On Syntactic Characteristics of Jinwen Shangshu

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Abstract: Jinwen Shangshu consists of the earliest documents handed down in China, and it is the classic of political history compiled no less than 2600 or 2500 years ago. The article makes a thorough analysis on object-preposed sentences, passive sentences, judgment sentences, and double-object sentences in Jinwen Shangshu (《今文尚书》). By comparing various sentence patterns and investigating them systematically combining with the development and the changes of the documentation language, it sums up some syntactic characteristics of Jinwen Shangshu as well as the the evolution law of syntactic forms in the documentation language, and it is of reference value to the study of the history of Chinese grammar.

Keywords: Shangshu, Jinwen Shangshu, syntactic characteristics

1. Introduction

Most documents in Jinwen Shangshu are credible ancient texts of Shang (商) and Zhou (周) dynasties. Besides some narrative and descriptive texts, these documents mainly record words, and they belong to colloquial written language reflecting the language styles of Shang and Zhou dynasties relatively systematically.

Jinwen Shangshu has many lexical features. For example, none of the forms of the self-addressing pronouns in the book is both single and plural, nor is its single or plural form marked with an added or deducted affix like that in modern Chinese. A self-addressing pronoun indicates its singular or plural by employing different lexical forms. Interjections and modal particles which are at the beginning or in the middle of the sentences are very rich, while modal particles at the end of the sentences are very poor. The book has neither “也(ye)” which is a high-frequency modal particle in classical Chinese nor the common modal particles “邪(耶)(ye)” and “与 (欤) (yu)”. [There is one case of “乎(hu, a modal particle)” in Yao Dian (《尧典》) only.] The interrogative mood is mainly

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indicated by modal adverbs and interrogative pronouns. The study shows that Jinwen Shangshu also has many syntactic features, and the article mainly outlines several results of the research on object-preposed sentences, passive sentences, judgment sentences, and double-object sentences in the book.

2. Object-preposed sentences present different forms

2.1 The uncommon form of negative object-preposed sentences: subject + pronoun object + negative word + verb predicate

Negative words strongly adhere to the preposed objects in negative sentences, and they are generally put in front of the preposed objects in Pre-Qin documents. The syntactic form is “negative word + pronoun object + verb predicate”, and most of the negative sentences in Jinwen Shangshu are in this form. There are 12 such cases in the book, and except for those, there are also 2 cases in which negative words are put after the pronoun objects as in (1a) and (2a) below:

(1a) a. 尔时罔敢易法。(《周书·大诰》)

ěr shí wǎng gǎn yì fǎ

you it not should belittle

‘You should not think little of it.’

b. 尔罔敢怠弃时

ěr wǎng gǎn dàì qì shí.

you not should belittle it

‘You should not belittle it.’

c. 尔时敢易废是

ěr shí gǎn yì fèi shì

you not should belittle it

‘You should not belittle it.’

“(1a) means (1b). As (1a) is a negative object-preposed sentence, we can infer that (1b) is the right interpretation”. (Zhou Bingjun, 1984:164) The expression “易法 (yì fǎ)” is “易废 (yì fèi)”, and the word “废 (fèi)” in Bronze inscriptions means “法 (fǎ)” mostly. “废 (fèi)” and “法 (fǎ)” are interchangeable in ancient times. “易废 (yì fèi)” is also “废易 (fèi yì)” meaning “怠弃 (dài qì, to belittle or think little of )”. “时 (shí)” is equal to the pronoun “是 (shì, ‘it’)”, and the negative word “罔 (wǎng, not)” is used after the pronoun object “时 (shí)”. Therefore, sentence (1a) can be interpreted into (1c).

① As to the morphological characteristics of Jinwen Shangshu, please see my articles for details: Qian Zongwu (1994), Qian Zongwu (1996) and Qian Zongwu (2002).
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(2) a. 汝 乃 是 不 蘉 
ru nài shì bù máng
you if these not bestir
‘if you don’t bestir yourself in these things’
b. 汝 乃 不 蘉 是 
ru nài bù máng shì.
you if not bestir these
‘if you don’t bestir yourself in these things’

Zhou Bingjun (1990:195) interprets it as follows: “if you don’t bestir yourself in these things”. “蘉（máng）”is a verb which means “bestir or working hard at”. As the preposed object of “蘉（máng）”, “是(shí, ‘these things’)” is put before the negative word “不” (bù, not). So sentence (2a) can be interpreted into (2b).

2.2 The uncommon form of the object-preposed prepositional structure: non-pronoun object + preposition

Take (3a) for example:

(3) a. 無 戴 用 乂 复 
tiǎn lù yòng yì mín
exterminating killing by, PREP rule people
‘to rule people by the violent infliction of death’
b. 用 無 戴 乂 复 
yòng tiǎn lù yì mín
by, PREP exterminating killing rule people
‘to rule people by the violent infliction of death’

(3a) means “to rule people by the violent infliction of death, and it is inverted”. (Zeng Yunqian, 1964:198) “用(yòng, by)” is a preposition, and the expression “無戴 (tiǎn lù, ‘exterminating and killing, death penalty’)” is its object. Therefore, (3a) can be explained as (3b).

In the documentation language, preposed objects of interrogative pronouns are very common, while preposed objects of demonstrative pronouns can be seen occasionally as in (4) below:

(4) 是 以 为 大夫 齐士 
shì yǐ wéi dà fù qí shì 
them PREP as great officer great officer
‘to appoint them as great officers of Dafu or Qingshi’

In sentence(4), “是以 (shí yǐ)” is “以是(yí shí)”. It is relatively rare that a non-pronoun object is preposed.

