

The Semantic and Syntactic Differences between 于 Sentences and 於 Sentences

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Abstract

The origins of and functional differences between 于 and 於 have long been controversial. This paper describes and analyzes previously overlooked differences in the contexts in which 于 and 於 appear. It is shown that the use of 于 versus 於 correlates with the semantic features of the following noun and the syntactic complexity of the sentence.

Data from *Zuo's Commentary* 左傳 show that when the following noun phrase is [+concrete], including a place, person, or time word, 于 is still frequently used, whereas only 於 can be used when the following noun phrase indicates a result, degree, or situation, all of which can be described as [-concrete] place. Examples of V + 於 + N[-concrete] include 納於邪, 及於寬政, 至於用鉞, and so on. Syntactically speaking, 於 is preferred when Verb + 于/於 + Noun appears in a syntactically complex sentence including a modifier 之, a demonstrative 其, a nominalizer 者, or a relativizer 所.

In sum, 于 and 於 are anything but graphic variants or in an archaic-contemporary graphic relationship.

Keywords

于, 於, semantic features, syntactic complexity

1. Introduction

The origins of and functional differences between the function words 于 and 於 in Classical Chinese have long been controversial. Karlgren (1926) and He (1989, 2000a, 2000b) discussed their differences based on the data in *Zuo's Commentary* 左傳, while Pulleyblank (1986) explored their possible origins and grammaticalization processes. In my dissertation (2012), based on data from both transmitted and excavated texts, I argued that 于 originated from a verb of movement, whereas 於 originated from a stationary verb. The grammaticalization process of 于 shows similarities with that of verbs of movement in other languages, whereas the grammaticalization process of 於 resembles that of stationary verbs. 于 first grammaticalized into a goal marker (or allative marker) with spatial meaning, and further grammaticalized into a non-spatial goal marker, such as a recipient marker co-occurring with a double-object verb or a verb of speech/inquiry. In contrast, 於 first grammaticalized into a locative marker, and further grammaticalized into a range of markers that do not imply an overt movement or transfer. When 於 started to appear and to replace 于, the instances of 于 in which the feature set was closely related to the original core feature set of 于—such as a spatial goal marker or a recipient marker—resisted replacement better, while the instances of 于 in which the feature set was more distant from the original feature set were the first to be replaced by 於.

Once 於 had encroached to a considerable extent upon the semantic scope of 于, the functional differences between 于 and 於 became difficult to discern, as the range of functions of 于 and 於 came to overlap in large part. Had 于 and 於, then, become virtual graphic variants by this period? The evidence shows, on the contrary, that a distinction between the two remained. The choice of 于 or 於 was strongly conditioned by the semantic features of the following noun and the syntactic complexity of the sentence in which it appears.

This paper considers the data in *Zuo's Commentary*, in which the overall ratio of 于 to 於 is 44:56.¹ It is illustrated that even in this text where both 于 and 於 frequently

¹ In *Zuo's Commentary*, 于 appears 1450 times and 於 appears 1811 times, resulting in a ratio of 于 to 於 of 44:56. In the Former Eight Dukes 前八公, 于 appears more frequently than 於, whereas 於 is more dominant in The Latter Four Dukes 後四公. In the Former Eight Dukes, 于 appears 721 times and 於 appears 639 times, resulting in the ratio of 于 to 於 of 53:47. In the Latter Four Dukes, however, 于 appears 729 times and 於 appears 1172 times, resulting in the ratio 38:62. For the numbers of occurrences of 于 and 於 in each of the twelve dukes, see Chang (2012: 154).

appear and the functions of 于 and 於 largely overlap, 于 and 於 are still distinct: the choice of 于 or 於 is conditioned by the semantic features of the following noun and the syntactic complexity of the sentence in which it appears. The following two sections discuss the semantic and syntactic differences, respectively, of the sentences in which 于 and 於 appear.

2. Semantic differences in the objects of 于 and 於

An analysis of the contexts in which 于 and 於 appear shows that the choice of 于 or 於 is conditioned by the semantic features of their object. When the object is [-concrete], indicating degree, result, or situation, 於 is by far the more frequently used. *Zuo's Commentary* includes 60 occurrences of 於 followed by an abstract noun and two occurrences of 於 followed by a verb phrase that indicates degree, result, or situation, while there are only two occurrences of 于 followed by an abstract noun and no occurrence followed by a verb phrase.

The two occurrences of 于 followed by an abstract noun are as follows.²

- (1) 秋，齊侯盟諸侯于葵丘，曰：“凡我同盟之人，既盟之後，言歸于好。”
(*Zuo's Commentary*/Duke Xi 9.3/327)
‘In autumn, the marquis of Qi made the covenant with the princes in Kuiqiu to this effect: “All we who have united in this covenant shall hereafter go back to good relationship.”’
- (2) 吾無專享文武之功，且為後人之迷敗傾覆而溺入于難，則振救之。(Zuo's *Commentary*/Duke Zhao 26.9/1475)
‘We would not enjoy ourselves alone the achievements of Wen and Wu, and (reasoned) that if any of their descendants went astray or were overthrown, getting plunged into calamity, (the princes, their relatives) would succor and save them.’

In the above examples, 于 is followed by 好 ‘good relationship’ and 難 ‘difficulty,’ both of which can be interpreted as a result or situation.

² The page numbers of the examples follow Yang (1981) and the English translations follow Legge (1960). English translations in italic are my modifications.

