INTRODUCTION *to* CLASSICAL CHINESE

Kai Vogelsang

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Preface

When Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat, the first European professor 'de Langue et de Littérature chinoises et tartares' at the Collège de France published his *Élémens de la grammaire chinoise* in 1822, he optimistically predicted:

The obstacles and prejudices that have up to now prevented the progress of Chinese literature in Europe seem to diminish day by day; and one can foresee the moment when the former will have been completely removed and the latter entirely eradicated: then, the study of Chinese will become as easy as that of all other oriental languages, maybe even as easy as that of certain European languages. (Abel-Rémusat 1822, p. v)

Yet, despite some great scholarly endeavours, the obstacles in the study of Classical Chinese have by no means disappeared. While lexicography and historical phonology of Old Chinese have made significant progress, the grammar of Classical Chinese remains sadly under-studied. Georg von der Gabelentz's *Chinesische Grammatik* of 1881, a landmark in Sinological scholarship, remains unsurpassed until this day. Although numerous articles devoted to specific phenomena and some short outline grammars have appeared since, there still is no comprehensive state-of-the-art grammar of Classical Chinese. The one work that would have lived up to this promise, Ulrich Unger's *Grammatik des Klassischen Chinesisch* in ten volumes, was never completed.

A similar situation obtains with regard to textbooks. To be sure, there is no dearth of primers of Classical Chinese in Western languages. As early as 1857, Wilhelm Schott wrote a *Chinesische Sprachlehre zum Gebrauche bei Vorlesungen und zur Selbstunterweisung*; in 1968, Harold Shadick's highly successful *First Course in Literary Chinese* in three volumes as well as Raymond Dawson's succinct *Introduction to Classical Chinese* appeared; in 1985, Ulrich Unger published his erudite *Einführung in das klassische Chinesisch*; in 2005, Robert Gassmann and Wolfgang Behr completed a three-volume course of *Antikchinesisch*; and in 2011, Paul van Els published a delightful Dutch *lesboek* entitled *Van orakelbot tot weblog*, to name just a few. But there are many more: in European and American universities, many departments use internal compilations of material in class. Indeed, the very abundance of different primers indicates the problem: there is no single scholarly introduction to the

Classical Chinese language that fulfils all needs, providing a comprehensive grammatical outline as well as detailed analyses of Classical texts, reading strategies, fundamentals of ancient Chinese cultural history, methods for the study of ancient texts, and up-to-date references. Significantly, Endymion Wilkinson's authoritative research guide, in the section on studying Classical Chinese, recommends: 'Try using one of the many textbooks and readers compiled for Chinese university students' (Wilkinson 2018, 43). Almost 200 years after Abel-Rémusat, there still is no standard textbook of Classical Chinese for Western students.

The present volume is intended to fill this gap. Such an enterprise may seem daunting, and the present author would never have undertaken it were he not standing on the shoulders of giants. The grammatical framework developed by Ulrich Unger in his *Grammatik des Klassischen Chinesisch* provided a solid basis for my analyses; the verb classes I propose were inspired by the work of John Cikoski; among the inventory of clause constituents, I owe the category of 'complement' to Derek Herforth and William G. Boltz; the description of nominalization is based on unpublished material by William G. Boltz; and finally, I followed Axel Schuessler for phonological reconstructions of Old Chinese.

Moreover, I am profoundly grateful to many people who personally assisted me in writing this book: to the late Hans Stumpfeldt for encouraging and inspiring me in countless ways; to Bill Boltz, ever enthusiastic to discuss grammatical problems, for giving me erudite guidance over many years; to Ruth Cremerius for debating all those thorny details with me over and over; to Ruth Cordes and Roland Kießling for providing me with linguistic guidance; to Joachim Gentz for valuable feedback to an early draft and inspiring the Focus on text structures; to Axel Schuessler and Eric Henry for generously supplying me with their unpublished material; to Wolfgang Behr for loading me with *published* material; to Yegor Grebnev and Christian Schwermann for extensive comments on parts of the manuscript; to Christoph Harbsmeier for much material and advice; to Derek Herforth for alerting me to many weaknesses in my draft; and to three reviewers for Oxford University Press for their highly stimulating comments.

But most of all, I am grateful to my students and assistants at the Asia-Africa Institute, who offered truly overwhelming support of this project for six years: to Charly Hirsch Morbey, the mistress of the glossary, who unflinchingly drafted and redrafted the first versions of this

book; Nils Wieland and Moritz Hesselmann, who tested early drafts in their tutorials; Stefan Christ, Alexandra Rohse, Marie Schierhorn, Valerie Fuhlenbrok, and Charles Schildge, who invested hours, days, and weeks helping to revise every detail of this book; and—last, but certainly not least—my second-year students, who patiently coped with all the imperfect stages of this book.

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For ease of recognition, syntactic constituents are abbreviated with capital letters, whereas lowercase is used for word classes.

A	adjunct		pr	pronoun
adv	adverb		pr_{dem}	demonstrative pronoun
aux	modal auxiliary		pr_{ind}	indefinite pronoun
C	complement		pr_{int}	interrogative pronoun
comp	comparative		pr_{per}	personal pronoun
conj	conjunction		pr_{refl}	reflexive pronoun
cop	copula		pr_{rel}	relative pronoun
ini	initial position		prep	preposition
interj	interjection		PrP	prepositional phrase
itr	intransitive		pt	particle
MC	Middle Chinese		pt_{int}	interrogative particle
mod	modifier		pt_{emp}	emphatic particle
MSC	Modern Standard Chinese		S	subject
n	noun		temp	temporal
n_c	common noun		tr	transitive
n_{loc}	local noun		tr_2	ditransitive
n_p	proper noun		v	verb
n_{temp}	temporal noun		v_i	intransitive verb
NP	noun phrase		v_n	neutral verb
O	object		v_{st}	stative verb
O_d	direct object		v_{tr}	transitive verb
O_i	indirect object		VP	verb phrase
O_{pr}	object pronoun		*	reconstructed pronunciation; unattested construction
$O_=$	coreferential object		<	derived from
OC	Old Chinese		>	developed into
P	predicator		⟨ ⟩	deletion
$part_a$	active participle		/	alternatives
$part_p$	passive participle		→	modifies
pass	passive voice		+	coordinated with

Abbreviated book titles

Unless noted otherwise, books are quoted by *juan* number. Scholarly literature is listed in the bibliography.

ChuC *Chuci zhijie* 楚辭直解, ed. by Chen Zizhan 陳子展. Shanghai 1996.

CQFL *Chunqiu fanlu yizheng* 春秋繁露義證, ed. by Su Yu 蘇輿. Beijing 2010, quoted by *pian*.

Erya *Erya yishu* 爾雅義疏, ed. by Hao Yixing 郝懿行. 2 vols. Shanghai 1983, quoted by *pian*.

FY *Fayan yishu* 法言義疏, ed. by Wang Rongbao 汪榮寶. 2 vols. Beijing 1996.

GLiang *Chunqiu Guliang jingzhuan buzhu* 春秋穀梁經傳補注, ed. by Zhong Wenzheng 鍾文烝. 2 vols. Beijing 2009, quoted by duke number and year.

GLong *Gongsun Longzi xuanjie* 公孫龍子懸解, ed. by Wang Guan 王琯. Beijing 1996.

Guan *Guanzi jiaoshi* 管子校釋, ed. by Yan Changyao 顏昌嶢. Changsha 1996, quoted by *pian*.

GY *Guoyu jijie* 國語集解, ed. by Xu Yuangao 徐元誥. Beijing 2002, quoted by *juan* and paragraph.

GYang *Chunqiu Gongyang zhuan zhushu* 春秋公羊傳注疏, ed. by Xu Yan徐彥 [ed. *Shisan jing zhushu*]. Shanghai 2009, quoted by duke number and year.

HDNJ *Huangdi neijing suwen: fu Lingshu jing* 黃帝內經素問:附靈樞經. Shanghai 1955, quoted by *pian*.

HFei *Han Feizi jijie* 韓非子集解, ed. by Wang Xianshen 王先慎. Beijing 1998, quoted by *pian*.

HNan *Huainan zi jishi* 淮南子集釋, ed. by He Ning 何寧. 3 vols. Beijing 1998.

HSWZ *Hanshi waizhuan jianshu* 韓詩外傳箋疏, ed. by Qu Shouyuan 屈守元. Chengdu 1996.

Lao *Laozi jiaoshi* 老子校釋, ed. by Zhu Qianzhi 朱謙之. Beijing 1984, quoted by *zhang*.

Li *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義, ed. by Kong Yingda 孔穎達 [ed. *Shisan jing zhushu*]. Shanghai 2009.

Lie *Liezi jishi* 列子集釋, ed. by Yang Bojun 楊伯峻. Beijing 1996.

LNZ *Xinyi Lienü zhuan* 新譯列女傳, ed. by Huang Qingquan黃清泉. Taipei 1996, quoted by *juan* and *pian*.

LT   Liutao 六韜, ed. by Chen Xi 陳曦, Beijing 2016.

Lü   *Lüshi chunqiu jiaoshi* 呂氏春秋校釋, ed. by Chen Qiyou 陳奇猷. 2 vols. Shanghai 1984, quoted by *juan* and *pian*.

LY   *Lunyu zhengyi* 論語正義, ed. by Liu Baonan 劉寶楠. 2 vols. Beijing 1998, quoted by *pian* and *zhang*.

Meng   *Mengzi zhengyi* 孟子正義, ed. by Jiao Xun 焦循. 2 vols. Beijing 1998, quoted by *pian* and *zhang*.

Mo   *Mozi xiangu* 墨子閒詁, ed. by Sun Yirang 孫詒讓. 2 vols. Beijing 2001, quoted by *pian*.

Shen   *Shenzi jijiao jizhu* 慎子集校集注, ed. by Xu Fuhong 許富宏. Beijing 2013, quoted by *pian*.

Shi   *Xinyi Shizi duben* 新譯尸子讀本, ed. by Shui Weisong 水渭松. Taipei 1997.

SHJ   *Xinyi Shanhai jing* 新譯山海經, ed. by Yang Xipeng 楊錫彭. Taipei 2004.

SJ   *Shiji* 史記, ed. by Sima Qian 司馬遷. Beijing 1997.

SJS   *Shangjun shu zhuizhi* 商君書錐指, ed. by Jiang Lihong 蔣禮鴻. Beijing 1996, quoted by *pian*.

Sun   *Shiyi jia zhu Sunzi bingfa jiaoli* 十一家注孫子校理, ed. by Yang Bing'an 楊丙安. Beijing 1999.

SY   *Shuoyuan jiaozheng* 說苑校證, ed. by Xiang Zonglu 向宗魯. Beijing 1987.

Wen   *Wenzi shuyi* 文子疏義, ed. by Wang Liqi 王利器. Beijing 2000.

WLiao   *Wei Liaozi* 尉繚子, ed. by Xu Yong 徐勇. Zhengzhou 2010.

Wu   Wuzi 吳子, ed. by Xu Yong 徐勇. Zhengzhou 2010.

XJ   *Xinyi Xiaojing duben* 新譯孝經讀本, ed. by Lai Yanyuan 賴炎元 and Huang Junlang 黃俊郎. Taipei 1992, quoted by *zhang*.