2.3 Uncommon forms of preposed objects in narrative sentences
These uncommon forms are mainly preposed objects in narrative sentences which do not employ structural auxiliaries between objects and verb predicates, and they have three patterns as follows:

1) pronoun object + verb predicate

(5) a. 民 献 有 十 夫 子 翼。 (《周书·大诰》)
   mǐn xiàn yǒu shí fū yú yì (Zhou Shu Da Gao)
   'There are ten eminent men helping me.'

b. 民 献 有 十 夫 翼 子。 (Qu Wanli, 1984:109)
   mǐn xiàn yǒu shí fū yì yú
   'There are ten eminent men helping me.'

   “‘献(xiàn)’ is 贤(xián), ‘the eminent people’. ‘十夫(shí fū)’ refers to ‘ten people’. ‘翼(yì)’ means ‘help’, and ‘子翼(yú yì)’ means ‘to help me’.” (Qu Wanli, 1984:109)

Accordingly, (5a) can be interpreted as (5b).

2) Noun object + verb predicate

(6) a. 天 明 畏。 (《周书·大诰》)
   tiān mínɡ wèi (Zhou Shu Da Gao)
   'The clearly-intimated will of Heaven can be revered.'

b. 天 之 明 德 可 畏
   tiān zhī mínɡ dé kě wèi
   'The bight virtues and the will of Heaven can be revered.'

c. 天 之 明 命 可 畏
   tiān zhī mínɡ mìng kě wèi
   'The clear will of Heaven can be revered.'

d. 畏 天 明。
   wèi tiān mínɡ
   'The clearly-intimated will of Heaven can be revered.'

According to Kong Anguo's interpretation (孔传), (5a) is explained as (5b) ((Qing dynasty) Ruan Yuan, 1979:199), and the interpretation of Cai Chen's interpretation (蔡传) is (5c) ((Song dynasty) Cai Chen, 1890:42). “天之明德(tiān zhī míng dé)” and “天之明命(tiān zhī míng mìng)” are all the objects of “畏” (wèi, ‘revere’). (6a) means (6d). (Zhou Bingjun, 1984:167)
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3) 惟 (wéi, ‘a scope adverb’) + noun object + verb predicate

(7) a. 惟 土 物 爱。 《周书·酒诰》
   wéi tǔ wù ài 《Zhou Shu·Jiu Gao》
   SADV soil productions cherish
   ‘to cherish the productions of the ground’

   b. 爱 土 物
   ài tǔ wù
   cherish the ground the productions
   ‘to economize and cherish the productions of the ground’

   c. 汝 封 当 爱惜 土地
   rǔ fēng dāng ài xī tǔ dì
   you Feng should cherish soil
   所 生 之 物 也。(Sun Xingyan, 1986:376)
   suǒ shēng zhī wù ye
   AUX produce AUX things MP
   ‘Feng, you should cherish and economize what the soil produces.’

(7a) is (7b), and Sun Xingyan (1986:376) explains it as (7c).

The pattern “惟(wéi) + noun (noun phrase) object + verb predicate” also has its variant in which the verb predicate is omitted as in (8a) below:

(8) a. 惟 兹 二 国 命 《周书·召诰》
   wéi zī èr guó mìng 《Zhou Shu·Shao Gao》
   SADV these two state fate
   ‘to stay alert and take warning from the fate of these two states’

   b. 惟 兹 二 国 命 是 监 (Zhou Bingjun, 1984:206)
   wéi zī èr guó mìng shì jiān
   SADV these two countries fate DRPR alert
   ‘to stay alert and take warning from the fate of these two states’

   Zhou Bingjun (1984:206) explains (8a) as (8b), and points out that the word “监(jiān, ‘alert’)” is omitted according to the previous statement.

The above special language forms in Jinwen Shangshu are not isolated phenomena. For example, there are 21 cases of preposed objects that are without structural auxiliary words between objects and verbs in narrative sentences. It seems that the rule has been formed, and such cases are mostly in Zhou Shu which is considered a more authentic part in Shangshu.

In sentence pattern “pronoun object + verb predicate”, the pronoun object is mainly the demonstrative pronoun “是(shì, ‘this/these’)”, and there are a total of 8 cases which are all sentences with 4 words as in (9) below:

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(9) 是 崇 是 長，是 信 是 使 (《周書·牧誓》)

shì chóng shì zhǎng, shì xìn shì shì (Zhou Shu-Ma Shi)

them honor them exalt them trust them employ

‘to exalt and honor them, to trust and employ them’

There are also a lot of such forms as “是(shì) + verb predicate” in Shi Jing (《詩經》). Many scholars believe that the pronoun “是(shì)” as the object must be preposed. The study shows that this may be the omitted form of “惟(wéi) + pronoun object + verb predicate”, and the reason for the omission is that the word number of the pattern is limited. “惟(wéi) + noun object + verb predicate” is the main form of the object-preposed narrative sentences. This form has already appeared in Oracle texts. For example, “惟(wéi)” is written as “今(húi)” or “隹(wéi)” in Oracle texts. There are 10 such cases in Jinwen Shangshu, so this should be the regularization of such an object-preposed form. Later, this structure developed into “惟(wéi) + noun object + 是(shì)/之(zhī) + verb predicate”. During Han and Wei dynasties, it evolves into “惟(wéi) + verb predicate + noun object” which is a structure with post-posed object. “惟(wéi)” in the object-preposed structure is a scope adverb, which can be placed before the preposed object, indicating that the object is single, exclusive and strongly designated. Such a preposed-object form may derive from the colloquial language in which the object is emphasized and preposed out of some need of rhetoric, and this is common in modern spoken Chinese. However, written languages lack specific contexts that spoken languages have, such as expression, gestures and other non-verbal expressing methods, and object-preposed forms may lead to obscure sentences, so structural particles as “之(zhī)” and “是(shì)” are added as the marks of the preposed objects during the language development. When the object post-posed forms appear, “之(zhī)” and “是(shì)” etc. disappear accordingly.