While 于 very rarely occurs with a [-concrete] object in this text, in contrast, 於 occurs quite frequently in this context. There are 60 cases of 於 followed by an abstract noun and two occurrences followed by a verb phrase, all of which indicate degree, result, or situation. The numbers of occurrences of 於 followed by an abstract noun or a verb phrase in each of the twelve dukes are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 The numbers of occurrences of 於 followed by an abstract noun or a verb phrase that indicates degree, result, or situation

	Abstract noun	Verb phrase	Total
Duke Yin 隱公	2	0	2
Duke Huan 桓公	2	0	2
Duke Zhuang 莊公	7	0	7
Duke Min 閔公	2	0	2
Duke Xi 僖公	3	1	4
Duke Wen 文公	4	0	4
Duke Xuan 宣公	2	0	2
Duke Cheng 成公	5	0	5
The Former Eight Dukes 前八公	27	1	28
Duke Xiang 襄公	9	1	10
Duke Zhao 昭公	18	0	18
Duke Ding 定公	2	0	2
Duke Ai 哀公	4	0	4
The Latter Four Dukes 後四公	33	1	34
Total	60	2	62

Abstract nouns that appear after 於 include 難 ‘difficulty’ (18 occurrences), 戾 ‘guilt’ (six occurrences), 惡 ‘evil,’ 好 ‘good relationship,’ 善 ‘goodness’ (three occurrences), 淫 ‘licentiousness,’ 死 ‘death,’ 禮 ‘propriety’ (two occurrences), 邪 ‘depravity,’ 軌物 ‘norm and various colors,’ 刑 ‘punishment,’ 寬政 ‘indulgent

government,’ 教訓 ‘lessons of instruction,’ 罪戾 ‘guiltiness of crime,’ 負擔 ‘toil,’ 怨 ‘resentment,’ 敗 ‘defeat,’ 凶德 ‘ill-omened virtue,’ 亂 ‘disorder,’ 勇 ‘braveness,’ 禍 ‘disaster,’ 老 ‘agedness,’ 戮 ‘killing,’ 討 ‘suppress,’ 神明 ‘spirit and brightness,’ 等 ‘rank,’ 罰 ‘punishment,’ 憂虞 ‘worry and anxiety,’ and 大刑 ‘great punishment’ (one occurrence). The following are examples of 於 followed by an abstract noun.

- (3) 修己而不責人，則免於難。(Zuo’s Commentary/Duke Min 2.7/269)
 ‘Cultivate yourself, and do not be finding fault with others; so shall you escape calamity.’

In the above example, 於 is followed by 難 ‘difficulty,’ which can be interpreted as a result or situation.

- (4) 羈旅之臣幸若獲宥，及於寬政，赦其不聞於教訓，免於罪戾，弛於負擔，君之惠也。(Zuo’s Commentary/Duke Zhuang 22.1/220)
 ‘Your subject is here an exile. I am fortunate if I obtain your forgiveness, and enjoy the advantage of your indulgent government. That you pardon my want of practice in the lessons of instruction, and hold me guiltiness of crime, and remove me from a life of toil: this is your lordship’s kindness.’

In the above example, 於 is followed by 寬政 ‘indulgent government,’ 教訓 ‘lessons of instruction,’ 罪戾 ‘guiltiness of crime,’ and 負擔 ‘toil,’ all of which can be interpreted as results or situations.

- (5) 石碻諫曰：“臣聞愛子，教之以義方，弗納於邪。”(Zuo’s Commentary/Duke Yin 3.7/31)
 ‘Shi Que remonstrated with the duke, saying, “Your servant has heard that, when you love a son, you should teach him righteous ways, and *should not let him fall into depravity.*”’

In the above example, 於 is followed by an abstract noun 邪 ‘depravity,’ which can be considered a result or situation.

Both of the two occurrences of 於 followed by a verb phrase are given below.

- (6) 臣懼其死，以及揚干，無所逃罪。不能致訓，至於用鉞。(Zuo's Commentary/Duke Xiang 3.7/929)

'I was afraid that the death which I should incur would also extend to Yanggan; I do not dare to escape from the consequences of guilt, for I was unable to give the necessary instructions previously, and proceeded to use the axe.'

In the above example, 於 is followed by a verb phrase 用鉞 'use the axe,' which is interpreted as a degree or result.

- (7) 叔詹曰：“楚王其不沒乎！為禮卒於無別。無別不可謂禮。將何以沒？”
(Zuo's Commentary/Duke Xi 22.9/400)

'Shu Zhan said, "The king of Chu will not die a natural death! The ceremonies shown on his account have ended in his breaking down the distinctions regulating the intercourse between the sexes; and where this is done there can be no propriety. How should he die a natural death?"'

In the above example, 於 is followed by a verb phrase 無別 'have no distinction,' which can be interpreted as a result or situation.

This evidence illustrates that 於 is by far more frequently followed by an abstract noun which indicates a degree, result, or situation. This proves that the usages of 于 and 於 were distinct even when 於 had encroached to a considerable extent upon 于 and their functions had come to largely overlap.

3. Syntactic differences of 于 and 於

From the usage of 于 and 於 in Zuo's Commentary, it is observed that the distinction between 于 and 於 relies not only on semantics, but also on syntax. Syntactically speaking, it is 於 that more frequently appears in a complex sentence, such as Modifier+ 之 +[V+yu+N]_{Head Noun}, [[V+yu+N]_{VP} 者]_{NP}, [其 [V+yu+N]_{VP}]_{NP}, [所 [V+yu+N]_{VP}]_{NP}, and so on. Table 2 shows the numbers of occurrences of 于 and 於 that appear in each sentential structure.