Xun   *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解, ed. by Wang Xianqian 王先謙. 2 vols. Beijing 1996.

XS   *Xinshu jiaozhu* 新書校注, by Jia Yi 賈誼, ed. by Yan Zhenyi 閻振益 and Zhong Xia 鐘夏. Beijing 2000, quoted by *juan* and *pian*.

XX   *Xinxu jiaoshi* 新序校釋, ed. by Shi Guangying 石光瑛 and Chen Xin 陳新. 2 vols. Beijing 2001, quoted by *juan* and *zhang*.

XY   *Xinyu jiaozhu* 新語校注, ed. by Wang Liqi 王利器. Beijing 1997, quoted by *pian*.

Yan   *Yanzi chunqiu jishi* 晏子春秋集釋, ed. by Wu Zeyu 吳則虞. 2 vols. Beijing 1982, quoted by *juan* and *pian*.

YDan   *Xinyi Yan Danzi* 新譯燕丹子, ed. by Cao Haidong 曹海東. Taipei 1995.

Yi   *Zhouyi zhengyi* 周易正義, ed. by Kong Yingda 孔穎達 [ed. *Shisan jing zhushu*]. Shanghai 2009.

YTL   *Yantie lun jiaozhu* 鹽鐵論校注, ed. by Wang Liqi 王利器. 2 vols. Beijing 1992, quoted by *pian*.

ZGC   *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策. 3 vols. Shanghai 1985, quoted by *juan* and *pian*.

ZL   *Zhouli zhengyi* 周禮正義, ed. by Sun Yirang 孫詒讓. 14 vols. Beijing 2000.

Zhuang *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋, ed. by Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩. 4 vols. Beijing 1997, quoted by *pian*.

Zuo   *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注, ed. by Yang Bojun 楊伯峻. 4 vols. Beijing 1981, quoted by duke number and year.

Introduction

Classical Chinese is perhaps the most important language in world history. Its significance is comparable to that of Latin and English, and the extent of its impact is second to none. Although it was used as a living language only during a relatively short time span of 400 years, it was the foundation of a literary tradition which spanned two millennia, surpassing that of any other civilization. Classical Chinese has shaped thought and literature throughout the history of imperial China and up to the present day. This introduction will give an outline of how Classical Chinese may be defined, what its characteristic features are, and how it is treated in the present book.

Defining Classical Chinese

Simply put, Classical Chinese is the language of the Chinese classics: the language of the philosophical and historical literature that represented the greatest flowering of Chinese intellectual history. The Classical period—roughly the fourth to the first century BC—saw the 'Hundred Schools' (百家) of Chinese philosophy, the beginnings of Chinese historiography, and the earliest attempts at synthesizing the whole of received wisdom. It was the age in which the words of Confucius and his followers were committed to writing, contending with the teachings of Daoism, Mohism, Legalism, and many others that laid the foundations of Chinese thought. Their writings constituted a canon of acknowledged excellence for later Chinese literati who spared no effort to learn the Classical language, which was far removed from the Chinese they spoke. Just as European writers turned to Homer, Herodotus, Cicero, and Sallust, the Chinese read, emulated, and quoted the *Lunyu, Mengzi, Zuozhuan,* and *Shiji*. These and other classical works provided a model that served to embellish the style and strengthen arguments in all respectable Chinese literature well into the twentieth century.

Until today, no student of Chinese culture can afford to neglect the Classical Chinese language. Even scholars dealing exclusively with modern China ignore it at their peril: not only scholarly articles, but

also literature, political speeches, and newspaper articles employ elements of Classical Chinese. In the past decades, there has been a notable revival of Classical Chinese, especially among young scholars, and several internet sites are devoted to promoting the language.

Box 1 Classical Chinese in the twenty-first century

From an e-mail to the author, September 2014:
尊敬的 Prof. Dr. Kai Vogelsang：
安好
百忙之中，收閱拙文，感激之情，寸言難達。
余姓張名凱*，字銘�گ，乃天津市直沽人也。祖居山東平陰，高祖乃民間中醫，活人無數，至余已第五代。幼好舊學，性喜讀書，曾入梨園行當之四載有餘，受傳統文化之耳濡目染。少年之季，興至針灸，祖母慈愛，授予一二。後學塾針灸推拿五年以至學士，再研讀中醫文獻三年而獲碩士，於二零一一年畢業回津就職至今。...余攻學之外，尚醉心於三教之學，出入於百家之言。嘗品味佛教唯識禪宗之八識定慧，玩索道家老子莊子之無為逍遙，世行儒家中庸大學之慎獨修身。閒暇之餘，吾常修習中華傳統武術，練陳氏太極數年有餘，解棚挒擠按之意，思采列肘靠之法。時至今日，吾已徜徉於中國古代文化十年有餘，僅得中醫之初道，望從三教聖賢為師，再修心正義，證天地大道，則此生之願，足矣.

* Name changed. For other examples of CC elements in everyday communication, *cf.* the illustrations in van Els 2011.

Yet, despite its importance, for two millennia the Classical Chinese language had not been systematically described. The Chinese never developed a grammatical tradition like the ancient Romans did, explaining the structure of their language and the rules that govern it. Countless students, aspiring to official positions in the Chinese empire, learned the language in years of intensive reading, memorization, and recitation of classical texts. Anthologies and annotated editions were meant to inculcate students with the basic tenets of Chinese tradition and teach them the classical language by the intuitive method, as it were. The first systematic accounts of Classical Chinese were given by European scholars like Abel-Rémusat (*Élémens de la grammaire chinoise*, 1822) and Georg von der Gabelentz (*Chinesische Grammatik*, 1881), who laid the ground-work for the academic study of Classical Chinese.

Earlier grammars like Martino Martini's *Grammatica sinica* (1653) or Francisco Varo's *Arte de la lengua mandarina* (1703) dealt with the Early Modern Chinese language. The first

grammar written in Chinese, Ma Jianzhong's 馬建忠 *Mashi wentong* 馬氏文通, heavily influenced by Latin grammar, was published in 1898 (*cf*. Ma Jianzhong 2007).

Arguably, the concept of 'Classical Chinese' is a scholarly construction of the nineteenth century—and up to the present day there is no consensus as to how it is defined. The term has been used in a variety of different ways. In Western literature it is variously understood as the Chinese language of the fifth to the third century BC (Unger 1985, 1), or 'the language of the period from the end of the Spring and Autumn period down to the end of the Han dynasty' (Norman 1988, 83) and beyond that, even including the literary language written until the twentieth century (Ramsey 1989, 4). In Chinese scholarly literature, on the other hand, the concept does not appear at all. The term that usually appears in text book titles, 古代漢語 *gudai Hanyu*, is a blanket term covering all varieties of written Chinese from the earliest texts down to the thirteenth century.

Cf., for example, the classic works by Zhou Fagao 1972 and Wang Li 1981, as well as more recent textbooks such as Zhang and Yan 1990 that include prose and poetry from the *Shijing* (first millennium BC) to Jiang Kui (*c*.1155–1221).

The term 文言 *wenyan* (or 文言文 *wenyanwen*) is equally broad in scope. It refers to the language employed in all genres of texts written in *imitation* of classical texts, covering the two millennia from Han times to the twentieth century. Finally, the term 古文 *guwen* is highly ambiguous: it may refer to (1) 'old texts', roughly equal in meaning to *gudai Hanyu*; (2) texts written in the 'old script' used before the Qin reform as opposed to such written in 'new script' of Han times; and (3) to a certain literary style promoted by traditional scholars beginning in the eighth century. None of these terms corresponds to 'Classical Chinese': paradoxically, there is no Chinese term for 'Classical Chinese'.

In the present book, 'Classical Chinese' will be defined as the language represented in transmitted Chinese literature of the fourth to first centuries BC, which is roughly the time of the Warring States (戰國), Qin (秦), and Western Han (西漢). This delimitation, which differs from others cited above, was chosen for two reasons. Firstly, judging from the present state of scholarship it seems untenable to date any of the classical texts earlier than the fourth century BC. Secondly, the period beginning in the first century AD not only saw a dramatic increase in literary production and a proliferation of literary genres. More importantly, the language of the texts began to differ significantly from the language of earlier texts: the beginning of the first century AD appears to mark the end of the classical period.

Classical Chinese is thus distinguished from (1) pre-Classical Chinese, used in texts before the fourth century BC, and (2) Literary Chinese, being the written scholarly language used from the first century onward. Furthermore, Classical Chinese should be distinguished from (3) the language of texts that were not transmitted by copying but buried and or discarded more than two millennia ago.

(1) Classical Chinese is clearly distinct from pre-Classical Chinese, that is the language used in inscriptions and literature before the fourth century BC. In particular, pre-Classical Chinese is the language of Chinese *canonical* literature (which, unfortunately, is also often called 'classical'), namely the *Five Canonical Texts*, 五經, which were written in an archaic—or in many instances: archaizing—language that differed considerably from Classical Chinese. Indeed, the vocabulary and syntax of pre-Classical Chinese was so different from the subsequent stages of Old Chinese that it apparently was no longer fully understood in the classical period. Significantly, the *Five Canonical Texts* 'rarely served as a model for later writers' (Norman 1988, 83): in this sense, too, they were *not* classical.

(2) On the other end of the time scale, Classical Chinese is distinguished from Literary Chinese. Whereas in the classical period the written language corresponded more or less closely to spoken language, this correlation became tenuous in the first and second centuries AD. While spoken Chinese evolved, the written language continued to be modelled on the classical language: it turned into a purely *literary* language, similar to Latin in mediaeval Europe. However, this literary language by no means remained true to Classical Chinese. While preserving archaisms and most syntactical structures, Literary Chinese was constantly infused with new vocabulary. Many elements of Classical Chinese grammar were no longer understood, so that they came to be used in different ways. Moreover, Literary Chinese developed an abundance of genres that each followed specific linguistic conventions. Thus Literary Chinese, while firmly based on Classical Chinese, developed in various ways that set it clearly apart from the latter.

(3) Finally, Classical Chinese should be differentiated from the language of the manuscripts on bamboo, wood, or silk that have recently been found in ancient tombs, wells, or ruins of frontier posts (*cf.* Focus 19). While written at the same time as the classical texts, these manuscripts are mostly legal or military documents that use administrative

language and much technical terminology that is not to be found in classical literature. The same is true for medical and mantic texts found in tombs: these are specialized texts that would require a special introduction. Moreover, these texts in tombs, having been buried for two millennia, never became models for later literature: they, too, were not classical.

Characteristics of Classical Chinese

Phonology

Classical Chinese has not been spoken for 2,000 years. We can only guess at how it may have sounded; but it must have been vastly different from Modern Standard Chinese. Linguistic change is observable even within the life-spans of individuals. Over generations and millennia its effects are tremendous. Consider, for example, the differences between the *Beowulf*, written in Old English about a thousand years ago, and its modern counterpart:

1	Hwæt! wē Gār-Dena in geār-dagum	So. The Spear-Danes in days gone by
2	þēod-cyninga þrym gefrūnon,	and the kings who ruled them had courage and greatness.
3	hū ðā æþelingas ellen fremedon.	We have heard of those princes' heroic campaigns.
4	Oft Scyld Scēfing sceaþena þrēatum,	There was Shield Sheafson, scourge of many tribes,
5	monegum mǣgþum meodo-setla oftēah.	a wrecker of mead-benches, rampaging among foes.
6	egsode Eorle, syððan ǣrest wearð	This terror of the hall-troops had come far.
7	fēasceaft funden; hē þæs frōfre gebād:	A foundling to start with, he would flourish later on
8	wēox under wolcnum, weorð-myndum þāh,	as his powers waxed and his worth was proved.
9	oðþæt him ǣghwylc þāra ymb-sittendra	In the end each clan on the outlying coasts
10	ofer hron-rāde hȳran scolde,	beyond the whale-road had to yield to him
11	gomban gyldan: þæt wæs gōd cyning!	and begin to pay tribute. That was one good king.

