *ke* would definitely result in a misunderstanding of the semantic relationship: *min* 民 “people” will probably be interpreted as an agent, see translation in (327).

To sum up, in Archaic Chinese *ke* is not only a modal auxiliary verb, but also implies a construction feature that is related to its formation process. In addition to explaining the formation of the *ke* construction, this hypothesis also works for explaining the formation of the *ke yi* construction (see Section 4, below),<sup>193</sup> as well as some structurally similar examples like those with *nan* and *yi* in Ancient Chinese, as shown in Section 5.

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<sup>192</sup> *Ke* is used together with other passive meaning patterns from the Song dynasty onwards, e.g., *Qi you san shi nian tian zi ke wei ren suo zhi hu* 岂有三十年天子而可为人所制乎? “How could it be that someone who is a prince for thirty years can be controlled by [other] people?” (*Zi zhi tong jian* 资治通鉴. Chenji 陈纪). I believe this indicates that *ke* in the pre-Qin era was not only a pure modal auxiliary verb but that its function also showed traces of its formation process. Therefore, the *ke* construction always implies a passive meaning itself.

<sup>193</sup> Although the *ke yi* construction is not relevant to passive at all, it is an important fact to support the hypothesis proposed for the *ke* construction. Meanwhile, it is important for the systematic study of the *ke/ke yi*, *nan/nan yi*, *yi/yi yi* and *zu/zu yi* constructions. Therefore, it is dealt with in this chapter.

## 4. HOW WAS THE *KE YI* CONSTRUCTION FORMED?

Similar to the *ke* construction, the *ke yi* construction has attracted considerable scholarly attention. Recently, it has been treated simply as a counterpart of the *ke* construction in terms of their syntactic features (see Section 1). However, I believe that this approach ignores the differences between *ke yi*<sub>1</sub> and *ke yi*<sub>2</sub>, with insufficient attention paid to the respective formation processes of the *ke yi*<sub>1</sub> and *ke yi*<sub>2</sub> constructions. To address this problem, I highlight the differences between them and describe them separately. First, I demonstrate that the verb moving backward hypothesis for the *ke* construction is similarly useful for the *ke yi*<sub>1</sub> construction (see in Section 4.1). After that, I show that the *ke yi*<sub>2</sub> construction originated from the *ke yi*<sub>1</sub> construction based on three additional conditions (see in Section 4.2).

### 4.1 Moving backward of the core verb of the serial verb construction “*yi-X-V-Y*” and the formation of the *ke yi*<sub>1</sub> construction

*Yi* is very rarely used independently as a verb; rather, it is nearly always the first verb in a serial verb construction. Moreover, the examples “*yi-X*+*ke* and “*X, ke yi* (i.e., *yi* as a verb)” are not attested. Therefore, I believe that the formation of the *ke yi*<sub>1</sub> construction is related to the *yi-X-V-Y* serial verb construction, meaning “taking/using a tool to do an action” rather than the verb *yi* meaning “take/use” only. Therefore, the underlying structure of the *ke yi*<sub>1</sub> construction is summarized below (hereafter defined as *ke yi*<sub>1</sub>, to distinguish it from *ke yi*<sub>2</sub> which will be studied later)

#### The underlying structure of the *ke yi*<sub>1</sub> construction

“*yi-X-V-Y*+*ke*

According to the hypothesis for the *ke* construction, I demonstrate that the formation process of the *ke yi*<sub>1</sub> construction is as follows: *ke* is used to comment on the serial verb construction *yi-X-V-Y* (without notable agent), which can be changed into

X-yi-V-Y due to the special feature of *yi*;<sup>194</sup> then, *yi-V-Y* as a whole is moved back in order to avoid the top-heavy problem, with X remaining at the beginning. See the whole process from Examples (328) to (330), below.

328. 以杞封鲁犹可。(Zuozhuan 左传. Xianggong 襄公 29)<sup>195</sup>

*yi qi feng lu you ke*  
use>INS NAME enfeoff NAME still OK

Using the state of Qi to enfeoff the state of Lu is still acceptable.

329. 靖以待命犹可，动必忧。(Zuozhuan 左传. Zhaogong 昭公 25)<sup>196</sup>

*jing yi dai ming you ke dong bi you*  
quiet use>INS wait-for fate still OK move sure trouble

Lit. Taking “quiet” [as the way] to wait for one’s fate is still acceptable; if moving, it surely brings trouble.” > “Waiting for one’s fate in peace is still acceptable; [however,] if one takes action, this will surely lead to trouble.

330. 钟声不可以知和。(Guoyu 国语. Zhouyu 周语)

*zhong sheng bu ke yi zhi he*  
bell sound NEG OK use>INS know harmony

Lit. Taking the sound of a bell [as the instrument] to know harmony is not suitable.” > “Knowing harmony through the sound of a bell is not suitable. > The sound of the bell cannot be used [as an instrument] to know harmony.

The formation process of the *ke yi* construction is summarized as follows:

### The formation process of the *ke yi* construction

a: [*yi*<sub>v</sub>-X<sub>p</sub>-V-Y]+*ke*→

<sup>194</sup> In Archaic Chinese, *yi-X-wei-Y* is interchangeable with *X-yi-wei-Y*. For example, the sentence *qiu yi wei qi* 秋以为期 “taking autumn as the date” first appeared in *Shijing*, and Zheng Xuan 郑玄 explained it as *yi qiu wei qi* 以秋为期 “taking autumn as the date” in his commentary *Shisanjing zhushu, Maoshi zhengyi* 十三经注疏,毛诗正义. For further discussions, see Guo (1997) and Pan (2000: 80–81).

<sup>195</sup> Similar examples can be frequently found in texts. Just like the *ke* construction, I think *ke* used alone in the response sentence also refers to the action “*yi X V Y*” rather than “X” alone. For example, *Wang de di ren, jiang yi qi nü wei hou. Fu Chen jian yue: “bu ke.”* 王德狄人，将以其女为后。富辰谏曰：“不可。” “The king, feeling grateful for the service, planned to make the daughter of their chief his queen.” Again Fu Chen remonstrated, saying that this is not suitable. (*Zhouyu* 周语. *Guoyu* 国语). *Bu ke* 不可 here comments on the planned action *yi qi nü wei hou* 以其女为后 “make the daughter of their chief his queen” rather than *qi nü* 其女 “the daughter of their chief”.

<sup>196</sup> Another example, *shu yi wei tai-zi er ke* 孰以为太子而可 “Taking whom as the princess then is OK?” (*Mozi* 墨子. Luwen 鲁问).

b: [X<sub>p</sub>-y<sub>i<sub>v</sub></sub>-V-Y]+ke→

c: X<sub>p</sub>+ke+[y<sub>i<sub>v</sub></sub>-V-Y]: no agent, no anaphoric *zhi*<sup>197</sup>

Similar to the *ke* construction, I refute several hypotheses. Firstly, *contra* Li (2004: 113-114), the *ke yi* construction is not formed by adding *yi* to the *ke* construction, because the two constructions have totally opposite syntactic features (see more details in Section 1). Secondly, the *ke yi*<sub>1</sub> construction was not formed by adding *ke yi*<sub>1</sub> in an active sentence, since *ke yi*<sub>1</sub> is not a compound word initially. Thirdly, the *ke yi*<sub>1</sub> construction was not formed by fronting the object, since the example *ke*+“*yi*-X-V-Y” (i.e., corresponding to B in Section 3.3) is not attested, either. Moreover, even if there were an object fronting process, the formation of the *ke yi*<sub>1</sub> construction would raise another question: why is the object of *yi* (i.e., X) fronted while the object of the second V (i.e., Y) is never fronted? Therefore, regarding the formation of the *ke yi*<sub>1</sub> construction, I believe that the object fronting process is highly unlikely. By contrast, the verb moving backward hypothesis seems eminently plausible.

When *yi* is interpreted as a full verb, the *ke yi*<sub>1</sub> construction is still a type of *ke* construction: the only difference is that the verb *yi* is followed by another V-O element, while V in the *ke* construction is not. Thus, the *ke yi*<sub>1</sub> construction retains all of the characteristics of the *ke* construction.

- The subject X is a patient subject whose semantic role equals the semantic role of the object of the verb *yi*.
- No agent of the verb *yi* is found.
- No patient of verb *yi* is found.
- No anaphoric *zhi* 之 of verb *yi* is found.

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<sup>197</sup> I use the lower-Type *abc* here to distinguish this process from the *ABC* process mentioned in Section 3.3. Note that stage *b* (cf. example 319) is indeed not so common.

However, it is quite possible since the exchange between *yi* X V Y and X *yi* V Y is quite justified. Similar to the *ke* construction, the evidence for the process from *a* to *c* is not diachronically obvious, since *a* has a top-heavy problem that will be modified by transferring directly to *c*. Therefore, the fact that *a* is relatively rare is understandable since *a* is a problematic (i.e., top-heavy) structure. The subscripts “v” and “p” denote “verb” and “patient” respectively, so *yi<sub>v</sub>* means *yi* is a verb, while X<sub>p</sub> means X is a patient.

Therefore, the question raised by Liu (2000) and Li (2001) that no object and no anaphoric *zhi* can follow *yi* is well explained here.

Note that the verbal use and the prepositional use of *yi* are so closely related that it is difficult to distinguish between these two usages. However, while it is not easy to tell one from the other, there is no doubt that *yi* functioned as both the verb “use” and the preposition “with” in the pre-Qin era (Guo: 1997). Therefore, the shift from verbal use to instrumental use is feasible. When *yi* is treated as a preposition,<sup>198</sup> the role of X also accords to the role of the object of *yi*. This process is summarized as follows.

### The extensional structure of *ke yi*

$X_{instr}+ke+yi_{1\ prep}+V+(Y)$ : no agent, no *zhi* after *yi*<sup>199</sup>

Likewise, *yi* never takes an anaphoric object, even though the preposition-object relationship is apparent. According to our explanation, the phenomenon observed by Liu (2000) and Li (2001) should not be taken as a reason to refute Wang’s (2005) view, but indirectly supports our verb backward moving hypothesis. However, in many cases, the subject (i.e., X) is an agent of V but not the object of *yi*—designated *ke yi*<sub>2</sub> in this chapter. As for the formation of the *ke yi*<sub>2</sub> construction,<sup>200</sup> I believe this was formed on the basis of *ke yi*<sub>1</sub> under three additional conditions, as is explained below.