Zeng Yunqian (1964:182) points out: “the inverted forms in early Zhou dynasty are different from those after it in their expressing. There are lots of such cases in Shangshu. If you do not understand such inverted forms, you will feel they are obscure and not smooth”. It seems that these special object-preposed sentence patterns in Jinwen Shangshu are “obscure, not smooth and difficult to articulate”, and they are found in Bronze inscriptions and Oracle texts. The forms of preposed pronoun objects in negative sentences in Jinwen Shangshu are not very strict, as the post-posed objects forms also exist. It is the case with those in Bronze inscriptions and Oracle texts. This situation is due to the fact that negative sentences are influenced by the analogy of the word order of affirmative sentences; The object-preposed forms of negative sentences have disappeared in the oral language of Han dynasty. The interrogative pronouns as preposed objects have not yet appeared in Bronze inscriptions and Oracle texts, and they may originate from Jinwen Shangshu. The pattern of “惟(wéi) + noun (noun phrases) object + 是(shì)/之(zhī) + verb predicate” in
3. Passive sentences are in the transitional stage from semantic styles to formal ones

There are two methods expressing passive in the documentation language: the first is to employ the words that express passive specifically, and the second does not. Sentences with the first method are generally called passive sentences, and also called grammatical passive sentences or explicit passive sentences. As the passivity of the subjects can be identified by their own sentence forms, they are called formal passive sentences; Sentences using the second method have different names: conceptual passive sentences or implicit passive sentences. They are called semantic sentences because the passivity of their subjects can be understood according to the meaning of whole sentences only.

There is no formal passive sentence in Oracle texts. The passive idea in ancient Chinese is manifested in the form of the active sentence, so there is no difference between the active and the passive in their forms. Zhou Fangao (1959) believes that “no mark is used in a passive sentence, and it is identified by the meaning of the text, so it may be the earlier way for the passive sentence”. Jin Zhaozi (1980:19) thinks that “the agent and the patient are not distinguished in ancient language, and this is really inevitable when the language has not been complete.”

Formal passive sentences begin to appear in Bronze inscriptions of Western Zhou Dynasty in only two forms: “于(yú, ‘by, PREP’) + the agent” and “见(jiàn, ‘by, ADV’) + verb + 于(yú, ‘by’, PREP) + the agent”. The former is common, and the latter is rare. The formal passive sentences in the documents of Pre-Qin dynasty and the two Han dynasties developed into four large sentence patterns: passive sentences with “于(yú)”, “为(wéi)”, “见(jiàn)” and “被(bèi)”. During these periods, formal passive sentences with syntactic marks increased largely while semantic passive sentences reduced relatively.

Passive sentences in the system of sentence patterns in Jinwen Shangshu are related to those in Bronze inscriptions, Oracle texts and other documents of Pre-Qin dynasty, but they are different from each other. There are a total of 57 passive sentences in Jinwen Shangshu. Among them, there are 11 formal passive sentences of which 10 cases are in Zhou Shu. For example:

(10) 无 恶 于 恶
wu bi yu xia

(《周书·大诰》)

(Zhou Shu·Da Gao)
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not frighten PREP hardship

‘Don’t be frightened by misery and hardship.’

(11) wén yù shǎng dì (Zhou Shu-Kang Gao)
hear by Lord of Heaven

‘It is known by Lord of Heaven.’

(12) shěn yuē qí shǎng xiān wén yú tiān (Zhou Shu-Kang Gao)
let along MP their even manifestly hear by Heaven

‘Let along what they are doing is also known manifestly by Heaven.’

(13) chí Yin mìng zhōng yú dì (Zhou Shu-Duo Shi)
declare Yin dynasty fate end by Heaven

‘Yin dynasty was declared to be ended by Heaven.’

(14) a. wǎng fēi yòu cí yǔ fá (Zhou Shu-Duo Shi)
no one not AF doubt by punish

‘No one didn’t doubt it was Heaven’s punishment.’

b. wǎng fēi yòu cí yǔ dì fá
No one not AF doubt by Lord of Heaven punish

‘People all thought they were punished by Lord of Heaven.’

(14a) is the abbreviation of (14b).

(15) gé yú huáng tiān (Zhou Shu-Jun Shi)
commend by great Heaven

‘was commended by great Heaven’

(16) gé yú shǎng dì (Zhou Shu-Jun Shi)
commend by Lord of Heaven

‘was commended by Lord of Heaven’

(17) wén yù shǎng dì (Zhou Shu-Jun Shi)
hear by Lord of Heaven

‘was known by Lord of Heaven’

(18) ér shǎng bù jì yú xiōng dé (Zhou Shu-Duo Fang)

‘was known by Lord of Heaven’

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you maybe not instigate by evil evil
‘Maybe you are not instigated by evil conduct.’

(19) 用端命于上帝
(yòng duān mìng yú shàng dì)
thus right decree by Lord of Heaven
‘They thus was assigned the right favoring decree by Lord of Heaven.’

There is only one such case in Pan Geng (盘庚) of Shang Shu (《商书》) as in (20) below:

(20) 用端命于天时
(yòng duān mìng yú tiān shí)
not punish by Heaven
‘not to be punished by Heaven’

Zeng Yunqian explains (20) as (21).

(21) 不为天时所罚也。
(bù wéi tiān shí suǒ fá yě)
not by Heaven AUX punish MP
‘not to be punished by Heaven’

There are 46 cases of semantic passive sentences which can be specifically divided into 4 types. The first type includes sentences with Can-Wish verbs like “可”(kè, ‘may’), “能”(néng, ‘can’) and “克”(kè, ‘can’) as in (22)-(24) below:

(22) 联言惠可庶行
(zhèn yán huì kě shù xíng)
my words MP can arrive action
‘Can my words be put into practice?’

