Classical Chinese Grammar Tutorial[*]
Lesson 1: Nominal Predicates

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Language points:

- The classical particle *la:lʔ* (ꥨ [也])

- The preclassical copula *ɢʷiʔ* (ꥯ [唯])

- The classical copula *ɢʷal* (ꥱ [爲])

Textbooks:

- Pulleyblank, E. (1995). *Outline of Classical Chinese grammar*. Vancouver: UBC Press. [PB]

- von der Galebentz, G. (1881). *Chinesische Grammatik*. Leipzig: T. O. Weigel. [vdG]

Historical sources:

- The Four Books: *Tá Hiok* (大學) 'Great Learning' (DH), *Čūng Yûng* (中庸) 'Doctrine of the Mean' (ČY), *Lûn Iǜ* (論語) 'Analects' (LI), *Méng Tsɨ̀* (孟子) 'Mencius' (MTs)

- The Five Classics: *Šī Kīng* (詩經) 'Classic of Poetry' (Šī), *Šū Kīng* (書經) 'Book of Documents' (Šū), *Lì Kí* (禮記) 'Book of Rites' (Lì), *Yik Kīng* (易經) 'Book of Changes' (Yik), *C'ūn Ts'ieū* (春秋) 'Spring and Autumn Annals' (C'Ts')

- Others: *Taò Tek Kīng* (道德經) 'Classic of the Way and Virtue' (TTK), *Tsò Čuén* (左傳) 'The Commentary of Zuo' (TsČ), *Čuāng Tsɨ̀* (莊子) 'The Works of Čuāng Tsɨ̀' (ČTs), *Sûn Tsɨ̀* (荀子) 'The Works of Sûn Tsɨ̀' (STs)

Specifications:

- **Zhengzhang Shangfang's Old Chinese reconstruction** system[1] is adopted, with the specific (IPA-tized) pronunciations extracted from `ytenx.org`. This system is suitable for our purposes in that it is both accurate enough and not overly detailed.

- **Von der Gabelentz's Mandarin romanization system** is adopted. This system is recommendable in that it retains the historical final consonants as part of the orthography, including the three nasals *-m, -n, -ng* and the three unreleased stops *-p, -t, -k*.

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[*]This tutorial consists of a series of notes I have compiled to help myself learn Classical Chinese grammar (in a procrastination-free fashion). All accompanying materials are available on my website (`www.juliosong.com`).

[1]Zhengzhang, S. (2003). *Old Chinese Phonology*. Shanghai: Shanghai Educational Publishing House.

1   The classical particle *la:lʔ* (帋 [也])

Classical Chinese had a copula *ɢʷal* (爲 [爲]), but it was seldom used. The more common *quasi* copular construction was formed with the sentence-final particle (SFP) *la:lʔ* (帋 [也]). The basic function of this particle was to mark assertion, but it had developed several other discourse-level functions too (e.g., to mark topicalization).

1.1   Basic function

The basic function of *la:lʔ* is assertion. Namely, it asserts a predicate to be true of a subject— or more exactly of a topic, since Chinese is a topic-prominent language. In other words, the particle *la:lʔ* turns a predicate into an assertive comment. As for the category of the predicate, it is most typically nominal (or a nominalized constituent) according to Pulleyblank, but a verbal predicate is also allowed, as one can certainly assert a verbal predicate to be true as well. Below I only illustrate the nominal situation, leaving the verbal situation to later sections, whenever a suitable example occur.

(1)   a.   德耆本帋財耆末帋
            德者本也財者末也 (TH)

tuːg	*tjaʔ*	*puːnʔ*	***la:lʔ,***	*zluː*	*tjaʔ*	*maːd*	***la:lʔ***
tek	čè	pèn	yè,	ts'âi	čè	mot	yè
virtue	NOM	root	AST	wealth	NOM	branch	AST

        'Virtue is the root (i.e., cause); wealth is the branch (i.e., effect).'   (vdG:192)

        b.   政耆正帋
            政者正也 (LI)

tjeŋs	*tjaʔ*	*tjeŋs*	***la:lʔ***
číng	čè	číng	yè
governing	NOM	rectifying	AST

        'Governing is rectifying.'   (vdG:192)

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[2]The EBAS font (`https://www.cns11643.gov.tw`) is used for the Small Seal Script, and the I.MingCP font (`https://github.com/ichitenfont/I.Ming`) is used for the Regular Script.

