

中研院歷史語言研究所集刊論文類編

語言文字編 語法卷

二

中國經濟學說史

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語言文字編·語法卷

二



中華書局

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An Emphatic Verb Phrase in the Oracle-Bone Inscriptions*

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This paper examines the construction pattern in which what is normally taken as a verb or verb phrase is nominalized by the main verb *yu* 有/又 or *wang* 亡. It suggests a hypothesis that such a construction conveys a sense of "emphasis" or entails a function of "contrast." The hypothesis is tested against actual inscriptions, and its adoption would account for some out-of-the-ordinary situations in which certain sacrificial activities were carried out by certain classes of people and/or directed toward certain ancestors.

0. Introduction: A General Description of the Different Types of Nominalization in the Oracle-Bone Inscriptions

Nominalization is a grammatical process by which a verb, verb phrase, or sentence is changed into a noun or noun phrase. A nominalized phrase thus plays the role of topic, subject, direct or indirect object of the verb, or object of a co-verb within a sentence. Notionally and semantically, the primary and intrinsic function of a noun or noun phrase is to refer to some animate or inanimate thing, matter, activity, process, state, or concept. However, in the case of a phrase which is obtained through nominalization

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of the verb₂ in the pattern “verb₁ + verb₂” (in which verb₂ is nominalized by being dependent on, or embedded in, verb₁), the primary referential function mentioned above becomes insignificant. This kind of nominalization plays the role of a predicate or verb phrase.

The concrete meanings of nominalized phrases cannot, of course, be exhaustively listed; they can mean any number or kind of things within a particular linguistic setting at any given time. There are, however, two categories of general meanings with which nominalization can be associated. In one of these, a phrase may be said in effect to convey such “performative” meanings as emphasis, contrast, characterization, or explanation. In the other category, a phrase may be interpreted as expressing a more specific, segmental, meaning such as a person, object, activity, time, location, condition, etc. It is only in the latter that the referential function is important. In the language of the oracle-bone inscriptions, the former category (“Category 1”)—which can be divided into two subtypes—is clearly marked, while the latter category (“Category 2”)—which can be divided into five subtypes—is not marked.

One of the two subtypes in Category 1 has the form of a verb or verb phrase preceded by the verb *yu* 出/又 or *wang* 亡. The other is comprised of a verb or verb phrase preceded by the “descriptive copula” *wei* 隹 or its negative counterpart *pu wei* 不佳 or *fei* 非; or alternately by the prescriptive or presumptive copula *hui* 市/實 and its most common negative counterpart *wu wei* 勿隹. Takashima (1990) contains a full study of the latter.

The five unmarked subtypes in Category 2 are determined by consideration of the meaning of a verb, verb phrase, or portion of a sentence, with reference to the particular syntactic positions in which it is found. Interpreted in terms of classical Chinese, they may be referred to as the “quasi-*che* 者” type, the “quasi-*so* 所” type, the “quasi-*chih* 之... (*yeh* 也)” type, the “quasi-*ch'i* 其” type, and finally the relative-clause type, in which the head noun modified by the preceding clause often refers to an unspecified subject or

object of the verb in the preceding clause. Apart from scattered remarks in previous papers, I have not yet made a systematic study of the last three types. For the quasi-*che* and the quasi-*so* types, however, the reader is referred to Takashima (1984b); here I will provide only two examples of each. First, for the quasi-*che* type:

出來自西 (*Ping-pien* 94.1) which is to be interpreted as 有來自西者 “there shall be someone coming from the west”; and

亡其來自西 (*Ping-pien* 94.2) which is to be interpreted as 亡其來自西者 “there might not be anyone coming from the west.” (Cf. also Case [C] on p. 684.)

For examples of the quasi-*so* type, we have the following:

若僂 (*Ching-hua* 1) which is to be interpreted as 若所稱 “just as prognosticated”; and

陟歲 (*Ts'ui-pien* 167) which is to be interpreted as 陟所劓 “offer up that which has been *kuei*-cut.”

This paper discusses only one type of nominalization, the Category 1 construction in which a verb, verb phrase, or portion of a sentence is preceded by the verb *yu* 出/又 or *wang* 亡.