(23) 矜曰其有能格
(shēn yuē qí yǒu néng gé)
let along it again can commend
‘Let along it can be praised again.’

(24) 大不克开
(dà bù kè kāi)
all not can advance
‘All the things can not be advanced.’

The second includes sentences with adverbs before the behavior verbs expressing scope, time, degree etc. as in (25), (26) and (27) below:

(25) 庶绩咸熙
(shù jì xián xī)
many things all thrive

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‘All kinds of things are thrived.’

(26) 九    河    既    道    (《虞夏书·禹贡》)
jǐu    hé    jì    dào    (Yu Xia Shu Yu Gong)
nine    river    already    dredge
‘Nine rivers have been dredged.’

(27) 六    府    孔    修    (《虞夏书·禹贡》)
liù    fǔ    kǒng    xiū    (Yu Xia Shu Yu Gong)
six    Fus    material    very    mange
‘Six Fus of water, fire, gold, wood, soil and grain are managed very well.’

The third is to use a form of an active sentence to express the passive mood directly as in (28)-(30) below:

(28)  舜    生    三十    征    (《虞夏书·尧典》)
Shùn    shēng    sān    shí    zhēng    (Yu Xia Shu Yao Dian)
Shun    grow    thirty    call    up
‘Shun was called to employment when he was thirty.’

(29)  九州    相    同    (《虞夏书·禹贡》)
jiǔ    zhōu    xiāng    tóng    (Yu Xia Shu Yu Gong)
nine    province    AUX    similar
‘Through out the nine provinces a similar order was effected.’

(30) 大    熟    未    获    (《周书·金縢》)
da    shú    wèi    huò    (Zhou Shu Jin Teng)
all    mature    not    harvest
‘The crops are all mature, but have not been harvested.’

The last one: the explicit form of the active sentence expresses the implicit semantic content of the double-object sentence. The patient subject is the near object of the double objects as in (31) below:

(31) 禹    锡    玄    圭    告    厥    成    功    (《虞夏书·禹贡》)
Yǔ    xī    xuán    guī    gào    jué    chéng    gōng    (Yu Xia Shu Yu Gong)
Yu    present    black    jade    tell    them    achieve    governance
‘Yu was presented a black jade telling people that the governance had been achieved.’

The ratio between the formal passive sentences and the semantic passive sentences is about 1:4, and that between Zhou Shu, Shang Shu and Yu Xia Shu is 10:1:0. Compared with the Oracle texts, formal passive sentences have appeared in Jinwen Shangshu; compared with other Pre-Qin documents, Jinwen Shangshu has only one type of passive sentence marked with the word “于(yú)”. These facts indicate that passive sentences in Jinwen Shangshu are in the developing and transitional phases from semantic passive sentences to formal ones. Meanwhile, it also shows that the passive form in Jinwen Shangshu is unitary.

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Many of the semantic passive sentences in *Jinwen Shangshu* need judging through the contextual information mostly, and this leads to ambiguity easily. Therefore, the formal passive sentence are promoted to develop and enriched fully by the communication function of the language after Western Zhou dynasty.

By comparing, it can be inferred that the passive sentences in Bronze inscriptions of Western Zhou and those in *Jinwen Shangshu* are much the same. They are different mainly in the following two aspects: first, the only form of the passive sentences in *Jinwen Shangshu* is with “于(yu)”. Besides “于(yu)”, there are also passive sentences with “见(jian, ‘by. ADV’)” in Bronze inscriptions of Western Zhou dynasty as in (32) below:

(32) 见 厌 于 公. (Shen Zigui)

jiàn yàn yú gōng

by. ADV satisfy AUX Zhou Gong

‘Zhou Gong was satisfied with him.’

Second, the relations within the semantic passive sentences of *Jinwen Shangshu* are not consistent as in (33) and (34) below:

(33) 王 司 敬 民 (《商书·高宗形日》)

wáng sì jìng mín

king succeed respect people

‘The king succeeded, and was respected by people.’

“司”(sì) above is cited as “嗣”(sì, ‘ascend’) in *Shi Ji* (《史记》). “司(sì)” is active, while “敬(jìng, ‘was respected’)” is passive, and “王(wáng, ‘the former king’)” is a patient subject.

(34) 我 其 发 出 狂 (《商书·微子》)

wǒ qí fā chū kuáng (Shang Shu·Weizi)

I AUX abandon out go to

‘What do you think I am going to be abandoned and exiled?’

The word “狂” (kuáng, ‘escape’) means “往” (wáng, ‘go to’) in *Shi Ji· Song Shi Jia* (《史记·宋世家》). The word “发” (fā, ‘abandon’) is read as “废” (fèi) by Sun Yirang (孙诒让), and the whole sentence means (34). “我(wò, ‘I’)” is the patient subject of “发(fā)” and the agent subject of “出狂(chū kuáng)”. This is the same with the semantic passive sentences in later times as in (35) and (36) below:

(35) 故 不能 推 车 而 及 (《左传·成公三年》)

gù bù néng tuī chē ér jí (Zuo Zhuan·Cheng Gong San Nian)

so not can push chariot AUX reach

‘So he could not push his chariot and was caught up with.’

“及”(jí, ‘reach’) here is passive and means “to be caught up with”, while “推(tuī, ‘to push’)” followed by the object “车(chē, ‘chariot’)” is active.

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(36) 盖文王拘而演《周易》；仲尼厄而作《春秋》。

In (36), “拘(jū, ‘be arrested’), "厄(è, ‘be put into distress’), “作(zuò, ‘write’), “修列(xiūliè, ‘write’)” are all active. The internal relations of semantic passive sentences in the inscriptions of Western Zhou are consistent. Guan Xiechu (1981:60-61) sums it up as follows: “as to the parallel verb predicates, it is required that their tone is consistent: all are active, or all are passive. If it is confirmed that one of the verb structures is passive, then other parallel compositions must be passive too.” By comparing the passive sentences in Jinwen Shangshu with those in Bronze inscriptions of Western Zhou, the special characteristics that can be seen also reflect from the other side that Jinwen Shangshu is in the time when Chinese formal passive sentences come into being and develop further.