c. 𝄞 𝄞 𝄞 𝄞 𝄞 𝄞 𝄞 𝄞 𝄞 𝄞 𝄞 𝄞 𝄞

天地之道博也厚也高也明也 (ČY)

$q^hl'i{:}n$	$l'els$	tju	$l'u{:}ʔ,$	$pa{:}g$	**$la{:}lʔ,$**	$go{:}ʔ$	**$la{:}lʔ,$**	$ka{:}w$	**$la{:}lʔ,$**	$mraŋ$	**$la{:}lʔ$**
t'iēn	tí	čī	taò,	pok	yè,	heú	yè,	kaō	yè,	mîng	yè
heaven	earth	GEN	way	wide	AST	thick	AST	high	AST	bright	AST

'The way of heaven and earth is wide, thick, high, and bright.'   (vdG:316)

The above examples not only illustrate the usage of *la:lʔ* but also demonstrate the categorial flexibility of Classical Chinese. In (1a), *pu:nʔ* 'root' and *ma:d* 'branch' are two bare nouns used as predicates, which are turned into assertive comments by *la:lʔ*, respectively commenting on *tek* 'virtue' and *zluɯ:* 'wealth'. In (1b), the content of the *la:lʔ*-comment is a nominalized verb *tjeŋs* 'to rectify'→'rectifying', which comments on another (homophonous) nominalized verb *tjeŋs* 'to govern'→'governing'. In fact, the latter verb is nominalized twice: first from a verb to a gerund (via zero derivation), and then from a gerund to an "enriched nominal" roughly meaning 'the matter of governing' (via the overt nominalizer *tja:ʔ*). The *A tja:ʔ B la:lʔ* '(the matter of) A is B' construction is highly common in Classical Chinese and is often used to give definitions. Finally, (1c) can be a bit tricky to translate. Von der Gabelentz translates the four predicates introduced by *la:lʔ* as adjectives (into German, which I have further translated into English above), but given how *la:lʔ*-predication works, they should more accurately be translated as nominals—more exactly as adjective- or stative verb–turned nominals. Thus, a more accurate way to translate (1c) is 'The way of heaven and earth is wideness, thickness, highness, and brightness.' That is indeed how the sentence is rendered in its Modern Chinese translation.

The negation of *la:lʔ*-predication assumes a different syntactic structure:

(2)   [NP *la:lʔ*] '(it) is {NP}' →[*puɯl* NP *la:lʔ*] '(it) is not {NP}'

See (3) for an example.

(3)   𝄞 𝄞 𝄞 𝄞 𝄞
       非我也兵也 (MTs)

$puɯl$	$ŋa{:}ʔ$	$la{:}lʔ,$	$praŋ$	$la{:}lʔ$
fēi	ngò	yè,	pīng	yè
NEG	I	AST	weapon	AST

'It is not me, but the weapon.'   (PB:16)

The morpheme *puɯl* (𝄞 [非]) is a fusion of the regular verbal negator *puɯ* (𝄞 [不]) plus the pre-classical copula *ɢʷiʔ* (𝄞 [唯]). The fusion is more obvious in the Baxter-Sagart reconstruction of Old Chinese: *pə + ɢʷij → pəj*. Theoretically speaking, since the function of the copula *ɢʷiʔ* and that of the assertive SFP *la:lʔ* with regard to nominal predication are the same, the *la:lʔ* in the negative form in (3) is superfluous, and it is indeed stylistically omitted sometimes (so is *la:lʔ*), as in (4).

(4) a. 𠂤非魚 𡨥知魚 之樂

子非魚安知魚之樂 (ČTs)

ʔsluʔ	***pul***	*ŋa,*	*qaːn*	*ʔlʼe*	*ŋa*	*tjiu*	*raːwɢ*
tsǐ	fēi	iǔ,	ngān	čī	iǔ	čī	lok
you.HON	NEG	fish	how	know	fish	GEN	joy

'You are not fish, so how can you know fish's joy?'

b. 必千乘 之家

必千乘之家 (MTs)

plig	*sn̥ʰiːn*	*ɦljuŋs*	*tjiu*	*kraː*
pit	tsʼiēn	šéng	čī	kiā
necessarily	thousand	chariot	GEN	family

'(It) must be a family of a thousand chariots.' (PB:19)

The reason why *pul* and *laːlʔ* co-occur in the negative form of nominal predication is probably that by the classical period of Chinese, the preclassical copula ɢʷiʔ had become obsolete, and the originally bimorphemic *pul* got reanalyzed as a monomorphemic NP-selecting negator.

