Focus Marking in Old Chinese

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A recurrent topic in the recent discussion on Chinese historical syntax has been a type of SOV sentences which is amply attested in Old Chinese. Several articles have appeared that examine synchronic and diachronic aspects of the syntax of this construction, which is often implicitly or explicitly claimed to be a focus construction. However, there is no empirical study of how the construction interacted with information structure and what types of focus could be expressed. This paper addresses this question and will attempt to give a first approximation to an answer. I will examine semantic and information-structural aspects of a data sample taken from texts reflecting discourse and analyze how the focus construction interacts with them to get a more precise picture of the role of the construction in information structure.

(1) Introduction

(1.1) Old Chinese

The term Old Chinese (Shànggǔ Hànyǔ) as defined by Wang (1956) comprises the Chinese language from the earliest written records, the oracle bone inscriptions of the 13th to 11th centuries B.C., to the end of the Han Dynasty (220 A.D.). The language we will look at here is restricted to the Western Zhou (about 1000-770 B.C), the Spring and Autumn (770-476 B.C.) and the Warring States (476-221 B.C.) periods. The choice not to cover earlier texts is motivated by the fact that Western Zhou texts are the first Chinese documents containing records of discourse. On the other hand, we will not cover texts later than the unification of China in 221 B.C. since the written language of the following centuries was modelled after the Warring States language and hence does not reflect authentic linguistic features of the spoken language. The focus of the study will be on the Warring States period, whose corpus not only provides by far the largest part of the relevant material, but also contains a large amount of discourse. The earlier material consists of several hundred short formulaic texts, an extensive collection of poems known as Shijing, a small number of historical records and some texts purporting to report royal speeches and conversations between kings and nobles. Almost only texts from the last group, mostly from the Western Zhou period, provide clear data for the study of information structure.

During the eight centuries studied, the language was subject to considerable linguistic change, and at least Warring States texts show strong dialectal variation. Only a small amount of syntactic variation and development has been noted with respect to the focus construction, but we will show that additional variation can be observed in semantics and information structure.

Unless specified differently, the examples and their English translations are from the database of Harbsmeier et al. (2010). Some translations were altered to make the example more transparent. The dating given for each examples is intended only to give a general orientation and datings for examples from the Shangshu and Yizhoushu collections, which contain many texts of uncertain age or even authenticity, are only tentative and might be wrong by one or more centuries. In inscriptional data, the Chinese characters given are the usual substitutes for inscriptional characters (e.g., 唯 wéi for inscriptional 隹) as given in the edition I have used.

Old Chinese was an isolating language with strict word order. Subjects almost always preceded the verb (1-3). Complements of verbal and prepositional heads displayed a somewhat mixed behaviour. Usually, they followed the head (1), but pronominal and interrogative arguments and most types of modifiers could or had to precede it (2-3). Noun phrases were strictly head-final; modifiers could be marked with the attribute particle 之 zhī (3). Tense, mood, aspect and even diatheses are often unmarked (1-3); pronominal subjects and to some extent pronominal complements could be dropped (4):
(1) 天與之天下
   tiān yǔ zhī tiānxià
   Heaven give him world
   Heaven gave him the world.
   (Mengzi, 4th century)

(2) 寡人是問
   guǎ rén shì wèn
   lonely person this inquire
   The Lonely Person (i.e., Our Majesty) will inquire about this.
   (Zuozhuan, 5th century)

(3) 陳侯之弟黃自楚歸于陳
   [NP Chén hóu zhī dì] [PP zì Chǔ] guī [PP yú Chén]
   Chen marquis ATTR younger.brother Huang from Chu return to Chen
   Huang, the younger brother of the marquis of Chen, returned from Chu to Chen.
   (Chunqiu, 6th century)

1.2 The Construction
The construction we will examine features in its basic form a preverbal complement NP. Starting
from the Western Zhou period, the complement was followed by a word which I will gloss as
"PRON" (the preposed complement will be printed in boldface in this and all subsequent examples):

(4) 其父母之不親也
   [qí fù-mǔ zhī bù qīn yě]
   his parents PRON not love ASP
   He does not love his parents.
   (Han Feizi, 3rd century)

This word usually is either the third-person object pronoun 之 zhī or the demonstrative 是 shì.
Which of the two morphemes is used depends on several factors such as whether there is a negation
marker and whether the preposed element is a pronoun (Meisterernst 2010). In earlier texts, other
markers, some of which seem to be of pronominal origin, are found, too (Yī 1989, 456).

Preposed complements could be preceded by a group of mostly aspectual or modal words for which
I will use the term Focus-Sensitive Particle. Of particular importance is the word 为 wéi (維, 唯, 惟, 佳)
and its negation 非 fēi. Wéi was the standard copula in early Old Chinese and also appeared in VP-
initial positions, possibly with a modal meaning. While fēi remained the standard negative copula,
the copular usage of wéi became largely obsolete by the seventh century B.C. and its meaning
shifted to "only", while retaining some of its old syntactic behavior. Other words acting as focus-
sensitive particles are the prospective 將 jiāng, the modal 必 bì "necessarily", 固 gù "certainly"
(Meisterernst 2010, 85) and in earlier Old Chinese the prospective or modal 其 qí and the injunctive
惠 huì (Djamouri 2004):

(5) 余必臣是助
   yú bì chén shì zhù
   I certainly subject PRON assist
   I will certainly assist the subjects.
   (Zuozhuan, 5th century)
The DMC is not restricted to complement NPs. PPs could participate in the same construction and Herforth (2001) has shown that they could show special syntactic features that have not yet been sufficiently studied. Furthermore, the subject could be marked by a focus-sensitive particle or the demonstrative 賣 shí, or both markers at the same time:

(6) 非 知 之 實 難
fēi zhī shí nán
not know it be.difficult
To know it is not difficult.
(Zuozhuan, 5th century)

Complement and subject marking are often separated in the literature, but I will argue below that their effects on information structure and semantics are similar. I will refer to the construction by the neutral term dependent marking construction (DMC). This term is preferable to terms like Focus Construction or Object Preposing since both arguments and adjuncts can be marked and since I will argue that the construction did not always mark the dependent as focussed.