Beowulf, tr. by Seamus Heaney.
London and New York: Norton, 2000.

Classical Chinese is more than twice as old as the *Beowulf*. The gulf that separates us from this language is even wider than that between Modern

English and Old English. The linguist Lü Shuxiang 呂叔湘 once remarked that if the great scholar Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), who wrote standard commentaries on the sayings of Confucius, were to travel back in time and witness a conversation between Confucius and his disciples, he would not have understood a single sentence of what they were talking about. Much less a contemporary Chinese, being another 800 years removed from Zhu Xi. We still do not know how Classical Chinese sounded. Only its phonological structure—that is the *relationships* among the sounds— has been reconstructed with some degree of confidence.

The following is a phonological reconstruction of a text from *Han Feizi*, next to a *pinyin* transcription in Modern Standard Chinese. It is the famous anecdote about the peasant who sees a rabbit run against a tree stump and break its neck, whereupon he, the peasant, instead of plowing his field decides to wait for further rabbits to do the same.

1	sûŋh nin wəʔ krêŋ lîn taʔ	Sòng rén yǒu gēng tián zhě
2	lîn truŋ wəʔ tro	tián zhōng yǒu zhū
3	lhâh tsôʔ thok tro	tù zǒu chù zhū
4	tet keŋʔ nə siʔ	zhé jǐng ér sǐ
5	ʔin lhak gə ruiʔ nə hjuʔ tro	yīn shì qí lěi ér shǒu zhū
6	krəih bukh têk lhâh	jì fù dé tù
7	lhâh pəʔ khâiʔ bukh têk	tù bù kě fù dé
8	nə lhin wai sûŋh kwêk sauh	ér shēn wèi sòng guó xiào
9	gêmʔ lok ləʔ sên waŋ tə teŋh	jīn yù yǐ xiān wáng zhī zhèng
10	drə tâŋ lhats tə min	chí dāng shì zhī mín
11	krî hjuʔ tro tə rus laiʔ	jiē shǒu zhū zhī lèi yě

These reconstructions indicate staggering differences between Old and Modern Chinese. Hardly a single syllable in the Old Chinese reconstruction looks like anything we know from Modern Standard Chinese, and a number of features are decidedly alien to it. Initial consonant clusters like in *krêŋ (l. 1) or *truŋ (l. 2) are entirely absent from Modern Standard Chinese, just like the glottal stop *ʔ that occurs in almost every line and the final consonants *-k (as in *thok, l. 3) and *-t (*tet, l. 4). Also the vowels, although we do not know their exact phonetic value, appear to be quite different from those of Modern Standard Chinese. To sum up, Old Chinese and Modern Chinese are entirely *different languages*.

Students of Classical Chinese may rest reassured that they will not be expected to attempt pronunciation of these tongue-twisters. In fact, they are not meant to be pronounced in the first place (*cf.* Focus 3). The

best we can do is to read Classical Chinese words in their *modern standard* pronunciations. For these, *pinyin* transliterations are provided in the vocabulary lists in every lesson.

The glossary in the appendix includes the phonological reconstructions of Old Chinese for reference purposes. In the body of the work, however, phonology is only treated where it is relevant to the understanding of an utterance.

Writing

The differences between Classical and Modern Chinese are largely concealed by the characteristics of Chinese *writing*. Firstly, Chinese characters do not represent sounds nearly as closely as alphabetic script does, so the complex phonology of Classical Chinese is nowhere apparent in writing. We can easily recite a classical text in Modern Standard Chinese pronunciation without noticing that there is anything amiss about it, which would be well-nigh impossible with the *Beowulf*.

In fact, Japanese scholars become proficient in reading Classical Chinese in a mixture of Sino-Japanese and native Japanese pronunciations, a practice called *Kanbun kundoku* (漢文訓讀). In this tradition, not only the words are pronounced in Japanese (adding grammatical suffixes), but entire sentences are read in the syntactical order called for in Japanese, inserting prepositions, conjunctions, and particles as needed. Similar methods are used in Korea for reading *Hanmun* (漢文) texts.

Secondly, although the character forms used in classical times, specimens of which have been found on manuscripts, differed significantly from modern Chinese writing, all classical texts have been transmitted to us in the still-current standard script (楷書 *kaishu*). All standard editions of Classical Chinese literature employ modern orthography, using either full-form or simplified characters. This makes classical texts look deceptively familiar at first sight.

Don't be deceived. The anecdote from *Han Feizi*, reproduced in its original version on the left and in Modern Standard Chinese translation on the right, may serve to illustrate the manifold differences that lie behind the similarity of writing.

1 宋人有耕田者。　　宋國有一個種田的人。
2 田中有株。　　　　田裏有一根樹樁子。
3 兔走，觸株。　　　一隻兔子跑過碰在樹樁子上，
4 折頸而死。　　　　折斷了脖子死了。
5 因釋其耒而守株。　他因此就放下他的犁耙來守着樹樁子，
6 冀復得兔。　　　　希望再得到兔子。
7 兔不可復得。　　　兔子再也得不到，
8 而身為宋國笑。　　他自己卻被宋國的人笑話了。
9 今欲以先王之政，　現在假使還要用先王的政治

10 治當世之民。　　　　來治理當代的民眾,
11 皆守株之類也。　　　　那就無疑屬於守株待兔之類的人了。

<div align="right">HFei 49, adapted from Bauer 1991, 18<i>f</i>.</div>

One feature that immediately meets the eye is the difference in *length*: the Classical Chinese text has fifty-eight characters, whereas the modern translation has 113, almost twice as many. This is partly due to lexical differences. Note how many words are monosyllabic in Classical but di- or trisyllabic in Modern Standard Chinese: 宋 – 宋國, 兔 – 兔子, 樹 – 樹椿子, 頸 – 脖子, 因 – 因此, 冀 – 希望, 身 – 自己, 笑 – 笑話, *etc*. Some Classical Chinese words—like 兔 and 笑—have simply been complemented by additional syllables, others have been completely replaced.

Further points that contribute to the conciseness of Classical Chinese include the absence of measure words as in 一隻, 一個, 一根, which are mandatory in the modern translation. Although measure words do exist in Classical Chinese, they are far less frequent. Nor do verbal complements such as 跑過, 折斷了, 放下, 得到 feature in the classical text; in every case, the simple verb suffices. Moreover, it may be noted that there seems to have been no equivalent to the third person pronoun 他 in Classical Chinese (ll. 5, 8); only the pronoun 其 (l. 5) appears as a counterpart to the possessive 他的. Furthermore, the conjunction 而 (l. 4) has no equivalent in Modern Standard Chinese; the adverb 皆 (l. 11) is no longer used; and the particle 之 (ll. 9–11) has been replaced by 的. The first thing to be noted about Classical Chinese, then, is that its vocabulary differs significantly from Modern Standard Chinese.

Characters vs. words

With the above in mind, students of Classical Chinese should be wary of *faux amis*, *i.e.* words that look familiar but actually differ in meaning. For example, 走, which appears in line 3, means 'to walk' in Modern Standard Chinese; in Classical Chinese, however, it means 'to run'. The rabbit did not walk against the tree stump and break its neck, it ran. Similarly, the particle 也 (l. 11) is obviously quite different from the adverb meaning 'also' in Modern Standard Chinese. The same *character* may write different *words*.

Students of Classical Chinese should be keenly aware of the problematic relationship between writing and language. Since Chinese characters

do not indicate sounds as precisely as alphabetic script does, it is often difficult to determine which word a given character represents. Many characters in Classical Chinese texts can be read in different ways, which means they may do service for several different words. Take, for example, the clause in line 8: the first character, 而, may represent a conjunction, meaning 'and, but' or a personal pronoun, meaning 'your'; and the character 為 may express, among others, the verb 'to make', the copula 'to be', or the preposition 'for'. It is easy to imagine how vastly different the clause may be understood, depending on how one interprets these characters. The first task when reading a Chinese text, then, is to determine *which words are represented by its characters*. Experienced readers may recognize this fast and accurately. But beginners are well advised to regularly look up characters in order to ascertain which words they may stand for. Besides their meaning, it is crucial to determine the LEXICAL PROPERTIES of the words in question, that is the functions they may perform in a sentence. But this is only the first step. Classical Chinese texts cannot be read merely with the help of a dictionary. In order to answer the question which word is written by a given character in a certain position within a sentence, it is necessary to have a good knowledge of Classical Chinese SYNTAX.

Box 2 *Faux amis*

Classical Chinese texts are usually edited using modern characters; that is the same writing system is used for *different* languages. This practice conceals the fact that the words represented by characters are quite different from those associated with them in MSC, not only phonologically but often also semantically. One should beware of such *faux amis*, 'false friends' that seem familiar from MSC but are not. Some examples include:

	Classical Chinese	Modern Standard Chinese
也	emphatic particle	'also'
說	'explain' or 'persuade' or 'be pleased'	'speak'
去	'go away, leave'	'go to'
他	'another'	'he'
史	'commissioner, scribe'	'history'

Moreover, quite a few CC noun phrases have become lexicalized in later periods, and some have significantly changed their meaning over time, for example:

	Classical Chinese	Modern Standard Chinese
人物	'man and beast'	'person'
東西	'east and west'	'thing'
朋友	'comrades and friends'	'friend(s)'
大家	'powerful family'	'everyone'
妻子	'wife and children'	'wife'

   Students of Classical Chinese may take these examples as a cautionary reminder of the fact that dictionaries of Modern Standard Chinese may be very misleading when used for reading Classical texts. For some more appropriate dictionaries, *cf*. Focus 16.

Syntax

Syntax, that is the way words combine to form sentences, is the primary concern of this book. Together with the study of lexical properties, it constitutes the core of Classical Chinese grammar. Whereas students of the language can make do with modern pronunciations and modern characters, they cannot do without a thorough understanding of Classical Chinese syntax. By contrast, MORPHOLOGY—the internal structure of words—only plays a marginal role in structuring Classical Chinese utterances: there are hardly any structural features (and none which are apparent in writing) that indicate whether a Classical Chinese word is a verb, noun, or adverb, there are no affixes that show us whether it is used as a subject or object, nor are tense and number indicated by the forms of words. In the absence of such morphological distinctions, syntax acquires all the more importance for marking grammatical relationships.

This is quite the opposite from the grammar of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, where the greatest emphasis is placed on morphology. Indeed, the absence of inflectional morphology has led students of the language to claim that (Classical) Chinese *has no grammar*—which, of course, is patently absurd. If Classical Chinese had no grammar, it would cease to be a language.