Table 2 The numbers of occurrences of 于 and 於 in complex sentential structures

		Modifier+之 +[V+yz+N] _{Head} Noun	[[V+yz+N] _{VP} 者] _{NP}	[其[V+yz+N] _{VP}] _{NP}	[所[V+yz+N] _{VP}] _{NP}	Total
Duke Yin 隱公	于	0	0	0	0	0
	於	0	1	0	0	1
Duke Huan 桓公	于	0	0	0	0	0
	於	1	0	0	0	1
Duke Zhuang 莊公	于	0	0	0	0	0
	於	0	1	1	0	2
Duke Min 閔公	于	0	0	0	0	0
	於	0	0	0	0	0
Duke Xi 僖公	于	1	1	1	0	3
	於	4	0	5	0	9
Duke Wen 文公	于	0	0	0	0	0
	於	3	4	4	0	11
Duke Xuan 宣公	于	0	0	0	0	0
	於	1	1	0	0	2
Duke Cheng 成公	于	0	0	0	0	0
	於	2	2	1	0	5
The Former Eight Dukes 前八公	于	1	1	1	0	3
	於	11	9	11	0	31
Duke Xiang 襄公	于	1	1	1	1	4
	於	7	8	1	4	20
Duke Zhao 昭公	于	0	2	0	0	2
	於	3	4	1	3	12
Duke Ding 定公	于	0	0	0	0	0
	於	0	1	0	0	1
Duke Ai 哀公	于	1	0	0	0	1
	於	0	1	0	0	1
The Latter Four Dukes 後四公	于	2	3	1	1	7
	於	10	14	2	7	34
Total	于	3	4	2	1	10
	於	21	23	13	7	65

Table 2 above shows that 於 appears in complex sentential structures much more frequently than 于. While there are only three occurrences of 于 in [Modifier+ 之 +[V+yu+N]_{Head Noun}], four occurrences in [[V+yu+N]_{VP} 者]_{NP}, two occurrences in [其 [V+yu+N]_{VP}]_{NP}, and one occurrence in [所 [V+yu+N]_{VP}]_{NP}, there are 21 occurrences of 於 in [Modifier+ 之 +[V+yu+N]_{Head Noun}], 23 occurrences in [[V+yu+N]_{VP} 者]_{NP}, 13 occurrences in [其 [V+yu+N]_{VP}]_{NP}, and seven occurrences in [所 [V+yu+N]_{VP}]_{NP}.

In the following subsections, examples of 于 and 於 in each sentential structure are provided.

3.1. [Modifier+ 之 +[V+yu+N]_{Head Noun}]

In [Modifier+ 之 +[V+yu+N]_{Head Noun}], 于 or 於 is used in a verb phrase which is nominalized and used as a head noun after a possessive/ attributive marker 之. There are three occurrences of 于 and 21 occurrences of 於 in this structure in *Zuo's Commentary*. In all of the three occurrences of [Modifier+ 之 +[V+ 于 +N]_{Head Noun}], the modifier is a noun phrase, whereas there are 20 occurrences of a noun phrase and one occurrence of a verb phrase used as a modifier in [Modifier+ 之 +[V+ 於 +N]_{Head Noun}].

Examples of 于 and 於 appearing in [Modifier+ 之 +[V+yu+N]_{Head Noun}] are provided below.

- (8) 黃人恃 [[諸侯]_M 之 [睦于齊]_H]_{NP} 也不共楚職。(Zuo's Commentary/Duke Xi 12.2/340)
 'The people of Huang, relying on the friendship of the State of Qi, did not render the tribute which was due from them to Chu.'
- (9) 夫子之在此也，猶 [[燕]_M 之 [巢于幕上]_H]_{NP}。(Zuo's Commentary/Duke Xiang 29.13/ 1167)
 'He lives here like a swallow which has its coffin in the ancestral temple.'
- (10) 君子是以知 [[季文子]_M 之 [忠於公室]_H]_{NP} 也。(Zuo's Commentary/Duke Xiang 5.10/944)
 'The superior man hereby knows that Ji Wenzi was loyal to the ducal House.'
- (11) 攜王好命，諸侯替之，而建王嗣，用遷邾鄆。則是 [[兄弟]_M 之 [能用力於王室]_H]_{NP} 也。(Zuo's Commentary/Duke Zhao 26.9/1476)
 'Then came king E in violation of the statutes, so that the princes set him aside, and raised king (You's) proper heir to the throne, who removed (the

capital) to Jiaru. Thus were the brothers (of the king) able to employ their strength in support of the royal House.’

(12) 員如吳，言 [[伐楚]_M 之 [利於州于]_H]_{NP}。 (*Zuo's commentary*/Duke Zhao 20.2/1409)

‘Yun went to Wu, and spoke to Zhouyu of the advantages of attacking Chu.’