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<sup>198</sup> Note that the preposition *yi* is not merely an instrumental preposition, but also expands to become a preposition indicating location or condition. See examples (1) and (2), below:

(1) *Heng men zhi xia ke yi qi chi* 衡门之下，可以栖迟。”At the bottom of the simple gate; can [we] rest [at this place].” > “[People] can rest at the bottom of the simple gate.” (*Shijing* 诗经. Hengmen 衡门).

(2) *fu zi bei zhi yi, qi zhao mu you jin, ke yi de guo* 夫子被之矣，其昭穆又近，可以得国。(Guoyu 国语. Zhouyu 周语) “Prince Zhou already has such virtue, and additionally his seniority in the family hierarchy is close to King Jin, it is accepted based on [these conditions] to obtain the state (i.e., become the king of this state).” > “[Prince Zhou] can obtain this state (i.e., become the king of this state) because he already has such virtue and his seniority in the family hierarchy is close to King Jin.”

However, I will not pursue this here since it is not so related to the topic in this thesis.

<sup>199</sup>  $X_{instr}$  and  $yi_{1\ prep}$  represent that X is an instrument, while  $yi_1$  is a preposition.

<sup>200</sup> Pulleyblank thought that the instrument subject can directly be extended to an agent subject. For example, *wang ke yi sha ren* 王可以杀人。”Using the king to kill a person is OK.” → “The king can kill a person.” (Pulleyblank 1995: 23-24). In his opinion, the original meaning is “the king may be used to kill a person”, later it is reanalyzed as “the king may be the agent of killing a person”. I think Pulleyblank’s observation is interesting; however, interpreting the “king” as an instrument is somewhat farfetched.

## 4.2 Three conditions for the development from *ke yi*<sub>1</sub> to *ke yi*<sub>2</sub>

The three additional conditions are the following: the decline of the prepositional function of *yi* as an instrumental marker (i.e., *ke yi*<sub>1</sub> developing into a compound word), the congruence of an instrument subject and an agent subject (i.e., causing the replacement of an instrument subject by an agent subject), and the need to break through the limitations of the *ke* construction (i.e., causing *ke yi*<sub>2</sub> to be used with a higher frequency). These conditions are discussed in detail below.

### 4.2.1 Decline of the prepositional function of *yi* as an instrumental marker

I think that the decline of the prepositional function of *yi* is owing to two facts.

Firstly, the process of the backward-movement of *yi* VY should have already neutralized the prepositional function of *yi* to some degree because of the elongated distance between *yi* and the instrument. The reason is obvious: The longer the distance between the two related elements, the more difficult it is to identify the relationship between them (Lu 2004: 5). I take (331) as an example.

331. 其木可以为棺，可以为车。 (*Guanzi* 管子. *Cheng ma* 乘马)

*qi mu ke yi wei guan ke yi wei che*  
its tree OK PREP make coffin OK PREP make cart

Woods [on the high mountains] can be made into coffins and carts.

The deep structure of (331) should be (332) below.

332. ★以其木为棺+可，以其木为车+可。 (constructed sentence)

*yi qi mu wei guan ke*  
using its tree make coffin OK

*yi qi mu wei che ke*  
using its trees make cart OK

Lit. [As for mountains], using its woods to make coffin is OK, [using its woods] to make a cart is OK.



In the deep structure (i.e., 332), *yi* is a typical instrumental marker.<sup>201</sup> After the movement (i.e., 331), the prepositional function of *yi* is weakened to some extent since the distance between *yi* 以 and *mu* 木 “woods” is further away in the deep structure.

Secondly, when X is a body part, then it is not conventionally analyzed as an instrument of *yi* since it is an element with agentive feature. Therefore, I believe that the prepositional function of *yi* in such cases will be further weakened. In other words, the prepositional meaning of *yi* in *shou ke yi wei guan* 手可以为棺 “the hands can be used to make coffin” should be weaker than in *mu ke yi wei guan* 木可以为棺 “the wood can be used to make a coffin”.

Accordingly, I summarize the first condition below.

**The first condition for the transition from *ke yi*<sub>1</sub> to *ke yi*<sub>2</sub>**

(1) When “*yi*-V-Y” is moved backward, then the prepositional function of *yi*<sub>1</sub> as instrumental marker is weakened to some degree; (2) if X is a body part of a person or an animal, then the prepositional function of *yi*<sub>1</sub> is further weakened.

1. X<sub>body part</sub>+*ke*+*yi*<sub>1</sub><sub>prep</sub>+V+(Y): no agent, no *zhi* after *yi*

→

2. X<sub>body part</sub>+*ke*-*yi*<sub>1</sub>+V+(Y): no agent, no *zhi* after *yi*<sup>202</sup>

Two accompanying results are that (1) *ke yi* could be treated as a compound word and (2) the *instrument object* of *yi* can be reanalyzed as the *instrument subject* of V. I explain this by taking (333) as an example.

333. 马，蹄可以践霜雪。(Zhuangzi 庄子. Mati 马蹄)

*ma ti ke yi jian shuang-xue*

horse hoof can PREP tread frost-snow

As for the horse, its hoof can be used to tread on frost and snow.

<sup>201</sup> Interpreting *yi* in the deep structure as a verb meaning “use” is possible. However, interpreting it as a typical instrumental marker is justified, too.

<sup>202</sup> X<sub>body part</sub> means that the element X is a body part. *Ke-yi*<sub>1</sub> is dashed in between so as to show that it is a kind of compound word.

The deep structure of example (333) should be (334) below.

334. ★ 以蹄践霜雪+可。(constructed sentence)

*yi ti jian shuang-xue ke*

using hoof tread frost-snow ok

Lit. Using its hoof to tread the frost-snow is ok.

*Yi* in the deep structure (i.e., 334) is obviously an instrumental preposition. However, its prepositional function declines in (333) because of two reasons: (1) *yi* 以 is distant from *ti* 蹄 “hoof” after the movement and (2) *ti* 蹄 “hoof” is a body part with agentive feature. Just because of the decline of the prepositional function of *yi*, *ke yi* could be treated as a compound word and the *instrument object* *ti* 蹄 “hoof” of *yi* can be reanalyzed as the *instrument subject* of V *jian* 践 “tread”. In our opinion, this is the very beginning of the development from *ke yi*<sub>1</sub> to *ke yi*<sub>2</sub>. Based on this condition, I go on discussing the second condition: the replacement of an *instrument subject* with an *agent subject*.

#### 4.2.2 The congruence of an instrument subject and an agent subject

When the  $X_{\text{body part}}$ , i.e., initially an *instrumental object* of *yi*, evolves as an *instrumental subject* of the matrix V, then it can be easily replaced by an agentive subject (i.e., the possessor of the body part). See alternative subjects between instrument and agent below.

335. 目 instrumental subject 视威仪之礼。(Shiji 史记. Yueshu 乐书)

*mu shi wei yi zhi li*  
eyes watch impressive dignified PART rite

The eyes watch the dignified rites.

336. ★ 臣 agentive subject 视威仪之礼。(constructed sentence)

*chen shi wei yi zhi li*  
I watch impressive dignified PART rite

I watch the dignified rites.

In examples (335) and (336), the alternative relationship between body part and agent subjects is clear.<sup>203</sup> This is the same for the case including *ke yi*. Two examples are listed below.

337. 足<sub>instrumental subject</sub> 可以遍行天下。(Xunzi 荀子. Xing'e 性恶)

*zu ke yi bian xing tian-xia*

feet OK PREP all-over walk world

Feet can walk all over the world.

338. ★人<sub>agentive subject</sub> 可以遍行天下。(constructed sentence)

*ren ke-yi bian xing tian-xia*

people can all-over walk world

People can walk all over the world.

In example (337), *zu* 足 “feet” could be recovered as instrumental object of *yi* to some extent. However, as already elaborately illustrated in Section 4.2.1, it is quite probably reanalyzed as an instrumental subject. Then, *ren* 人 “people” as an alternative can replace it as a subject resulting in example (338) because of the congruence of an instrument subject and an agent subject. Based on the above discussion, I summarize the second condition as follows.

### The second condition for the transition from *ke yi*<sub>1</sub> to *ke yi*<sub>2</sub>

When the instrument subject is a body part of a person or an animal, then the agent (i.e., the possessor of the body part) can replace it in the subject position.

1. X<sub>body part</sub>+*ke-yi*<sub>1</sub>+V+Y

→

2. X<sub>person/animal</sub>+*ke-yi*<sub>2</sub>+V+Y<sup>204</sup>

The motivation for this development is that the agent is the possessor of the body parts. Onishi (2008: 35-38) made a similar conclusion: as the agent and the body part

<sup>203</sup> In Modern Chinese, this is also common. For example, *Yanjing kan heiban* 眼睛看黑板 “Lit. Your eyes look at the blackboard” and *Nimen kan heiban* 你们看黑板 “You look at the blackboard”.

<sup>204</sup> X<sub>body part</sub> means X is a body part, while X<sub>person/animal</sub> means X is a person or an animal. Both *ke-yi*<sub>1</sub> and *ke-yi*<sub>2</sub> are dashed in between in order to show that they are kind of compound words.

have some relations with “one uses oneself” (i.e., “I use my eyes”), thus the instrument can represent the user (i.e., agent) and the agent implies the instrument to some degree.

Bearing this in mind, I analyze example (333) furthermore as (339) below.

马，蹄可以践霜雪。(See transcription in example 335)

→

339. ★马可以践霜雪。(constructed sentence)

*ma ke-yi jian shuang-xue*

horse can tread frost-snow

The horse can tread on frost and snow.

*Ma* 马 “horse”, the possessor of *ti* 蹄 “hoof”, definitely can replace *ti* 蹄 “hoof” as a new subject designating an unproblematic sentence.<sup>205</sup> Typologically, the relationship between instrument and agent is attested by the fact that the same marker is used for Russian, Sanskrit (Lyons 1968) and other languages (Nilsen 1973).

According to the discussion in Sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2, I summarize the development of *ke yi* (i.e., *ke yi*<sub>1</sub> and *ke yi*<sub>2</sub>) as below.<sup>206</sup>

**First stage:** typical *ke yi*<sub>1</sub>, e.g., *Qi mu ke yi wei guan, ke yi wei che* 其木可以为棺，可以为车。“Woods on the high mountains can be made into coffins and carts.” (See gloss in example 331)

**Second stage:** weakening of the prepositional function of *yi*, and the instrument object is reanalyzed as an instrument subject, e.g., *Ti ke yi jian shuang xue* 蹄可以践霜雪 “its hoof can be used to tread on frost and snow.” (See gloss in 333)

<sup>205</sup> Note that I have already proved that the prepositional function of *yi* is weakened and *ke yi* is possible to be analyzed as a compound word in Section 4.2.1.