1.2   In combination with other SFPs

Depending on the type of the sentence, *laːlʔ* can be used in combination with another SFP, such as the interrogative ɢaː (� [乎]) or the perfect aspect ɢluʔ (㬰 [矣]). These respectively correspond to Mandarin *ma* (嗎) and *le* (了). The stacked SFPs went through phonetic fusion and became a single complex SFP: ***laːlʔ+ɢaː=la*** (㦲 [與] or 歟[歟], mainly in Confucian texts from the Lù State) **or *laː*** (邪[邪] or its popular Clerical Script variant 耶[耶], mainly in texts from other Warring States texts), and ***laːlʔ+ɢluʔ=luʔ*** (㠯 [已]). However, the fusion mechanism was probably not properly understood by later scribes, as we can see various doubly stacked (i.e., fused+unfused) SFPs in surviving versions of the Confucian texts (especially in later copies). The fusion theory here is from Pulleyblank (1995). There are alternative theories regarding these stacked SFPs too. For instance, some scholars argue that the stylistic stacking, especially in later texts, had actually led to new, compound SFPs with stronger modal force.[3]

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[3]See, e.g., Cho, E.-J. (2010). A study on the phenomenon of ye-yi-yi in the Analects. In Clements, L. E. & C.-M. L. Liu (eds.), *Proceedings of the 22nd North American Conference on Chinese Linguistics & the 18th International Conference on Chinese Linguistics*, vol. 1, 63–80. (`https://naccl.osu.edu/sites/naccl.osu.edu/files/05%20cho.pdf`)

(5) a. 𣢇𣢼吾望𤕟也乎
    繫爲吾望爾也乎 (TsČ)

    *ma ɢʷal ŋa: maŋs njelʔ **la:lʔ ɢa:***
    wû   wéi ngû wáng rî   yè **hû**
    not think I   expect you AST Q

    'Didn't you think that I was waiting for you?'

  b. 周𤕟知𦰩將畔而使𡳞與
    周公知其將畔而使之與 (MTs)

    *tjuw klo:ŋ ʔl'e gu ʔsaŋ ba:ns njiu sruʔ tju **la***
    čeū kūng čī kʼî tsiāng puán rî ssî čī iû
    Čeū Duke know he will   rebel CONJ employ him AST.Q

    'Did Duke of Čeū send him (i.e., Kuàn Šū) knowing he'd rebel?'   (vdG:323)

  c. 仲由可使從政也與
    仲由可使從政也與 (LI)

    *duŋs luw kʰa:lʔ sruʔ zloŋ tjeŋs **la:lʔ la***
    čúng yeū kò ssî ts'ûng číng yè iû
    Čúng Yeū can let follow governing AST AST.Q

    'As for Čung Yeū, can we let him become a government official?'

  d. 其正色邪
    其正色邪 (ČTs)

    *gu tjeŋs sruug **la:***
    kʼî číng sé yê
    its true color AST.Q

    'Is it its true color?'   (PB:17)

According to Pulleyblank, the original, unfused form *la:lʔ-ɢa:* 'AST-Q' is mainly seen in *Tsò Čuén*, while the various fused forms are seen in later texts. The sentence structure throughout (5) is, underlyingly, just

(6) [$_{\text{ɢa:P}_{[+Q]}}$ (Subject/Topic) [$_{\text{la:lʔP}_{[+\text{AST}]}}$ Predicate *la:lʔ*$_{[+\text{AST}]}$] *ɢa:*$_{[+Q]}$]

which roughly means

(7) 'Is it the case that {Predicate} is true of {Subject/Topic}?'

Thus, for example, (7a) literally means 'Is it the case that {not-thinking-that-I-expect-you} is true of {you}?', where the subject/topic 'you' is clearly omitted (because Chinese is a radical pro-drop language). The topics in (7b–c), on the other hand, are not omitted, though notice that *duŋs luw* 'Čúng Yeŭ' in (7c) is not really the subject of the entire *la:lʔ*P but a topicalized "pivotal" argument—it is originally both the direct object of *sruʔ* 'let, make' and the subject of the subordinate VP *zloŋ tjeŋs* 'enter politics'. Likewise, the ostensible subject *k'î číng sé* 'its true color' in (7d) is not a subject at all—nor even a topic—but a nominal predicate commentized by *la:lʔ* (which is fused into the complex SFP *la:*). The real subject/topic of the sentence, probably a demonstrative like 'this' or 'that', is omitted.