In examples (8) and (9), 于 is used in a verb phrase which appears in a head noun position, whereas 於 is used in examples (10), (11), and (12). While the modifier is a noun phrase in example (8) through (11), it is a verb phrase (伐楚 “attack Chu”) in example (12).³

The reason that [Modifier+ 之 +[V+ 於 +N]_{Head Noun}] is by far dominant compared to [Modifier+ 之 +[V+ 于 +N]_{Head Noun}] can be found in chronology. The emergence of [NP+ 之 +[V+yu+N]_{Head Noun}] is quite late, and it is 於 that is preferred in newly-emerging, complex sentential structures. According to Yue (1998), the [N(P)+ 之 +VP] structure is first observed in Eastern Zhou bronze inscriptions. Among the total of 1178 occurrences of 之 in *Qingtongqi mingwen jiansuo* 青銅器銘文檢索 by Zhou He 周何, Ji Xusheng 季旭昇, and Wang Zhongwen 汪中文 (1995), there are 27 occurrences of [N+ 之 +VP] in Eastern Zhou bronze inscriptions. In *The Book of Documents* 尚書, among the total of about 230 occurrences of 之, there are 27 occurrences of [NP+ 之 +VP].⁴ In sum, the fact that 於 appears in the [NP+ 之 +[V+yu+N]_{Head Noun}] structure

³ Interestingly enough, compared to [Modifier+ 之 +[V+yu+N]_{Head Noun}], [[V+yu+N]_{Modifier}+ 之 +Head Noun] does not appear very frequently. Also, it is only 于 that appears in this structure. There are five occurrences of [[V+ 于 +N]_{Modifier}+ 之 +Head Noun] in the entire *Zuo's Commentary* (four in Duke Xiang and one in Duke Zhao). Among them, there are four occurrences of [[V+ 于 +N]_{Modifier}+ 之 + 故] and one occurrence of [[V+ 于 +N]_{Modifier}+ 之 + 歲]. Examples of [[V+ 于 +N]_{Modifier}+ 之 +Head Noun] are as follows.

(i) 季武子對曰：“[[會于沙隨]_{VP} 之 [歲]_{NP}]_{NP}，寡君以生。” (*Zuo's commentary*/Duke Xiang 9.7/ 970)

‘Ji Wuzi replied, “My lord was born in the year of the meeting at Shasui.”’

(ii) 吳子使壽越如晉，辭 [[不會于雞澤]_{VP} 之 [故]_{NP}]_{NP}，且請聽諸侯之好。 (*Zuo's Commentary*/ Duke Xiang 5.5/ 943)

‘The viscount of Wu sent Shou Yue to Jin, to explain the reason of his not attending the meeting at Jize, and to ask for another opportunity of joining the alliance of the other States.’

⁴ There are ten occurrences of [NP+ 之 +VP] in “Pangeng” 盤庚, five occurrences in “Hongfan” 洪範, three occurrences in “Jinteng” 金縢, three occurrences in “Wuyi” 無逸, two occurrences in “Lüxing” 呂刑, two occurrences in “Qinshi” 秦誓, one occurrence in “Xibo kanli” 西伯戡黎, and one occurrence in “Guming” 顧命 in the entire *The Book of Documents*.

much more frequently than 于 shows that 於 is by far preferred in newly-emerging, complex syntactic structures.

3.2. [[V+yu+N]_{VP}者]_{NP}

In [[V+yu+N]_{VP}者]_{NP} (and in [[NP+[V+yu+N]_{VP}]_{Sentence}者]_{NP} as in example (14) below), 于 or 於 is used in a verb phrase (or in a sentence) which is nominalized by 者. In the entire *Zuo's Commentary*, there are four occurrences of [[V+ 于 +N]_{VP}者]_{NP}, while there are 23 occurrences of [[V+ 於 +N]_{VP}者]_{NP}. Examples in which 于 and 於 appear in [[V+yu+N]_{VP}者]_{NP} are as follows.

- (13) 初，平王之東遷也，辛有適伊川，見[[被髮]_{VP1}而[祭于野]_{VP2}者]_{NP}。
(*Zuo's Commentary*/Duke Xi 22.4/393-4)
'Earlier, when King Ping removed from the old capital of Zhou to the east, Xin You happened to go to Yichuan, and saw there a man sacrificing in the wilderness with disheveled hair.'
- (14) [[[群臣]_{NP}[不盡力于魯君]_{VP}]_{Sentence}者]_{NP}，非不能事君也。然據有異焉。
(*Zuo's Commentary*/Duke Zhao 26.4/1471)
'That your officers do not do their utmost for the ruler of Lu is not because they are unable to serve you, but because of the strange things that have occurred.'
- (15) 見[[有禮於其君]_{VP}者]_{NP}，事之，如孝子之養父母也；見[[無禮於其君]_{VP}者]_{NP}，誅之，如鷹鷂之逐鳥雀也。(Zuo's Commentary/Duke Wen 18.7/633)
'When you see a man who observes the rules of propriety in his conduct to his ruler, behave to him as a dutiful son should do in nourishing his parents. When you see a man who transgresses those rules towards his ruler, take him off as an eagle or a hawk pursues a small bird.'
- (16) 諺所謂[[室於怒市於色]_{VP}者]_{NP}，楚之謂矣。⁵(*Zuo's Commentary*/Duke Zhao 19.11/1405)
'The words of the common saying might be applied to Chu: "He is angry with the members of his family, and he shows his anger in the market place."'

⁵ He (1989: 87-88) pointed out that 室於怒市於色 is a [N 於 V] structure and is an inversion of 於室怒於市色, which is [於 NV]. They are inverted in order to emphasize the nouns following 於.