(1.3) Previous Work

On the other hand, the role of the construction in information structure has not yet been studied in detail. It is often implicitly or explicitly assumed, especially by western sinologists, that the construction involves focussing. Gabelentz (1881) already states that the construction was used to mark "scharfe Herausstellung"; according to Pulleyblank (1960), the structure marks "prominence". Western translators sometimes render it by the English cleft construction, in particular if a focus-sensitive particle is used. Herforth (2001) shows that the construction could mark narrow focus, in particular a contrast between a proposition and a contextual assumption from which it differs only with respect to one element. Xu and Li (1993) assume that the construction marks focus and is related to preposing of pronominal complements in interrogative and negative contexts.

Meisterernst (2010), the most comprehensive analysis of the MDC for complements, argues that it represents four distinct underlying structures: a cleft construction in which the copula 唯 wéi / 非 fēi could be used, a focalization construction without a focus-sensitive particle, fronting of interrogative complements and an idiomatic expression with 講 wèi "call". Only the first two ones are classified as focus constructions, which Meisterernst assumes to require contrastive contexts.

(2) The Study
(2.1) Marked Complements

In the data, the distribution of complements in the marked position of the DMC is far from uniform. While they are amply attested in the Oracle Bone Inscriptions from the 13th to 11th centuries B.C., the phenomenon is rare in Western Zhou texts. Only a handful of examples from traditional texts and an even smaller number of difficult passages from inscriptions, which might be instances of the
construction, are known. This fact might be due to the formal nature of all surviving texts from this epoch, which may have caused writers not to use structures which typically marked information structure in spoken language. Nevertheless, starting with the Spring and Autumn Period, the structure became more common in all types of texts, including poetry, narratives and even inscriptions on votive vessels. Therefore, this section will concentrate on Warring States texts, with earlier examples added where they could be found.

(2.1.1) Contrastive Focus

As mentioned above, previous work assumes that the DMC essentially marks contrastiveness. In this section, I will present a typology of contrastive focus.

2.1.1.1 Contrastive Pattern A

In a widespread biclausal pattern, there are two propositions differing only by one role. The falseness of one proposition is used to derive the contextually unexpected falseness of the other one. Consider (7). A duke asks the philosopher Guan Zhong whether Prince Kai Fang is a good officer. Guan Zhong points out that Kai Fang does not obey the duties of filial piety and infers from this that he cannot serve the duke:

(7) "But how about Prince Kai Fang of Wei?" Guan Zhong said: "He is not acceptable. Between Qi and Wei there is no more than a ten-day's journey, but in order to serve you and because he wanted to please you, he did not once go back to see his parents in fifteen years: this is not a proper humane attitude.

He cannot cultivate a close relationship with his parents, how can he go on to cultivate a close relationship with his ruler?

(8) Now, Shu Diaō does not even love his own body. How will he be able to love you?

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There are other biclausal examples where the parallelism between the two clauses is not expressed directly in the syntax, although the effects on information structure on the use of the focus construction are similar to the preceding cases. In (9), the Duke of Yu claims that there is no danger
of an attack by the state of Jin, but his minister points out that Jin has already attacked another state

despite its historical importance, inferring from this that the situation is dangerous also for the less
important state of Yu:

(9) The marquis of Jin again borrowed a way through Yú to attack Guò […] The duke said, "The princes of
Jin and Yú are descended from the same ancestor. How should Jin injure us?" The minister replied, "(The
founders of Guo were ministers of the first king of the current dynasty and their merits are still
widely recognized)

将 虢 是 滅，何 愛 於 虞？
jǐng Guó shì miè hé ài yú Yú
ASPf Guo PRON extinguish how love to Yu
If it extinguishes Guó, what love is it likely to whow to Yú?
(Zuozhuan, 5th century. Translation altered)

In this example, the proposition "Jin attacks Guo" is given before the beginning of the dialogue by
the narrator and can be assumed to be present in the background of the conversation, whose main
concern, however, is to decide the truth of "Jin will attack Yu". Thus, the proposition with x = Guo
is contextually less salient and receives focus marking.