A somewhat similar *la:lʔ*-fusion pattern is observed for the perfect aspect marker *ɢluʔ*. While the unfused form *la:lʔ-ɢluʔ* 'AST-PRF' is never attested according to Pulleyblank, there are numerous occurrences of the doubly stacked forms *la:lʔ-luʔ* and *la:lʔ-luʔ-ɢluʔ*.

(8) a. 是亂國ʔ
         是亂國已 (STs)

djeʔ	*ro:ns*	*kʷw:g*	***luʔ***
ssǐ	luán	kuok	ǐ
this	disordered	country	AST.PRF

'This is a disordered country (as one can tell upon entering it).'   (PB:19)

   b. 今老矣麇能爲也ʔ
       今老矣麇能爲也已 (TsČ)

krum	*ru:ʔ*	*ɢluʔ*	*ma*		*nuu:*	*ɢʷal*	***la:lʔ***	***luʔ***
kīm	laò	ǐ	wû		nêng	weî	yè	ǐ
now	old	PRF	not.have		can	do	AST	AST.PRF

'I am old now. There's nothing I can do now.'

   c. 此亦妄人也ʔ矣
       此亦妄人也已矣 (MTs)

sheʔ	*la:g*	*maŋs*	*njin*	***la:lʔ***	***luʔ***	***ɢluʔ***
ts'ǐ	í	wáng	žîn	yè	ǐ	ǐ
this	also	reckless	person	AST	AST.PRF	PRF

'This is just another reckless person (as I have realized now).'   (PB:19)

According to Pulleyblank, when the perfect aspect particle is applied to an asserted comment, the aspectual reading is imposed not on the content of the comment (i.e., the embedded predicate) but on the asserting speech act itself. Namely, the perfect aspect denotes a change in the asserter's mental state, roughly meaning '{asserter} has realized the truth of {comment}'. Thus, for instance, the literal meaning of (8a) is roughly 'I have realized that it is true that this is a disordered country.' Notice that while (8a) and (8c) both have a nominal predicate embedded

in the assertive shell (i.e., *la:lʔ*P), the embedded predicate in (8b), *ma nɯ: ɢʷal* 'not have things that (I) can do', looks like a VP. Recall that while *la:lʔ* is typically used on nominal predicates (which makes it look like a copula, though it isn't), it is occasionally also used on verbal predicates (where it simply conveys an assertive mood).

2 The preclassical copula *ɢʷiʔ* (唯[唯])

The SFP *la:lʔ* served quasi copular purposes only from the classical period on. In the preclassical period, namely the period before Confucius's time, there had been a real copula in the Chinese language, which was pronounced *ɢʷiʔ* and variably written as 唯[唯] (in *Tsò Čuén*), 維[維] (in *Šī Kīng*), or 惟[惟] (in *Šū Kīng* and *Lûn Iǜ*). But like many other function words in the Sinitic languages, this one was versatile in its actual usage too.

2.1 Copulative usage

We begin with the basic copulative usage of *ɢʷiʔ* in Preclassical Chinese.

(9) a. 我將我亯維羊維牛
        我將我亯維羊維牛 (Šī)

        ŋa:lʔ   ʔsaŋ   ŋa:lʔ   qʰaŋʔ,   ɢʷiʔ   laŋ   ɢʷiʔ   ŋʷɯ
        ngò   tsiāng ngò   hiàng,   wêi   yâng wêi   nieû
        I   offer   I   sacrifice COP   ram   COP   bull

        'I offered up and I made sacrifices; (it) was rams and (it) was bulls'   (vdG:314)

    b. 予惟聽用德
        予惟聽用德 (Šū)

        laʔ   ɢʷiʔ   l̥ʰe:ŋs   loŋs   tɯ:g
        iǜ   wêi   t'īng   yúng   tek
        I   COP   listen follow virtue

        'I am (a person who) listens to and follows virtue.'   (vdG:314)

Preclassical texts may sound "foreign" to Modern Chinese speakers, but they are analyzable via general linguistic methods, which can in turn aid understanding. The sentence in (9a), taken from *Classic of Poetry*, is about offering up animal sacrifices. It stylistically repeats the subject *ŋa:lʔ* 'I' and the copula *ɢʷiʔ*, perhaps for rhythmic purposes, but if we abstract away from that style, then the essential syntactic structure of the sentence is just

(10)   [Subj VP] [(Subj) CopP]

which literally says 'I offer up sacrifices; (what I sacrifice) is …' The subject/topic of the copular clause is omitted.