In examples (13) and (14), 于 appears in a verb phrase which is nominalized by 者, whereas 於 is used in the same structure in examples (15) and (16).⁶

The emergence of the nominalizer 者 is also quite late. In *The Book of Documents*, there is only one occurrence of 者, which is provided below.⁷

- (17) 八：庶徵。曰雨，曰暘，曰燠，曰寒，曰風，曰時。[五者]_{NP}來備，各以其敘，庶草蕃廡。(The Book of Documents/“Hongfan” 洪範 /124)
 ‘Eight: the various verifications. They are called rain, sunshine, heat, cold, wind and their seasonableness; when the five come in a complete way, and each in its order, all the plants are rich and luxuriant.’

In *The Book of Odes* 詩經, there are 61 occurrences of 者. Among them, there are eight occurrences of [VP 者]_{NP}. There are six occurrences of (不)知我者 in *Ode* 65 and two occurrences of 不知我者 in *Ode* 109, all of which belong to the “Feng” 風 section. The “Feng” section was composed later than the “Ya” 雅 and the “Song” 頌 sections.⁸ Therefore, it is very likely that it reflects the language of a later period as compared to “Ya” and “Song.” An example of [VP 者]_{NP} in *The Book of Odes* is as follows.⁹

- (18) 彼黍離離，彼稷之苗。行邁靡靡，中心搖搖。[[知我]_{VP}者]_{NP}，謂我心憂。[[不知我]_{VP}者]_{NP}，謂我何求。悠悠蒼天，此何人哉！(The Book of Odes 65.1)
 ‘That glutinous millet (has ears that are) hanging down. Oh, the sprouts of that panicked millet! I am walking slowly, in the core of my heart I am

⁶ In example (13) and (15), 者 is used as transfer-referential (*zhuǎnzhi* 轉指), whereas it is used as self-referential (*zìzhǐ* 自指) in (14) and (16). With the limited data in *Zuo's Commentary*, it is not quite certain whether the use of 者 as self-referential or transfer-referential affects the choice of 于 or 於 appearing in a verb phrase that it nominalizes.

⁷ The page number of the example from *The Book of Documents* follows Qu (1983a). The English translation follows Karlgren (1950a).

⁸ Huh (1986: 37-38) mentioned that *The Book of Odes* was composed from the early Western Zhou to the mid Spring and Autumn period (1122 BC-570 BC). “Zhou Song” 周頌 was composed in the early Western Zhou period, “Da Ya” 大雅 was composed in the early and mid-Western Zhou period, “Xiao Ya” 小雅 was composed after the mid-Western Zhou period, and “Guo Feng” 國風 was composed from the late Western Zhou period to mid-Spring and Autumn period.

⁹ The English translation of *The Book of Odes* follows Karlgren (1950b).

agitated. Those who know me say that my heart is grieved. Those who do not know me ask what I am seeking. Oh, you distant blue Heaven, what kind of man is he?’

As shown above, [VP 者]_{NP} was not common in the time of *The Book of Documents* and *The Book of Odes*. Qian (2004: 17) compared the frequency of 者 in *The Book of Documents*, *Zuo’s Commentary*, and *Records of the Historian* 史記 and pointed out that the frequency gradually increases from *The Book of Documents* to *Zuo’s Commentary*, and from *Zuo’s Commentary* to *Records of the Historian*. 者 does not appear in *The Book of Documents*.¹⁰ The frequency of 者 in *Zuo’s Commentary* is 2.8 times per one thousand characters, whereas it appears 8.4 times per one thousand characters in *Records of the Historian*.¹¹ This shows that [VP 者]_{NP} is a newly emerging syntactic structure which became more and more popular in *Zuo’s Commentary* and *Records of the Historian*.

In sum, the fact that 於 is by far preferred over 于 in the structure [[V+yu+N]_{VP} 者]_{NP} shows that 於 is preferred in a newly-emerging, complex syntactic structure.

3.3. [其[V+yu+N]_{VP}]_{NP}

In [其[V+yu+N]_{VP}]_{NP}, 其 is a demonstrative adjective and [V+yu+N] following 其 is nominalized. In *Zuo’s Commentary*, [其[V+yu+N]_{VP}]_{NP} is used either as the object of a verb or as the object of the preposition 以, which originated from a verb. While [其[V+于+N]_{VP}]_{NP} appears only twice, [其[V+於+N]_{VP}]_{NP} appears 13 times in the entire *Zuo’s Commentary*. Examples are as follows.

- (19) 二十三年春，齊侯伐宋，圍緡，以討[其[不與盟于齊]_{VP}]_{NP}也。(Zuo’s *Commentary*/Duke Xi 23.1/401)
 ‘In the twenty-third year, in the spring, the marquis of Qi wished to punish Song and laid siege to Min because of the duke’s absenting himself from the covenant in Qi.’

¹⁰ Qian did not count in the occurrence of 者 in *The Book of Documents* that appears in example (17) above.

¹¹ See He (2005: 9-14) for a comparison of the usages of 者 in *Zuo’s Commentary* and *Records of the Historian*.

(20) 齊人以 [其 [未得志 于 我]_{VP}]_{NP} 故，秋，齊侯伐我北鄙，圍桃。(Zuo's *Commentary*/Duke Xiang 17.3/1030)

‘The people of Qi having been disappointed of their aim in regard to us, in autumn the marquis invaded our northern border, and laid siege to Tao.’