Through examining the passive sentences and their characteristics in Jinwen Shangshu, the following conclusions can also be made:

(1) The real formal passive sentences in Chinese have appeared before Spring and Autumn period. The 11 cases of passive sentences with “于(yú)” in Jinwen Shangshu and the passive sentences in Bronze inscriptions indicate that formal passive sentences have already been used in Western Zhou dynasty.

(2) Neither Oracle texts nor Yu Xia Shu of Shangshu has formal passive sentences, and this is not a coincidence. Jinwen Shangshu only has one type of formal passive sentence with passive mark “于(yú)”. In the inscriptions of the Western Zhou, there are two kinds of passive sentences: sentences with “于(yú)” are common, and sentences with “见(jiàn)” are rare. This indicates that the sentence with “于(yú)” is the earliest form of Chinese formal passive sentences. At the same time, the comparative study of passive sentences in Oracle texts, Bronze inscriptions, the documents of the Pre-Qin dynasty and the two Han dynasties shows that the formal passive sentences in Jinwen Shangshu are in a transitional
developing stage from semantic passive sentences to formal ones.

(3) The direct motivation that leads to Chinese formal passive sentences may be out of the need of rhetoric, as the narrator intends to highlight the agent through the form and the structure of the sentence. In *Jinwen Shangshu*, except for “negative adverb + Verb + 于(yú) + the agent” and “于(yú) + verb”, there are a total of 7 cases of passive sentences employing “Verb + 于(yú) + the agent”. The agents introduced by “于(yú)” are all words meaning “上天” (shàng tiān, ‘Lord of Heaven’): “上帝、天、帝、皇天” (shàng dì, tiān, dì, huáng tiān, ‘Lord of Heaven’). In the inscriptions of Western Zhou dynasty, besides “上天”, the agents introduced by “于(yú)” are also “王(wáng, ‘king’), “公”(gōng, ‘great officer’ ) and “侯”(hòu, ‘great officer’). This linguistic phenomenon inspires us to decipher the causes for Chinese passive sentences. The ancient people lived in extremely rugged natural environments, and they somehow held infinite fear and revered Heaven when facing the irresistible natural force that they could not explain, hence they naturally highlighted the power of Heaven in their language. Generally, “于(yú)” is used to introduce “天(tiān, ‘lord of heaven’)” and acts as a visual mark.

(4) After formal passive sentences tend to mature, the continued use of semantic passive sentences is mainly due to following the syntactic and the language potential of the context as in (37a) below:

(37) a. 鲁酒薄而邯郸围 (《庄子·胠箧》)

Lù jiǔ báo ér Hándān wéi (Zhuangzi·Qu Qie)

state Lu wine thin AUX Handan besiege

‘Handan was besieged due to the thin wine of the state Lu.’

b. 鲁酒薄而邯郸见围

Lù jiǔ báo ér Hándān jiàn wéi

state Lu wine thin AUX Handan by. ADV besiege

‘Handan was besieged due to the thin wine of Lu.’

*Zhuangzi* is the work of the late Warring States period when the formal passive sentences have been perfected. The reason why the author didn’t use (37b) is that the expression “鲁酒薄(Lù jiǔ báo, ‘thin wine of Lu’)” consists of three words, so does “邯郸围(Hándān wéi, ‘Handan was besieged’)”, and they read smoothly, fit for the rhythm, and go with the language potential of the context.

4. The definiteness of predicates in judgment sentences and the syntactic factors of “是(shì)” evolving into a judgment word

The study shows that the predicates of the judgment sentences in *Jinwen Shangshu* are definite, and they are restricted only to nouns, pronouns and noun phrases. There are logical relations of equality, generic, or resemblance among the person, the thing, and the
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object that are indicated by the subject and the predicate. Except for the external form and the logic relation between the subject and the predicate, a judgment sentence in Jinwen Shangshu is mainly judged by the nature of its predicate. Judgment sentences, descriptive sentences and narrative sentences are all in a complementary sentence system. The classification standard for them is the nature of their predicates.

Yi Mengchun (1989:111) has ever cited the interpretation in Ma Jianzhong (1898) as the evidence to show that the predicate of the judgment sentence can be a verb phrase or a subject-predicate phrase as in (38) and (39) below:

(38) 既不能令，又不受命，是绝物也。

“since I can not order others, and don’t want to obey orders, this will make me break off the relations with others.”

(39) 二老者，天下之大老也。

“They are two highly respected old man in the world, so their turning to him is like that fathers in the world all turn to him.’

In fact, the verb phrase “绝物(jué wù)” and the predicate phrase “天下之父归之(tiān xià zhī fù guī zhī)” are not expressing judgment. Yang Bojun (1989:205,208) translated the above two sentences respectively as follows: “since I can not order others, and don’t want to obey others’ orders, what I am facing is only a blind alley.” “The two old men are the world’s most prestigious men, so their turning to Xibo (西伯) indicates that fathers in the world all turn to Xibo”. The explicit forms of the predicates of some judgment sentences in the documentation language are verb phrases or subject-predicate phrases, while their implicit forms are omitted noun phrases. Such cases are not rare in Jinwen Shangshu as in (40) below:

(40) 乃尔牧阅

‘This is what you’ve heard of.’

Zhou Bingjun (1990) explains (40) as “this is what you’ve heard of”. The explicit form
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of (40) is the subject-predicate structure “尔攸闻(ěr yōu wén)” meaning “you’ve heard of”, but its implicit form is the omitted noun phrase which means “what you’ve heard of”.