<sup>206</sup> Onishi assumes a transition from the first to the third stage without mentioning the second stage. Therefore, the disadvantage of his hypothesis is the following: since it does not explain how the prepositional function of *yi* declines, *yi* is still a preposition indicating instrument. Accordingly, this hypothesis faces two problems: (1) If *yi* is still a preposition indicating an instrument, then how can the instrument object of *yi* can be treated as a subject of the matrix V? (2) If the instrument object is not reanalyzed as the subject of the matrix of V, then the agent cannot replace the instrument object in the subject position. In sum, although there is an overlap of the motivation (i.e., body part has both agentive and instrumental features) for the two conditions and the diachronic evidence of the development of *ke yi* from the second to third stages is not so clear, therefore, it is quite important to clarify the second stage.

**Third stage:** replacement of the instrument subject with an agent subject resulting in *ke yi<sub>2</sub>*, e.g., *ma ke yi jian shuang xue* 马可以践霜雪 “the horse can tread on frost and snow.” (See gloss in example 339)

As such, the *ke yi<sub>2</sub>* construction can be characterized in the following way:

- An agent subject (i.e., X) of the matrix V cannot be recovered as the object of *yi*
- The matrix V is followed by an object.

Subsequently, the actual demand of a counterpart of the *ke* construction promotes *ke yi<sub>2</sub>* developing into a popular construction.

#### 4.2.3 Practical need to break through the limitations of the *ke* construction

As mentioned earlier, the *ke* construction has several special features: obligatory patient subject; incompatibility with an agent; no object after V; and no anaphoric *zhi* after V. In sum, the use of the modal auxiliary verb *ke* is restricted to sentences with passive meaning. This is quite different from the modal auxiliary verb that can be used in both active and passive sentences in other languages (e.g., *can* in English). As such, on a practical communicative level, a counterpart is needed that could be used in an active sentence to break through the limitations of the *ke* construction.<sup>207</sup>

As discussed above, there are the following features of the *ke yi<sub>2</sub>* construction: V following *ke yi<sub>2</sub>* can take an object, and the subject is an agent. Moreover, *ke yi<sub>2</sub>* as a compound word is semantically identical to *ke*. Therefore, *ke yi<sub>2</sub>* is a good counterpart (i.e., semantically identical but opposite in terms of syntax).

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<sup>207</sup> According to Li (2004), *neng* was used as a modal verb from as early as the sixth century BC. Moreover, it was normally used in active sentences. See the difference between examples (1) and (2).

(1) *tian zuo nie, you ke wei, zi zuo nie, bu ke huan* 天作孽，犹可违；自作孽，不可违。(Shangshu 尚书. Taijia 太甲) “Calamities sent by Heaven may be avoided; but there is no escape from those brought on by oneself.”

(2) *tian neng chu qu zhi* 天能除去之。 “Heaven can remove the disaster.”(Mozi 墨子. Tianzhi 天志) However, although *ke* and *neng* are good counterparts in syntax, they are quite different in semantics (see Cai 2009). Generally, I think *ke* is more subjective while *neng* is more objective. Therefore, I do not consider *neng* a good counterpart of *ke*.

Precisely because of the need to break through the limitations of the *ke* construction, the *ke yi*<sub>2</sub> construction became more popular since the time of the *Guoyu*. One example is presented below.

340. 若临大事，其可以贤于臣。(Guoyu 国语. Jinyu 晋语)<sup>208</sup>

ruo lin da shi qi ke-yi xian yu chen  
if encounter great event he can wiser PREP I

When [he] faces the great event, he can be wiser than me.

Note that both *ke* and *ke yi*<sub>1</sub> are found in the earliest text *Shijing*, while *ke yi*<sub>2</sub> is not. This diachronic evidence (i.e., *ke yi*<sub>2</sub> appeared later than *ke yi*<sub>1</sub>) also indirectly supports our hypothesis (i.e., *ke yi*<sub>2</sub> is formed based on *ke yi*<sub>1</sub>).<sup>209</sup> On the basis of the above analysis, I summarize the third condition for the transition as follows.

### The third condition for the transition from *ke yi*<sub>1</sub> to *ke yi*<sub>2</sub>

The practical demand to break through the limitation of the *ke* construction

$$X_{\text{person/animal}} + ke\ yi_2 + V + (Y)^{210}$$

Summing up Section 4, I believe that the *ke yi*<sub>1</sub> construction is still basically the *ke* construction, and the *counterpart* relationship between *ke* and *ke yi* mentioned in Section 1 only refers to the *ke* & *ke yi*<sub>2</sub> constructions. Considering the essential difference between *ke yi*<sub>1</sub> and *ke yi*<sub>2</sub>, I conclude the following.

(1) The object of *yi* can be recovered in *ke yi*<sub>1</sub> rather than in *ke yi*<sub>2</sub>.

<sup>208</sup> A detailed context is provided here for clarification:

*Qi Xi ci yu jun wei, gong wen yue: "Shu ke?" Dui yue: "chen zhi zi Wu ke. ... ruo lin da shi, qi ke yi xian yu chen."* 祁奚辞于军尉，公问焉，曰：“孰可？”对曰：“臣之子午可。...。若临大事，其可以贤于臣。” “[When] Qi Xi resigned his military position, Lord Jin Dao asked: “Who is suitable [to succeed to the position]?” He answered: “My son Zi Wu is suitable [...] He can do better than me when facing important events.””

<sup>209</sup> According to Zhu (2003: 20), there are 20 examples of “*ke+yi*” in *Shijing* 诗经 and *Shangshu* 尚书. In 18 of these *yi* should be interpreted as a preposition (i.e., the *ke yi*<sub>1</sub> construction), while in 2 it should be interpreted as *he yi* 何以 “how, why”. In other words, there is no *ke yi*<sub>2</sub> construction in *Shijing* and *Shangshu*.

<sup>210</sup> X<sub>A</sub> represents that X is an agent of V, and *ke yi*<sub>2</sub> here is a compound word.

(2) The subject should be interpreted as a kind of instrument or condition of *yi* in *ke yi<sub>1</sub>* whereas as an agent of V following *ke yi<sub>2</sub>*.

(3) The *ke yi<sub>1</sub>* is not a compound word while *ke yi<sub>2</sub>* is.

Since *ke yi* underwent the development from *ke yi<sub>1</sub>* to *ke yi<sub>2</sub>*, the function of *yi* is quite complex and scholars have expressed different opinions. He (2004: 153) regarded *yi* in the *ke yi* and *zu yi* constructions as conjunction rather than preposition as no example of *ke yi* in which *yi* is followed by an object is attested in *Zuozhuan*. Zhu (2003: 53) supported He's opinion to some extent: *Yi* in the compound word *ke yi* (i.e., *ke yi<sub>2</sub>*) could be derived from both the preposition and the conjunction. Jing (1998: 37) stated that *ke yi* is a coordinate construction in which the semantic of *ke* equals *yi*. Zhang (1997: 54) thought that the *yi* in *ke yi* is not derived from the instrumental preposition but is just a marker without meaning. Liu (1999: 575) concluded that there is no convincing explanation of the nature of *yi* in *ke yi* until now. I think that our hypothesis contributes to four aspects: (1) it is the first try to explain how *ke* and *yi* co-occur in a sequence; (2) it convincingly answers the question why *yi* never takes an object and (3) it clearly shows the interpretation of the nature of *yi* should depend on *ke yi<sub>1</sub>* and *ke yi<sub>2</sub>*, respectively; (4) it demonstrates how *ke yi<sub>1</sub>* developed into *ke yi<sub>2</sub>*.

I also note that, from the beginning of the Han dynasty, the “counterpart” relationship between the *ke* construction and the *ke yi<sub>2</sub>* construction is not strictly applied and they are interchangeable in some instances. This is why ever more exceptions are found in *Shiji* (see Chi 2004). I believe this happened because *ke yi<sub>2</sub>* developed into a compound word, and it mainly expressed deontic modality,<sup>211</sup> just as *ke* did.

Besides the *ke/ke yi* constructions, some related constructions, i.e., *nan 难/nan yi 难以*, *yi 易/yi yi 易以* and *zu 足/zu yi 足以* constructions are also considered here.

## 5. EXPLANATION OF THE FORMATION OF THE *NAN (YI)/YI (YI)/ZU (YI) CONSTRUCTIONS*

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<sup>211</sup> In Modern Chinese, *ke yi* has assumed all of *ke*'s functions. Two factors have contributed to this: both *ke* and *ke yi* indicate modality and the trend of disyllabification.

Generally, the *nan/nan yi* and *yi/yi yi* constructions can also be explained through the verb moving backward hypothesis.<sup>212</sup> However, *zu/zu yi* is different. See discussions in Sections 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 respectively.

## 5.1 The *nan* 难 “difficult” and *yi* 易 “easy” constructions

In general, the formation process of the *nan* 难 “difficult” and *yi* 易 “easy” constructions is quite similar to the *ke* construction. In detail, there are three similar structures for *nan* and *yi*. I start with *nan*.

341. (Structure 1). 然则非圣别说，而听圣人难也。 (*Shangjunshu* 商君书. Laimindishiwu 徠民第十五)

<i>ran</i>	<i>ze</i>	<i>fei</i>	<i>sheng</i>	<i>bie</i>	<i>shuo</i>
so	then	NEG	sage	special	viewpoint
<i>er</i>	<i>ting</i>	<i>sheng-ren</i>	<i>nan</i>	<i>ye</i>	
but	listen	sage	difficult	FIN	

If so, then it is not [because] the sage has a special viewpoint, but [because] listening to the sage is difficult.

342. (Structure 2). 难言宪术，须同而出。 (*Guanzi* 管子. Baixin 白心)

<i>nan</i>	<i>yan</i>	<i>xian</i>	<i>shu</i>	<i>xu</i>	<i>tong</i>	<i>er</i>	<i>chu</i>
difficult	declare	law	technique	must	same	then	appear

It is difficult to spell out basic laws and administrative techniques, but they must be made consistent before they are issued.

343. (Structure 3). 故国贫而民难治也。 (*Mozi* 墨子. Ciguo 辞过)

<i>gu</i>	<i>guo</i>	<i>pin</i>	<i>er</i>	<i>min</i>	<i>nan</i>	<i>zhi</i>	<i>ye</i>
therefore	state	poor	then	people	difficult	govern	FIN

Therefore, [if] the state is poor, then the people are difficult to govern.

Similar to the *ke* construction, Structure 2 is extremely rare (Example 342 is the only pre-Qin example), while there are numerous examples of Structures 1 and 3. Therefore, I believe there was a direct transition from Structure 1 to Structure 3 without the intermediate stage of Structure 2.