The interpretation of (10b) is also a bit tricky for Modern Chinese speakers. Von der Gabelentz gives two ways to make sense of it. First, we can treat the post-copula part as a gerund phrase meaning 'listening to and following virtue', which would render a quasi-stative translation (at least formally) 'I am listening to and following virtue'. Second, we can alternatively treat it as a nominalization meaning 'someone who listens to and follows virtue' (this kind of quasi-relative-clause nominalization is common in Chinese), whereby we get the overall translation given in (10b). I personally find both analyses okay.

The copulative ɢʷiʔ is clearly more than just a *be*-verb. Von der Gabelentz provides three translations (in German): 'sein', 'existiren', and 'werden'. In English these are 'be', 'exist', and 'become', which suggest that ɢʷiʔ very likely had other grammatical functions usually associated with *be*-verbs in familiar European languages too, such as the quasi passive voice–marking function in (11).[4] This kind of direct speech construction is very common in *Šū Kīng*, often just in the form ɢʷiʔ ɢʷad '(it) is said…' The expletive subject is omitted, as expected.

(11) 㦰 聞 惟 㘽
      我聞惟曰 (Šū)

      *ŋaːlʔ mun **ɢʷiʔ** ɢʷad*
      ngò   wên   wêi   yuet
      I   hear COP   say

      'I hear (it) is said…'   (vdG:314)

Also notice the two different 1SG pronouns *ŋaːlʔ* and *laʔ* in (10). (Pre-)Classical Chinese pronouns are an intriguing phenomenon that has attracted much scholarly research. We will briefly introduce them later in this tutorial series.

2.2   Topicalization

The second salient usage of ɢʷiʔ is as a topic marker. Here, the term "topic" is construed broadly, as either a normal, left-periphery topic or a "low topic" at the *v*P edge. These respectively correspond to constituent-fronting to two phase-edge positions: the clausal left periphery and the *v*P left edge. We begin with the first scenario.

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[4]Though some scholars treat this as a cleft structure. See, e.g., Kuo, W.-J. (2006). A preliminary study on wei clefts in Jinwen Shangshu. *Humanitas Taiwanica* 85, pp. 135–174. (`http://homepage.ntu.edu.tw/~bcla/e_book/85/8504.pdf`)

(12) a. 𢔌聖 𡇈念𠂹𤞤惟𤞤亨念𠂹聖
      惟聖罔念作狂惟狂克念作聖 (Šū)

ɢʷiʔ	*hljeŋs*	*mlaŋʔ*	*nɯːms*	*ʔsaːgs*	*gʷaŋ,*	*ɢʷiʔ*	*gʷaŋ*	*kʰɯːg*	*nɯːms*
wêi	šíng	wàng	niém	tsok	kʼuâng,	wêi	kʼuâng	kʼek	niém
TOP	wise	not have	consideration	do	mad	TOP	mad	can	consider

ʔsaːgs	*hljeŋs*
tsok	šíng
do	wise

      'As for the wise, if he had no (prudent) consideration, would behave like a madman; as for the mad, if he could consider (things prudently), would behave like a wise man.'
                                                (vdG:316)

    b. 惟戊午王㳄于河朔
      惟戊午王次于河朔 (Šū)

ɢʷiʔ	*mus*	*ŋʷɯ,*	*ɢʷaŋ*	*sn̥ʰis*	*qa*	*gaːl*	*sŋraːg*
wêi	meú	ngù	wâng	tsʼí	iū	hô	šok
TOP	Meú	Ngù	king	halt	at	river	north

      'On the Meú-Ngù (i.e., 55th) day, the king halted at the northern bank of the river.'
                                                  (vdG:316)

In (12a), the two occurrences of *ɢʷiʔ* respectively topicalize the two clausal subjects *hljeŋs* 'wise'→'the wise, wise man' and *gʷaŋ* 'mad'→'the mad, madman'. In (12b), *ɢʷiʔ* topicalizes a temporal adverbial *mus ŋʷɯ* 'the Meú-Ngù day (i.e., the 55th day in a cycle on the ancient Chinese calendar)'. Notice that the name of the day can function as an adverbial by itself in (Pre-)Classical Chinese, without the help of a preposition.

Modern Chinese speakers may find this topic-marking usage of *ɢʷiʔ* counterintuitive due to the salient modern-day meaning 'only' of the word. However, in order to properly grasp preclassical grammar, Chinese speakers must temporarily forget that later-developed meaning and just treat *ɢʷiʔ* as an ordinary grammatical marker, like Japanese *wa* or Korean *neun*.