(21) 賈季怨陽子之易其班也，而知 [其 [無援 於 晉]_{VP}]_{NP} 也。(Zuo's *Commentary*/Duke Wen 6.6/552)

‘Jia Ji resented Yang's causing him to be superseded in the command of the army of the center and knowing that he had not friends to succor him in Jin.’

(22) 夏，楚侵陳，克壺丘，以 [其 [服 於 晉]_{VP}]_{NP} 也。(Zuo's *Commentary*/Duke Wen 9.7/573)

‘In summer, Chu made an incursion into Chen, and reduced Huqiu because of its submission to Jin.’

In example (19), [其 [V+ 于 +N]_{VP}]_{NP} is used as the object of the verb 討 ‘punish,’ whereas in example (20), it is used as the object of a preposition 以 ‘because of,’ which was grammaticalized from a verb meaning ‘to take’ > ‘to take (something as a reason)’ > ‘because of.’ In examples (21), [其 [V+ 於 +N]_{VP}]_{NP} is used as the object of the verb 知 ‘to know,’ whereas it is used as the object of a preposition 以 in example (22).

[其 +VP]_{NP} is a relatively new and complex sentential structure that frequently appears in *Zuo's Commentary*. In *The Book of Documents*, however, 其 is by far more frequently used as a modal marker than as a demonstrative.¹² Also, when 其 is used as a demonstrative, it is almost always followed by a simple, monosyllabic noun or a verb, in a structure which can be formulated as [其 +N/V]_{NP}. Examples are as follows.

(23) 皋陶曰：“都。亦行有九德，亦言 [其 [人]_N]_{NP} 有德，乃言曰：‘載采采’。” (*The Book of Documents*/"Gao Yao mo" 皋陶謀 /34)

¹² In *The Book of Documents*, it is 厥 that is frequently used as a demonstrative. In *Zuo's Commentary*, the use of 其 as a modal marker decreased significantly and it was frequently used as a demonstrative. According to He's (1989: 396) statistics, among the total of 2470 occurrences of 其 in *Zuo's Commentary*, there are 1846 occurrences of 其 used as a demonstrative and only 624 occurrences of it used as a modal marker.

‘Gao Yao said: “Oh, in the actions there are nine virtues. When (we) say that this man has virtue, we mean that he initiates the various works.”’

In the above example, 其人 can be interpreted as [其 +N]_{NP}.

- (24) 人之有能有為，使羞 [其 [行]_{NV}]_{NP}，而邦其昌。凡厥正人，既富方穀。汝弗能使有好于而家，時人斯其辜。于 [其 [無好德]_{VP}]_{NP}，汝雖錫之福，其作汝用咎。¹³ (*The Book of Documents* / “Hongfan” 洪範 /120)
 ‘When there are men who have ability and activity, cause them to bring forth their (actions) achievements, and the state will be prosperous. All the principal men, when they have been enumerated, they will be good. If you cannot cause them to have friendliness towards your house, those men will commit offences. As to those who are not good, even though you give them happiness (i.e. emoluments) in acting for you they will use wickedness.’

In the above example, 其行 can be interpreted as [其 +N/V]_{NP} and 其無好德 can be interpreted as [其 +VP]_{NP}. 其無好德 is a rare case in *The Book of Documents* where a demonstrative 其 is followed by a verb phrase.

So far, by comparing the occurrences of 其 in *The Book of Documents* and in *Zuo’s Commentary*, it is observed that [其 +VP]_{NP} is a newly-emerging, complex sentential structure. The fact that 於 appears much more frequently in this structure than 于 does in *Zuo’s Commentary* shows that 於 is preferred in a newly-emerging, syntactically complex sentence.

3.4. [所[V+yu+N]_{VP}]_{NP}

In [所[V+yu+N]_{VP}]_{NP}, [V+yu+N]_{VP} is relativized by a relative pronoun 所. There is only one occurrence of [所[V+于+N]_{VP}]_{NP} in *Zuo’s Commentary*, while there are seven occurrences of [所[V+於+N]_{VP}]_{NP}. It is noteworthy that [所[V+yu+N]_{VP}]_{NP} only appears in Duke Xiang and Duke Zhao, both of which belong to The Latter Four Dukes. The occurrences of [所[V+yu+N]_{VP}]_{NP} in *Zuo’s Commentary* are summarized in Table 3.

¹³ 其 in 而邦其昌 “The state will be prosperous,” 時人斯其辜 “Those men will commit offences,” and 其作汝用咎 “In acting for you they will use wickedness” is used as a modal marker.

Table 3 The occurrences of [所 [V+yu+N]_{VP}]_{NP} in *Zuo's Commentary*

		[所[V+于+N] _{VP}] _{NP}	[所[V+於+N] _{VP}] _{NP}
Oath form	Duke Xiang	1	2
	Duke Zhao	0	0
[所以[V+於+N] _{VP}] _{NP}	Duke Xiang	0	1
	Duke Zhao	0	1
[所謂[V+於+N] _{VP}] _{NP}	Duke Xiang	0	0
	Duke Zhao	0	1
Others	Duke Xiang	0	1
	Duke Zhao	0	1
Total		1	7

The only occurrence of [所 [V+ 于 +N]_{VP}]_{NP} is used in the oath form [所不……者，有如……]， which is provided below.