   The lack of inflectional morphology not only entails that words remain constant in their form but also that syntactic rules apply more strictly than in inflectional languages. In fact, Classical Chinese grammar displays some very regular features that may be explained in much the same terms used for Indo-European languages. We speak about 'words', 'phrases', and 'sentences' in Classical Chinese as a matter of

course; and we can further analyse and classify these linguistic units by the same categories that apply in Western grammar: word classes like 'noun', 'verb', 'conjunction', *etc*., and constituents like 'subject', 'predicator', and 'object'.

This is not to say that these categories are unproblematic or unanimously accepted; they are not. All grammars are artificial sets of rules imposed on a given language. Such rules can never fully describe the infinite variety of linguistic expression; much less if it has been developed for a different language than the one it is applied to. Since the grammatical categories used for describing CC are transferred from Latin, they should be taken as *metaphoric*. In the absence of an indigenous grammatical tradition, these metaphors are the best we have.

These categories allow us to formulate some very simple ground rules that apply to Classical Chinese syntax. Thus the order of the basic sentence parts, with few exceptions, is subject—predicator—object, just like in the English language. Furthermore, modifiers always precede that which is modified. Consider the phrases 宋人, 'people of Song', in line 1 of the anecdote above, where the modifier precedes the head, or 復得 in line 7, where the adverb precedes the verb. This is a principle that should inform any analysis of syntactical structures in Classical Chinese: the core of any utterance, be it a phrase, a clause, or complex sentence, is likely to be found in the *final* position.

This kind of analysis, assuming rules that may be couched in Western terminology, goes a long way in explaining Classical Chinese utterances. Nevertheless, a word of caution is called for. Grammatical rules are not laws. They apply in most but certainly not in all cases. Whereas the first part of this book introduces basic rules, the texts in the second part will show how many of these rules were being ignored or became obsolete over time. Students of Classical Chinese should be prepared for this experience, which may be frustrating at times. It is well to remember that Classical Chinese was once a living language with as many peculiarities, redundancies, and illogicalities as other languages. It is complicated, even enigmatic at times, but certainly not incomprehensible. An understanding of Classical Chinese does not come intuitively, in a double sense: it is neither reached immediately nor without resort to conscious reasoning. But if attained, through patience and rational analysis, it is hugely rewarding.

Structure of this book

This *Introduction to Classical Chinese* is conceived as a textbook for university-level courses in Sinology or Chinese studies as well as for

autodidactic study. Its object is to impart the knowledge necessary to read, understand, and analyse Classical Chinese texts, namely:

- a *basic core vocabulary* of Classical Chinese, including word classes;
- the most important *syntactic structures* and the rules that govern them;
- acquaintance with *historical and cultural background* as well as *important texts* of the classical corpus;
- the ability to use dictionaries and other *reference works* for the study of ancient China;
- *philological methods* for the critical analysis of Classical Chinese texts.

In all this, a basic knowledge of Modern Standard Chinese is presupposed. The book does not provide detailed information on modern standard pronunciations, *pinyin* transliteration, the stroke order of characters, or other points treated in beginners' courses of Chinese. The one language dealt with in this textbook is Classical Chinese.

The book is divided into two parts. Part I introduces the basic grammar of Classical Chinese; its lessons are organized according to grammatical features, beginning with words and phrases, progressing through simple sentences (or clauses), and ending with complex sentences. Concise vocabulary lists are provided to accompany the example texts, and a detailed glossary in the appendix contains all Classical Chinese words that appear in the book. This is where students should regularly turn for all lexical information not given in the vocabulary lists or the pertinent comments.

Part II of the book is devised as an introduction to Classical Chinese literature, arranged by texts, not by syntactical features. It provides information about the texts' structure, date, contents, and historical importance, as well as selected readings. Annotations deal not only with grammatical points but also with literary or historical issues. Whereas in Part I, every lesson is essential and should be studied in proper sequence, Part II is more loosely organized: readers may digress from the suggested order or even skip single chapters, depending on their time and interests.

Finally, this book is not only about grammar. In order to deal with Classical Chinese texts in a scholarly manner, knowledge of the language is not enough. Readers will encounter a host of names, dates,

historical allusions, and references to other texts that they have to make sense of; they will need to use dictionaries, concordances, commentaries, and other philological tools; and they will need to understand the genesis and transmission of texts in order to analyse them in a methodological way. These issues are dealt with in a number of digressions on the historical background, chronology, names, bibliographic matters, reference works, critical philology, *etc*. These 'Foci' are meant to provide basic knowledge of Classical Chinese studies in a broad sense. In sum, this book is meant to introduce students of Classical Chinese to all aspects relevant for working in the field.

Part I

The lessons in the first part of this book are meant to lay the groundwork for the understanding of Classical Chinese texts. Each one of them is centred around a specific grammatical issue, proceeding from the smallest grammatical units—words and phrases—to more complex structures: clauses and complex sentences.

Thus Part I encapsulates the very basics of Classical Chinese grammar: this is what every student of the language *must* know in order to deal with texts such as those given in Part II. Every lesson provides:

1. A short *introduction* into the larger topic as well as preliminary questions.
2. *Explanations* of specific grammatical points and *examples* to illustrate these points. All these example phrases or sentences are corpus-based, that is derived from classical texts and reproduced as they appear there: in full-form characters and arranged in traditional fashion from top to bottom and from right to left. No attempt has been made to invent 'purer' examples in order to highlight certain phenomena. Extensive comments serve to explain the examples.

   The punctuation of these example sentences is simplified. It is limited to commas and circles, excluding question marks and other punctuation marks; occasional omission of parts is indicated by ellipses; following Chinese editorial custom, proper names are underlined.

3. *Vocabulary lists* accompanying the examples. It should be noted that these lists provide only the meaning of a given character in the particular example. For fuller entries, the reader should turn to the glossary in the appendix. Once a character has been listed, it will *not* be repeated in subsequent vocabulary lists unless it represents a different word; such entries are marked with superscript numerals.
4. *Exercises* at the end of each lesson. No vocabulary lists are provided for these; students are expected to look up unknown words in the glossary.

5. Abundant *cross-references* for review purposes as well as references to other grammars and scholarly literature.
6. Interspersed *boxes* providing summary information of grammatical topics that are spread over several lessons.

    Throughout the book, additional information and references for more inquisitive readers are provided in small script paragraphs like this one. Students who want to concentrate on the basics may simply skip these.

Occasional *reviews* serve to summarize important points and provide additional examples for repetition. Additionally, a series of *foci* introduce basic knowledge, resources, and methods for dealing with Classical Chinese texts. These are no mere diversions but important elements in the study of Ancient China: they are just as fundamental as the grammar lessons and should be studied with equal attention.

Lesson 1

Word classes and constituents

1.1 Introduction

This lesson introduces the two basic grammatical elements of Classical Chinese that will be dealt with in this book: WORDS and CONSTITUENTS. Words may be defined for the present purposes as the smallest independent meaningful elements of speech; according to their lexical properties, they may be assigned to certain WORD CLASSES such as noun, verb, preposition, *etc*.

One could add that words consist of one or more MORPHEMES. However, morphemes, being the smallest semantic units of language, will only occasionally be dealt with in this book, for two reasons. (1) Derivational morphology, which describes the way morphemes contribute to word-formation, properly belongs to the field of lexicology; and (2) in OC, inflectional morphology is scarce and plays no important role in grammatical analysis. Therefore, morphological distinctions will only be discussed where they have a bearing on grammar.

Constituents (also called sentence parts), on the other hand, are the syntactical elements that make up a sentence: subject, predicator, object, *etc*. The former classification refers to the *form* of a grammatical unit, the latter to its *function* within a sentence. Within a simple hierarchy of grammatical units, words and constituents may be placed as follows:

Function	Form
SENTENCES, which consist of one or more	
CLAUSES, which consist of one or more	
CONSTITUENTS, represented by	PHRASES, which consist of one or more
	WORDS

Adapted from Quirk et al. 1985, 42*f*.

It is important to appreciate the categorical difference between words and constituents. Words belong to fixed word classes, but they may assume the *function* of different constituents; conversely, constituents have a clearly defined slot within a sentence, but this slot may be filled by different words. Take, for example, the English sentence 'The sheriff rode a horse'. The word 'sheriff', which belongs to the class of nouns, here functions as subject; the verb 'ride' functions as predicator; and 'horse', which is also a noun, functions as object. Conversely, 'sheriff' may also function as object—'I shot the sheriff'—but not as predicator; and the participle of 'ride' may function as subject or object, as in 'I like riding'.

The interplay between both categories is what the grammar of Classical Chinese is all about. On the one hand, the lexical properties of a word limit the syntactic functions it may fulfil; on the other hand, constituents can only be arranged in a limited number of ways: seven canonical clause types will be introduced in this lesson. Thus the analysis of Classical Chinese sentences—an exercise we will rehearse over and over again in the following lessons—consists in correlating the lexical properties of the words it contains with the positions they occupy in the sentence. The precondition for such analysis is acquaintance with the word classes and constituents of Classical Chinese.

Preliminary questions: What word classes can you distinguish in your native language? What constituents do you know? How do the two categories relate to each other: in other words, what functions within a sentence may members of a given word class perform?

1.2 Word classes

The words of Classical Chinese, just like those of Indo-European languages, may be arranged in different word classes. Whereas in inflectional languages morphology is an important aspect for such classification, Classical Chinese in most cases lacks formal indicators of word class. Words must therefore be classified almost exclusively by their intrinsic meaning and their syntactic behaviour in sentences.

Chinese scholarship has traditionally distinguished between 實字 and 虛字, 'full' and 'empty words'. The former correspond to 'content words' such as nouns and verbs that carry semantic substance; the latter correspond to 'function words,' including prepositions, conjunctions, and particles that mainly serve to structure sentences. This twofold scheme may be much refined by applying categories from Greco-Latin grammar. In what follows, we will distinguish between:

- nominal word classes, including NOUNS and PRONOUNS;
- verbal word classes, including VERBS and PREPOSITIONS;
- others, including ADVERBS, CONJUNCTIONS, PARTICLES, and INTERJECTIONS.

The following paragraphs will briefly introduce these word classes and their secondary word classes, deferring more detailed discussion of their syntactic behaviour to the subsequent lessons.

It is worth emphasizing that there is no agreement among scholars on the classification of words in Classical Chinese. For various views on the topic, *cf.* Norman 1988, 87–94; Vochala and Vochalová 1990, 32–116; and Cikoski 1970.

1.2.1 Nouns

These are words that denote people (*e.g.* 王, 'king'), places (*e.g.* 城, 'city'), or things (*e.g.* 木, 'tree', 春, 'spring'), including names (*e.g.* 周, 'Zhou'). According to their semantic value and syntactic behaviour, nouns may be further classified as:

- COMMON NOUNS, which designate classes of persons (*e.g.* 王, 'king'), places (*e.g.* 國, 'state'), things (*e.g.* 木, 'tree'), or abstract concepts (*e.g.* 德, 'virtue', 禮, 'ritual');

- LOCAL NOUNS, which express spatial or temporal positions (*e.g.* 上, 'top', 前, 'front');
- TEMPORAL NOUNS, which express points in time (*e.g.* 昔, 'ancient times', 夏, 'summer').
- PROPER NOUNS, which are names of people, places, or things (*e.g.* 堯, 'Yao', or 河, 'He', the 'Yellow River').

Syntactically, nouns typically function as subject, object, complement, or predicator. They may be modified by other nouns, pronouns, and certain verbs.