Next we turn to the low topic–marking *ɢʷiʔ*. The low topic has similar grammatical status to the high topic; it is just lower on the syntactic tree (at the left periphery of the verb phrase).

(13) a. 寧王惟卜用
      寧王惟卜用 (Šū)

neːŋ	*ɢʷaŋ*	*ɢʷiʔ*	*poːg*	*loŋs*
nîng	wâng	wêi	puk	yóng
Nîng	king	LTOP	divination	follow

      'King Nîng followed the divination result.'
                                                  (vdG:314)

9

b. 乃及王季維德之行 (Ŝī)

*nɯ:ʔ gruɯb ɢʷaŋ kʷids **ɢʷiʔ** tɯ:g tjɯ gra:ŋ*
nài   kip   wâng   kí   wêi   tek   čī   hîng
then   with   King   Kí   LTOP   virtue   3SG.ACC   walk

'Then (King Kí's wife) together with King Kí, (they) walked (the path of) virtue.'

(vdG:314)

c. 惟慢游是好傲虐是作 (Ŝū)

ɢʷiʔ mro:ns lu djeʔ qʰu:s ŋa:ws ŋawɢ djeʔ ʔsa:gs
wêi   mán   yeû   ší   haó   ngaó   yok   ší   tsok
LTOP   sluggishness   diversion   this   love   cockiness   oppression   this   do

'Sluggishness and diversion were what he loved, and cockiness and oppression were what he did.'

(vdG:314)

In (13a), the direct object *po:g* 'divination (result)' is preposed via *ɢʷiʔ* to the left of the verb *loŋs*. Without *ɢʷiʔ*, the sentence would be in the form *ne:ŋ ɢʷaŋ loŋs po:g* 'lit. Nîng King follows divination result' instead. The object fronting apparently serves some discourse-related purpose, which we simply call "topicalization" here, without going into the technical details. The sentence in (13a) is pretty normal, but the sentences in (13b–c) are more interesting. First, they both contain a resumptive pronoun: *tjɯ* '3SG.ACC' in (13b) and *djeʔ* 'this' in (13c). The latter is a demonstrative used pronominally. So, the two sentences respectively have the following coreferential patterns:

(14) a. *ɢʷiʔ tɯ:g_i tjɯ_i gra:ŋ* (for (13b))

b. *ɢʷiʔ [mro:ns lu]_j djeʔ_j qʰu:s [ŋa:ws ŋawɢ]_k djeʔ_k ʔsa:gs* (for (13c))

The use of resumptive pronouns is interesting in that it is a clear sign that the real, logical direct object has moved from its original locality (here VP). In terms of phrase structure, this suggests that *ɢʷiʔ*-fronting, whatever its exact grammatical function is, is not thematically motivated (but, e.g., discourse-driven).

The sentences in (14b–c) are also interesting in that they could both be treated as clausal rather than low topicalization, for there is no other fronted argument preceding the fronted direct object. Of course, on such an analysis, the logical subject (which is pro-dropped anyway) would remain in a lower position in the syntactic representation (instead of occupying its usual topic position), as in (15).

(15) a. [$_\text{TopP}$ ɢʷiʔ *tuː:g$_i$* [$_\text{IP}$ (Subject) [$_{v\text{P}}$ *tjɯ$_i$* *graːŋ*]]]
         TOP virtue$_i$ (they)   it$_i$ walk

   b. [$_\text{TopP}$ ɢʷiʔ [$_\text{NP}$ *mroːns*   *lu*   ]$_j$ [$_\text{IP}$ (Subject) [$_{v\text{P}}$ *djeʔ$_j$* *qʰuːs*]]],
      TOP [sluggishness diversion]$_j$ (he)   this$_j$ love

      [$_\text{TopP}$ (ɢʷiʔ) [$_\text{NP}$ *ŋaːws*   *ŋawɢ*   ]$_k$ [$_\text{IP}$ (Subject) [$_{v\text{P}}$ *djeʔ$_k$* *ʔsaːgs*]]]
      (TOP) [cockiness oppression]$_k$ (he)   this$_k$ do

So, while von der Gabelentz lists (13b–c) together with (13a) under the "object inversion" usage, I think there is still some grammatical difference between them. Also notice the omission of ɢʷiʔ in the second clause in (13c)/(15b). This indicates that even though ɢʷiʔ is used in Preclassical Chinese to signal topicalization, it is *not* obligatory. Indeed, all the examples above intuitively also make sense without ɢʷiʔ. The deviating word order plus the context are enough to assure readers of the topicalized status of the relevant constituents.