- (25) 宣子盥而撫之，曰：“事吳敢不如事主！”猶視。欒懷子曰：“其為未卒事於齊故也乎？”乃復撫之曰：“主苟終，[[所 [不嗣事于齊]_{VP}]_{NP} 者]_{NP}，有如河！”(*Zuo's Commentary*/Duke Xiang 19.1/1046)

‘Xuanzi washed his hands and stroked the corpse, saying, “I will serve your son Wu just as faithfully as I would you!” But the eyes continued to stare. Luan Ying said, “It must be because the business in Qi is not yet completed.” He too stroked the corpse and said, “Your life may be over, but if I fail to carry on in your place in the undertaking in Qi, may the Yellow River punish me!”’

Among the seven occurrences of [所 [V+ 於 +N]_{VP}]_{NP}, there are two occurrences of 所 in the oath form. An example is as follows.

- (26) “嬰 [所 [不唯忠於君利社稷者是與]_{VP}]_{NP}，¹⁴ 有如上帝！”乃歆。(Zuo's *Commentary*/Duke Xiang 25.2/1099)

¹⁴ As He (1989: 249) pointed out, a nominalizer 者 in this sentence is used as transfer-referential (*zhuǎnzhi* 轉指, “the one who” or “those who”), while 者 in the oath form [所不……者，有如……] is used as self-referential (*zizhi* 自指).

“If we do not adhere to those who are faithful to the ruler and seek the good of the altars, may god witness it!” With this he smeared his lips with the blood.’

There are two occurrences of [所以 [V+ 於 +N]_{VP}]_{NP} and one occurrence of [所謂 [V+ 於 +N]_{VP}]_{NP}. For the occurrence of [所謂 [V+ 於 +N]_{VP}]_{NP}, see example 16 in 3.2. An example of [所以 [V+ 於 +N]_{VP}]_{NP} is as follows.

- (27) 若以大夫之靈，獲保首領以歿於地，唯是春秋窳窳之事 [[所以 [從先君於禰廟]_{VP}]_{NP}者]_{NP}，請為“靈”若“厲。”大夫擇焉。(Zuo's *Commentary*/Duke Xiang 13.4/1001)

‘If by your influence I am able to preserve my head, and die a natural death, for the business of sacrifice and interment, whereby I shall take the place after my predecessors in the temple proper to me, I beg you will call me by such an epithet as Ling or Li according as you shall choose.’

Another example of [所 [V+ 於 +N]_{VP}]_{NP} is as follows.

- (28) 季武子以 [[所 [得於齊]_{VP}]_M之 [兵]_H]_{NP} 作林鐘而銘魯功焉。¹⁵(Zuo's *Commentary*/Duke Xiang 19.4/1047)

‘Ji Wuzi had a bell, toned to the second note of the chromatic scale, cast from the weapons which he had acquired in Qi, and had the services performed by Lu engraved upon it.’

What is the possible reason that [所 [V+yu+N]_{VP}]_{NP} appears only in Duke Xiang and Duke Zhao, both of which belong to The Latter Four Dukes? Also, why does [所 [V+ 於 +N]_{VP}]_{NP} appear by far more frequently than [所 [V+ 于 +N]_{VP}]_{NP}? The answer can be found in diachrony.

¹⁵ This is a rare example in Zuo's *Commentary* in which [所 +V(P)]_{NP} is used as a modifier. In Zuo's *Commentary*, [所 +V(P)]_{NP} is mostly used as a subject, an object, or a nominal predicate. According to He (1989: 235-238), among the total of 416 occurrences of 所 used as a relative pronoun in Zuo's *Commentary*, there are 96 occurrences of [所 +V(P)]_{NP} used as a subject, 103 occurrences used as an object, and 114 occurrences used as a noun predicate, while there are only 10 occurrences of [所 +V(P)]_{NP} used as a modifier. The use of [所 +V(P)]_{NP} as a modifier increases significantly in *Records of the Historian*. For details on the comparison of [所 +V(P)]_{NP} in Zuo's *Commentary* and *Records of the Historian*, see He (2004: 14-20).

It is believed that 所 was originally a noun meaning ‘place’ and later grammaticalized into a relative pronoun.¹⁶ When 所 first started to be used as a relative pronoun, it was frequently followed by a simple verb phrase, such as a monosyllabic verb. In *The Book of Documents*, for instance, among the total of eight occurrences of 所, three are used as a noun meaning ‘place’ or with other related meaning and five are used as a relative pronoun. Among the five occurrences of 所 used as a relative pronoun, four are followed by a monosyllabic verb (欲 ‘to desire,’ 偃 ‘to overthrow,’ 其 (= 期) ‘to expect,’ and 愆 ‘to digress’).¹⁷

In *The Book of Odes*, there are eight occurrences of 所 used as a noun meaning ‘place’ and 42 occurrences used as a relative pronoun. Among the 42 occurrences as a relative pronoun, 31 are followed by a monosyllabic verb, eight are followed by two monosyllabic verbs (in the form 所 +V₁+V₂), and three are followed by 可 +V. The occurrences of 所 +V₁+V₂ are most likely to make lines tetra-syllabic. Examples of 所 +V, 所 +V₁+V₂, and 所 + 可 V are as follows.

(29) 蔽芾甘棠，勿翦勿伐。召伯所茇。(Odes 16.1) [所 +V]

‘Luxuriant is that sweet-pear tree; do not cut it down, do not hew it, that is where the prince of Shao bivouacked.’

(30) 祈父！予，王之爪牙。胡轉予于恤？靡所止居。(Odes 185.1) [所 +V₁+V₂]

‘Oh, minister of war, you are the claws and teeth of the king; why do you throw us into misery? We have nowhere to settle and rest.’