OC nouns are not morphologically marked as such; there are no nominal suffixes as MSC 子 and 頭 (in 椅子, 石頭, *etc.*). But in many cases there is a morphological differentiation between nouns and the verbs derived from the same root, *e.g.* 王 *wáng* < *waŋ*, 'king', *vs.* *wàng* < *waŋh*, 'to be king'. Compare the phonological difference between certain English nouns and the related verbs: belief *vs.* believe, advice *vs.* advise, ˈconvict *vs.* conˈvict, ˈdecrease *vs.* deˈcrease, *etc.*

1.2.2 Pronouns

Pronouns are words with nominal function that are used to refer either to participants or things mentioned in the discourse. They include:

- PERSONAL PRONOUNS (*e.g.* 我, 'I, we');
- DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS (*e.g.* 此, 'this');
- INTERROGATIVE PRONOUNS (*e.g.* 誰, 'who?');
- INDEFINITE PRONOUNS (*e.g.* 某, 'some');
- REFLEXIVE PRONOUNS (*e.g.* 己, 'him-/her-/itself');
- a RELATIVE PRONOUN (所, 'that which').

As the name implies, pronouns 'replace' nouns. Syntactically, they function in much the same ways as nouns; but there are certain restrictions. Some pronouns, for example, may only be used as modifiers. However, none of them may be modified themselves.

1.2.3 Verbs

Verbs are words that describe an action, motion, state, quality, or occurrence. They typically function as predicators, adjuncts, or as modifiers. Verbs can be further categorized by the kind of complementation they

permit—*e.g.* one or two objects, a complement, or none—and how this affects their meaning. In Classical Chinese, four subclasses of verbs may be distinguished:

- TRANSITIVE VERBS usually govern an object and, if used without an object, may be understood in the passive voice (compare 'I broke the window' and 'The window broke'), *e.g.* 分, 'divide':

    X 分 Y   X divides Y.

    X 分   X is divided.

- INTRANSITIVE VERBS usually do not take an object and, if followed by an object, are to be understood in a causative sense (compare 'He walked' and 'He walked the dog'), *e.g.* 休, 'rest':

    X 休   X rests.

    X 休 Y   X makes Y rest.

- STATIVE VERBS express states or qualities, corresponding semantically to English adjectives (*e.g.* 小, 'small', 老, 'old'); while syntactically similar to intransitive verbs, they may occur in comparative and superlative constructions;

- NEUTRAL VERBS may be used with or without an object without changing their relationship to the subject (compare 'He eats' and 'He eats spaghetti'); *e.g.* 從, 'follow':

    X 從   X follows.

    X 從 Y   X follows Y.

I owe the category of neutral verbs to John Cikoski (who calls them 'direct' verbs). The first three of the above categories correspond to what Cikoski has called ERGATIVE VERBS (Cikoski 1970, 54, 1978b, 79). Cikoski's categories have been adopted and expounded by Ōnishi 2004 and Boltz 2011, 2015a.

Transitive, intransitive, and stative verbs may serve to modify nouns. This use is especially frequent for stative verbs and for NUMERALS, which belong to the subclass of intransitive verbs. On the other hand, neutral verbs, as a rule, may not serve as modifiers: there is no *從子, 'obedient child', in Classical Chinese.

Box 3 Numerals

In Classical Chinese, numerals are intransitive verbs. The numerals from one to ten, 一, 二, 三, 四, 五, 六, 七, 八, 九, 十, are the same as in MSC, and so are the multiples of ten: 百, 千, 萬. However, there is no distinction between ordinals and cardinals. Compound numerals are formed through determination (or, mathematically speaking, multiplication) with a smaller number, *e.g.* 三十, 百萬. Different powers of ten are coordinated asyndetically: 十萬九千二百一十二 (CQFL 28), '109,212'. (Note that a word for 'zero' did not exist in Classical Chinese.)

Sometimes, a lower power of ten may be joined by 有, as in 二十有五 (Zuo 3.25), 'twenty-five' (compare old English 'five and twenty'), or 百有二十 (Li 5), 'hundred and twenty'. If a numeral is preceded by a smaller or equal numeral, the two are usually to be multiplied, as in 三三而九 (CQFL 28), 'three times three is nine', or 二八十六 (SY 18.12), 'two times eight is sixteen'.

However, approximate numbers, too, are expressed by simple juxtaposition: 六七 (Meng 2A1), 'six or seven', 再三 (HFei 32), 'two or three (times)'. Fractions may be expressed like in MSC: 三分之一 (Guan 76), or simply 十九 ('nine tenths', Zhuang 25). Finally, it should be pointed out that numerals in Classical Chinese often do not indicate exact quantities: 萬物 simply means 'all (kinds of) beings', 百官 means 'all offices', *i.e.* the 'administration', and so on.

References: Harbsmeier 2002; Martzloff 2006.

1.2.4 Prepositions

Prepositions express spatial, temporal, or other relations between two entities, one being a verb (which usually precedes the preposition), the other being a noun phrase (which usually follows the preposition), as in 'She walks *in* the park'. All Classical Chinese prepositions derive from verbs (*e.g.* 於, 'in, at, on' < 'be [in a place]'). Accordingly, prepositional phrases occur only in verbal clauses, where they function as adjuncts. There are only about a dozen prepositions in Classical Chinese; among the most common are 於, 'in, at, on', and 以, 'with, by means of'.

Some scholars call prep 'coverbs' or 'prepositional verbs', others do not use the category at all but simply treat prep as verbs. However, since by the classical period many of them are used almost exclusively as prep, they are classified as such in this book.

1.2.5 Adverbs

While in Classical Chinese many nouns and verbs may function adverbially, there are some words that primarily serve to modify verbs:

these may be classified as adverbs. Syntactically, adverbs exclusively function as adjuncts, preceding the predicator. They modify predicators by expressing degree (*e.g.* 最, 'most'), negation (*e.g.* 不, 'not'), time (*e.g.* 已, 'already'), manner (*e.g.* 忽, 'suddenly'), or scope (*e.g.* 或, 'some', or 各, 'each').

1.2.6 Conjunctions

These are words that connect words, phrases, or clauses, establishing different kinds of logical relationships between them, *e.g.* 而, 'and, but', 則, 'then'. Conjunctions may express coordination ('apples *and* bananas'), disjunction ('him *or* me'), conditions ('*If* I understand correctly…'), as well as temporal ('*Before* I saw her…'), adversative ('You can run, *but* you can't hide') and other relations. Syntactically, they function as connective adjuncts.

1.2.7 Particles

This class includes a variety of function words that add modal, aspectual, accentuating, interrogative, or other meanings to an utterance. Frequent Classical Chinese particles include emphatic 也, interrogative 乎, perfective 矣, and others. Syntactically, they always function as adjuncts.

Many of these particles do not correspond to English words, since in English their function is typically fulfilled simply by intonation (*e.g.* high pitch at the end of questions) or, in writing, by punctuation such as question or exclamation marks.

1.2.8 Interjections

Interjections are emotive words, such as English 'ah!', 'oh!', 'dear!'—expressing surprise, joy, anger, and so forth—that do not enter into syntactic relations. They are typically placed at the beginning of sentences.

As the following lessons will show, CC words often transcend these neatly defined word classes: nouns may be used as verbs or verbs as nouns (*cf.* Box 10). This does *not* invalidate the basic classifications given above.

1.3 Constituents

We now turn to CONSTITUENTS, being the functional elements of sentences. SIMPLE SENTENCES, or CLAUSES, always consist of two major

functional categories, a SUBJECT and a PREDICATE. The subject almost always presents the 'topic' of the sentence or its 'subject matter', expressing what the sentence is about. The predicate is what is being stated about the subject, the 'comment' about the 'topic', as it were. As a rule, the predicate follows the subject. However, in this book we will only rarely refer to this level of analysis. Rather than focussing on the predicate as a separate structural unit, we will mainly analyse the elements that *constitute* the predicate.

Whereas in English the predicate must always contain a verb, in Classical Chinese it may contain either a verb or a noun phrase as PREDICATOR. While subject and predicator are sufficient for a complete clause, in many cases they are joined by other constituents: a predicator may take one or two OBJECTS, and it may be supplemented by a COMPLEMENT; additionally, various ADJUNCTS may add to the meaning of the utterance. The basic clause structure may be visualized in the following formula, which shows possible clause constituents and their syntactic order (constituents which may be absent are put in parentheses):

	Subject	*Predicate*	
Constituent	**S**	(A) **P**	(O_i) (O_d) (C) (A)
Position	initial	medial	final

The focus of this book will be on the constituents highlighted in grey. In what follows, these will be briefly introduced.

1.3.1 Subject

Being the 'topic' of the sentence, the subject (S) can be the agent who does (or the patient who suffers) the action expressed in the sentence; or it can be a person, thing, or action that is defined or characterized; or it can designate the place where something happens, in which case one can speak of a LOCATIVE SUBJECT. In regular constituent order, the subject occupies the initial position in a clause. The subject is typically represented by a noun phrase; but it may also be a verb phrase (in which case we speak of an INFINITIVE SUBJECT), or even an entire 'demoted' clause. When understood from the context, the subject is regularly deleted. This does not mean that the clause has no subject, it does; it is merely not explicitly stated. When translating Classical Chinese

sentences, the subject must often be gleaned from the context—and needs to be supplied in an English translation.

1.3.2 Predicator

The PREDICATOR (P) is the central and indispensable part of the clause; its normal position is after the subject and before objects or complements, if there are any. Be sure to distinguish the predicator from the predicate, mentioned in 1.3: the former is only *a part* of the predicate. Whereas in English and MSC, the predicator is always represented by a verb, Classical Chinese clauses may have verbal or nominal predicators. Accordingly, one can distinguish verbal and nominal clauses. While the subject may be deleted, the predicator must be expressed. The minimal clause in Classical Chinese thus formally consists of a predicator only, as in 反, '⟨He⟩ returned', 善, 'Good', or imperatives like 坐, 'sit down!'. However, most clauses are more complex, containing one or several of the following constituents.

1.3.3 Object

The OBJECT (O) represents a person or thing to which an action is directed. Since objects are governed by the verb that expresses the action, they only occur in verbal clauses. Like the subject, objects are usually represented by a noun phrase; but verb phrases (INFINITIVE OBJECTS) or 'demoted' clauses also occur in this function. Most Classical Chinese verbs license an object, neutral verbs may even take two. In the latter case, the first is the INDIRECT OBJECT (O_i) and the second the DIRECT OBJECT (O_d). Usually, the object occurs in final position, directly following the predicator; but in certain cases, it may be anteposed, that is placed before the predicator, or even exposed before the subject.

1.3.4 Complement

COMPLEMENTS (C) are constituents which are not affected by the verbal action—hence are not objects—but which complement the subject or the object by applying some attribute or definition to it. Compare English sentences like 'Peter is *a student*', or 'He called me *a fool*'. In Classical Chinese, complements may be realized by noun phrases or verb phrases. Their normal place in the sentence is the final position.