2.3 Emphasis

Apart from the copulative and topic-marking uses, ɢʷiʔ could also be used for various emphatic or focalizing purposes in Preclassical Chinese. This was the origin of its modern-day meaning 'only'. The emphatic ɢʷiʔ is often hard to translate, since what is emphasized is not necessarily a constituent in the sentence but may also be some grammatical force. Below, (16a–d) illustrate the emphatic usage of ɢʷiʔ, while (16e) illustrates its 'only' usage.

(16) a. 今𢝫𢼸�多誥𢝫惟大𨽰𤕓四國民命
       今我曷敢多誥我惟大降爾四國民命 (Šū)

       krum *ŋaːlʔ* *gaːd* *klaːmʔ* *ʔlʼaːl* *kuːgs,*   *ŋaːlʔ* **ɢʷiʔ** *daːds* *kruːŋs* *njelʔ* *hljids*
       kīm ngò hot kàm tō kaó,   ngò wêi tá kiáng rì ssǐ
       now I why dare much announce I EMPH greatly alleviate you four
          kʷɯːg *min*   *mreŋs*
          kuok mîn   míng
          state populace life

       'Why do I dare speak (i.e., warn you) so much now? It is because I (want to) greatly alleviate the lives of the populace living in the four states of yours.'
                                                     (vdG:314)

   b. 惟𪗰非𪗰
      惟齊非齊 (Šū)

      ɢʷiʔ *zliːls* *pul* *zliːl*
      wêi ts'î fêi ts'î
      EMPH order not orderly

      'Put what is not orderly in order (—I emphasize this).'   (vdG:314)

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c. 𠦪非酒惟行
   岡非酒惟行 (Šū)

   mlaŋʔ   *pul*   *ʔsluʔ*   **ɢʷiʔ**   *gra:ŋ*
   wàng   fēi   tsieù   wêi   hîng
   nothing   not   alcohol   EMPH   walk

   '(It was) nothing but alcohol (that they) got involved in.'   (vdG:314–315)

d. 𠦪曰弗亨惟既厥心
   岡曰不克惟既厥心 (Šū)

   mlaŋʔ   *ɢʷuʔ*   *pud*   *kʰɯ:g,*   **ɢʷiʔ**   *kuds*   *kod*   *slum*
   wàng   yuet   fû   kʾek,   wêi   kí   kiuet   sīm
   not   say   not   can   EMPH   prepare   3SG.POSS   heart

   '(One should) not say that (he) cannot (do it), (but should) devote his heart (to it instead).'   (vdG:315)

e. 惟仁者能好人能惡人
   惟仁者能好人能惡人 (LY)

   ɢʷiʔ *njin*   *tja:ʔ,*   *nɯ:*   *qʰu:s*   *njin,*   *nɯ:*   *qa:gs*   *njin*
   wêi   žîn   čè,   nêng   haó   žîn,   nêng   ngú   žîn
   only   conscientious   NOM   can   love   people   can   hate   people

   'Only the conscientious are able to love and hate people.'   (vdG:315)

The emphasized elements are different in all five sentences above. In (16a), the speaker emphasizes an entire clause, which expresses the reason why he dare keep talking, probably in front of several state rulers. NB even though the emphatic force is on the entire clause, *ɢʷiʔ* is not used to introduce the entire clause but intervenes between the subject/topic and the rest of the clause. One way to understand this syntactic peculiarity is to identify *ɢʷiʔ* as an adverbial here.

In fact, the same can be said about the occurrences of *ɢʷiʔ* in (16b–d), because in all these sentences *ɢʷiʔ* immediately precedes the verb. In (16b), the verb is *zli:ls* 'put …in order', and *ɢʷiʔ* gives it more semantic force, which is in a sense similar to the effect of the kind of perfective verbal prefixes in languages like Russian and Hungarian. In (16c), the verb is *gra:ŋ* 'walk'→'get involved in', and *ɢʷiʔ* strengthens its semantic force, presumably in "agreement" with the emphasis in 'nothing but alcohol'. In (16d), the verb is *kuds* 'prepare, make ready', and *ɢʷiʔ* highlights the VP it heads, 'make one's heart ready'→'devote one's heart to it', in contrast with the preceding (negated) alternative 'say one cannot do it'. Von der Gabelentz groups all three sentences in (16b–d) under this polar contrast usage, but strictly speaking only (16d) presents such a contrast, at least on the syntactic level, since only in (16d) are the contrasted constituents parallel in constituent/categorial status. Finally, the use of *ɢʷiʔ* in (16e) is clearly just the Classical/Modern Chinese usage—as the focalizing modifier 'only'.