The case of *yi* is comparable.

344. (Structure 1). 齐、楚合，则攻宋易也。 (*Zhanguoce* 战国策. *Songweice* 宋卫策)

*Qi Chu he ze gong song yi ye*  
NAME NAME unite then attack NAME easy FIN

[If] the states of Qi and Chu unite, then attacking the state of Song is easy.

345. (Structure 2). 饥者易为食，渴者易为饮。 (*Mengzi* 孟子. *Gongsunchou Shang* 公孙丑上)

*ji zhe yi wei shi ke zhe yi wei yin*  
hungry NOM easy make food thirsty NOM easy make drink

It is easy to make food for the hungry people, [and] easy to make drinks for the thirsty people.

346. (Structure 3). 使各自为战，则楚易败也。 (*Shiji* 史. *Xianyu benji* 项羽本纪)

*shi ge zi wei zhan ze chu yi bai ye*  
let each self do fight then NAME easy defeat FIN

Let them fight separately, then the state of Chu is easy to defeat.

It is even more difficult to find examples of Structure 2 for *yi*, so the hypothesis that there was a direct transition from Structure 1 to Structure 3 is even more convincing.

## 5.2 The *nan yi* 难以 and *yi yi* 易以 constructions

To some extent, the *nan yi* and *yi yi* constructions are similar to the *ke yi* construction. Initially, they are used to comment on the “*yi X V Y*” serial verb construction.<sup>213</sup> For example:

347. 以敬孝易，以爱孝难。 (*Zhuangzi* 庄子. *Tianyun* 天运)

*yi jing xiao yi yi ai xiao nan*  
using>INS respect filial easy using>INS love filial difficult

Using filial respect is easy, while using filial love is difficult. → To be filial due to respect is easy, to be filial due to love is hard.

However, the functional extension of *yi* in *nan yi* and *yi yi* does not rigorously follow

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<sup>213</sup> Y, normally *fu mu* 父母 (“father and mother”), is omitted here.

the functional development of *yi* in the *ke yi* construction. Moreover, there is no distinction between *nan yi*<sub>1</sub> and *nan yi*<sub>2</sub> or *yi yi*<sub>1</sub> and *yi yi*<sub>2</sub>. Therefore, I hypothesize that the *nan yi* and *yi yi* constructions only correlate to the *ke yi*<sub>2</sub> construction.

Based on the above analysis of the *ke (yi)*, *nan (yi)* and *yi (yi)* constructions, two conditions are summarized for the verb moving backward in Ancient Chinese :

1. the subject should be an action consisting of the V+O or V<sub>1</sub> (e.g., *yi*)+O<sub>1</sub>+V<sub>2</sub>+O<sub>2</sub> serial verb construction,<sup>214</sup>
2. the predicate of the main sentence should be an intransitive verb that describes the suitability.

### 5.3 The *zu (yi)*足 (以) construction

The formation of the *zu* 足 “sufficient” (*yi* 以) construction is often equated to the *ke (yi)* construction (Ma 1898 [2007] , Ding and Zhang 2012). However, I feel that *zu* does not match the two criteria because it is normally used to comment on a thing (i.e., a noun) rather than an action (i.e., verb).<sup>215</sup> For example:

348. 下不从事，则财用不足。(Mozi 墨子. Feiming 非命)

<i>xia</i>	<i>bu</i>	<i>cong</i>	<i>shi</i>	<i>ze</i>	<i>cai</i>	<i>yong</i>	<i>bu</i>	<i>zu</i>
below	NEG	do	work	then	stuff	appliance	NEG	enough

If those below (i.e., the common people) do not do the labour work, then the fiscal resources will be insufficient.

In example (348), *zu* is used to comment on the noun *cai yong* 财用 “fiscal resources”. In contrast, it is never used to comment on an action. Therefore, the *zu (yi)* construction could not be formed by the verb moving backward, and the *zu (yi)* construction cannot be equated to the *ke (yi)* construction.

Meanwhile, I find that *zu* is often followed by an action, and the entire construction

<sup>214</sup> With respect to the serial verb construction, I discuss only the Type when V<sub>1</sub> is *yi* 以 (“to use/to take”) in this chapter.

<sup>215</sup> Note that this point is totally different from *ke/ke yi*.

expresses a necessary condition: whether the thing (i.e., the noun) that appears at the beginning of the sentence is sufficient for the action (i.e., VP) to occur.<sup>216</sup> For example:

349. 苟有道，里地足容身。<sup>217</sup> (*Shangjunshu* 商君书. *Cuofa* 错法)

*gou you dao li di zu rong shen*  
if have way NUM land sufficient hold body

If the correct method is used, even a territory of one square *li* is sufficient for the body.

In the above example, *li di* 里地 “a land of one Li” is sufficient to *rong shen* 容身 “hold the body”, and *zu* – initially an intransitive verb – can be reanalysed as either an adverb or an auxiliary verb. However, this usage is very rare,<sup>218</sup> which suggests that the *zu* construction cannot be formed by fronting the object.

How, then, is the *zu* construction formed? The following example provides the key:

350. 驰车千驷不足乘。(Guanzi 管子. Qichenqizhu 七臣七主)

*chi-che qian si<sup>219</sup> bu zu cheng*  
running vehicle NUM horse NEG sufficient ride

Thousands of vehicles, each pulled by four horses, are insufficient for him to ride.

Similar to examples 348 and 349, *qian si* 千驷 “thousands of vehicles, each pulled by four horses” is an insufficient condition of *cheng* 乘 “ride”. The point is that *qian si* and *cheng* are not only in a “condition-action” relationship, but also in a “patient-V” relationship. It is fair to say that this marks the beginning of the *zu* construction. Subsequently, the semantic “sufficient condition” generates the semantic “is worthy of”. For example:

351. 见利不顾其君，其仁不足称也。(Liji 礼记. Tangong 檀弓)

*jian li bu gu qi jun*  
see benefit NEG care his king  
*qi ren bu zu cheng ye*

<sup>216</sup> Note that this is also different from *ke*.

<sup>217</sup> *Li* 里 is a Chinese unit of measurement; *yi li* 一里 is equivalent to 500 metres.

<sup>218</sup> Indeed, this is the only example I have found.

<sup>219</sup> *Si ma yi si* 四马一驷 “a team of four horses.”

his virtue NEG is worthy of praise FIN

[When he] sees the benefit, he does not think about his king, his virtue is not praiseworthy.

Similar to Example 350, both the “condition-action” and the “patient-V” relationships are expressed in example 351: *qi ren* 其仁 “his virtue” is insufficient for *cheng* 称 “praise”; and *qi ren* 其仁 “his virtue” is the object of *cheng* 称 “praise”. The difference is that *zu* also means “is worthy of” in this example. This usage occurs much more frequently than the “sufficient” usage. Hereby, the *zu* construction is formed.

Moreover, the *ke* construction had an influence on the formation of the *zu* construction. In some cases, *zu* and *ke* are used in parallel to each other and are interchangeable. For example:

352. 始于不足见，终于不可及。 (*Guanzi* 管子. *Lizheng* 立政)

*shi yu bu zu jian Zhong yu bu ke ji*  
begin PREP NEG sufficient see end PREP NEG can reach

It begins [as a tiny thing that] is too small to see, and ends at a height that people cannot reach.

According to the above analysis, the formation of the *zu* construction is summarized as follows:

1. *Zu* is used to describe whether the subject (noun) is sufficient or insufficient.
2. Then it is used in a sufficient condition sentence in which an action follows *zu* to describe whether the subject (noun) is a sufficient condition for the occurrence of an action.
3. When the subject is also the patient of the V, it generates the semantic “be worthy of”.

Once the *zu* construction had been formed in this way, the *ke* construction analogically served to increase its usage because of their similar structural features.

- the subject is a patient;
- no patient follows the verb after *zu*;

- there is no agent.

This is why the *zu* construction is often equated to the *ke* construction. However, the *zu* construction is not formed by a verb moving backward, nor by fronting the object, as mentioned above.

Interestingly, although the original meaning (i.e., “sufficient”) of *zu* is rarely expressed in the *zu* construction, it is often expressed in the “*zu yi*” construction. For example:

353. 其德足以昭其馨香，其惠足以同其民人。 (*Guoyu* 国语. *Zhouyu* 周语)

<i>qi</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>zu-yi</i>	<i>zhao</i>	<i>qi</i>	<i>xin-xiang</i>
his	virtue	sufficient	reveal	his	fragrance
<i>qi</i>	<i>hui</i>	<i>zu-yi</i>	<i>tong</i>	<i>qi</i>	<i>min-ren</i>
his	favour	sufficient	educate	his	people

His virtue is so great that it is sufficient to reveal his fragrance, his kindness is so great that it is sufficient to educate his people.

Regarding the formation of the *zu yi* construction, I believe that this occurred in imitation of the *ke yi* construction, since there is no evidence of a *zu yi* developmental process. Similar to the *nan yi* and *yi yi* constructions, there is no need to distinguish between *zu yi*<sub>1</sub> and *zu yi*<sub>2</sub> constructions.

Note that these constructions (i.e., *ke*, *nan*, *zu* and *yi* construction) are commonly studied in terms of tough or middle constructions. See discussion in Section 6 below.

## 6. TOUGH AND PASSIVE

The study of the *ke* construction and related constructions provides some clues to solve the question about the similarities and differences between tough construction and passive construction. The tough construction in Old Chinese are typically expressed by adjective such as *yi* (i.e., easy) and *nan* (i.e., hard), most recent scholars have excluded it completely from their studies on the history of the Chinese passive (Wang 1957 and 1958[1980], Yang 1980, Chu 1987, Peyraube 1989, Tang and Zhou

1958, and Wei 1994), while the difference and similarities between the passive and tough construction in Chinese have been left unexamined.

In the following, I try to see the difference and similarities between tough and passive constructions.

**Similarities:** these constructions (i.e., *ke*, *nan*, *yi* and *zu* constructions) and other passives have a great deal in common. The most important one is that (1) both of them have a passive meaning, that is, (2) an action or a process with an *undergoer-orientation*. Moreover, (3) V in both constructions is (mainly) intransitive.<sup>220</sup>

**Difference:** Apart from (1) the undergoer-orientation subject, (2) passive meaning and (3) intransitive V, these tough constructions do not share many morphosyntactic properties with other passives. For example, (1) unlike other passives in which an actor in an oblique phrase is optionally allowed, the actor is never overtly expressed in *these constructions*. Furthermore, (2) *ke*, *nan*, *zu*, *yi* in these constructions are still verbs with strong lexical meanings indicating a potentiality, suitability, difficulty, and sufficiency; rather than passive lexicals expressing “become or suffering.” (3) Meanwhile, although both of them have passive meaning, the difference lies in the generic reading, which is only observed in these constructions rather than in passives. (4) As mentioned before, passive expresses stativization and the affectedness of the subject, while these features are not observed in these constructions.

