

Temporal phrases in the Shiji : adverbials indicating a point of time

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Résumé

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Abstract

In this paper, the syntax and the semantics of deictic temporal adverbials - complex temporal noun phrases and prepositional phrases with yi 以 - that locate a situation on the time axis are at issue. Although these adverbials differ syntactically, they can represent both independent (calendar adverbials) and dependent adverbials which are related to a previously established time. Within a framework based on Reichenbach's distinction of the temporal categories speech time, event (situation) time, and reference time and on a fourth category TA time which focuses on the time inherent in the temporal adverbial, it will be shown how these adverbials contribute to the temporal interpretation of a sentence.

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Temporal phrases in the *Shiji*: adverbials indicating a point of time

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In this paper, the syntax and the semantics of deictic temporal adverbials – complex temporal noun phrases and prepositional phrases with *yi* 以 – that locate a situation on the time axis are at issue. Although these adverbials differ syntactically, they can represent both independent (calendar adverbials) and dependent adverbials which are related to a previously established time. Within a framework based on Reichenbach's distinction of the temporal categories *speech time*, *event (situation) time*, and *reference time* and on a fourth category *TA time* which focuses on the time inherent in the temporal adverbial, it will be shown how these adverbials contribute to the temporal interpretation of a sentence.

Key words : Deictic temporal adverbial, Han period Chinese, temporal categories, independent and dependent temporal adverbials.

Dans cet article, la syntaxe et la sémantique des syntagmes temporels déictiques – des syntagmes nominaux et des syntagmes prépositionnels en *yi* 以 – qui servent à localiser une situation sur l'axe du temps, seront analysés. Bien que ces syntagmes adverbiaux soient syntaxiquement distincts, ils peuvent également représenter des adverbes indépendants (termes calendériques) et des adverbes dépendants liés à un temps antérieurement établi. Dans le cadre des catégories temporelles distinguées par Reichenbach – temps du discours, temps de l'événement, temps de référence et temps focalisé par l'adverbe temporel – on montrera comment ces syntagmes adverbiaux contribuent à l'interprétation temporelle d'une phrase.

Mots clés : Syntagme temporel déictique, chinois pré-médiéval, catégories temporelles, syntagme adverbial dépendant et indépendant.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this paper, those temporal phrases in a text from the Western Han (Western Han 206 BC – 23 AD), namely the *Shiji*,¹ that locate a situation on a particular point of the time axis are at issue. The employment of temporal markers in this text cannot necessarily be regarded as typical only for the Han period; most of the temporal adverbials occurring in this text can be found in earlier texts as well. But as a historical narrative in which the situations described are usually represented within a temporal frame it provides ample material for an investigation of temporal adverbials. Since the text consists of different narrative structures such as purely descriptive parts, chronologically arranged narratives, dialogue – speech – parts etc, accordingly its temporal structure can differ reasonably.

1.1. A short overview of temporal markers in Classical and Han period Chinese

Since Chinese is a language that lacks a verbal morphology to indicate tenses,² the temporal structure of a sentence has to be indicated exclusively by syntactic means. The most important of these are: 1. aspecto-temporal adverbs belonging to the category of

¹ The *Shiji* is a historical text written around 100 BC. As far as its linguistic characteristics are concerned, it cannot be considered a homogeneous Han period text. Only those parts that refer to Han period events can be regarded with certainty as representative of the language of this period; parts referring to events in the pre-Han periods often consist of literal or nearly literal quotations from earlier texts and represent earlier periods of the language.