2.1.1.3 Contrastive Pattern B

In another group of examples involving a contrast between two propositions composed of a
common expression \( \lambda x.A(x) \) and an individual, both the unexpected falseness of proposition \( A(a) \)
and the unexpected truth of proposition \( A(b) \) are marked with the dependent marking construction,
often together with the focus-sensitive 唯 wei or its negative counterpart 非 fei. In (10), it should be
expected that Xun Shou wants to get his son back, but unexpectedly, his arrows seem to be more
important to him, i.e. A can be paraphrased as "\( \lambda x. \text{considers } x \text{ most important} \)". The default
assumptions inferred from world are \( A(\text{son}) \) and \( \neg A(\text{arrow}) \), which contrast with the truth of
\( \neg A(\text{son}) \) and \( A(\text{arrow}) \):

(10) Xiong Fuji of Chu took Zhi Ying prisoner. Zhi Ying's father Xun Shou […] set out with the men of his
clan to recover his son. [...] Each time Xun Shou made ready to shoot, if he saw that the arrow was an
especially good one, he set it aside in the quiver strapped to (his carriage driver) Wei Yi's back. Wei Yi
remarked to him angrily,

非 子 之 求，而 蒲 之 愛
fēi zǐ zhī qiú ér pú zhī ài
notf son PRON search CONJ arrow PRON love
Instead of trying to get your son back, you are caring about arrows!
(Zuozhuan, 5th century)

In (11), which is largely parallel to (10), the unexpected correctness of the second proposition is
marked by 唯 wei:

(11) When Ganzi went to Jin, the duke changed his house into a new one, so that it was completed on his
return. After he had made his acknowledgments, however, he pulled the house down, rebuilt the
dwellings in the neighbourhoods as they had been before, and sent to the old residents to return to them.
He said, There is the common saying

非 宅 是 卜 唯 鄰 是 卜
fēi zhái shì bǔ wéi lín shī bǔ
notf house PRON make-divination WEI neighbor PRON make-divination
It is not about the house that the oracle is consulted but about the neighbours. My friends, the oracle was formerly consulted about this neighbourhood. To go against the divination is inauspicious. (Zuozhuan, 5th century)

In (12), there are two contrasted propositions, but the propositions are not expressed in a parallel manner as in the preceding examples and only the second proposition is marked by the dependent marking construction. In an address before a battle, a king points out that the king of the enemy dynasty employs criminals rather than his relatives as officers:

(12) He destroys and rejects his still living uncles and uterine brothers and does not promote them.

He respects those from all over the world who had to flee because of great crimes, them he trusts and them he employs, them he has for dignitaries, ministers and officers (Shangshu, Mushi; 8th century?, translation adapted from Metsterernst 2010)

But still, the information structure is similar to the preceding examples. The common expression could be paraphrased as "the king employs x as officers", where the truth under the assignment x = relatives is contextually assumed. The fact that only the assignment x = criminals is marked by the focus construction could be motivated by the fact that this assignment is completely unexpected and that the referent "criminals" is not introduced before.

In other examples, the relationship between the two propositions is much less explicitly marked. The truth of a proposition is contextually assumed but not uttered, and the speaker asserts that a certain role in the proposition should be assigned to a different entity. In (13), the robbers assume that the man they have killed is whom they believed to kill, but Jizi asserts that this assumption is wrong:

(13) Duke Xuān ordered Jīzǐ to go on a mission to Qí, and ordered thieves to lie in wait so as to kill him [...] (In order to save Jizi's life, his brother) Shòuzǐ gave Jīzǐ wine to drink and then, placing Jīzǐ's banner on his own carriage, he set out ahead of Jīzǐ. The robbers accordingly killed him. When Jīzǐ arrived on the scene, he said

I'm the one you want, what fault has he committed? (Zuozhuan, 5th century)

2.1.1.4 Contrastive Pattern C

There is another group of examples where a correct assignment is chosen from a set of alternatives which may contain more than two members. Unlike Type B, the background does not contain a preference for one assignment. The following two examples illustrate this usage in the context of divination, where the outcome is not known in advance. In (14), a duke asks the oracle in which
region from a given set of alternatives the new capital should be built and reports the result to the
king, using the dependent marking construction:

(14) *I prognosticated about the region of the Lí river north of the Hé; I then prognosticated about the region
east of the Jiàn river and the west of the Chán river;*

惟 洛 食
wéi  Luò  shí
WEIF  Luo  order
but it was (the region of) Luò that (the oracle) ordered

*Again I prognosticated about the region east of the Chán river;*

亦 惟 洛 食
yì  wéi  Luò  shí
again WEIF  Luo  order
but again, it was (the region of) Luò that was ordered.

*Shangshu, Luogao, 10th century*)

In (15), the duke asks the oracle whether the king, who is suffering from serious illness, is about to
die. The set of contextually given alternatives is therefore \{king will die, king will survive\}. The
oracle chooses the auspicious alternative:

(15) *The duke said: According to the content (of the oracles), your Majesty king will suffer no harm. (The
king said:) I, the little child, have obtained a new mandate from the Three Kings (i.e. a new spell of life),*

惟 永 終 是 圖
wéi  [yǒng  zhōng]  shì  tú
WEIF  eternal  end  PRON  plan
for a distant end I shall plan

*Shangshu, Jin Teng, 7th century?)

2.1.1.5 Contrastive Pattern D

There is evidence that another type of contrastive interpretation could be marked by the dependent
marking construction:

(16) *我 文 王 之 為 子 武 王 之 為 弟*

wǒ  Wén  wáng  zhī  wéi  zǐ  Wǔ  wáng  zhī  wéi  di
I  Wen  king  PRON  be.for  son  Wu  king  PRON  be.for  younger.brother
I am the son of King Wen,  the younger brother of King Wu,

成 王 之 為 叔 父
Chéng  wáng  zhī  wéi  shū-fù
Cheng king  PRON  be.for  uncle
and the uncle of King Cheng.