When all these points are considered, it is necessary to determine the role these constructions play in the Ancient Chinese voice system. While a passive meaning appears to be expressed, as these constructions are not syntactically passive, they should be considered a serial verb construction with deontic modality and a generic reading. Deontic modality was expressed in different ways in Ancient Chinese, such as *neng* 能 and *xu* 需, and was not restricted to a passive or middle voice. However, generic readings are often associated with middle-related constructions, with these constructions possessing middle voice characteristics that also express a passive meaning.

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<sup>220</sup> The V in some passives can take objects (see the discussion in Chapter 7, Part 3).

## 7. CONCLUSION

*Ke* is a modal auxiliary verb with full semantic rather than a passive marker in the *ke* construction. With respect to the formation of the *ke* construction, I mainly refute the object fronting hypothesis: The *ke* construction is formed by fronting the object in an active sentence including *ke*. Meanwhile, the following hypotheses: (1) The *ke* construction is formed by adding *ke* to a notional passive; (2) The *ke* construction is formed solely by reanalysis, are also refuted.

I have provided a new hypothesis to explain the formation process of the *ke* construction: the underlying structure is “V-patient”+*ke*, in which *ke* expresses the suitability of the action V-patient. The V is then moved backward to avoid the top-heavy problem, which results in the *ke* construction patient+*ke*+V. Accordingly, every feature of the *ke* construction (i.e., obligatory patient subject; incompatibility with agent; no patient after V; no anaphoric *zhi* after V) is explained.

In particular, this hypothesis helps to explain the formation of the *ke yi* construction: *ke* is used to comment on the serial verb construction “*yi*-X-V-Y” – meaning “using/taking something to do something” – and the underlying structure is “*yi*-X-V-Y”+*ke*, which can be changed to “X-*yi*-V-Y”+*ke* since *yi*-X-V-Y is interchangeable with X-*yi*-V-Y in Ancient Chinese. Simply by imitating the rule of the formation of the *ke* construction, the object of *yi* (i.e., X) remains at the beginning of the sentence, while all of *yi*-V-Y is moved backward to avoid the top-heavy problem. Interpreting *yi* as a verb meaning “use/take” is justifiable only at the initial stage, as it quickly developed into a preposition indicating instrument. Irrespective of whether *yi* is a verb or a preposition, the subject N can be interpreted as the object of *yi*; I define this as *ke yi*<sub>1</sub>. Using *ke yi*<sub>1</sub> as a base, *ke yi*<sub>2</sub> was formed because of three conditions: (1) The decline of the prepositional function of *yi* as an instrumental marker, (2) the congruence between an instrument subject and an agent subject within a specific context; and (3) the need to break through the limitations of the *ke* construction. Scholars have rarely bothered to differentiate between *ke yi*<sub>1</sub> and *ke yi*<sub>2</sub>, yet I feel that this distinction is crucial for the study of the *ke yi* construction. Moreover, the verb moving backward hypothesis provides new insights into

explaining the formation of similar constructions (e.g., the *nan* 难 “difficult to V”/*yi* 易 “easy to V”/*zu* 足 “sufficient to V” constructions) in Ancient Chinese, as well as into typological studies of the tough construction. Therefore, the answers are clear to the questions proposed at the beginning: (1) *ke*, *zu*, *nan* and *yi* in these constructions function as modal auxiliary verbs; (2) the formation process of these constructions results in patient topic/subject sentences which simultaneously generate a passive meaning; (3) An actor is not allowed in these constructions since there is no agent in the underlying structure; (4) the generic reading is typologically quite relevant to the middle structure with the passive meaning; (5) as discussed in Section 6, they are syntactically similar in the undergoer-orientation subject and intransitive verb, however, functionally, they differ in “stativization” and “subject-affectedness” (see more discussion in Part 5).



## PART 5: CONCLUSION

This thesis investigated all the major Ancient Chinese forms that have been conventionally labeled “passive,” such as the notional passive and marked passive *jian*, *bei*, *wei*, and *yu* constructions and attention was also paid to the *ke*, *nan*, *yi*, and *zu* constructions. Some examples in the notional passive were found to be morphologically marked on their verbs through tonal derivation or consonant alternation, while some examples were found to be unmarked, which suggested that there may have been an “absolute unmarked passive” in Ancient Chinese. Although found to have varying lexical resources, the marked passives appeared to have some similarities in their grammaticalization process; for example, when *wei* was followed by a derived noun that denoted the patient object of its verbal action in the copula construction, and when both *bei* and *jian* developed into passive constructions due to the semantic “suffer/receive” when followed by an abstract noun which could also be used as transitive verbs. It was concluded that the functional ambiguity between a noun and a verb was the key for their reanalysis as passive markers in Ancient Chinese. The emergence of these three periphrastic constructions indicated a renewal process that led to several passive phrasal expressions; however, as discussed, almost all were ambiguous in both passive and non-passive interpretations. Some scholars have claimed that there is no passive in Ancient Chinese, which is relevant to three factors presented in the introduction: (1) it is a comprehensive feature of verbs in Ancient Chinese; (2) there is a word-class movement between the noun and verb in Chinese literature usually referred to as *zi zhi* 自指 “self-designation” and *zhuan zhi* 转指 “transferred designation”; and (3) the general syntax features of the Chinese. During the diachronic study of the passive constructions, these three factors were consistently accounted for. Besides the notional passive and the marked passive, attention was also paid to the *ke*, *nan*, *yi* and *zu* constructions which were previously studied under either “passive” or “middle” topics. Regardless what the perspective is, *ke*, *zu*, *nan* and *yi* are not passive markers.

After carefully checking these apparent passive markers, the following conclusions were made. It is necessary to distinguish a *passive sense* from a *passive voice*. While many of the cited examples tended to imply a passive sense, it is doubtful that they were *syntactic passive markers* for a mature passive voice in Ancient Chinese. Concretely, a passive sense here means that a sentence can be translated into a passive

in modern Mandarin or English, while the passive voice is a grammatical category that corresponds to the active voice; in other words, the passive sense is a semantic interpretation from a translation and contrastive perspective, while the passive voice is a formal and syntactic category. Obviously, a language that has a passive voice should have much stricter criteria than having some constructions that imply a passive sense, especially when contrasted to other languages.

Below, a summary is given as to the condition(s) that were likely to trigger a *passive sense* in Ancient Chinese and the additional conditions required for a *passive voice* definition.

## 1. CONDITION FOR A PASSIVE SENSE

A passive sense interpretation is triggered if a sentence has a patient subject, which is why the broad definition presented by Ma (1898 [2007] ) that any sentences with the patient occurring in the subject position can be categorized as a passive has been adhered to by some scholars.

The most typical example is the notional passive, in which none of the elements are marked and the sole feature is a patient subject.<sup>221</sup> Although the PV notional passive has been treated as a structure to express a *resultant state* as most of the V in these structures belongs to labile verbs, translating it into a *bei passive* in modern Mandarin or a *be passive* in English does not unduly influence the semantics.<sup>222</sup> For example, as *dong zhe* 栋折 “the rooftree cracks” can be translated as *dong bei zhe* 栋被折 “the rooftree was cracked” depending on the context, it could be seen to be a passive structure. This can be seen more clearly in modern Mandarin; for example,

*Tuanjie jin yibu jiaqiang le* 团结进一步加强了 “Unity has been further strengthened.”

*Zhege wenti zhengzai yanjiu* 这个问题正在研究 “This problem is now being discussed.”

*Fan zuo hao le* 饭做好了 “The food has been prepared.”

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<sup>221</sup> Some of them are argued with morphological difference, see discussion in Part 2.

<sup>222</sup> Intransitive-labile is different (see discussion in Section 2.1.2, Chapter 1, Part 2), the intransitive pattern of such a kind of verb cannot be translated as passive in English.

While these sentences are not marked by any passive markers, they have patient subjects and the English translations are usually rendered as passives. If these are interpreted as passive sense by adding *bei*, this can be acceptable *in some contexts* but not in others.<sup>223</sup> Generally, most native speakers would not define these examples as passives, but would admit that they *imply* a passive sense. Because of these complexities, some scholars have argued that these examples are “pseudo-passive” or “middle voice” as the subject has patient properties (see e.g., Cheng and Huang 1994, Ting 1997).

Other examples are sentences that include verbs such as *zao*, *yu*, and *shou* “receive/suffer,” which are usually explained as “the subject (patient) suffers/is subjected to something.” However, all can be translated as *passive* in modern Mandarin by replacing *zao*, *yu*, and *shou* with *bei*, and all can be rendered as passives in English. The reason for these interpretations is that the subject can be recovered as the object of V after *zao*, *yu*, and *shou*; however, *zao*, *yu*, and *shou* are commonly analyzed as lexical verbs expressing “receive/encounter > suffer” rather than passive markers, which also proves that if the subject is relevant to the object of the matrix verb, then the sentence implies a passive sense to some degree.

However, defining a patient subject is difficult because Ancient Chinese typically has a topic as well as a subject (e.g., Lappolla 1990).<sup>224</sup> If it is claimed that the subject position in Ancient Chinese is in front of the verb, this may be valid for the topic

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<sup>223</sup> In most cases, I can add a passive marker, such as “被” in front of the verb to make the passivity overt, such as the sentence *fan bei zuo hao le* 饭被做好了 “The rice has been cooked”. However, it seems that the marker is redundant, and the sentence sounds somewhat unnatural.

A good example to show that this type of construction is not passive is from LaPolla (2009: 51), who provides an example of two old friends passing each other on the street while one does not notice the other. The person who was not noticed could call out: *Eh, Lao pengyou dou bu renshi la!?* 嘿，老朋友都不认识啦？！ “Hey, (you) don’t recognize (your) old friend!?” LaPolla convincingly stated that “To read this as a passive sentence would be inappropriate to the situation, as the emphasis is on the person addressed not recognizing the speaker rather than it being on the speaker not being recognized by someone.”