1.3.5 Adjunct

We will call ADJUNCTS (A) all other parts of the predicate, including adverbial expressions of place, time, and manner, particles, as well as connectives linking clauses or constituents. In contrast to the more central constituents—subject, predicator, object—which are usually only realized once, it is common to find several adjuncts in a sentence. Conversely, they are usually optional and hence peripheral to the syntactic structure: as a rule, adjuncts can be omitted without affecting the grammaticality of the sentence. They may occur in various positions: before the subject (initial), between subject and predicator (medial), and after the predicator (final). In principle, members of all word classes, except pronouns and interjections, may function as adjuncts.

1.4 Clause types

Having introduced the different constituents, we may now take the formula given in 1.3 one step further and fill in the distribution of constituents that usually occur within the clause. Leaving aside all optional adjuncts, seven canonical clause types of Classical Chinese emerge:

	S	P	O_i	O_d	C	A	
①	舜	人				也。	Shun was a man.
②	三人	行。					Three men walk.
③	聖人	作		樂。			The sages made music.
④	父	教	之	忠。			The father teaches him loyalty.
⑤	子	為			誰。		Who are you?
⑥	箕子	為	之		奴。		Jizi was a slave to him.
⑦	王	使		人	來。		The king made somebody come.

舜 Shùn, n_p, *a mythical ruler*
人 rén, n_c, 'person, man'
也 yě, pt_{emp}, *marks nom P*
行 xíng, v_i, 'go, travel'
聖人 shèngrén, n_c, 'sage'
作 zuò, v_i, *caus* 'make'

樂 yuè, n_c, 'music'
父 fù, n_c, 'father'
教 jiào, v_n, 'teach'
之 zhī, pr_{per}, 'him, her, it'
忠 zhōng, n_c, 'loyalty'
子 zǐ, n_c, 'you'
為 wéi, v_n, *as* cop, 'be'

誰 shéi, pr_{int}, 'who?'
箕子 Jīzǐ, n_p
奴 nú, n_c, 'slave'
王 wáng, n_c, 'king'
使 shǐ, v_n, 'make s.o. do sth.'
來 lái, v_i, 'come'

All other clauses may be understood as variations of these seven types. The following lessons will offer detailed explanations of these canonical clauses, of their variation by deletion of constituents or addition of adjuncts, of their transformation into non-canonical clauses by changes in syntactic order, and finally of their combination into complex sentences. In doing so, they will constantly rehearse the analysis of these constructions with reference to the lexical properties and syntactic structures outlined in this chapter.

1.5 Exercises

Look up the characters 也, 行, 作, 樂, 教, 為, 誰, and 王 in the glossary and note which words they represent. What do you notice?

References ① Meng 4B28 ② LY 7.22 ③ Li 19 ④ Zuo 5.23 ⑤ LY 18.6 ⑥ LY 18.1 ⑦ Meng 2A2

Focus 1

History of the Chinese language

With a history of over 3,000 years, Chinese is one of the oldest recorded languages in the world. In the course of this history, the Chinese language has undergone such profound phonological, lexical, and grammatical changes that calling it a single language is a bold abstraction. Rather, it seems fair to say that Chinese has become a different language several times over. Linguists roughly divide the history of the Chinese language into four distinct periods, Old, Middle, Early Modern, and Modern Chinese:

(1) Old Chinese (上古漢語): thirteenth century BC to third century AD
(2) Middle Chinese (中古漢語): fourth to twelfth centuries
(3) Early Modern Chinese (近代漢語): twelfth to nineteenth centuries
(4) Modern Chinese (現代漢語): twentieth to twenty-first centuries

For this periodization, *cf.* Wang Li 1980, 35. Wang assumes 'transitory periods' between each of these periods, namely in the third and fourth centuries, twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and from 1840 to 1919.

Note that Classical Chinese does not appear as a distinct period in this scheme. Rather, it is a stage within the long period of Old Chinese which may be further subdivided as follows:

(1a) pre-Classical Chinese: thirteenth to fifth centuries BC
(1b) Classical Chinese: fourth to first centuries BC
(1c) post-Classical Chinese: first to third centuries AD

(1a) Old Chinese was a largely monosyllabic language with a productive derivational morphology, diverse affixes, and much more complex syllables than Middle or Modern Chinese. The earliest evidence of Old Chinese is found in inscriptions: oracle records of the Shang dynasty from *c.* thirteenth to eleventh centuries BC, incised on bones, and commemorative inscriptions in sacrificial bronze vessels from the Zhou dynasty. Composed in a terse, specialized language and written in

ancient script, both bone and bronze inscriptions are very limited in their contents. Apart from recurring standard formulae, much of their vocabulary is still unknown, and the syntax of these inscriptions differs markedly from later stages of Chinese.

The same is true of a few transmitted texts that may be (partly) dated to pre-classical times: the *Canon of Odes* (詩經, *cf.* Focus 11); the *Canon of Documents* (書經, *cf.* Focus 6); the *Canon of Changes* (易經, *cf.* Lesson 32), and the *Springs and Autumns* (春秋, *cf.* Focus 10). Together with another text, the *Canon of Rites* (禮經, *cf.* Lesson 33), this corpus was revered as the *Five Canonical Texts* (五經) in later times. However, already in the Classical period, their vocabulary and syntax appeared so archaic that they were no longer understood without extensive commentary. Just like the ancient inscriptions, they were remnants of a bygone age which, even to Confucius and his contemporaries, was clouded by myths.

(1b) In the classical period, beginning in the fourth century BC, a momentous change took place: now, texts were increasingly written on bamboo or wooden slips, sometimes on silk. The spread of these writing materials ushered in the age of Chinese manuscript culture (*cf.* Focus 19). Dozens of book-length texts were written—the longest reaching half a million characters—whose scope and diversity far surpassed all textual production of the preceding period. It was the classical age of Chinese philosophy in which 'a hundred schools of thought' flourished. They not only introduced a host of new terms, but also used a diction that was much closer to spoken language than earlier texts. It included many new function words—prepositions, conjunctions, particles—various syntactic options and a nuanced vocabulary (including dialectal variants) that allowed for an unprecedented richness of written expression. This is the Classical Chinese language that will be described in detail in this book.

(1c) By the first century AD, Classical Chinese had undergone many subtle changes. On the one hand, some older constructions fell out of use and others were no longer clearly understood; on the other hand, the vocabulary grew as many compound words were generated, new ways of phrase creation were exploited and syntactic constructions introduced that had been unknown in the classical period. In this period, which may be called post-Classical Chinese, written language again began to separate from the vernacular. Moreover, the former increasingly diversified into genre-specific styles: historical, poetic, religious, literary, philosophical, and technical texts began to develop along distinctly different lines.

This was the beginning of Literary Chinese (*cf.* p. xx), a purely written language based on Classical Chinese which was nevertheless continually influenced by the developments of the spoken language. Especially during periods of disunion, under the influence of migration and the influx of foreign peoples, this spoken language would change dramatically.

(2) Middle Chinese, which developed after the fall of the Han dynasty, is well attested in a great corpus of literature, some of which written in the vernacular, and, notably, in dictionaries arranged according to rhymes. It was phonologically quite different from Old Chinese: now, affixes and other morphological features developed into eight *tones*, making Chinese a tonal language. The influence of Buddhist scriptures as well as the languages of Central and Middle Asian peoples that came into China contributed to changes in syntax and vocabulary. For example, the use of measure words greatly increased, nominal pre- and suffixes appeared, the pronoun 是 developed into a copular verb, postverbal aspect markers like 了 or 著 appeared, and measures began to be used for verb phrases.

(3) With the flight of the Song court to South China in the twelfth century and the Mongol occupation began the period of Early Modern Chinese. This period saw the development of the modern Chinese dialects. Whereas the southern dialects remained phonologically closer to Middle Chinese, the northern dialects further reduced phonological distinctions, leading to the four tones of modern Mandarin. The latter also received distinct influences from the Altaic languages, including the development of 'disposal' constructions with 把, perhaps also the prevalence of absolute topics at the beginning of sentences. A sizable corpus of colloquial literature, including the classic Chinese novels, was written in a language fairly close to Modern Chinese.

(4) Modern Chinese was characterized by further phonological changes and, most conspicuously, the influx of new vocabulary from Japanese and Western languages in the twentieth century. In fact, the entire inventory of modern concepts—社會, 'society', 民族, 'nation', 自由, 'freedom', and hundreds more—was imported into Chinese via Japan. Moreover, for the first time, a standardized 'national language' (國語) or 'common language' (普通話) was propagated in order to supersede the various Chinese dialects: yet another new Chinese language that was entirely different from its predecessors. For native speakers of Modern Chinese, too, Classical Chinese is a foreign language.

References: Tai and Chan 1999 give a succinct overview of periodization; Norman 1988 and Ramsey 1989 both contain historical sketches; Wang Li 1980 is a standard account in Chinese; Wilkinson 2018, 17–27, is a good summary with many references.

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Lesson 2

Noun phrases I

</div>

2.1 Introduction

Having discussed words and constituents, we now turn to the link between these two categories, PHRASES. Phrases are single words or groups of words that serve as constituents. They are named after the class of that word which has the primary function in it. Thus a NOUN PHRASE centres around one or several nouns, and its overall value is nominal. Syntactically, it typically functions as subject, object, predicator, or complement.

This lesson will discuss the structure of noun phrases that consist of more than one word. In such constructions independent elements are linked either by COORDINATION or by SUBORDINATION. Coordination means the juxtaposition of two or more linguistic units of the same status, placing both on *equal* rank, as in English 'pots and pans': one noun does not modify the other, but they stand side by side. Subordination places two nouns on *unequal* rank, the second one being the HEAD of the phrase, while the first one serves as a MODIFIER.

Preliminary questions: What is meant by 'coordination' and 'subordination'? Find examples of noun phrases constructed according to

these principles in your mother tongue and in Modern Standard Chinese.

2.2 Asyndetic coordination

In Classical Chinese, nouns may be coordinated by simply juxtaposing them without the aid of a linking element. The form is simply:

① 日 月　　　　　　　　sun *and* moon

$$\underbrace{n_1 + n_2}_{NP}$$

日 *rì*, n_c, 'sun'
月 *yuè*, n_c, 'moon'

This usually means 'n_1 and n_2' or, in some cases, 'n_1 *or* n_2'. We shall call this unmarked form of coordination, which may consist of two or more words, ASYNDETIC COORDINATION. Not all nouns can be coordinated in this way. The preconditions for asyndetic coordination are that, firstly, both nouns belong to the *same secondary word class*: they must both be common, proper, local, or temporal nouns. Secondly, there must be *semantic correspondence* between them: both nouns must belong to the same semantic category. 'Sun and moon' are both celestial bodies; and in the following examples, 'spring and autumn' are both seasons; 'father and mother' are both parents, *etc*.

Apart from enumerations and poetry, asyndetic coordination is not possible in English. To translate such noun phrases, we have to insert 'and' in between their constituent elements.

Such noun phrases often serve as expressions for the superordinate semantic category of their constituent elements (just like in English, one may say 'pots and pans', meaning 'cooking utensils'). As such, many noun phrases became lexicalized in later times. However, in Classical Chinese their individual elements mostly retained their specific meaning. Students of Classical Chinese should take the individual components of such noun phrases seriously.