*Xunzi, 3rd century*)

There are three consecutive clauses sharing a common semantic expression which can be
formalized as \(\lambda x \lambda P . \text{I am } P \text{ of } x\). The three clauses give different pairs \(<x, P>\) \(<\text{Wen, son}>\),
\(<\text{Wu, brother}>\) and \(<\text{Cheng, uncle}>\) making \(A(x, P)\) true. The next example is similar:

(17) *Guǎn Zhòng said: "If things turn out as you say, Sir;*

*我 且 賢 之 用，能 之 使，勞 之 論*

8
I will employ the morally excellent and I shall entrust missions to those who are capable. Those who have made an effort I shall appraise positively.

(Han Feizi, 3rd century)

Again, the common expression is a function with two arguments, $A = \lambda x \lambda P . \text{I will do } P \text{ to } x$, and the tuples \{<employ, the morally excellent>, <entrust missions, the capable>, <appraise positively, who has made an effort>\} are contrasted as arguments making $A$ true.

(2.1.2) Focus for Emphasis without Contrast

Not all instances of the Focus Construction are easily analyzed as contrastive. In the following examples, the content of the clause involving the focus construction is neither unexpected in the discourse context nor does it contrast a referent with a set of alternatives. Rather, the speaker wants to emphasize a constituent:

(18) Being ruler and president, if you do not treat your house-people well, and your petty officers and your provincial administrators, but are terrorizing and tyrannical and greatly set aside the Royal orders,

乃非德用父
nài fēi-dé yòng yì
then not-virtue with govern
then you govern with immorality.

(Shangshu, Kanggao, 10th century)

That tyrannical government is immoral can be inferred from world knowledge and does not conflict with background assumptions. Nevertheless, it seems clear that "immorality" is focussed, since the only other content word, "govern", is implicitly given in the beginning of the example. In (19), a general of Zhou explains that his campaign against the state of Chen was legitimate because of Chen's ignorance of its ancient indebtedness towards Zhou. He uses the focus construction to emphasize "we/us" three times, thus emphasizing the strength of the obligations:

(19) An officer asked what had been the offence of Chen, when (General) Zichan replied, " (The first prince of Chen obtained his fiefdom from our king)

則我周之自出
zé wǒ Zhōu zhī zì chū
CONJ our Zhou PRON from originate
Thus, they originated with our Zhou
and to the present time their dependence has been on it.[...]

至於莊、宣皆我之自立
zhìyú Zhuāng Xuān jiē wǒ zhī zì lì
follow Zhuang Xuan both we PRON from stand
The succeeding (dukes), Zhuang, and Xuan, both owed their dignity to us.

[Later, ] the duke (of Chen) had to to flee, but he owed his return to his State to us [...]. Now Chen has forgotten its great obligations to Zhou, and makes no account of our great kindness to it, and has cast away the affinity between us.

(Zuozhuan, 5th century)
Narrow, noncontrastive focus is also found in answers:

(20) 何謂辰？日月之會是謂辰
hé wèi chén [rì yuè zhī huì] shì wèi chén

What do we refer to as chen? - We refer to the conjunction of the sun and the moon as chen.
(Zuozhuan, 5th century)

(2.1.5) VP and Predicate Focus

There is a second group of examples in which contrastiveness does not seem to play a role. Unlike the previous types, the examples seem to show that complement fronting could receive a VP or predicate focus interpretation in suitable contexts.

In (21), a king proclaims a prohibition of excessive consume of wine. Obviously, the beginning of the proclamation must be understood as having wide focus, although the complement is marked:

(21) King Wén told and instructed you youngster and the principal officers and managers of affairs not to have a constant (use of) wine. In the various states the drinking should be only at the sacrifices, and by virtue they should hold on to sobriety. I say: In our people’s guidance,

小子惟土物愛
xiǎo zǐ wéi tǔ wù ài

small child WEI soil product love

you youngster should love (i.e., economize) the products of the soil
(Shangshu, Jiugao. 10th century)

It appears that the next example involves VP or predicate focus, too. The marked element is "(my) subjects". The sentence is a quotation without context, but I believe that "the king's subjects" should not be interpreted as focussed here. Firstly, it is hard to imagine any alternatives which could be substituted for "subject". Secondly, the context into which the quotation is embedded contains the struggle between rulers and subjects as a salient proposition which contrasts with the ruler's assertion only with respect to the predicate, but not the complement "subjects". This suggests that "subjects" should be analyzed as given, while the predicate or the VP is focussed:

(22) (A duke said to a messenger sent by a king, who offers help), "From my want of ability I was not able to love my uncles and elder brothers, thereby occasioning sorrow to your ruler. I do obeisance to the humiliation expressed by your orders. Ruler and subjects are fighting daily, and if your ruler says,

余必臣是助
yú bì chén shì zhù

'I will certainly assist the subjects.'
I accept only his commands.
(Zuozhuan, 5th century)

In (23), the marked constituent "robbers" is the topic of the conversation and there seems to be no reason why it should be understood as focussed. On the other hand, the minister's obligation to remove criminals is new and contrasts with his apparent inability to do so. Therefore, I assume that the predicate or the VP is focussed:

(23) The State of Lu became plagued by a multitude of robbers, and Ji Wuzi asked [his minister of crime]
why he did not deal effectually with the criminals. "They cannot be so dealt with," was the reply. "I am not able to do it." Ji Wuzi urged, "We have our four boundaries well defined; how is it that robbers cannot be put down?