<sup>224</sup> According to Shi (2000: 383), there are three different standpoints concerning the preverbal NPs in languages like Mandarin: The first one maintains that the subject-predicate is the fundamental relationship between the VP and preverbal NPs, so that the preverbal NPs are analyzed as subjects. The second one divides languages into subject-prominent and topic-prominent, then the preverbal NPs in languages like Mandarin are topics. The third standpoint supports the view that both topics and subjects exist as separate notions and may appear in the same sentence. Currently, the last seems to be the commonly accepted.

position as well, which makes it difficult to claim that the subjects are marked by syntax. Distinguishing a patient subject from a patient topic is so complicated that it requires a thesis all its own; therefore, here only some general ideas rather than detailed explanations are given. Generally, the patient topic was marked with *fu* 夫, *ye* 也, *zhe* 者, and so on in Ancient Chinese. For example, *Fu zhuan yu, xi zhe xian wang yi wei dong meng zhu* 夫顓臾, 昔者先王以为东蒙主 “Now as for Zhuanyu, in ancient times the former kings put Zhuanyu in charge of (the sacrifices at) Dongmeng.” (*Lunyu* 论语. Jishi 季氏 ). Usually, there is an agent between the patient topic and V, such as *Yu, wo suo yu ye* 鱼, 我所欲也 “Fish is what I want (*Mengzi* 孟子. *Gao zi shang* 告子上).” These patient topics do not trigger a passive interpretation. Roughly speaking, compared with the patient subject, a patient topic is not so easy to trigger passive interpretation.

In sum, from a translation perspective, for convenience, the apparent passives in Ancient Chinese could be translated as passives in modern Mandarin or English; however, a patient subject or a patient topic are not sufficient conditions for the passive voice as mentioned in Part 1 as some additional conditions are required, which are summarized in the following.

## **2. OTHER CONDITIONS FOR THE PASSIVE VOICE**

Beside the patient subject mentioned above, there are three additional conditions required to define the mature passive voice.

### **2.1 Compatibility with an agent**

Agents are often omitted in passive constructions as they are generally implied in the context. Due to this lack of an explicit agent, many passive sentences are more concise than their active counterparts, with corpus-based research having found that the majority of passives are “short” passives (Svartvik 1966, Givón 1979, Thompson 1987, Biber et al. 1999).

However, many scholars have also realized that although the “by-phrase” itself is optional and most passives are “short passives,” the importance of the *by*-phrase should not be underestimated for three reasons.

First, the presence of the *by*-phrase is directly related to the lexical operation on the argument structure of the verb that the passive morpheme represents (Yang 2012, Wanner 2009).

Second, adding a *by*-phrase is also a simple test for identifying true passives from adjectival passives. In English, the term “adjectival passive” is somewhat misleading as what looks like a passive is actually a copula construction with an adjectival predicate, which means sentences such as *the window was broken* can have two readings either as a state with *be* as a main verb followed by an adjectival phrase, or as an event with *be* as an auxiliary followed by a participle (Wasow 1977, Chomsky 1981: 54-55, Levin and Rappaport 1986).<sup>225</sup>

Third, researchers have found that there are passive constructions in some languages that require an agent phrase (e.g., Ting 1998, Bao and Wee 1999, Yip and Matthews 2000, Tang 2001, Matthews et al, 2005 and Zhou 2016), most of which are spoken in China (especially the southern regions) and Southeast Asia, such as the Taiwanese southern Min, the Jieyang dialect of Chaozhou, Cantonese, and Singaporean English. Zhou’s (2016) study result is a piece of good evidence. After investigating different passive markers in dialects in China, he concludes that many passive markers, such as *gei* 给, *bo* 拨, *bi* 畀, *qi* 乞, *jiao* 叫, and *rang* 让, require an agent when expressing a passive sense. Even when the agent is unclear or not so important for the semantic interpretation, it still cannot be deleted. Instead, the agentive information can be expressed with general and indefinite nouns like *ren* 人 “person/ human being” or

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<sup>225</sup> This ambiguity does not occur in languages like German, Dutch, or Italian, which do not use the equivalent of *be* to form the passive. The passive auxiliary in German is *werden* (*become*). In German, then, sentences like *window was broken* (Passive: “Das Fensterscheibe wurde zerbrochen”/Adjective (resultative state): “Das Fenster ist zerbrochen”) have two translations, and one has to make up one’s mind as to whether the sentence is construed as a copula construction or a passive.

wu 物 “things”. *Rang* 让 and *jiao* 叫 are taken as examples here. A sentence without an agent, e.g., \* *Zhang San rang/ jiao da le* 张三让/ 叫打了 “Zhang San was hit”, is ungrammatical. By contrast, a sentence with an agent like *Zhang San rang/ jiao Li Si da le* “Zhang San was hit by Li Si” is grammatical. Xiao et al. (2006: 128) found that both the *rang* passive and *jiao* passive occur in the agentive form in all examples studied and the Chinese passive occurs in the agentive form much more frequently than their counterparts in English.

Therefore, suffice to say the (optional) *by*-phrase is an integral part of a passive construction even though it is not expressed in a majority of passives, which means that the compatibility with an agent is an obligatory condition for the passive voice. Therefore, as studied in Parts 2 and 4, both the notional passive and the *ke* construction must be treated with caution as most notional passives and all *ke* constructions are incompatible with an agent.

Note that although an agent is normally not present in *English passive*, it was more common “present” than “not present” in *Ancient Chinese*, since *wei A suo V* was the most common passive structure found in Ancient Chinese in which A was required.

## 2.2 No semantic limitations for the use of the verb

All apparent passive markers were originally full verbs that have been reanalyzed as passive markers in the serial verb constructions, that is,  $V_{\text{pass.}}+V$ .<sup>226</sup> Part 3 focused on the syntactically marked periphrastic passives *jian*, *bei*, and *wei* constructions. It had been previously argued that the *wei* passive arose through the reanalysis of the copula construction whereas *jian* and *bei* are reanalyzed as passives based on experience verbs construction. Concretely, this occurred when *wei* was followed by a derived noun that denoted the patient object of the verbal action and when *jian* and *bei* were followed by an abstract noun that could also be used as a transitive verb, respectively. The functional ambiguity between the noun and verb of these elements after these markers (i.e., *jian*, *bei*, *wei*) eventually led to a reanalysis of a non-passive

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<sup>226</sup>  $V_p$  means the V, which is later analyzed as a passive marker.

construction as a passive construction. However, this point has to be viewed from two angles: (1) On one hand, this provides a possibility for the lexical verbs *jian*, *bei* and *wei* to be reanalyzed as passive markers; (2) but on the other hand, Part 3 indicated that this interpretation was quite *limited* in both quantity and in the semantics, which is why some scholars have refuted the passive marker status of *jian*, *bei* and *wei*, as well as the main reason why this thesis argues against this passive voice view. If *jian*, *bei* and *wei* are really grammaticalized as passive markers, then there should be no semantic limitations in the verb use following them.<sup>227</sup> What needs to be emphasized is that although the topic “limitation” was also mentioned in the previous study, for example, in most languages, only a transitive verb and verb with agentive feature can be passivized, and this is of course quite different from the “semantic limitation” discussed here (i.e., only a few verbs with special semantic meanings like *lu* 戮 “kill”, *xiao* 笑 “laugh”, *qin* 禽 “capture”). Therefore, the “semantic limitation” of verbs used in the *jian*, *bei* and *wei* constructions indeed is a very special feature, and resulting in doubting the passive hypothesis. In other words, a mature passive voice should avoid such a limitation.

### 2.3 No ambiguity with an active interpretation

Further, if the elements after *jian*, *bei* and *wei* are not clearly verbal, then *jian*, *bei* and *wei* are not really being grammaticalized as passive markers. Therefore, the *jian* V, *bei* V and *wei* V structures are actually V-O structures with active meanings. In my opinion, the ambiguity of the passive and active interpretations of these structures was an apparent feature of Ancient Chinese. The fact that the verbal semantics of *jian*, *bei* and *wei* never completely faded until Middle Chinese, still there in Middle Chinese to certain degree, which further enforced a V-O interpretation. Therefore, it is not possible to conclude that the passive voice was a feature of Ancient or Han Chinese because it is not possible to convincingly state that this passive interpretation is the only analysis.

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<sup>227</sup> General markers are very few in Chinese; most constructions are limited by their original semantics (*le* 了 < to end, *ba* 把 < to grasp, etc.) Many constructions were very limited in Ancient Chinese, as with the passive constructions, they generalized to a certain degree in Middle Chinese, but were still quite limited in their functional realm.



While it has been demonstrated that some constructions in Ancient Chinese conveyed a “passive sense,” it is not possible to categorically conclude that Ancient Chinese had a mature passive voice that was clearly marked syntactically. Noonan (1994) found that Irish had a passive type that although conforming structurally to the prototype did not conform to the prototype’s functional characterization. Although this construction was commonly translated into English as passive, the passive was not the only possible translation and sometimes was not even possible, which is similar to the categorization of the passive in Ancient Chinese.

Although it has been concluded in this thesis that there was no passive voice in Ancient Chinese, the passive structures, except for the *ke* construction, which has been defined as a “tough construction” indicating potentiality, had some shared features.

### **3. SHARED FEATURES**

Despite this formal variation, there are some generalizations that hold across these Ancient Chinese passive constructions.

The most obvious common features were that all had a *patient subject*, as discussed in Section 1, and all had *ambiguous* passive and non-passive interpretations, as discussed in Section 2.3. In addition to these two points, (1) all implied a *resultant state*; (2) all could have a retained object; (3) all tended to express subject adversity; (4) all occur with subjects that have high animacy and (5) all feature a low degree of agent suppression. Emphasizing again, the *ke* construction is excluded from the following discussion.

#### **3.1 Resultant state**

Chao (1968) claimed that the predicative verbs in *bei* passives were traditionally restricted to disposable verbs, and the essential part of this disposal notion was that the action was complete, indicating that one important syntactic constraint of the *bei*

construction was that the event must have a result, which means that *bei* passives usually co-occur with resultative verbal compounds or perfective aspect markers such as *le* 了 and *guo* 过.

Similarly, each of the so-called passives in Ancient Chinese is much more constrained by aspect as all are most commonly found in contexts in which the event is viewed as a whole and has already taken place. However, implying a resultant state is not definitively a passive; for example, the discussion in Part 2 indicated that PV structures should be interpreted as constructions expressing a resultant state rather than a passive state, due to two facts. First, the V in the notional passive PV actually corresponds to a V-C structure in Modern Chinese (recall the discussion in Part 1). In other words, examples such as *Liang gong cang* 良弓藏 “The good bow has been hidden” in Ancient Chinese correspond to examples such as *Liang gong cang qi lai le* 良弓藏起来了 “The good bow has been hidden” in modern Mandarin. Although the modern sentence is translated as a passive in English, it is rarely analyzed as a passive construction in Chinese, which is why the PV structure in Ancient Chinese should also express a resultant state rather than a passive. Second, the V that appeared in the PV structure in Ancient Chinese was limited to labile verbs that implied both action and result semantics, while the V without these semantic features was infrequently used in the PV structure, which further deepens the non-passive conclusion. Bhat (1999) stated that Mandarin was an aspect-prominent language rather than a tense or mood prominent language,<sup>228</sup> which was possibly also true for Ancient Chinese.

