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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 Huáng] [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 (Yi 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 *wéi* (維, 唯, 惟, 隹) and its negation *fēi* 非. *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_F 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 實 *shí*, or both markers at the same time:

- (6) 非 知 之 實 難
 fēi [zhī zhī] shí nán
 not_F know it PRON 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

In the Chinese grammatical literature, the construction for complements is usually discussed in the context of word order as an instance of preverbal object placement, cf. Wang (1956) 417-422, Ma (1983) 129-133, Yi (1989), Yang and He (2001) 799-809. Syntactic aspects of the construction have been examined in detail, among others, by Pulleyblank (1960), Yin (1985), Peyraube (1997), Herforth (2001), Djamouri (2004) and Meisterernst (2010).

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 謂 *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 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.*

[其 父母] 之 不 親 也 , 又 能 親 君 乎
 qí fù-mǔ zhī bù qīn yě yòu néng qīn jūn hū
 his parents PRON not love ASP then can love ruler INTERROG

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

(Han Feizi, 3rd century)

It can be seen that the dependent marking construction is applied in the first clause only. This distinction has an analogue in information structure. The contextually salient proposition introduced by the initial question is "*he can have a close relationship with the duke*", while the proposition "*he can have a close relationship with his parents*" can be seen as composed of the expression " λx .*he can have a close relationship with x*" and the new referent "*parents*", i.e. the complement in the second clause is given and syntactically unmarked, while the complement in the first clause is new and syntactically marked. Examples with this correlation between information structure and syntax are not uncommon. The following example occurs in a very similar context, the behavior of the complements is completely analogous and the second clause is again realized as a rhetorical question:

(8) 今 夫 豎刁 [其 身] 之 不 愛 焉 能 愛 君
 jīn fū Shù Diāo qí shēn zhī bù ài yān néng ài jūn?
 now this Shu Diaō his body PRON not love how can love ruler

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

(Guanzi, 4th century)

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 Guó [...] 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)*

將 號 是 滅 , 何 愛 於 虞 ?

jiāng Guó shì miè hé ài yú Yú

ASP_F Guo PRON extinguish how love to Yu

If it extinguishes **Guó**, what love is it likely to whow to **Yú**?

(*Zuozhuan, 5th century. Transation 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 " $\lambda x. considers x most important$ ". The default assumptions inferred from world are $A(son)$ and $\neg A(arrow)$, which contrast with the truth of $\neg A(son)$ and $A(arrow)$:

- (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

not_F 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 corectness of the second proposition is marked by 唯 *wéi*:

- (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 shì bǔ

not_F house PRON make-divination WEI_F 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.*

惟 四 方 之 多 罪 逋 逃 是 崇 是 長
wéi [si-fāng zhī duō zuì bū táo] shì chōng shì cháng
WEI_Fworld ATTR many crime flee escape PRON honor PRON respect
是 信 是 使 是 以 為 大 夫 卿 士
shì xìn shì shǐ, shì yǐ wéi dà fū qīng shì
PRON trust PRON employ PRON as take great man minister officer

He respects **those from all over the world who had to flee because of great crimes**, then he trusts and then he employs, then he has for dignitaries, ministers and officers

(Shangshu, Mushi; 8th century?, translation adapted from Meisterernst 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 $x = \text{relatives}$ is contextually assumed. The fact that only the assignment $x = \text{criminals}$ 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 Jízi 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 Jízi wine to drink and then, placing Jízi's banner on his own carriage, he set out ahead of Jízi. The robbers accordingly killed him. When Jízi arrived on the scene, he said

我 之 求 也 , 此 何 罪?
wǒ zhī qiú yě cǐ hé zuì
I PRON want ASP this how guilty
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 shì