子 为 司寇 将 盗 是 务 去
zi wei si-kou jiang dao shi wu qu
you be minister.of.crime ASP thief PRON should expel

You are the minister of Crime. Your business should be to remove thieves.

(Zuozhuan, 5th century)

That wide focus is involved seems particular clear in answers like (24). The nobleman Weizi asks another nobleman why he seems to be indignant with Weizi. The answer does not contain given material and apparently is focussed entirely:

(24) (Weizi) spoke to Shen Shuyu, who gave him no answer, and withdrew. Weizi followed him [...] "Thrice," said Weizi, "you snubbed me in the court. You have frightened me, and I have felt that I must come and see you. Please tell me my errors; why should you be so indignant with me?"  Shu yu replied:

吾 不 免 是 懼
wu [bu miand] shi ju
I not escape PRON fear
I was afraid lest I should not escape;
[... You have fallen into disgrace with the king, so I might be in danger if I were friendly to you]
(Zuozhuan, 5th century)

The following example appears to be of a similar nature. There is no question, yet the information structural situation is similar. The addressee has not asked a question, but the speaker is aware that the addressee is unsure about what the speaker is intending to do. In (25), the earl of Qin has captured the ruler of Jin and assures the captive's dignitaries that he did not aim to use violence, but only wanted to end Jin's "dreams" by demonstrating his military power:

(25) The (Earl of) Qín captured the ruler of Jìn and took him back to Qín with them. The dignitaries of Jìn, unbinding their hair and decamping every day, followed behind. But the Earl of Qín sent someone to try to persuade them to desist, saying: "Why do you grieve so, my friends? I am escorting your lord to the west

亦 晉 之 妖 夢 是 蹐
yi [Jin zhi yao meng] shi jian
so that I may put an end to the ominous dreams of the state of Jin.

How should I dare do anything more drastic?
(Zuozhuan, 5th century)

In (26), the referent of the marked constituent 'good men' is introduced in the immediately preceding sentence. There is no contrast between this and another referent, but there is a contrast between the propositions "he promotes the good", which is expected, but false, and "he oppresses the good", which is true. This means that the sentence resembles contrastive focus structure B, but the focussed element is the predicate, while the preposed complement "the good" is introduced in the preceding sentence and might be topical:

(26) (The king's son) put to death the grand-marshal Wei Yan, and took to himself all his property. Shen Wiyu said, "The king's son is sure not to escape an evil death. Good men are the reliance of the State.
As chief minister of the State,

\[\text{将善是封殖而虐之} \]

jiāng shàn shì fēng zhí ěr nüè zhī

ASP\textsubscript{F} good PRON promote support CONJ oppress them

he (the king's son) ought to promote and support the good, but he oppresses them.

(Zuozhuan, 5\textsuperscript{th} century)

Similarly, the preposed demonstrative in the common expression 是/此之謂 shì/cǐ zhī wèi "this one calls" is apparently topical, while the VP-internal material following the demonstrative is new:

(27) Once (the philosopher) Zhuang Zhou dreamt he was a butterfly [...]. Suddenly he woke up and there he was, solid and unmistakable Zhuang Zhou. But he didn't know if he was Zhuang Zhou who had dreamt he was a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming he was Zhuang Zhou. Between Zhuang Zhou and a butterfly there must be some distinction.

此之謂物化
cǐ zhī wèi wù huà

this PRON call thing change

This is called the Transformation of Things.

(Zhuangzi, 4\textsuperscript{th} century)

(2.1.3) Other Types of Focus

There are at least two other types of focus expressed by the Focus Construction, both of which are well known. One of them is restrictive focussing with 唯 wéi in later texts, when it had come to mean "only", the other one is focussing of interrogatives. Since these types can be easily recognized and are amply documented in the literature (e.g. Yang and He 2001, 802-807), I will not discuss them further.

(2.2) Marked Subjects

As noted in 1.2, subjects can participate in the DMC, although it is not possible to recognize syntactically marked subjects without a preceding particle or a following pronoun, since this would equal the canonical position of the subject NP. Thus, we can only deal with subjects following focus-sensitive particles and with subjects followed by the pronoun 賢 shí.

(2.2.1) The Western Zhou language

Subjects following 唯 wéi are very common in the Western Zhou language. The subject is always definite, differs from the preceding subject and is usually not introduced before. The following passage is a particularly clear example. 唯 wéi occurs together with a new subject in three sentences:

(28) The king said: Fēng, I cannot but scrutinize. (I) will tell you the principles of virtue in the application of the punishments.

今 唯 民 不 靜, 未 応 厥 心
jin wéi mín bù jìng wèi lì jué xīn

now WEI\textsubscript{F} people not quiet not.yet settle their mind
Now the people are not quiet, they have not yet settled their minds. *(I) have guided them, but repeatedly they have not concurred (with my directions).*

爽 惟 天 其 罽 殃 我, 我 其 不 怨
shuǎng wéi tiān qí fà jǐ wò wǒ qí bù yuàn
fault WEIf heaven ASP punish kill we we ASP not resent

If there is any fault, *Heaven* will punish and kill us¹, and we shall not resent it.

惟 厥 罪 無 在 大
wéi jué zuì wú zài dà
WEIf their crime not be.at be.great

(The importance of) **their crimes** does not depend on wether they are great,
it does not depend on wether they are many, how much the more, then, when they upwards are manifest to and heard by Heaven!