Further, as demonstrated in Part 3, the *jian*, *bei*, and *wei* constructions also tended to prefer perfective aspect contexts that implied a resultant state; however, as verified in many examples, they are far from being real passive markers.

In conclusion, all the passives in Ancient Chinese expressed a *resultant state* to some extent, and while this was not a sufficient condition for the passive, it was a necessary precondition. Therefore, it is better to distinguish the *ke* construction (i.e., the tough

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<sup>228</sup> Bhat (1999) categorized languages as tense-prominent, aspect-prominent, or mood-prominent, depending on whether they placed greater prominence on tense, aspect, or mood in their overall grammatical system, taking into particular consideration the grammaticalization, obligatoriness, systematicity, and pervasiveness of these categories in the languages.

construction) from passive because it does not imply a resultant state.

### 3.2 Object retained

Chappell (1986) discussed the *bodily effect passive*, concluding that besides the regular passive form NP (undergoer)—BEI—NP (agent)—VP in standard Chinese (i.e., modern Mandarin), there was a second syntactically related passive with a complex predicate that contained a postverbal or “retained object”: NP (undergoer)—BEI—NP (agent)—V—LE-N (part of the body). Chappell (1986) therefore claimed that the second construction was restricted to expressing an inalienable relationship between a person and a part of the body, such as *Ta bei diren da shang le tui* 他被敌人打伤了腿 “He had his leg wounded in the enemy’s firing.”<sup>229</sup> This hypothesis can be extended as this construction is found in both modern Mandarin and Ancient Chinese; for example, the notional passive is commonly found with a retained object, such as *Ding zhe zu* 鼎折足 “The feet of the Ding are broken” (*Zhouyi* 周易, Ding 鼎), and *Bigan pou xin* 比干剖心 “Bigan’s heart was cut open” (*Zhuangzi* 庄子, *Daozhi* 盗跖). Note that, besides the body parts mentioned in Chappell, the retained object could also be the direct object of a di-transitive verb, such as *Mai ci chi jin* 麦赐赤金 “Mai was bestowed with gold” (*Mai ding* 麦鼎) and *Chen...jian ci bei an* 臣...见赐杯案 “I was bestowed with cup items” (*Hanshu* 汉书, *Gongyu zhuan* 贡禹传). There are also some examples in which the V is followed by an object in the same way as its active counterpart, such as *Wei wu suo dao rou* 为乌所盗肉 “[Their] meat stolen by the black birds” (*Hanshu* 汉书, *Huang Ba zhuan* 黄霸传). Certainly, the object is more commonly seen as an anaphoric pronoun *zhi* 之, such as *Jin wei chi di zi zhan zhi* 今为赤帝子斩之 “Now he was killed by Chi Dizi” (*Shiji* 史记, *Gaozu benji* 高祖本纪) and *Gong...wei zei sha zhi* 公...为贼杀之 “Lord was killed by the traitor.” (*Lunheng* 论衡, *Dinggui pian* 订鬼篇). Therefore, it is safe to say that object retaining was observed in all passives in Ancient Chinese, which is dramatically different from, for example,

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<sup>229</sup> Chappell argued that other relational nouns, such as kinship or material alienable possessions, were excluded from postverbal position (p. 271).

English passives. Therefore, the verbs appearing in the passive constructions in Ancient (and even modern) Chinese are not “intransitivized”, as to say, since all can keep an object in some contexts, and thus passives cannot be explained in terms of promoting the object to subject position. The object retention construction indicates that the core concept of the passives in Ancient Chinese expressed “the subject suffering an event,” which is why it has been noted that these passives were always related to “adversity.” Shibatani (1985: 841) also studied this phenomenon and observed a relationship between such a phenomenon and the *affectedness* of the “passive subject” which will be studied below.

### **3.3 Adversity: negative affectedness**

The adversity associated with the *bei* construction in modern Mandarin has been studied by many scholars. Chappell (1986: 1026) quoted from a research group on grammar in the Linguistics Institute of China’s Academy of Sciences saying that “According to traditional usage, the *bei* construction mainly explains that there has been suffering for the subject, naturally the suffering is not of one’s own free will, and as a result, it can only express that there has been harm or unhappiness and unwillingness. [...]” Li and Thompson (1981: 493) also suggested that the *bei* sentence in Chinese was similar to constructions in many other Asian languages that expressed adverse situations in which something unfortunate has happened. Hashimoto (1988: 336) also pointed out that the Chinese passive maintained an adverse coloring, with the passive sentence nearly always implying that something unfortunate has happened.

However, the active counterpart does not have such semantic connotations. For example, Chappell (1986: 1028) found that the predicates for pleasant and emotionally neutral events could occur in the passive but also had an adversarial interpretation, and therefore concluded that adversity was not a lexical function of the verb type but *resulted directly from the use of the passive construction*. For example, Li and Thompson (1981: 495) pointed out that in the *bei* construction, the message carried by verbs of perception or cognition was unfortunate or pejorative, whereas the meanings of these verbs were generally neutral in the active voice. For example,

although verbs such as *kanjian* 看见 “see”; *faxian* 发现 “discover, find”; and *tingdao* 听到 “hear/arrive = able to hear” do not have negative connotations when used in active sentences, they imply that the events were somewhat unfortunate when used in *bei* constructions. Hashimoto (1988: 336) also admitted that when deriving a passive construction from a corresponding active construction, he had failed to account for the additional, adverse, inflective coloring of the passive counterpart in Chinese. It is widely believed that the *bei* construction has an “adverse meaning,” and it could also be argued that the *get*-passive in English is also an overwhelmingly adverse passive (Hatcher 1949, Chappell 1980, Downing 1996, Toyota 2007).<sup>230</sup>

Most of the passive markers in Ancient Chinese were followed by negative elements and the sentences tended to express somewhat unfortunate events. However, when the element following these passive markers was positive (although this was quite rare), the whole sentence had positive connotation, that is “somebody (i.e., subject) receives/enjoys something good.” In other words, the *jian*, *bei* and *wei* constructions themselves did not supplement the “unhappy emotional feeling,” which confirms the hypothesis that *the degree of grammaticalization of the passives in Ancient Chinese was quite low* because these passive markers were not real passive markers, but lexical verbs expressing “suffer” or “receive” depending on the negative or positive elements following them in the sentence. Therefore, the adverse meanings in the sentences were mainly determined from the negative connotations in the elements following the passive markers, rather than from the *jian*, *bei* and *wei* constructions. Accordingly, when the elements after the so-called passive markers are positive, they should be explained as “receive/enjoy” without any “adverse meaning,” which is different from the case in the *bei* construction in Modern Mandarin.

Moreover, Siewierska (1984) found that periphrastic passives involving auxiliary verbs were common cross-linguistically, and one language may have various forms

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<sup>230</sup> Through a comparison of *Honglouloumeng* 红楼梦 (a novel written in Qing dynasty), Modern Chinese and translated Chinese, Guo and Chow (2013: 154) found an evident trend: the “traditional” adversarial passive form was extended to non-adversarial situations. In *Honglouloumeng* material, *bei* passives seldom convey neutral or positive meanings (only 15%); however, in Modern Chinese and translated Chinese, *bei* passives denoting non-adversarial meanings increase dramatically, especially the neutral passives. In addition, there is also an increase of 5% in *bei* passives with positive meanings in both Modern Chinese and translated Chinese. Therefore, it is observed that the adversarial requirement does not hold tightly in Modern Chinese.

with different functions. For example, indicating a *difference in aspect* in Polish and Dutch, showing a *difference between a resultant state and a process* in Icelandic, and showing a *different emphasis* in Swedish. The most familiar one is the *get* passive and *be* passive in English (See Wanner 2009: 86-87 for the difference between the *be* passive and *get* passive). However, *jian* V, *bei* V and *wei* V sentences do not show any *different distinct roles* as compared to *get* and *be* passives in English. This point indirectly supports that emphasizing the *experience* of the subject (e.g., affectedness) could be at the core and may be the single most important feature of the marked passives in Ancient Chinese.

### 3.4 Subject with high animacy

As Corrigan (1988) has shown, many verbs are expected to have an animate agent and an inanimate patient; therefore, an important pragmatic function of passives concerns the *inanimate* subject (Leech and Svartvik 1975). In the study of the notional passive, this fact basically confirms such a statement: an inanimate subject is more common than an animate subject (see in Chapter 1, Part 2). However, most of the subjects of the marked passives (i.e., *jian*, *bei* and *wei* constructions) in Ancient Chinese were *animate* (see Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 in Part 3).<sup>231</sup> Actually, the degree of animacy of the subject in Chinese passive constructions *tends to decline* in the course of the diachronic development of the passive constructions in Chinese. For example, Guo and Chow (2013: 159) stated that there were more animate patients than inanimate patients in early Modern Chinese (81% vs. 19%), which increased over time with the rise in *inanimate objects* serving as patient-subjects of *bei* passives (46% and 45% respectively) in Modern Mandarin.

Therefore, it could be speculated that the passive markers in Ancient Chinese had the function to emphasize the affectedness of the *animated experiencer*, which explains why the subjects of the passive in Ancient Chinese frequently had high animacy. Such a feature leads the scholar to speculate that “Chinese passive is closer to the *get*-passive in English rather than the *be*-passive,” as for examples Xiao, McEnery and Qian (2006) assumed. Although such a speculation has been proposed on the

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<sup>231</sup> In modern Mandarin, the animate pre-BEI Nps are also quite common (LaPolla 1990: 71).

basis of Modern Mandarin, it is also true for Ancient Chinese passives, as was shown in this thesis.

In order to find out how similar they (i.e., Chinese passive and *get*-passive in English) are, the common defining characteristics of the *get* passive are presented below:

- (a) *Get* passives are “normally used in constructions without an agent” (Leech & Svartvik 1975);
- (b). *Get* passives place “the emphasis on the subject rather than the agent, and on what happens to the subject as a result of the event” (Quirk & Crystal 1985: 161);
- (c). *Get* passives emphasize the subject referent’s condition, which is “usually an unfavourable condition” (Quirk & Crystal 1985:161);
- (d). *Get* passives “describe events that are perceived to have either fortunate or unfortunate consequences for the subject” (Siewierska 1984:135);
- (e). *Get* passives are likely to have a human subject that is non-agentive, affected and involved (Givón 1983:119ff.).