WEI_F 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 shì

again WEI_F 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

WEI_F 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 dì
 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 A = "λxλP . I am P of x". The three clauses give different pairs <x,P> (<Wen, son>, <Wu, brother> and <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

wǒ qiě xián zhī yòng néng zhī shǐ láo zhī lùn
 I FUT virtuous PRON use can PRON send labor PRON mention
 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 = "λxλP . I will do P 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 义
 nǎi fei-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 call *chen* sun moon ATTR meet PRON call *chen*
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_F 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 certainly_Fsubject PRON assist
'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 為 司寇 將 盜 是 務 去
 zǐ wéi sī-kòu jiāng dào shì wù qù
 you be minister.of.crime ASP_F 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?" Shuyu replied:

吾 不 免 是 懼
 wú [bù miǎn] shì jù
 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) Qin captured the ruler of Jin and took him back to Qin with them. The dignitaries of Jin, unbinding their hair and decamping every day, followed behind. But the Earl of Qin 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 踐
 yì [Jìn zhī yāo mèng] shì jiàn
 CONJ Jin ATTR strange dream PRON trample

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 Wuyu 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,

將 善 是 封 殖 而 虐 之
jiāng shàn shì fēng zhí ér nüè zhī
ASP_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, 5th 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, 4th 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 實 *shí*.

(2.2.1) The Western Zhou language

Subjects following 惟 *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. 惟 *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 惟 民 不 靜, 未 戾 厥 心
jīn wéi mín bù jìng wèi lì jué xīn
now WEI_F people not quiet not.yet settle their mind

Now **the people** are not quiet, they have not yet settled their minds.

(1) *have guided them, but repeatedly they have not concurred (with my directions).*

爽 惟 天 其 罰 殛 我, 我 其 不 怨
shuǎng wéi tiān qí fá jí wǒ wǒ qí bù yuàn
fault WEI_F 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

WEI_F their crime not be.at be.great

(The importance of) **their crimes** does not depend on whether they are great,

it does not depend on whether 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
WEI_F Wen king receive it WEI_F 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 focus-sensitive 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 perceived on high. Therefore, when Heaven sent down destruction on (the state of) Yin and had no mercy for Yin, it was due to (their) excesses.*

天 非 虐, 惟 民 自 速 辜
tiān fēi nüè, wéi mín zì sù gū
Heaven not_F tyrannical WEI_F 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.

(Shangshu, Jiugao. 10th century)

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 實 *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 生 禍 , 唯 順 生 福
wéi nì shēng huò wéi shùn shēng fú
WEI_F disobey create chaos WEI_F obey create luck
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 “*lx.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 not_F WEI_F we congratulate ASP_F 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 Qí, Zhòng Qìngfù 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
Qí shī hé zuì zuì wǒ zhī yóu
Qi army how guilty guilt I PRON be.from

Of what is the army of Qí 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
fēi [zhī zhī] shí nán jiāng zài xíng zhī
not_F know it PRON be.difficult ASP be.at do it

It is not **knowing it** that is difficult, (the difficulty) lies in acting accordingly.

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.P 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.*

牟 姓 有 亂 , 必 季 實 立
Mǐ xìng yǒu luàn bì jì shí lì
Mi surname there.is chaos always_F 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.*

唯 我 能 也
wéi wǒ néng yě
only_F I can ASP

Only I am capable of that.

(Zhuangzi, 4th century)

Furthermore, the subject preceded by the pronominal morpheme 實 *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.*

此 二 人 者 實 弑 寡君
[cǐ èr rén zhě] shí shì guǎjūn
these two man TOPIC PRON murder prince

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 "negation 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 , 隗 作 邵 考 奭 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.

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 $\langle x,P \rangle$ 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 *wéi*.**

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
 yú bì [chén shì zhù]_F
 I certainly subject PRON assist
 I will certainly assist the subjects.

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

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

(35') 必 季 實 立

bì [jì]_F shí lì
 always_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 速 辜
 tiān [fēi nüè]_F, wéi [mín zì sù gū]_F
 Heaven not_F tyrannical WEI_F people self draw guilt
 Heaven is [not tyrannical]_F, [people draw guilt upon themselves]_F.

Possibly, the patterns are also not uniform with respect to the use of focus-sensitive particles. Particles like the modal 必 *bì* and the prospective 將 *jiāng* have a wide distribution, but the semantically vacuous reading of 唯 *wéi* 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 *wéi* 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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