*(Shangshu. 10th century)*

In this and other examples, the focus seems to be on the entire sentence and the subject is usually not topical. This generalization corresponds to the observation that 惟 wéi is very common at the beginning of speeches or narratives, where one expects wide focus.²

Furthermore, instances of the contrastive patterns we have identified in the context of complement focus are attested with subjects. The following example corresponds to Contrastive Pattern D:

(29) *August Heaven removed the Mandate of the Great Yin Dynasty.*

維 文 王 受 之, 惟 武 王 大 克 之
wéi [Wén wáng] shòu zhī wéi [Wǔ wáng] dà kè zhī
WEIf Wen king receive it WEIf Wu king great conquer it

**King Wen** received it and **king Wu** greatly *conquered* it.

*(Yizhoushu, Zhai Gong. 10th century, after Shaughnessy 2006)*

The following example resembles Contrastive Pattern B. It contrasts a false and a true proposition, but unlike the instances of Pattern B they differ in more than just one argument and the information structure is different from those examples. The subject in the first clause, which precedes the focussensitive negation, is identical with the subject of the preceding sentence and apparently topical, while the VP including the negation is focussed. On the other hand, the entire second clause is focussed. The syntactic difference between the two clauses suggests that subjects which did not belong to the focus domain preceded a focus-sensitive particle, i.e. the position of the subject relative to the focus-sensitive particle is relevant for information structure even in wide focus sentences:

(30) *The crowds intoxicated themselves (by excessive consume of wine), and the rank smell was percieved on high. Therefore, when Heaven sent down destruction on (the state of) Yin and had no mercy for Yin, it was due to (their) exesses.*

天 非 虐， 惟 民 自 速 寡
tiān fēi nüè, wéi mín zì sù gū
Heaven notf tyrannical WEIf people self draw guilt

Heaven is not tyrannical, **people** draw guilt upon themselves.

¹ Karlgren as quoted in Harbsmeier et al. 2010 translates 我 as 'I', but 'we' seems preferable to me here. 'We' is the usual meaning in Shang and earlier Western Zhou Chinese and is semantically plausible in this context. Furthermore, the king refers to himself by 予 'I' in the preceding sentence.

² For examples, see Dai and Ma (1995) 1788-1792, 4994-4999.
We may conclude that 惟 wéi preceding a subject in Western Zhou texts could mark subject focus, as in (30) or sentence focus as in (29, 31). Djamouri (1991) has shown that 非 fēi shows the same pattern and marked either constituent or clausal negation. Other focus-sensitive particles are only rarely found with subjects in the Western Zhou language. 其 qí is attested almost exclusively in the formula “may the sons and grandsons for ten thousand years cherish and use it”, which occurs at the end of inscriptions on bronze vessels. The focus seems to be not on the subject, but on the entire sentence. The pronoun 実 shí is not attested in Western Zhou texts; therefore, subjects without focus-sensitive particle could not be (visibly) marked by the DMC.

(2.2.1) The Warring States Language

What we have called Contrastive Pattern D can also be found in Warring States texts, as exemplified by (31):

(31) 唯 逆 造 禍， 唯 顺 造 福
    wéi nì shèng huò wéi shùn shèng fú
    Rebellion creates chaos, obedience creates good fortune.
    (Zhongsan Wang Cuo Fanghu Inscription , ca. 310 B.C; after Dai and Ma 1995, 4997)

However, this usage is rare and other contrastive patterns are more commonly attested. In (32), there is a given proposition "$\lambda x. x$ offers congratulations" together with the claim that it is true only for $x = $ Zi-Tai-Shu. Zi-Tai-Shu rejects this claim and claims that the whole world can be substituted for x. This corresponds to Contrastive Pattern B:

(32) (Zi-Tai-Shu) went to Jin, to offer congratulations on (the completion of the palace of) Siqi. [...] The historiographer Zhao visited Zi-Tai-Shu, and said, " [...] The thing is matter for condolence and yet you offer congratulations on it." The other replied, "How is it matter for condolence?
    其 非 唯 我 賀， 將 天 下 實 賀
    qí fēi wéi wǒ hè jiāng tiānxià shí hè
    ASP notF WEIf we congratulate ASPF world PRON congratulate
    It is not we only who offer congratulations. The whole world will offer congratulations.
    (Zuozhuan, 5th century)

In (33), a general asks his duke for permission to attack the invading enemy. The duke claims that this would not be righteous, since it is not the enemy but the duke who is responsible for the war. He uses Contrastive Pattern B twice, one time for the subject and one time for the complement:

(33) When Chéng surrendered to the army of Qi, Zhòng Qingfù asked leave to attack that army. The duke said:
    不 可 我 實 不 德
    bù kě wǒ shí bù dé
    not be.possible I PRON not virtuous
    You cannot. It is I who is not virtuous.
    齊 師 何 罪？ 罪 我 之 由
    Qi shī hé zuì zuì wǒ zhī yóu
    Qi army how guilty guilt I PRON be.from
Of what is the army of Qi guilty? The crime is all from me.
(Zuozhuan, 5th century)

The following example also is an instance of contrastive focussing:

(34) 非知之實難將在行之
"He did not know it, it was difficult to carry it out."