Furthermore, it was found that:

- (1) The *get*-passive in English is also predominantly of an agentive nature as it normally occurs with a controlling, purposive, responsible agentive patient-subject, which could be viewed as a natural consequence of the diachronic origin of the construction;
- (2) The *get*-passive in English has also a human-agentive feature of the subject predictable from its adversarial nature (see discussion above). For example, Lakoff (1971) noted that when the *get*-passive did not impart a sense of the subject’s intent or responsibility, it tended to impart a sense of the subject’s (or even the speaker’s) *affectedness* or involvement;<sup>232</sup>
- (3) There is only one difference: the marked passive in Ancient Chinese was

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<sup>232</sup> Toyota (2006: 161) clearly showed that the subject of *get*-passives is commonly animate. Moreover, the dominant animacy of the subject is human. Toyota explained that: The pattern of occurrence in the *get*-passive indicates that by using this construction an event is viewed from the perspective of a human entity. This is what is supposed to be a common pattern across languages, i.e. in sentences in general. However, the passive is often used to alter this common viewpoint and to view an event from a non-human entity (Givón 1979: 152, Saeed 1997: 161), as observed in the modern English *be*-passive.

compatible with an agent, while the *get* passive is normally used without an agent.

Therefore, it could be surmised that the passive in Ancient Chinese was indeed more similar to the *get*-passive which is less commonly accepted than the *be* passive in English. Moreover, it could be speculated that the passive markers in Ancient Chinese were more similar to indicators that emphasized the affectedness of the animated experiencer, which means the lexical meaning of the passive markers in Ancient Chinese is more prominent than the *get* in the *get* passive.

### 3.5 Low degree of suppressing an agent

In English, passive were argued to be used to *suppress an agent* by making it implicit or placing it at the end of the clause. *Suppression* here means the agent does not get mapped into the syntactic function of subject. It then becomes oblique or is suppressed entirely. However, the situation is a little bit different for passive in Ancient Chinese in two aspects.

Firstly, the agent is realizing as a heavy phrase at the right periphery of sentence, e.g., *wei* A V, *wei* A *suo* V and *bei* A V, all of which have agents before rather than after V. This constitutes a great difference between English and Chinese passives. Therefore, the statement that passive is suppressing the agent may be unjustified in Ancient Chinese. At least, I have to admit that the degree of agent suppression is low in Ancient Chinese.

Secondly, for the agent to be oblique, it should be preceded by a preposition, yet the passive markers cannot properly be considered prepositions. As for the status of these markers, see the discussion in Part 1, Section 2.2. LaPolla (1990: 79-83) has a detailed discussion of “the nature of the particle *bei*”, and concludes that *bei* locates “somewhere between a full verb and a preposition”. I think LaPolla’s opinion is convincing and also works for *jian*, *bei* and *wei* in Ancient Chinese. Therefore, it is not so easily possible to suppress the agent.



Based on the two facts, it is true that the degree of defocusing an agent is lower for *jian*, *bei* and *wei* constructions as compared to their counterparts in English. However, these explanations do not apply to *yu* since *yu* indeed marks the agent as oblique. In general, the feature of suppressing an agent is not so essential in Chinese passives. By contrast, the essential feature of Ancient Chinese passives is to emphasize the affectedness of the subject, as thoroughly discussed in Section 3.3 above.

#### 4. PROTOTYPICAL PERSPECTIVE

Shibatani (1985) claimed that the various passive constructions existed on a continuum, with some having certain prototypical constructions, others having limited prototypical constructions, and others sharing no prototypical construction similarities. If a specific construction in a given language exhibited most of the properties of the prototype passive but lacked one or more properties, it could be called a non-prototypical instance of the passive prototype. Meanwhile, Shibatani (1985) believed that there should be no argument as to whether a given construction should be considered a passive as a more informative approach would be a description of how such a construction was similar to or different from the prototypical passive. However, as discussed in the introduction, a typological definition of cross-linguistic passives is impossible, which means that summarizing the prototypical features of passives is also difficult. In such situations, Lüpke's (2007) summary of passive features is a valuable definition for the *passive voice*. Therefore, the conditions for a passive voice summarized in this chapter are similar to Lüpke's definition. Regarding the situation of passive in Ancient Chinese, my basic view is that some examples have indeed with passive meanings, however, this is far from stating that Ancient Chinese had developed a mature passive voice. In other words, the degree of grammaticalization of passives in Ancient Chinese is lower when compared with the passives in languages such as English.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> Keenan and Dryer (1985) commented that Mandarin Chinese was relatively low on the productivity of marked passive scale, but was not at the bottom as there are languages (e.g., Chadic languages and many languages in New Guinea) that do not allow the passive at all.

However, determining which Ancient Chinese passives were relatively mature among the many different passives is also a difficult task. Some scholars (e.g., Lü 1982, Liu 1991) believe that the notional passive is a mature passive, and that Chinese has a strong tendency to express the passive sense in an active form or without any passive markers. However, from a generative transformation grammar perspective, Reynolds (1996) and Li (2015) concluded that the *jian* V structure was the most prototypical and developed. However, in my opinion, the *wei* A *suo* V is the closest to the passive voice as it was most commonly used since there is no limited use of V in this structure. In contrast, *wei* A *suo* V was treated as the least prototypical by Reynolds (1996) and Li (2015) as the formal generative approach was unable to properly explain the *wei* A *suo* V pattern because an A is not placed after the V but before the V making it more like a PS (i.e., A)V structure than a typical passive PV(A). However, it is possible that the formal generative approach has too narrow a perspective to account for the diachronic changes in the passive in Ancient Chinese as it only uses syntactic criteria (e.g., non-agent argument promotion and movement) to define the passive. Therefore, this study focused more on the functional typological tradition to define the passive with an emphasis on the diachronic perspective. However, when following this path, the grammatical active and passive categories do not fall into neatly distinct classes, but differ gradually so that they may be ordered on a gradient continuum.

Then, I move on to a more essential question: Why was the degree of grammaticalization of passive markers in Ancient Chinese so low? This point relates to the “General grammatical features of Chinese” discussed in Section 3.3.3, Chapter 1. Moreover, Givón (1979) assumed that languages developed from having more pragmatically based grammatical relations to having more syntactically based relations. If this assumption were correct, then the hypothesis should be that since grammatical relations in modern Mandarin are heavily weighted in favor of pragmatic factors, the same or an even stronger tendency should be found in the pragmatic relations in Old Chinese. This hypothesis has been verified in many studies (e.g., Serruys 1981, Shen 1986, Wang 1986, Herforth 1987). Therefore, the low degree of the grammaticalization of passives in Ancient Chinese is quite understandable.

Typologically, this situation is similar to many Asian languages. A review of studies on passives in a number of Asian languages reveals that there is controversy as to

whether the languages have a passive or not. Some studies which argue that a passive does not exist admit that there are particular constructions which might look like a passive but argue that it is not a real passive. Here it was labeled as “the so-called” passive since the verbs that mark those constructions are “semantically and syntactically full verbs”. Likewise, Li and Thompson (1976: 476) have pointed out that the passive is common among “subject prominent languages”, but in “topic prominent languages”, such as Japanese and Vietnamese, the passive is assumed to be absent or marginal; moreover, it carries a special meaning, such as misfortune or adversity. They recognize the existence of the adversative passive, in which the subject is affected (e.g. Liem 1969; Chu 1973; Howard & Niyekawa-Howard 1976; Shibatani 1985). In addition, Prasithrathsint (2004) asserts that the adversative passive is a distinctive areal feature of Southeast Asian languages.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In sum, constructions that are labelled “passive voice” may have different nuances of meaning cross-linguistically. Therefore, it is true that whether a language has passive voice is to some extent dependent on the definition applied. For example, if the passive is syntactically defined as (1) “promoting object to subject”, then it may be true that Ancient Chinese did not have a passive. However, I claim that even though Chinese does not have a syntactic passive, it uses a corresponding structure to change the pragmatic functions (such as the function of topic or focus) of the semantic roles. I call this structure a “pragmatic passive”. Accordingly, if passive is defined as “defocusing the agent”, then the scope of the passive could be quite broad while the most common one “*wei A suoV*” could be excluded since A is not defocused in such a construction; if passive is defined as “topicalization of a non-agent element”, the scope of the passive could be also broad, since Chinese is a topic-prominent language. In my opinion, the core of the examples which are labeled as passive in Ancient Chinese is to express “affectedness of the subject”. In other words, the whole sentence shows an “inward” semantic feature. Such a hypothesis explains why *zao*, *shou* and *yu* are indecisively argued to mark a passive and reasonably excludes the *ke*, *nan*, *yi* and *zu* constructions which are not relevant to the “affectedness of the subject”. I think such a hypothesis is also useful from a typological perspective.

As Siewierska (1984) argued: most definitions are either too broad or too narrow and most definitions are formulated on the basis of a synchronic perspective. Considering the current work, it is quite relevant to the diachronic aspect and to processes of grammaticalization. Therefore, I apply a relatively narrow definition: in addition to patient subject, Lüpke's definition is also taken into account. Such a kind of definition is quite useful when considering the diachronic development of passives. Therefore, instead of asking whether there is passive in Ancient Chinese — or not, the approach in this thesis can also be viewed from another perspective, namely: what specific features do passives have in Ancient Chinese? Concretely, as for the notional passive, its scope could be much broader as compared to other languages, such as English, since some transitive verbs can also appear in the notional passive, although this phenomenon is not so common; as for the marked passives, these constructions emphasize that the subject is being affected. I can go so far to claim that only in emphasizing *the affectedness of the subject*, Ancient Chinese passives are similar to passives in other languages. By contrast, in the case of markers in Ancient Chinese, there may be not the change of grammatical relations (i.e., promotion of the object to subject position) that is involved in the passivization process of many other languages.

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Doing doctoral research is not easy, while being a new mother is even more difficult. After getting married in the first year of my PhD study, I gave birth to my daughter in the following year. I remember how hopeless I felt: I could work only after she had fallen asleep. During my third year, my husband graduated from his PhD program, but unfortunately, he did not find a post-doctoral position in Belgium. Then, our family moved back to China and I returned to Belgium alone. But soon, he got a post-doctoral position in Germany and our family moved to Germany and lived together again and I went back to Ghent to report my progress in regular intervals. I have to say, that was such an exhausting life. What I am proud of is that I never thought to give up my PhD study.

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