② 春秋冬夏

③ 父母

④ 上下…天地

⑤ 子女

⑥ 東西南北

⑦ 堯舜…湯武

⑧ 父兄子弟

⑨ 父子…君臣…夫婦…長幼…朋友

春 *chūn*, n_{temp}, 'spring'
秋 *qiū*, n_{temp}, 'autumn'
冬 *dōng*, n_{temp}, 'winter'
夏 *xià*, n_{temp}, 'summer'
母 *mǔ*, n_c, 'mother'
上 *shàng*, n_{loc}, 'top'
下 *xià*, n_{loc}, 'bottom'

Comments ② The seasons—all of them n_{temp}—are normally enumerated in this order for euphonic reasons (*cf.* Box 4). ③ Does 父母 mean 'parents' or 'father and mother'? When in doubt, it is advisable to choose the latter translation, taking each word seriously. ④ Local nouns, too, may be coordinated asyndetically. 'Heaven and earth' also means 'the world'. ⑤ In CC, 子 means 'child', which could also be a daughter. In the combination 子女, it obviously means 'son'. On the other hand, 女 can also mean 'girl' or 'woman', as in 男女, 'men and women'. ⑦ If two n_P are coordinated asyndetically, semantic correspondence is also necessary: Yao and Shun were both sage rulers of antiquity; and Tang and Wu were the virtuous founders of the Shang and Zhou dynasties, respectively. ⑧ A coordination of two coordinations, designating elder and younger relatives. ⑨ These are the well-known 'five relations' (五倫) that order society according to the 'Confucian' tradition. Note that 朋友, too, is a noun phrase, not a word, and that it is a *plural*: 'comrades and friends' (*cf.* Box 2). As this example shows, asyndetic coordinations of near-synonymous words often function to express the plural which cannot be distinguished morphologically. There is never just one 朋友 in Classical Chinese.

天 *tiān*, n_c, 'heaven'
地 *dì*, n_c, 'earth'
子² *zǐ*, n_c, 'son'
女 *nǔ*, n_c, 'daughter'
東 *dōng*, n_{loc}, 'east'
西 *xī*, n_{loc}, 'west'
南 *nán*, n_{loc}, 'south'
北 *běi*, n_{loc}, 'north'
堯 Yáo, n_p, *a mythical ruler*
湯 Tāng, n_p, *Shang ruler*
武 Wǔ, n_p, *Zhou ruler*
兄 *xiōng*, n_c, 'older brother'
弟 *dì*, n_c, 'younger brother'
君 *jūn*, n_c, 'ruler'
臣 *chén*, n_c, 'servant'
夫 *fū*, n_c, 'husband'
婦 *fù*, n_c, 'married woman'
長 *zhǎng*, v_{st}, *as* n_c, 'senior'
幼 *yòu*, v_{st}, *as* n_c, 'younger one'
朋 *péng*, n_c, 'comrade'
友 *yǒu*, n_c, 'friend'

Box 4 Euphonic rules

The order of the individual nouns in asyndetic coordinations is not arbitrary. Just like in English, where we always say 'pots and pans' but not 'pans and pots', 'pomp and circumstance' but not 'circumstance and pomp', asyndetic coordinations in Classical Chinese seem to follow certain euphonic rules. Ulrich Unger has specified five such rules with reference to the sound system of Middle Chinese (*cf.* Focus 2):

1. Even tone precedes oblique tones, as in 身體 or 天地.
2. Rising tone precedes departing tone, as in 土地.

3. Entering tone succeeds all others, as in 酒肉.
4. High tone precedes low tone, as in 子女.
5. Nasal final precedes vowel final, as in 兄弟 or 朋友.

Occasionally, these euphonic rules may be overruled for semantic reasons, *e.g.* in 父子 and 國家, where the higher-ranking term takes pride of place. In some cases, such as 山川, both words are phonologically equal; their order may be purely conventional (*川山 is not attested)—unless the phrase is to be understood as a subordination, in which case the euphonic rules do not apply. In the case of 國家 *kwâk-krâ, the consonance of final *-k and the following initial *k- may have been an independent euphonic reason for the order of words. To sum up, while the euphonic rules proposed by Unger do not cover all asyndetic coordinations, they are a highly useful tool for understanding the structure of these noun phrases; moreover, in cases of doubt, they may serve as an indication of whether a given noun phrase is to be construed as a coordination (in which case the euphonic rules should apply) or a subordination (in which case they do not apply).

References: Unger 2019, 44–82.

2.3 Conjunctional coordination

As mentioned above, only nouns belonging to the same semantic category may enter into asyndetic coordination. Words belonging to *different* semantic categories must be coordinated with the CONJUNCTION 與, which means 'and' or, in some cases, 'or'.

⑩ 君 與 子   the ruler *and* you   與 *yǔ*, conj, 'and, or'
  n_1 conj n_2
     NP

⑪ 君 與 父   ruler *or* father
  n_1 conj n_2
     NP

Note that simple 'and' often does not convey the force of 與, which emphatically means 'as well as' or 'together with'; conjunctional coordination emphasizes both elements individually. While their conjunction is stressed, the relation between the two nouns is not as close as in asyndetic coordinations; nor do conjunctional coordinations designate a superordinate term.

On the emphatic force of 與, *cf.* Boltz 1983.

Moreover, the conjunction 與 is mandatory for coordinations of two-syllable nouns or noun phrases with one-syllable nouns, as in:

⑫ 天地　與　我　　Heaven, earth, and I
$\underbrace{\text{NP　conj　n}}$
　　　NP

⑲ ⑱ ⑰ ⑯ ⑮ ⑭ ⑬
吾 我 此 利 人 萬 父
與 與 與 與 與 物 與
汝 爾 彼 命 人 與 夫
　　　與　　我
　　　仁

物 *wù*, n$_c$, 'creature'
我 *wǒ*, pr$_{per}$, 'I', 'we'
利 *lì*, n$_c$, 'profit'
命 *mìng*, n$_c$, 'fate'
仁 *rén*, n$_c$, 'benevolence'
此 *cǐ*, pr$_{dem}$, 'this'
彼 *bǐ*, pr$_{dem}$, 'that'
爾 *ěr*, pr$_{per}$, 'you'
吾 *wú*, pr$_{per}$, 'I', 'we'
汝 *rǔ*, pr$_{per}$, 'you'

Comments ⑬ The context makes clear that this means 'father *or* husband'. ⑮ 與 is also used when *identical* words are joined. Asyndetically coordinated, 人人 often means 'man by man' in the sense of 'one by one'. ⑯ Here, 與 means 'together with': the phrase states what Confucius allegedly rarely talked about. ⑰ 與 is also necessary to coordinate *pronouns* with one another; in this case, the two most common DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS. 此 refers to something close at hand or just mentioned, whereas 彼 refers to something more distant. ⑱–⑲ These are the most common PERSONAL PRONOUNS of the first and second persons in Classical Chinese (*cf.* Box 5); they cannot be coordinated asyndetically.

2.4 Asyndetic subordination

In noun phrases constructed by SUBORDINATION, the first element is subordinated to the second, it serves as a MODIFIER to the latter, which is called the HEAD. This follows the general rule that in Classical Chinese the modifier precedes the modified. Just like coordinations,

subordinations may be achieved by simple juxtaposition of two words without an intervening conjunction, in the form:

⑳　東　海　　　　　eastern sea　　　　　海 *hǎi*, n_c, 'sea'

$$\underbrace{n_1 \rightarrow n_2}_{NP}$$

In this construction, n_2 is the head, that is the word that governs all the other words in the phrase. The head alone can represent the whole noun phrase: the 'eastern sea' is first and foremost a *sea*. This being said, n_1 serves as modifier to the head: it specifies which or what kind of sea is meant. While the head of a noun phrase must always be a noun, the modifier may be a noun, pronoun, or verb.

2.4.1 Nouns as modifiers

The precondition for asyndetic subordination of two nouns is that they belong to *different semantic categories* (or else they would have to be construed as *co*ordinated; *cf*. 2.2). Noun phrases with a noun as modifier may be understood in analogy to genitive constructions in English, more specifically, they may be construed as DESCRIPTIVE GENITIVES: the modifier describes a *quality* of the head. Often such noun phrases would become lexicalized, as it were, turning into COMPOUND NOUNS; and they may often conveniently be translated into English as such.

㉙	㉘	㉗	㉖	㉕	㉔	㉓	㉒	㉑
王	前	堂	山	山	金	孔	中	聖
前	王	上	下	林	人	子	國	人

中 *zhōng*, n_loc, 'middle'
國 *guó*, n_c, 'state'
孔 *Kǒng*, n_p, *family name*
金 *jīn*, n_c, 'bronze'
山 *shān*, n_c, 'mountain'
林 *lín*, n_c, 'forest'
堂 *táng*, n_c, 'hall'
前 *qián*, n_loc, ' front'

Comments ㉑ 'Wise man', or simply 'sage', means a 'teacher for a hundred generations' (Meng 7B15) like Yao, Shun, the Duke of Zhou, and Confucius, or an ideal ruler. ㉒ As seen in ⑳, local nouns, too, may enter into asyndetic subordinations, either as the head or as the modifier of a NP designating spatial or temporal relations. 中國 does not yet mean 'China' but rather

'the middle states' located in the North China plain: it is a *plural*. ㉓ 孔子, 'Master Kong', was the usual appellation of Confucius by his disciples. Names are a special case of asyndetic subordination: in this case the head is a honorific title, specified by a family name (*cf.* Focus 5). ㉔ 金人 means a statue made of bronze. Note that the logical relation between modifier and head is not indicated by the construction itself: for example, a 玉人 is not a man made of jade but a man working with jade, a 'jade-smith'. Compare English 'carrot cake' *vs.* 'cupcake' *vs.* 'birthday cake'. ㉕ Some cases may seem ambiguous: is 山林 to be understood as a coordination or a subordination? ㉖–㉗ The exact position expressed by local nouns must be gleaned from the context. Thus 山下 is not 'underneath the hill' but 'at the bottom of the hill'; and 堂上 is not 'on top of the hall' but 'up in the hall': temple and palace halls were usually built on hills or platforms. ㉘–㉙ Note the crucial difference in these two NP: the first one means a 'king', 王 being the head, more specifically a 'former king' (the local noun here expresses a *temporal* relation); the second one, by contrast, means a place 'in front of', 前 being the head, more specifically 'in front of the king'.

2.4.2 Pronouns as modifiers

Pronouns in general may serve as modifiers, but never as heads of noun phrases: they cannot themselves be modified. Pronouns do not modify the head in terms of a quality but determine it with reference to its situational context: they answer to the question 'which?' or 'whose?' When personal pronouns serve as modifiers, we may compare this to an English possessive genitive (*cf.* Box 9); in fact, this is the main function of the pronouns 而 and 其, which cannot be used independently.

㉞	㉝	㉜	㉛	㉚	
其 妻 子	而 母	吾 王	我 國	此 人	而 *ér*, pr_per, 'your' 其 *qí*, pr_per, 'his' 妻 *qī*, n_c, 'wife'

Comments ㉚ A pr_dem as modifier. ㉜ 吾, being a less emphatic form of the first person pronoun, is much more common as a modifier than the stressed form 我. ㉝–㉞ The pronouns 而 and 其 are *only* used as modifiers. Note that 妻子 is itself a NP which is being further modified.

Box 5 Personal pronouns

The inventory of personal pronouns in Classical Chinese differs considerably from that of MSC. It comprises the following:

我 *wǒ* and 吾 *wú*, 'I, we', 予 (*var.* 余) *yú*, 'I', 爾 *ěr* and 若 *ruò* 'you', 汝 *rǔ* (also, deceptively, written 女), 'you'; 而 *ér*, 'your', 其 *qí*, 'his, her, its', and 之 *zhī*, 'him, her, it'.