Similarly, some explicit forms in documentation language are judgment sentences, and the noun or noun phrase is in the position of a predicate, but its implicit form is actually a narrative sentence. The noun or the noun phrase is not a predicate, but an object, and the verb predicates are implied as in (41a) and (42) below:

(41) a. 夫战，勇气也。 (《左传·庄公十年》)
fú zhàn yǒng qì yě (Zuo Zhuan·Zhuanggong Shi Nian)
war courage MP
‘Fighting in war relies on courage.’

b. 夫战，(凭借)勇气也。
fú zhàn, (píng jiè) yǒng qì yě
war rely on courage MP
‘Fighting in war relies on courage.’

The implicit form of (41a) is (41b), and “凭借(píng jiè)” is omitted here.

(42) 百乘，显使也。 (《战国策·齐策》)
bǎi chéng, xiǎn shǐ yě (Zhan Guo Ce·Qi Ce)
one hundred chariots envoy MP
‘One hundred chariots indicate that the diplomatic envoy is very grand.’

(43) 百乘 (之使)，显使也。
bǎi chéng (zhī shǐ), xiǎn shǐ yě
one hundred chariots AUX envoy grand envoy MP
‘One hundred chariots indicate that the diplomatic envoy is very grand.’

The explicit and implicit forms of (42) and (43) are all judgment sentences, and (42) is equal to (43).

There is no “也(yě)” in Jinwen Shangshu, and there’s only one case of “者(zhě)” in the book. The basic form of the judgment sentence is “subject + noun predicate” with a total of 22 cases. This type of sentences can be seen mostly in Yu Xia Shu·Yu Gong as in (44)-(47) below:

(44) 厥贡漆，丝。 (《虞夏书·禹贡》)
jué gòng qǐ sī (Yu Xia Shu·Yu Gong)
their tribute lacquer silk
‘The articles of tribute in this area are lacquer and silk.’

(45) 厥贡盐，绵。 (《虞夏书·禹贡》)
jué gòng yán, mián (Yu Xia Shu·Yu Gong)
their tribute salt fine ko-hemp cloth
‘The articles of tribute in this area are salt and fine ko-hemp cloth.’
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(46) 厥篚厥丝
jué fěi yuán sī
their baskets tussur silk

‘The tribute is tussur silk in baskets.’

(47) 厥土厥赤埴坟
jué tǔ jué chì zhí fén
there soil red clayey rich

‘The soil there is red, clayey and rich.’

The form is also the main form of the judgment sentences in the inscriptions of the Western Zhou Dynasty, and it is perhaps the earliest form of Chinese judgment sentence. In addition, there are also five forms derived from the basic sentence pattern in Jinwen Shangshu:

1) subject + 惟(wéi) + noun predicate

(48) 济河惟兖州
jǐ hé wéi yǎn zhōu
Ji River Yellow River is Yanzhou

‘The area between Ji River and Yellow River is called Yanzhou.’

2) subject + 曰(yuē) + noun predicate

(49) 五行，一曰水，二曰火，三曰木，
wǔ xíng, yī yuē shuǐ, èr yuē huǒ, sān yuē mù,
Five element one is water two is fire, three is wood

四曰金，五曰土
sì yuē jīn, wǔ yuē tǔ
four is gold five is soil

‘Five elements: one is water, two is fire, three is wood, four is gold, five is soil.’

3) subject + 是(shì) + noun predicate

(50) 启籥见书，乃并是吉
qǐ yuè jiàn shū, nǎi bìng shì jí
open lock see book just all are auspicious

‘They unlocked the lock and saw a book, in which all were just auspicious.’

4) subject + nǐ(nài) + noun predicate
See example (40) “乃尔攸闻(nǎi ěr yōu wén)”(Zhou Shu-Duo Fang).

5) subject + 则(zé) + noun predicate

(51) 岁则大熟
suì zé dà shú
year then ADV bumper harvest

‘This year then turned out very fruitful.’
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In the last two forms above, “乃(nǎi)” and “则(zé)” are adverbs which are used between the subject and the predicate to confirm that the judgment made by the predicate or the situation expressed by the predicate is true and reasonable. Although there is only one case respectively for the two forms in Jinwen Shangshu, such cases are more common in other documents of Pre-Qin dynasty and two Han dynasties. The cases of “曰(yuē, ‘is’)” used in judgment sentences are mainly in Zhou Shu · Hong Fan. Wang Yinzhi (1956:30) believes that “曰(yuē)” is like “是(wéi, ‘is’)”. In Jinwen Shangshu, there are a total of 36 cases of “惟(wéi, ‘is’)” used in judgment sentences. It is in high frequency, and it is so widespread that such cases can be found in Yu Xia Shu, Shang Shu and Zhou Shu. “Subject + 惟(wéi) + noun predicate” is the main form of judgment sentences in Jinwen Shangshu, and there is only one case of “是(shì)” used in judgment sentence, that is “乃并是吉(nǎi bìng shì jí)” in Zhou Shu-Jin Teng, but this might be the earliest case of “是(shì)” used as a judgment word in the documents.

How does “是(shì)” become a judgment word in modern Chinese? Analyzing how “是(shì)” is used in Jinwen Shangshu may give us some inspiration. There are 28 cases of “是(shì)” which is mostly used as a double-reference pronoun referring to a preposed object in the book as in (52) below:

(52) 今 商 王 受 惟 妇 言 是 用 （《周书·牧誓》）
     jīn Shāng wáng Shòu wéi fù yán shì yòng (Zhou Shu-Mu Shì)
     ‘Now Shou, the king of Shang only follows the words of his wife.’