The abbreviations of the titles of oracle-bone collections, both rubbings and drawings, follow those given in Keightley (1978: 229-231). Those not found in Keightley (*ibid*) are according to Shima (*S* 589).

The following symbols are used:

/ means “or.”

* means “unattested or reconstructed.”

> means “yields to.”

< means “is derived from.”

... means “missing” or “abbreviated.”

{ means “a pair of charges, *tui-chen* 對貞” or “to be considered together.” (NB: it does not mean “choose one or the other,” as it does in standard linguistic notation.)

() means various things such as "can be supplied," "the bone/modern form equivalent," "bibliographical information," etc., in other words "parenthetically supplied information for fuller understanding."

= means "is equivalent to."

≈ means "is roughly equivalent to."

We have also arbitrarily assigned the readings "Ch'iao" to 雀 and "Ch'üeh" to the name of the diviner 覡.

1. The Verbs *Yu* 又/又 and *Wang* 亡 + Verb / Verb-Phrase Pattern: The Emphatic Hypothesis

The kind of nominalization we shall be studying in this section functions as a verb phrase or predicate. It has the pattern "Verb₁ (*yu* or *wang*) + Verb₂," where Verb₂ invariably carries the essential information load. This is to be contrasted with the cases where the main idea of existence/possession is asserted, positively by the use of *yu* and negatively by the use of *wang*.

What has motivated the study of this pattern is that the Shang apparently could express a similar meaning with or without the use of the verb *yu/wang*. If this was the case, though, why did they use it at all? The following examples illustrate this question:

- (1) { (a) 丁巳卜貞王 筮 日不雨。 Pu-tz'u 535
 Ting-ssu day cracking, tested: When the king treats the sun as
 guest, it will not rain.
 (b) 貞帶 又 筮。 Ping-pien 457(7)
 Tested: Fu/*yu*/conduct a guesting ritual.
 (c) 帶 亡 其 筮。 Ibid (8)
 Fu/*wang*/perhaps/conduct a guesting ritual.

Example (1) (a) uses a single verb *pin* 筮, whereas (b) employs a verb phrase consisting of *yu* and *pin*. Example(c)uses *wang*, the negative counter-

part of *yu*, followed by the modal particle *ch'i* 其.¹ This shows that in (b) and (c) the main verbs are not *pin* but *yu* and *wang*, respectively. It also shows that *yu* cannot mean *yu* 侑 'to offer' because in that case the negative would have to be *wu* 勿. Here are another "pair" of examples:

- (1) { (d) 王其往逐麋獲。 *Ch'ien-pien* 3. 32. 5
 If the king goes chasing *chih*-deer, (he) will catch (them).
 (e) 戊午卜覈貞雀追亘虫獲。 *Ping-pien* 304 (7)
 Wu-wu day cracking, Ch'üeh tested: If Ch'iao chases Hsüan,
 (Ch'iao) will/*yu*/catch (him).

Although the Shang distinguished the chasing of game from that of humans by using the verbs *chu* 逐 and *chui* 追, respectively, they used the same verb *huo* 獲 for the successful outcome of both. Notice that in (e) the verb *yu* appears but in (d) it does not. Although (1) (d) and (1) (e) do not constitute a *tui-chen*, the former is expressed without *yu*, the latter with it. Why is this so?

The nominalization of the verb *pin* in (1)(b) and (1)(c), as well as that of the verb *huo* in (1)(e), is made possible by their being embedded in the "higher" verbs *yu* and *wang*. While this grammatical analysis is readily acceptable to specialists, the precise semantic interpretation of such a construction may be different depending on the analyst. The hypothesis I wish to offer in this paper is that such a construction came to entail "emphasis"

1 The modal particle *ch'i*, when combined with the verb *wang*, follows it, rather than precedes it--viz., *wang ch'i*. There are only two exceptions to this order in *Ping-pien*, namely, 47(8) [貞其亡來齒; but the rubbing is unclear] and 77(2) [王固曰吉佳其亡工言甬其徂]. Since the *wang ch'i* can be followed by a noun--e. g., *chih* 麋 'deer' [*Ping-pien* 286 (2); quoted in (4) (A) (d) and (e)]--the scope of *ch'i*'s modality extends backwards (as odd as this might seem) to the verb *wang*. That is, *wang ch'i* as a verb phrase is a tight unit both grammatically and semantically. I would like to discuss this phenomenon and related matters more fully on another occasion; for the present see also Note 26.

or “contrast,” a linguistic phenomenon which has a “performative” rather than a “referential” function. In other words, *yu/wang* gave prominence to the succeeding verb or verb phrase, and the divinatory charge and prognostication were uttered either positively or negatively with extra modal force, possibly resulting in a contrast between the nouns that are grammatically associated with the succeeding verb. In what follows, I will attempt to support this hypothesis, and explore some of its implications.