Our master knew (that my purpose was impracticable), but I was not capable (of taking his advice).
(Zuozhuan, 5th century)

It marks a contrast between "knowing" and "acting" with respect to the expression "λP is difficult". The sentence strongly resembles Contrastive Pattern B. Unlike the instances of that type with marked complements, however, marking is used here only for the first, false, proposition. There are also instances of noncontrastive subject focussing (35):

(35) The one who will end up in possession of the state of Chu is (the younger son) Qiji. [...]. The gods gave their command in his favor and the people of the state trust him.
(Mi surname there.is chaos always younger.son PRON establish)
Whenever there is disorder among the persons of the Mi surname, it is always one of the younger sons who in the end takes the throne.
(Zuozhuan, 5th century)

Interrogative focus and the usage of wéi as "only" common in the Warring States language is also found with subjects. The following is an example of the latter phenomenon:

(36) The wind said, "It's true that I whirl up from the North Sea and whirl off to the South Sea. But if you hold up a finger against me you've defeated me, and if you trample on me you've likewise defeated me. On the other hand, I can break down big trees and blow over great houses.

Only I am capable of that.
(Zhuangzi, 4th century)

Furthermore, the subject preceded by the pronominal morpheme 賢 shí could be topical, as in the following example, where it is marked with the topic marker 者 zhě:

(37) (Zhouyu murdered his ruler and made himself marquis of Wei). Shízi's son Hòu asked his father how to establish the prince (Zhouyu) [...]. Shízi said, (He should go to the duke of Chén and get him to ask an audience of the king for him) [...] On this Hòu and Zhōuyù went to (the duke of) Chén; but Shízi sent information to Chén, saying, "The State of Wèi is narrow and small, and I am aged and can do nothing.

These two men have murdered the prince
and I venture to ask that you will instantly take the proper measures with them.
(Zuozhuan, 5th century)

The "two men" who are about to arrive in Chen are topical, while the focus of the sentence is obviously on "murdered the prince", which is the justification for the request to punish them. This shows that subjects in the marked position of the DMC were not necessarily focussed in the Warring States language. It remains to be investigated whether this was restricted to subjects without focus particle, but what we have seen in the Western Zhou language, where subjects following a particle belonged to the focus domain, suggests that this was indeed the case.

(2.3) Focus-Sensitive Particles and Predicate Focus

The use of focus-sensitive particles was not restricted to the DMC. As noted by Herforth (2001) and as we have seen in (30), focus-sensitive particles mark predicate or VP focus if they directly precede the verb in the Warring States language. For the Western Zhou language, Djamouri (1991) states that preverbal 非 fēi marked "négation polémique", which we may interpret as focussed negation, and also negated interrogatives and subordinates. At least some of the focus patterns we have observed in the case of complement and subject focus are also attested for predicate focus. The following example corresponds precisely to contrastive pattern B:

(38) 班非敢覓，佳作邵考爽益
Bān fēi gǎn mì, wéi zuò shào kǎo shì yì
Ban not f dare seek WEI f make bright ancestor mother vessel
While Ban has not dared to seek for this, he wished to make for his illustrious deceased parents this vessel.
(Ban Gui inscription, 10th century, after Djamouri 1991, 37)

Interestingly, wéi meaning "only" in an immediately preverbal position apparently always restricts the predicate or the VP, but not VP-internal material in its canonical position. This distinguishes Old Chinese focus-sensitive particles not only from their counterparts in languages like English, but also from Old Chinese preverbal quantifiers, which could be associated with a complement in its canonical postverbal position (Harbsmeier 1981).

(2.4) Summary: Syntax and Information Structure in the DMC

In the preceding section, I have introduced a typology of the Old Chinese dependent marking construction and showed that at least some of the types are found in both complement and subject marking; some of them even outside the DMC in predicate focus structures:

1. Contrastive Focus A
   There is a contextually salient proposition $A(x)$ whose truth is at issue. The speaker introduces another, obviously false, proposition $A(y)$ and derives from its falseness the falseness of $A(x)$. Syntactically, $\neg A(y)$ is realized with the DMC and $\neg A(x)$ as a rhetorical question. Instances of this type have been found only with complements.
2. Contrastive Focus B
   There is a contextually salient proposition $A(x)$ whose truth is expected. The speaker claims that $A(x)$ is false and that some $A(y)$ is true. $y$ in $A(y)$ is marked with the DMC;
A(x) can be realized explicitly with the DMC or can be inferred from the context or from world knowledge. Instances of this type have been found with complements, subjects and focus-sensitive particles without marked dependent.

3. Contrastive Focus C
   There is a salient propositional abstract $\lambda x.A(x)$ and a set of alternatives, whose members can be inferred from the context. The utterance chooses one alternative y making $A(y)$ true and marks y with the DMC. Unlike pattern B, there are no contextual preferences for one of the alternatives in advance. Instances of this type have been found with complements only.

4. Contrastive Focus D
   This is a multiple focus pattern where several consecutive clauses share an expression of the form $\lambda x\lambda P.A(x,P)$ and give different pairs of expressions $<x,P>$ making $A(x,P)$ true. The clauses are completely parallel and always use the DMC to mark x, while the expression denoting P occupies its canonical position. Instances of this type have been found with complements and subjects.

(2) Noncontrastive narrow focus.
   Here, the construction serves to emphasize a constituent which is new, but neither conflicts with expected nor is contrasted. Examples were found with subject and complements.