“是(shì)” is used to repeatedly refer to the preposed object “妇言” (fù yán, ‘the woman’s words’). “是(shì)” can also be used as a conjunction meaning “于是” (yú shì, ‘then’) as in (53) below:

(53) 桑 土 既 蚕, 是 降 丘 宅 土
     sāng tǔ jì cán, shì jiàng qiū zhái tǔ
     mulberry soil already silkworms then come down mound dwell ground
     (《虞夏书·禹贡》)

(54) 于是 民 得 下 丘 居 土
     yú shì mín dé xià qiū jū tǔ
     then people could come down mound dwell on ground
     (司马迁: 《史记·夏本纪》)

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'Then people could come down from the mound and dwell on the ground.'

"是(shì)" is often used as a pronoun or a conjunction repeatedly referring to a more complex subject, so it is often used between a complex independent subject and a noun predicate, and the cases can be found in Jinwen Shangshu as in (55) below:

(55) 责 人 无 难, 惟 受 责 俾
blame others this not difficult ADV by blame obey
如 流, 是 惟 艰 滅! (《周书·秦誓》)

(56) 人 之 民 日 不 欲 与 我 斗,
other AUX people every day want with me fight
吾 民 日 不 欲 为 我 斗,
my people every day not want for me fight
是 强 者 之 所 以 反 弱 也。 (《荀子·王制》)
shí qiáng zhě zhī suǒ yǐ fǎn ruò yě (Xunzi·Wang Zhi)
this powerful person AUX reason turn weak MP

'People in other countries want to fight with me every day, while my men do not want to fight for me every day, this is why a powerful one becomes weak.'

"是(shì)" which repeatedly refers to "人之民日欲与我斗(ren zhi min ri yu yu wodou)
吾民日不欲为我斗(wu min ri bu yu wei wodou)" is the subject of "强者之所以反弱(qiang zhe zhi su0 yi fan ruo)"", and it is often used between subjects and noun predicates referring to the subjects as appositives, so with its function of repeatedly referring to the preposed object weakening gradually, "是(shì)" as a pronoun becomes empty constantly, and gradually becomes a copula which helps the subject indicate judgment or explain the subject. To Western Han dynasty, the grammatical function of "是(shì)" connecting the subject and predicate has been clear as in (57) below:

(57) 此 必 是 豁让 也。 (《史记·刺客列传》)
ci bi shi Yu Rang ye (Shi Ji·Ci Ke Lie Zhuang)

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The subject is “此” (cǐ, ‘this’), a near demonstrative pronoun. “是(shì)” is modified by the adverb “必” (bì, ‘must’), so the grammatical status of “是(shì)” as a judgment word has been very clear. To Eastern Han dynasty, the sentence pattern “subject + 是(shì) + noun predicate + 也(ye)” has been used frequently in the documents, and becomes a mature judgment sentence pattern gradually.

5. Verbs and objects in double-object sentences present complex word order, and verbs all have the agentic properties of transfer, continuation and bidirectionality

In Jinwen Shangshu, double-object sentences are very rich. The word orders of verbs and their two objects are complex, and they can be divided into two main patterns generally: the first is the basic pattern “the subject + verb predicate + indirect object + direct object” as in (58)-(60) below:

(58) 天乃锡禹洪范九畴 (《周书·洪范》)
Heaven then gave Yu great laws nine Division

(59) 大降尔四国民命 (《周书·多士》)
widely give your four countries people order

(60) 予誓告汝群言之首 (《周书·秦誓》)
I oath warn you many words AUX head

The pattern is the same basic syntactic form of the double-object sentences in ancient Chinese as those in modern Chinese, and it can be found that the direct or indirect objects are omitted in Jinwen Shangshu as in (61) and (62) below:

(61) 太保乃以庶邦冢君
Taibao, officer then and numerous countries leaders

(62) 出取币，乃复入锡周公。(《周书·召诰》)
out took jade and silk then again entered present Zhougong

‘The officer of Taibao and the leaders of numerous countries took out the jade and the silk, then entered again and presented them to Zhou Gong.’
In (61), the direct object of “锡(āi, ‘present’)” is omitted according to the former sentences.

(62) 高后丕乃崇降罪疾。(《商书·盘庚中》)
previous kings then just heavily condemn guilt evil
‘The previous kings then will condemn you for the guilt and evil heavily.’

In (62), the indirect object “汝(ǔ, ‘you’)” is omitted before the direct object “罪疾(zuì jí, ‘the guilt and evil’)” according to the sentence as in (63) below:

(63) 先后丕降与汝罪疾。(《商书·盘庚中》)
previous king then condemn to you guilt evil
‘The previous kings then will condemn you for the guilt and evil heavily.’

The second type is the form changed from the basic sentence pattern. It is based on the basic sentence pattern, and is formed by using certain grammatical means to adjust the word orders between the verbs and the double objects. There are four types as follows:

1) subject + verb predicate + indirect object + 于(yú) + direct object

(64) 予告汝于难。(《商书·盘庚上》)
yū gào rǔ yú nán (Shang Shu·Pangeng Shang)
I tell you with difficulties
‘Let me tell you the difficulties.’

2) subject + 以(以) + direct object + verb predicate + indirect object

(65) 予旦已受人之微言。(《周书·立政》)
yú dàn yǐ shòu rén zhī huī yán
I, Jidan have told all the glorious words of previous people to you.

3) subject + verb predicate + direct object + 于(yú) + indirect object

(66) 天降丧于殷。(《周书·君奭》)
tiān jiàng sàng yú Yīn (Zhou Shu·Jun Shi)
Heaven sent down ruin on Yin dynasty
‘Heaven sent down ruin on Yin.’

4) indirect object + verb predicate + direct object

(67) 禹锡玄圭。(《虞夏书·禹贡》)
Yǔ xī xuán guī (Yu Xia Shu·Yu Gong)
Yu present black jade

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‘Yu was presented the black jade.’

(68) 帝乃锡禹玄圭 (《史记·五帝本紀》)

dì nǎi xǐ Yǔ xuán guī (Shi Ji·Wu Di Ben Ji)

‘The king presented Yu the black jade.’