² It is generally agreed that in Ancient Chinese there may have been a distinction of different verbal categories, but due to the writing system it is still difficult to establish a coherent system of a verbal morphology during this period. But in any case, most of the assumed verbal categories concern rather e.g. situation types, a distinction of transitive and intransitive verbs and other categories than the category tense. See e.g. Sagart (1999) and for an overview of the Ancient Chinese morphology see e.g. Baxter and Sagart (1998: 45f). Additionally, during the Han period this morphological system had already ceased to be productive.

genuine adverbs: these can be either deictic or non-deictic; 2. temporal adverbials indicating a point of time: they are always deictic; and 3. duration phrases, indicating the duration of a situation: they are non-deictic.³ Aspecto-temporal adverbs belonging to the category of genuine adverbs can be divided into two different categories: 1. those which are exclusively confined to preverbal position separable from the verb only by a restricted class of syntactic elements⁴ – these adverbs do not necessarily modify the predicate temporally – and 2. those which can appear in either preverbal or in sentence initial position. Only the latter ones can usually be regarded as deictic referring to a point of time. These are adverbs such as *xi* 昔 'once', *chu* 初 'in the beginning, originally' and many more as in the following example with *xi* 昔 'once':

- (1) 昔成王定鼎于郊廓，卜世三十，卜年七百，天所命也。 (Shiji: 40; 1700)
 xi cheng wang ding ding yu jiaru, bu shi
 once Cheng king establish tripod in Jiaru, divine generation
 san shi, bu nian qi bo, tian suo ming ye⁵
 three ten, divine year seven hundred, heaven REL decree FIN
 'King Cheng had once established the tripods at Jiaru, it was
 divined that they would stay there thirty generations and
 seven hundred years, this was what Heaven decreed.'

The semantics of the first category of genuine adverbs, namely of those which are strictly confined to preverbal position, is very closely connected to the semantics, i.e. the situation type, of the verb they modify; they can modify the predicate either temporally or

³ The syntactic and semantic constraints of duration phrases in Han period Chinese are discussed in Meisterernst (2003).

⁴ These adverbs are syntactically similar to the adverbs proper in Modern Mandarin as defined by Alleton (1972).

⁵ The following abbreviations are used in glossing examples: CON connector; FIN final particle; NEG negative; NOM particle of nominalisation; OBJ object; PREP preposition; QUEST question marker; REL relative pronoun; SUB subordinator.

But if a situation has to be located on a specific point of the time axis either as absolute or as relative to some other time, a temporal adverbial indicating a point of time has to be employed and the tense of the verb has to be established according to the temporal sequence of situations and the temporal adverbial employed. The syntax and the semantics of these temporal adverbials which explicitly locate a situation on a specific point of the time axis will be discussed in the following.

1.2. Point of time adverbials versus duration phrases

Point of time adverbials – henceforth temporal adverbials (TA) – are always deictic; they locate a situation on the time axis insofar as they refer to the specific moment when the particular occurrence of the situation referred to by the predicate takes place. This specific moment can be of varying extension, a millisecond, a minute, a year, a reign of unspecified length etc., but it is always viewed as punctual from an external perspective. All point of time adverbials has in common that they can be substituted in a question by 'when'. They are what Verkuyl (1973) categorises as temporal adverbials referring to a closed domain, in contrast to those he characterises as referring to open domains. Adverbials referring to closed domains refer to situations which do not hold infinitely, and for which both boundaries are given; they refer to the closed subset of moments at which the situation holds. Within adverbials referring to a temporally open domain only one temporal boundary is given and accordingly they refer to an open subset of moments which theoretically can hold infinitely. These are e.g. adverbials consisting of prepositions which indicate the initial or the final point of a situation such as 'from' which indicates the initial point and 'up to' which indicates the final point of the situation. The syntax of these adverbials can differ considerably from that of adverbials referring to closed domains. In this paper, we will deal only with those adverbials referring to closed domains. As will be demonstrated, the particular moment indicated by the adverbial can be specified to varying degrees.

Point of time adverbials can be contrasted to duration phrases, which are not deictic since they refer to the duration of a situation and do not locate the situation on the time axis. In the linguistic literature these duration phrases or *duration adverbials* are occasionally e.g. by Verkuyl (1973: 583) and by Paris (1988: 424) subdivided into *duration-dating adverbials* and *duration measuring adverbials* as in the following examples from Modern Mandarin, presented by Paris (1988: 424). The first represents a *duration-dating adverbial* and the second a *duration-measuring adverbial*:

(4) ta liang nian yiqian xue-guo hanyu
 he two year before study-Asp. Chinese
 'He studied Chinese two years ago.'

