The Syntax of "NP F VP" in Old Chinese

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This paper investigates the syntax of two kinds of constructions in Old Chinese which can be analyzed into the "NP F VP" structure in which an overt functional category F occurs between the subject NP and its predicate, namely "NP *zhi* VP" ("主之谓"), one of the prominent structures in Old Chinese, and its analogue "NP *er* VP" ("主而谓").

The first part of the paper discusses the syntax of "NP *zhi* VP". It is shown that *zhi* '之', as a functional head, can function as a nonfinite INFL and project a nonfinite clause in the form of "NP *zhi* VP". According to this analysis, the syntactic difference between the "NP *zhi* VP" structure and the one without *zhi* lies in the fact that the former is nonfinite whereas the latter is finite.

Unlike *zhi* in the "NP *zhi* VP" structure, *er* '而' in the "NP *er* VP" structure is an instantiation of Mood in the C domain which takes a finite IP as its complement. Hence, the "NP *er* VP" structure is finite in nature.

If this analysis is on the right track, then the structures like "NP *zhi* VP" and "NP *er* VP" can be characterized as different instantiations of the abstract "NP F VP" structure in Old Chinese. They differ from each other only in different values of F. It is the properties of the functional category F that determine the nature of the "NP F VP" structure. F can be a C, or an INFL. The commonalities of these two kinds of structures under discussion are captured by F, and their variations or differences are also reflected in it.