2. Dummy Word “occasion” / “chance”

We have already observed in (1)(b) and (1)(c) that the main verbs are *yu* and *wang*. When they are followed by another verb, we may regard the succeeding verb as being dependent on, or embedded in, them. This is one kind of nominalization, and I believe the semantic motivation for it should be explained in terms of the basic meanings of the verbs *yu* and *wang*, “have/there is” and “have not/there is not,” respectively.

In Takashima (1973: 50-53) I suggested that a dummy word such as “occasion” or “chance” be supplied after these verbs. Such a word is required in English to connect them to the succeeding verbs. While it is not essential in Chinese, it serves as a step toward accounting for the obvious difference in locution of such pairs of sentences as the following:

- | | | |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| (2) { | (a) 戊寅卜覈貞 <u>其來</u> 。 | <i>Ping-pien</i> 28(1) |
| | <u>Wu-yin</u> day cracking, Ch'üeh tested: Chih Chia might come. | |
| | (b) 貞 <u>其來</u> 不其來。 | Ibid (2) |
| | Tested: Chia might not come. | |
| { | (c) 乎目于河 <u>出來</u> 。 | Ibid 503 (5) |
| | If (we) call upon Mu [to make a <i>ti</i> -binding sacrifice (禘) ²] | |

2 Although I have supplied the verb *ti* 禘 here on the basis of the total context of the inscriptions on *Ping-pien* 502 and its reverse, 503, it is possible that the missing verb is *wang* 往 ‘to go; to send’. In either case, Chow Kwok-ching’s

{ to the River God, (s)he will have an occasion to come.
(Tentative translation.)

(d) 貞亡其來。

Ibid (6)

Tested: There might not be an occasion for (Mu) to come.

Or: (Mu) might not have an occasion to come. (Tentative translation.)

The difference in locution here is that (a) and (b) do not use *yu/wang*, while (c) and (d) do, for the same verb *lai*.

Studies by Takashima (1980: 84–86; 95–96) and (more specifically) Chow Kwok-ching (1982: 136–141) have shown that in certain contexts the verbs *yu* and *wang* are best construed as active, transitive verbs stronger in meaning than “to have/not have.” Chow (*op. cit.*: 136–137) suggests the meaning “get” for *yu*, and *mutatis mutandis* this is acceptable. Applied as it stands to examples (2)(c) and (2)(d), Chow’s suggestion would produce the meaning “(Mu) shall *get* to come” and “(Mu) might not *get* to come,” respectively. (Here I have used the word “might” to express the sense of “uncertainty” on the part of the Shang diviner indicated by the use of the modal particle *ch’i*.)

One possible deduction from the interpretation of “get to come” is a potential meaning, “can come.” Since this is based on an English translation, it is perhaps perilous to assign that meaning to the Shang expression itself. However, to ensure that we are not prematurely discarding a correct answer, let us examine the evidence in the inscriptions.

First, the potential meaning does not seem to apply to all the cases in which the *yu/wang*+verb/verb-phrase pattern is observed.³ For example:

(續) study (1982: 100–116) indicates the need to supply a verb before *yü* 于, rather than to interpret *yü* as a full-fledged verb, which would presumably mean “to go.”

3 In Section 4 we shall discuss cases where the verbs *yu* and *wang* are followed by another verb and yet cannot be regarded as forming the *yu/wang*+verb/verb-phrase pattern.

- (2) { (e) 甲申卜勞貞孚丁亡敗。 Ping-pien 61(5)
Chia-shen day cracking, Pin tested: The soldiers⁴ of Yü will not get (<have an occasion to be) defeated. (Tentative translation.)
 (f) 貞孚丁其出敗。 Ibid (6)
 Tested: The soldiers of Yü might get (< have an occasion to be) defeated. (Tentative translation.)