Of these, 我 survives in Modern Chinese, and so does 爾 *ne*ʔ, which developed into colloquial *nǐ*. Even the character 爾, simplified as 尔, entered into the character 你. The pronouns 乃, 'your', and 厥, 'his', were archaisms already in the Classical period.

These pronouns differ in their range of meaning and functions. Of the first person pronouns, 我 is the most important: it can be singular or plural, and it can function as S, O, and P in nominal sentences. 吾 is a less stressed form of 我; while sharing the latter's range of meaning, it cannot occur in final position. Finally, 予/余 only expresses the singular. Of the second person pronouns, 爾 and 若 may be singular or plural, while 汝/女 is only singular; all three can function as S or O. On the other hand, 而 and 其 can only function as modifiers. Remarkably, Classical Chinese lacked a third person pronoun used as S or P: 之 is only used as O, and 其 is only used as modifier (他 *tā*, in Classical Chinese, is a DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUN meaning 'other').

It should be noted that the status of the latter two is contested among grammarians; for example, Schuessler 2007 takes 之 as a pr$_{dem}$, and Unger 1985 takes both as 'anaphoric pronouns'.

		sing.	plur.	mod.	S	O	P
1st pers.	我	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
	吾	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes*	no
	予/余	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
2nd pers.	爾	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
	汝/女	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
	若	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
	而	yes	no	yes	no	no	no
3rd pers.	之	yes	yes	no	no	yes	no
	其	yes	yes	yes	no	no	no

*As an O, 吾 may not occur in final position but only, in negated P, before the P (*cf.* 5.2.3).

Personal pronouns were often avoided in Classical Chinese texts and substituted by other forms of address: humble self-references like 臣, 'your humble servant', or 寡人, 'my humble self' (used by the ruler) replace first person pronouns; 夫子 or 子, 'master', or 君, 'ruler' are used instead of second person pronouns, when talking to superiors; the non-existing third person pronoun in the nominative case is replaced by a noun or a demonstrative pronoun, or the S is simply omitted.

References: Graham 1969; Kennedy 1956. Cikoski 1970; 127–30; Pulleyblank 1996, 76–85; Vochala and Vochalová 1990, 40–3; Harbsmeier 1997; Chen Cuizhu 2013.

2.4.3 Verbs as modifiers

Nouns may also be modified by certain verbs. Of the basic subclasses of verbs (*cf.* 1.2.3), transitive, intransitive, and stative verbs can serve as modifiers, but neutral verbs—with very few exceptions—cannot. Stative verbs, in particular, lend themselves to usage as modifiers, since they are semantically equivalent to English adjectives: they describe a *quality* of the head.

While stative verbs as modifiers are translatable as adjectives in English, the case is different for transitive and intransitive verbs. Intransitive verbs describe an action that the head is *performing*, they should be translated as ACTIVE PARTICIPLES (in English, *-ing* participles), as in 'the *crying* baby'. Transitive verbs, on the other hand, describe an action that the head has *undergone*, they must be construed as PASSIVE PARTICIPLES (in English, *-ed/-en* participles), as in 'the *destroyed* building'. To sum up:

$v_{st} \rightarrow n \sim$ adjective
$v_i \rightarrow n \sim$ part$_a$
$v_{tr} \rightarrow n \sim$ part$_p$

㊲	㊱	㉟
弱燕 ⋮ 彊齊	大家 ⋮ 小家	高山

㊷	㊶	㊵	㊴	㊳
愛子	生物	補衣	飛鳥	四民 ⋮ 百姓

高 *gāo*, v$_{st}$, 'be high, tall'
大 *dà*, v$_{st}$, 'be big'
小 *xiǎo*, v$_{st}$, 'be small'
家 *jiā*, n$_c$, 'family'
弱 *ruò*, v$_{st}$, 'be weak'
燕 Yān, n$_p$, *a state*
彊/強 *qiáng*, v$_{st}$, 'be strong'
齊 Qí, n$_p$, *a state*
民 *mín*, n$_c$, 'people'
姓 *xìng*, n$_c$, 'clan'
飛 *fēi*, v$_i$, 'fly'
鳥 *niǎo*, n$_c$, 'bird'
補 *bǔ*, v$_{tr}$, 'to mend'
衣 *yī*, n$_c$, 'clothes'
生 *shēng*, n$_c$ *as* v$_i$, 'live'
愛 *ài*, v$_{tr}$, 'love'

Comments ㊱ Of course, 大家 has nothing to do with the modern word; it means a 'great', that is powerful aristocratic family. ㊲ Some proper names may be modified by v$_{st}$. ㊳ Two phrases with numerals as modifiers: 四民 means the idealized 'four kinds of people', *i.e.* the four estates in traditional

Chinese society, 士農工商, 'scholars, peasants, artisans, and merchants' (in descending order of esteem); 百姓 first meant 'the aristocracy' and then broadened to mean 'the people'. ㊴ This designates a *class* of animals, to be translated as part$_a$. ㊵–㊷ Consider the verb classes to decide whether the modifiers are to be construed as part$_a$ or part$_p$.

2.5 Exercises

Analyse and translate the following noun phrases. Use the glossary to look up words you do not know.

㊿	㊾	㊽	㊼	㊻	㊺	㊹	㊸
予手	老子	秋水…百川	吳越…齊魯	禮與食	士農工商	死生…富貴	陰陽

References ① LY 19.24 ② Zhuang 18 ③ LY 4.19 ④ Meng 7A13 ⑤ XS 8.1 ⑥ ZGC 4.4 ⑦ Meng 7A30 ⑧ Zuo 9.14 ⑨ Meng 3A4 ⑩ Meng 3A3 ⑪ SY 19.23 ⑫ Zhuang 2 ⑬ Zuo 2.2 ⑭ Zhuang 2 ⑮ Mo 15 ⑯ LY 9.1 ⑰ Mo 45 ⑱ LY 7.11 ⑲ Zhuang 6 ⑳ SY 5 ㉑ Meng 2A2 ㉒ Meng 1B11 ㉓ LY 2.19 ㉔ SY 10 ㉕ Xun 14 ㉖ Xun 21 ㉗ Meng 1A7 ㉘ CQFL 1.1 ㉙ Meng 2B2 ㉚ SJ 31 ㉛ Mo 19 ㉜ Meng 1B1 ㉝ ZGC 20.13 ㉞ Meng 7A22 ㉟ Zhuang 21 ㊱ Mo 16 ㊲ SY 1 ㊳ SY 7 ㊴ Meng 2A2 ㊵ Lü 15.5 ㊶ Li 19 ㊷ Zuo 7.2 ㊸ SY 19 ㊹ LY 12.5 ㊺ SY 7 ㊻ Meng 6B1 ㊼ Zhuang 29 ㊽ Zhuang 17 ㊾ Zhuang 23 ㊿ LY 8.3

Reconstruction of Middle Chinese

As discussed in Focus 1, the Chinese language has changed significantly throughout its history. Chinese scholars have been aware of this fact for about half a millennium, and they have recognized the importance of historical phonology, that is the reconstruction of historical sound systems: 'If you know the ancient rhymes, then you can grasp the ancient pronunciations; and if you know the ancient pronunciations, then you can realize the ancient meanings' (Zhang Zhidong). However, since Chinese characters represent entire syllables without specifying their internal phonological structure, the reconstruction of 'ancient pronunciations' is a complicated task. This and the following Focus will give a rough outline of how it is done.

We have no systematic account of how Old Chinese was pronounced. The earliest available descriptions of sounds that we possess refer to *Middle Chinese*. Starting in the third century, Chinese philologists had begun to employ a system of describing the pronunciation of words through the help of two others (反切 *fanqie*), the first representing its initial, the second its final and the tone. Thus 寄 *jì* was described as 居 *jū* plus 義 *yì*; in Middle Chinese:

$$\text{*kje = *k(jwo) + *(ŋ)je}$$

Such descriptions of ancient pronunciations are given in many commentaries on classical texts. An especially valuable collection of such glosses is the *Jingdian shiwen* 經典釋文 by Lu Deming 陸德明 (*c.*550–630), which provides the pronunciation of a great number of characters in fourteen classical and canonical texts: it is a prime source for the reconstruction of Middle Chinese.

A sample page with glosses on *Zhuangzi* is shown in Figure 1: note, for example, how the character 好 (3rd line from the left) is glossed as 呼報反, that is *x(uo) + *(p)âu = *xâu. Just like 報, which defines the tone, the character 好 must be read in the fourth tone in modern pronunciation. Moreover, in 601, the first dictionary, the *Qieyun* 切韻 by Lu Fayan
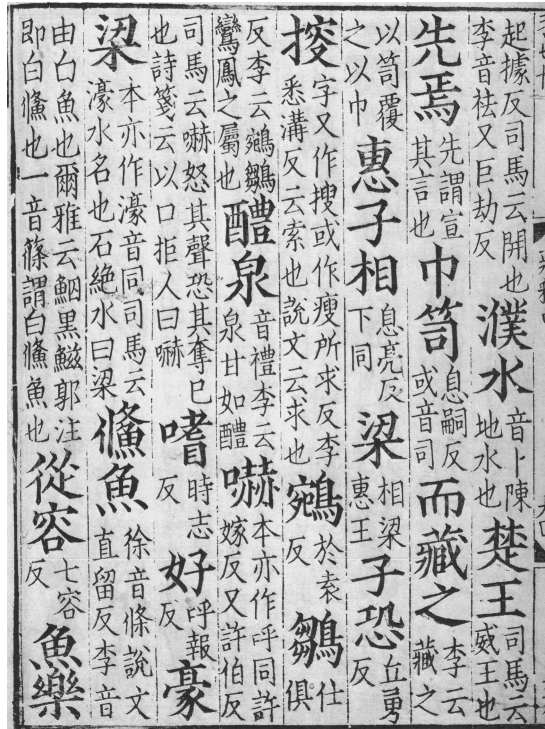
Figure 1   A page from the *Jingdian shiwen*

Source: Iriya Yoshitaka (ed.). *Kobun Shōsho, Sōshi ongi*. Tōkyō: Tenri Daigaku Shuppanbu, 1982, 252.

陸法言, was written that arranged words by *rhymes*, distinguishing thirty-six initials and 193 rhymes. This system was refined in later centuries, and a vocabulary for the description of articulation—including words for 'labials' (唇), 'dentals' (齒), and so on—was developed. With these tools, it was possible to describe the phonological *relations* of Middle Chinese syllables to one another—but not yet their actual phonemic structure.

It was not until European scholars of the twentieth century combined the methods of Western linguistics with these specifically Chinese techniques that such reconstructions became possible. In a pioneering work, the Swedish Sinologist Bernhard Karlgren (1889–1978) undertook a systematic comparison of twenty-two Chinese dialects as well as the Sino-Japanese, Sino-Korean, and Sino-Vietnamese pronunciation of Chinese characters. Assuming that the Chinese dialects had developed genetically from Middle Chinese like the Romance languages from Latin, Karlgren traced the changes in pronunciation to a hypothetical Middle Chinese which he correlated to the phonological categories of rhyme dictionaries.