¹⁶ See Zhou (1956). For a summary of the discussion on the origin of the relative pronoun 所, see Zhou (1972: 368-369).

¹⁷ There is one occurrence of 所 in “Jinteng” 金滕 which is followed by a relatively complex verb phrase, which can be analyzed as [所 (自) 以 +VP].

(i) 邦人大恐，王與大夫盡弁，以啟金滕之書，乃得[[周公所自以為功代武王]_M之[說]_{Head noun}]_{NP}. (*The Book of Documents* / “Jinteng” 金滕 / 132)

‘The people of the land greatly feared. The king and dignitaries all capped themselves in order to open the books of the metal-bound coffer. And then they got hold of the words by which Zhou Gong proffered himself to take the place of King Wu.’

It must be the case that “Jinteng” was compiled after the relativizer 所 had started to be followed by a complex verb phrase such as [所 +Preposition+VP] and [所 +Preposition+VP] started to be used as a modifier. For instance, Qu (1983a: 127) argued that “Jinteng” was compiled in the Warring States period.

(31) 牆有茨，不可埽也。中冓之言，不可道也。所可道也，言之醜也。(Odes 46.1) [所+可V]

‘On the wall there is the Tribulus, it cannot be brushed away; the words of the (inner trellis-work =) inner chamber, they cannot be told; what can be told is (still) the ugliest of tales.’

So far, it has been observed that in *The Book of Documents* and *The Book of Odes*, the great majority of instances of 所 used as a relative pronoun are followed by a simple, monosyllabic verb. In *Zuo’s Commentary*, however, 所 started to be followed by a complex verb phrase.¹⁸ According to He’s (1989: 239-248) statistics, 所 is not only followed by a monosyllabic verb (264 occurrences; including seven cases where 所 is followed by two or more monosyllabic verbs), but also followed by [Prep+V+(O)] (91 occurrences; prepositions include 以 ‘because of,’ ‘by means of’ [82 occurrences], 由 ‘from’ [7 occurrences], 自 ‘from’ [1 occurrence], and 為 ‘on behalf of,’ ‘for’ [1 occurrence]), [Adv+V] or [Optative V+V] (27 occurrences; adverbs include 不 ‘not,’ 未 ‘not yet,’ 甚 ‘even’ and so on; optative verbs include 能 ‘be capable to,’ 敢 ‘be dare to,’ 欲 ‘to desire to,’ and 得 ‘be able to’), [V+O] (20 occurrences), [V+complement] (1 occurrence), and so on.

At the beginning of this section, it was observed that all of the eight occurrences of [所 [V+yu+N]_{VP}]_{NP} appear in Duke Xiang and Duke Zhao, both of which belong to The Latter Four Dukes. The reason can be explained as follows: It was not until the time of The Latter Four Dukes that 所 relativized such a complex verb phrase as [V+yu+N]_{VP}. Also, it is mentioned that while there is only one occurrence of [所 [V+于+N]_{VP}]_{NP}, there are seven occurrences of [所 [V+於+N]_{VP}]_{NP} in *Zuo’s Commentary*. A possible explanation for this is that by the time 所 started to relativize a syntactically complex verb phrase such as [V+yu+N]_{VP}, 於 had become more dominant than 于.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, based on the data in *Zuo’s Commentary*, it is illustrated that the choice of 于 or 於 is conditioned by the semantic features of the following noun and

¹⁸ According to He’s (1989: 235) statistics, 所 appears 463 times in the entire *Zuo’s Commentary*. Among them, there are 416 cases where it is used as a relative pronoun (*jiégòu zhùcí* 結構助詞), 12 cases used as a conjunction leading a conditional sentence (*jiǎshè liáncí* 假設連詞), and 34 cases used as a noun.

the syntactic complexity of the sentence in which it appears. Semantically speaking, 於 is by far preferred when the following noun is an abstract noun indicating degree, result, or situation. Syntactically speaking, it is 於 that frequently appears in a complex sentence, such as Modifier+ 之 +[V+yu+N]_{Head Noun}, [[V+yu+N]_{VP} 者]_{NP}, [其 [V+yu+N]_{VP}]_{NP}, [所 [V+yu+N]_{VP}]_{NP}, and so on. The reason that 於 is much more frequently followed by an abstract noun or appears more frequently in a complex sentence can be explained diachronically. By the time Chinese prose became more eloquent, delivering more complex ideas, and Classical Chinese grammar developed more complex sentential structures, 於 had largely replaced 于 across much of its range of uses and had become the more dominant of the two.

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古漢語虛辭“于”和“於”的語意上、句法上的區別

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提要

古漢語虛辭“于”和“於”的來源和用法上的區別到目前為止眾說不一。本文分析《左傳》裡出現的“于”和“於”語意上、句法上的區別來證明這兩個虛詞有區別。在語意方面，“于”後邊常常出現具體的名詞（包括地方、人、時間）。於此相反，抽象的名詞（包括結果、程度、情況）只出現在“於”的後邊。在句法方面，“於”比“于”頻繁地出現在複雜的句子裡（包括[定+之+中]，[其+動詞句]，[動詞句+者]，[所+動詞句]，等等）。總之，“于”和“於”有很明顯的語意上、句法上的區別，並不能看做古今字或者通假字而已。

關鍵詞

于，於，語意上、句法上的區別