(67) is cited as (68) in Shi Ji·Wu Di Ben Ji. These double-object sentence patterns all meet two conditions: first, there is a clear relationship of agent and patient between verb predicates and double objects; Second, the indirect objects parallel with the direct objects rather than modify them.

The changed sentence pattern of double objects in Jinwen Shangshu is due to the emphasis on the semantic focus of the patient. When emphasizing the direct objects, type(1) and type(2) are formed, and when emphasizing the indirect objects, type(3) and type(4) are formed. There are two ways of emphasizing: one is changing the word order, and the other is adding a preposition before the semantic focus.

As to the four changed types from the basic pattern of double-object sentences in Jinwen Shangshu, when analyzed from an angle of explicit grammatical form, “subject + verb predicate + indirect object + 于(yú) + direct object” and “subject + verb predicate + direct object + 于(yú) + indirect object” can be analyzed as “the subject + verb predicate + object + complement of preposition-object structure”, and it seems that the pattern “subject + 以(yǐ) + direct object + verb predicate + indirect object” can be analyzed as “subject + adverbial of preposition-object structure + verb predicate + object”, and “indirect object + verb predicate + direct object” can be analyzed as “subject + verb predicate + object”. But the implicit grammatical content of these changed patterns is still the double-object sentence. The relationship between the transitive verb predicate and the double objects is very clear, and it is significantly different from those with the complement of preposition-object structure and the adverbial of preposition-object structure.

The double-object sentence of “subject + 以(yǐ) + direct object + verb predicate + indirect object” presents an immature state clearly in Jinwen Shangshu. First, they are less in quantity; second, they have a small range of distribution, only in Zhou Shu; Third, their syntactic structures are not complete. For example:

(69) 我无以告我先王 (《周书·金縢》)

wǒ wú yǐ gào wǒ xiān wáng (Zhou Shu·Jin Teng)

I no with report my former king

‘I have nothing to report to my former kings.’

The sentence above is an incomplete form of the changed sentence pattern, in which a direct object behind “以(yǐ)” is missing. In the double-object sentence “subject + verb
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predicate + direct object + 于(yú) + indirect object”, “于(yú)” introduces the indirect object, and is placed after the direct object with the pragmatic function of emphasizing the indirect object. Such changed pattern of double-object sentences has occurred in Bronze inscriptions, and is also very common in Pre-Qin documents.

There are a total of 17 double-object verbs in Jinwen Shangshu, which can be divided into two categories according to semantic types. Type one consists of the transitive verbs meaning “to ask” or “to tell”, including “问(wèn), 告(gào), 敕(chì), 慰(bì), 教(jiào)”; Type two consists of the transitive verbs meaning “to give” or “to befall”, including “锡(xī), 馈(kuì), 赠(wèi), 赐(yì), 授(shòu), 施(shī), 投(tóu), 降(jiàng), 致(zhì), 降致(jiàng zhì) and 降与(jiàng yú)”. There are only 3 verbs that are used in the double-object basic sentence type “subject + verb predicate + direct object” in which the indirect object is omitted, and they are “降(jiàng)”, “致(zhì)” and “降致(jiàng zhì)”; There are only 2 verbs that are used in the basic double-object sentence type “subject + verb predicate + indirect object” in which the direct object is omitted, and they are “授(lài)” and “锡(xī)”.

All the double-object verbs in Jinwen Shangshu have two properties: one is the transfer and continuation of the action, and the other is the bidirectionality of the action. The action of any double-object verbs must be conducted from one to another. There is a transitional point in the middle of the action before moving to the real target, and it must be a person close to the active verb. This transition point is sometimes omitted in the explicit syntactic form, but the implicit syntactic content always exists. The action or behavior of a double-object verb must involve two aspects: one is the person, and the other is the thing. The former is the object of the active verb, and the latter is the content of the action. That is to say, the verb must be with two objects, but the two objects are neither coordinate nor compound. The bi-directional property of the double-object verbs in Jinwen Shangshu is also shown as the positive and negative relation to the verb itself. For example, “问(wèn, ‘ask’)” in (70) and “告(gào, ‘tell’)” in (71) are semantically opposite. In fact, any double-object verb always implies a semantically opposite one.

(70) 二公及王问诸史与百执事
er gōng jí wáng wèn zhū shǐ yǔ bǎi zhí shì
two Gong and king ask these historiographers and various service officers
(《周书·金縢》)
zhí shì

‘Two officers of Gong asked the historiographers and various service officers.’

(71) 乃告太子、王季、文王 (《周书·金縢》)
nǎi gào tài wáng wáng jì wén wáng (Zhou Shu-Jin Teng)
then address King’s great-grandfather King Ji Wen King

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‘Then addressed King Wu’s great-grandfather, grandfather and father.’

The semantic content and scope also have an influence on the choice of the verbs for the double objects. The objects of “问(wèn)” and “告(gào)” are generally single, but the contents of “问(wèn)” and “告(gào)” are complicated. Therefore, the semantic range of double-object verbs like “问(wèn)” and “告(gào)” is much larger. For example, the direct object of the verb “告(gào)” in Yu Xia Shu-Gan Shi (《虞夏书·甘誓》) is almost the whole text of the oath. The contents of “锡(xī)” and “降(jiàng)” can only be specific or abstract things, therefore, they have a smaller semantic range as the double-object verbs.

Symbols and abbreviations

| Symbol | Explanation          |
|--------|----------------------|
| MP     | Modal Particle       |
| PREP   | Preposition          |
| AUX    | Auxiliary Word       |
| SADV   | Scope Adverb         |
| DRPR   | Double-reference Pronoun |
| ADV    | Adverb               |
| AF     | Affix                |
| COP    | Copula               |

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