(3) VP, Predicate or Sentence Focus.
   In certain contexts, the DMC did not mark the dependent in the marked position as focussed. In these cases, the focussed element can be the predicate, the VP or even the entire sentence. The syntactically marked element may be inside or outside the focus domain and even topical. Examples have been found with both subjects and complements.

(4) Interrogative Focus.
(5) Restrictive use of focus-sensitive 唯 重.

Abstracting away from these patterns, one finds that both narrow (1,2,4,5) and wide focus (3) could be marked with the DMC. Syntactically, the distinction between the different ranges of focus is transparent in the contrastive sentence patterns and interrogative focussing, where a wide interpretation can be excluded, but not in other cases, where only the context provides conclusive evidence. It seems that the DMC with focus-sensitive particles involves a systematic ambiguity between wide focus readings such as in (28, 28) and narrow readings as in (15, 35):

(22') 余 必 臣 是 助
yù bì [chén shì zhù]$_F$
I certainly subject PRON assist
I will certainly assist the subjects.

(28') 今 唯 民 不 靜
jīn wéi [mín bù jìng]$_F$
now WE$_F$ people not quiet
Now the people are not quiet.

(15') 唯 永 終 是 圖
wéi [yǒng zhōng]$_F$ shì tú
WE$_F$ eternal end PRON plan
for a distant end I shall plan.

(35') 必 季 實 立
always\textsubscript{F} younger.son PRON establish
It is always one of the younger sons who in the end takes the throne.

The generalization seems to be that the focus-sensitive particle marks the beginning of the range of focus, but not its end. Herforth 2001 already assumes a similar generalization, but he assumes that only the material directly following the particle is focussed, which accounts for (35') and (38), but not for the difference between (35') and (22'). This generalization is supported by (30), where the first focus-sensitive particle follows and the second precedes the subject, corresponding to the information structure we have reconstructed for the sentence:

(30) 天 非 虐， 惟 民 自 遂 殆

Heaven is [not tyrannical], [people draw guilt upon themselves].

Possibly, the patterns are also not uniform with respect to the use of focus-sensitive particles. Particles like the modal 必\textsubscript{F} and the prospective 將\textsubscript{F} have a wide distribution, but the semantically vacuous reading of 唯\textsubscript{F} is not found in the emphatic examples nor in Warring States wide or predicate focus examples. It is not clear, though, whether this reflects a true generalization or is caused by the small size of the sample.

Much work on crosslinguistic aspects of information structure assumes that focus is nonuniform. Kiss (1998) claims that two fundamental types of focus can be distinguished. Identificational Focus represents the exhaustive set of entities for which the predicate phrase is true; this set is a subset of the contextually given set of entities for which the predicate phrase could possibly hold. Information Focus, on the other hand, just marks nonpresupposed information without expressing exhaustive identification. Information Focus is syntactically not marked, while constituents carrying Identificational Focus are preposed to the specifier position of a functional projection. Furthermore, she assumes that the semantic interpretation of identificational focus in a language is parametrized by the features [+contrastive] and [+exhaustive].

Both interpretational effects can be observed in the Old Chinese DMC: the instances of (5) are [+exhaustive] and those of (1) are obviously [+contrastive], and at least in Patterns B and C also [+exhaustive]. Interrogative focus (4) also belongs to Identificational Focus according to Kiss. On the other hand, there are examples which clearly do not meet Kiss' definition of Identificational Focus. In the instances reflecting noncontrastive narrow (2) focus there is no contextually given set of alternatives. Examples of VP or Sentence focus (3) are even clearer examples of Information Focus.

There are different possible explanations for this conflict between the assumed universality of the nonuniformity of focus and the apparent uniformity of the Old Chinese construction across the identificational-information focus dichotomy. While it is beyond doubt that the DMC could express contrastive focus, one might claim that the analyses of the alleged instances of wide focus are mistaken and that they represent identificational focus. Even if the examples with marked complements were spurious, there would still be the question of why focus-sensitive 唯\textsubscript{F} is common at the beginning of speeches and narratives in the Western Zhou language. On the other hand, one might simply claim that the distinction between identificational and information focus is not universal. However, our knowledge of focus in Old Chinese is far too fragmentary to warrant
such a strong claim without further empirical justification. It must be noted that most of the
generalizations developed here do not differentiate between different syntactic variants of the DMC,
which is parametrized at least by the type of the marked element, the choice of the focus-sensitive
particle, if one is used, and the choice of the following pronominal morpheme. Given that syntactic
differences between the different pronominal markers have been noted, it seems reasonable to
assume that more differences will be discovered when taking information structure into account.
This clearly would require a much larger data set to avoid running the risk of accidental
generalizations. It is hoped that this paper has shown that the information structure of the DMC is
worth investigating and that the typology presented here is a first step in this direction.

(3) Conclusion

I have presented a typology of the role of information structure in an Old Chinese Dependent
Marking Construction, in which a subject, complement or adjunct occupies a preverbal position
where it can be marked with a pronominal morpheme and an optional focus-sensitive particle. It
was shown that the well-known contrastive focus reading distinguishes at least four common
patterns with different pragmatic and syntactic features. Furthermore, I argued that besides
restrictive and interrogative focalization, the Dependent Marking Construction could also have a
noncontrastive narrow and a VP or sentence focus reading. It was argued that this ambiguity reflects
the fact that the scope of focus-sensitive particles is not fully specified and has to be inferred from
the context.

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