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.