The above examples in §2.1–2.3 represent all major uses of *ɢʷiʔ* in (Pre-)Classical Chinese.

3 The classical copula *ɢʷal* (羇 [爲])

The preclassical functions of *ɢʷiʔ* systematically fell out of use in the classical period (except in inherited phrases), and the "copular" function was taken over by the SFP *la:lʔ* (殜 [也]). But there was a later-developed copula in the classical period too—the multifunctional light verb *ɢʷal* (羇 [爲]). Its original lexical meaning was 'do, act', which is actually still in use today, and as a light verb it could express a range of semigrammatical meanings including 'become' and 'be'. However, its copulative use was uncommon and mostly only occurred in situations where the more regular *la:lʔ*-construction was not possible for various reasons. Since the multifunctionality of *ɢʷal* in Classical Chinese will be the topic of another lesson, here we only illustrate its simple copulative usage.

(17) a. 恤民爲德正直爲正直曲爲直參和爲仁

    恤民爲德正直爲正直曲爲直參和爲仁 (TsČ)

sqʰʷig	*min*	***ɢʷal***	*tuːg,*	*tjeŋs*	*dug*	***ɢʷal***	*tjeŋs,*	*dug*
siüt	mîn	wêi	tek,	číng	čik	wêi	číng,	čik
sympathize	populace	COP	virtue	correct	honest	COP	correctness	straighten

kʰog	***ɢʷal***	*dug,*	*slo:m*	*go:l*	***ɢʷal***	*njin*
k'iük	wêi	čik,	sām	huô	wêi	žîn
bent	COP	lawfulness	three	sum	COP	humanity

'Sympathizing with the populace is virtue, sincerity is correctness, rectifying incorrectness is lawfulness, and the three combined is humanity.' (vdG:307)

    b. 子爲誰

    子爲誰 (LY)

ʔsluʔ	***ɢʷal***	*djul*
tsǐ	wêi	šûi
sir	COP	who

'Who are you, sir?' (PB:22)

According to Pulleyblank, a key difference between the copulative *ɢʷal* and the "copular" SFP *la:lʔ* is that *ɢʷal* is used on presupposed information (i.e., one of several given designated options) whereas *la:lʔ* is used to add new, descriptive information. While this seemingly explains why *ɢʷal* is used in both sentences in (17)—in particular, (17a) explains several given concepts, and (17b) asks a person's name (among a set of individuals whose identities are possibly known)—whether the rule of thumb is technically correct probably requires more scholarly research.

Another scenario where *ɢʷal* is used instead of *la:lʔ* to introduce a nominal predicate is when the nominal is embedded in a VP-selecting functional category, such as the perfect aspect—that is, when the aspectual force is on the VP per se rather than on the assertion (i.e., when *luʔ* 已 is not appropriate).

(18)　𢿛𩰿𢿛多矤
　　　不爲不多矣 (TsČ)

pɯ **ɢʷal** *pɯ* *ʔlʼaːl* *ɢlɯʔ*
put wêi put tō ì
not COP not many PRF

　　　'(It) is (already) not few.'　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(PB:21)

In (18), since the context is not about the speaker's subjective realization but about an objective change of state (from being few to being not few), the perfect marker *ɢlɯʔ* is used directly on a VP. Accordingly, the nominal predicate must be syntactically "verbalized"—hence the use of the copula *ɢʷal*.

Exercises

I. Translate the following sentences into Classical Chinese using words and grammatical points in this lesson.

1. Virtue is the root of wealth.

2. You$_{honorific}$ are not a family of a thousand chariots.

3. Is governing rectifying? (Lù style)

4. Is the fish happy? (non-Lù Warring States' style)

5. This is its true color (as I have realized now).

6. As for virtue, it is about sympathizing with the people.

7. Who is Čúng Yeū?

II. Translate the following sentences into Preclassical Chinese using words and grammatical points in this lesson.

1. I am a reckless person.

2. It is said: "King Nìng halted at the northern bank of the river."

3. The Duke of Čeū walked the path of virtue and followed the divination result.

4. As for the madman, sluggishness and cockiness were what he did.

5. Don't say you can't. Just put your heart in order.