It is clear from other inscriptions (*S* 170.4) that Yü 孚 is the name of a friend of the Shang. It would be strange, therefore, that the Shang should have divined whether Yü's soldiers might "be able to" be defeated or will not "be able to" be defeated. (The use of English "get" when followed by the past participle of a transitive verb has a passive meaning, but that is irrelevant to the semantic implication of *yu* and *wang* in question.) The strangeness of the potential interpretation for *yu* and *wang* is further intensified by the presence of action-controllable verbs such as *pin* 寤 'to treat as guest' in examples (1)(b) and (1)(c), since the execution of this verb under normal circumstances (which will be made clear later) depended on the will of the Shang. Second, in the inscriptions, the potential meaning is expressed by the word *k'o* 克 'be able, can; vanquish', which in the following example is found combined with the word *yu* itself:

- (2) (g) 寅小臣沓克又戔画……。 Chia-pien 1267
 It should be the *hsiao-ch'en*, Yung, who should be able to have a chance to give a damaging blow to...⁵

Although this is a Period III inscription which might require a different

4 For this meaning, see Ch'iu Hsi-kuei (1983: 23-24).

5 The modern transcription of this inscription is uncertain. For another interpretation of the order in which the inscription is to be read, see Shima Kunio (*S* 132.2). Cf. also the *k'ao-shih* by Ch'ü Wan-li 屈萬里 for *Chia-pien* 1267/p. 127. However, it seems certain that the string "*k'o yu tsai* 克又戔" is to be construed as a syntactic unit, and that is the crucial point here.

treatment from the Period I inscriptions of (2)(e) and (2)(f), it is unlikely that *yu* in (2)(g) had a potential meaning in addition to that of *k'o*.

Another possible deduction from the interpretation “get to come” or, literally, “get/obtain someone’s coming” or “have (a chance/occasion) for someone to come,” is to construe the *yu* and its negative counterpart *wang* as conveying an emphatic sense. This is derived chiefly from evidence I have found in the inscriptions, supported by the possibility that nominalization of this type often conveys emphasis in classical Chinese as well.⁶

- 6 This possibility is yet to be fully explored. It is a common practice that, when *yu* or *wu* 無 precedes a verb/verb phrase, one supplies either *che* 者 or *so* 所 (which is basically referential in function) to understand the expression. This is appropriate in many cases, but there is another kind of example in which the emphatic hypothesis seems to give a better explanation for the use of *yu* and *wu*. A few examples are given below:

(1) 志士仁人無求生以害仁，有殺身以成仁。

Lun-yü 論語 (HY Concordance 31/15/9)

The determined scholar and the man of virtue will never seek to stay alive at the expense of doing harm to [the principle of] humane life; (they) will even sacrifice their lives to establish it.

N. B. Ōta Tatsuo (1964: 73) quotes this passage and observes that in the above use of *yu* and *wu* it is not clear “what [求生以害仁 or 殺身以成仁] refers to—whether it refers to the existence or non-existence of the action or to that of the person.” It quite possibly refers to neither. That is, the use of *yu* and *wu* is to be explained more as an emphatic expression. In this regard, Ma Chien-chung (1898: 228)—whose opinion is dismissed by Ōta (*ibid*)—nonetheless captures the meaning here. Ma says that the use of *yu* here is to be interpreted as *wei yu* 惟有 ‘it is only...’.

(2) 子曰苟有用我者，期月而已可也，三年有成。

Lun-yü (*op. cit.*: 25/13/10)

“The Master said, ‘If anyone were to employ me, in a year’s time I would have brought things to a satisfactory state, and after three years I should [really] have results to show for it.’” D. C. Lau’s (1979: 120) translation.

(3) 故君子有不戰戰必勝也。

Meng-tzu (HY Concordance 14/2B/1)

Therefore, a gentleman would rather not fight; but if he does, he will surely win a victory.

(4) 人之有道也，飽食煖衣逸居而無教則近於禽獸。聖人有憂之。

Meng-tzu (*op. cit.*: 20/3A/4)