(5) ta xue hanyu xue-guo liang nian
 he study Chinese study-Asp. two year
 'He studied Chinese for two years.'

According to my framework, only the second category, the duration-measuring adverbials, which in a question can be substituted by 'how long', indicates the duration of time while the first which in a question can be substituted by 'when' indicates a point of time. Although temporal adverbials and duration phrases can be identical in their surface structure – as it is the case in the two examples for Modern Mandarin –, they can usually be distinguished according to their distribution in the sentence and to the semantics of the verb they modify. In Han period Chinese, temporal adverbials are confined to sentence-initial and preverbal position, while duration phrases occur occasionally in preverbal and mainly in post verbal position as in the following example (6):

(6) 在位九歲，無能有所匡言。 (Shiji: 109; 2767)
 zai wei jiu sui, wu neng you suo kuang yan
 be-in position nine year, NEG can have REL correct word
 'Although he had been in his position for nine years it had not been possible for him to correct the words.'

Point of time adverbials and duration phrases differ significantly regarding their syntax and their semantics. Only when they appear in preverbal position – which they do quite infrequently – can duration phrases be analysed as adverbials; when they appear in post verbal position, they have to be analysed either as a complement of the verb or as a predicate of the sentence.⁷ Contrastively, since phrases referring to a point of time exclusively appear to the left of the verb, they always have to be analysed as adverbials.

1.3. The Syntax and the semantics of temporal adverbials (TA)

1.3.1. The syntax of temporal adverbials

Syntactically, temporal adverbials in Han period Chinese can be realized in different ways. A point of time can be referred to by genuine adverbs as in example (7), noun phrases as in (8) or prepositional phrases as in (9).

- (7) 昔成王定鼎于郊廓，卜世三十，卜年七百，天所命也。
(*Shiji*: 40; 1700)

xi cheng wang ding ding yu jiaru, bu shi
once Cheng king establish tripod in Jiaru, divine generation
san shi, bu nian qi bo, tian suo ming ye
three ten, divine year seven hundred, heaven REL decree FIN
'King Cheng had once established the tripods at Jiaru, it was
divined that they would stay there thirty generations and
seven hundred years, this was what heaven decreed.'

- (8) 乙卯夜，棄疾使船人從江上走呼曰...
yimao ye, qiji shi chuan ren cong jiang shang
yimao night, Qiji order boat man from Jiang above

zou hu yue
run shout say

⁷ Detailed studies of duration phrases in Modern Mandarin are provided by Paul (1988), Ernst (1987; 1994) and Li (1987) and in Han period Chinese by Meisterernst (2003).

'In the night of the day *yimao*, Qiji ordered a boatsman to run on the bank of the Jiang and to shout...'⁸ (*Shiji*: 40; 1708)

- (9) 惠公以九月卒，子圉立。 (*Shiji*: 39; 1660)
 hui gong yi jiu yue zu, Ziyu li
 Hui duke PREP nine month die, Ziyu enthrone
 'Duke Hui died in the ninth month and Ziyu was enthroned.'

These adverbials are what Cinque (1999) calls "Circumstantial Adverbials", which are typically realized in prepositional form or in bare NP form and which he assumes to be less rigidly ordered with respect to one another than genuine or – as Cinque categorises them – proper adverbs.⁹ According to Cinque these circumstantial adverbials cannot appear in any preverbal position except for the so-called absolute initial position of the sentence.¹⁰ Tang (2001) shows that this assumption does not apply to Chinese and that temporal adverbials can appear in both the sentence-initial and the preverbal position. Additionally, they can appear between a modal and the matrix verb.¹¹ What Tang shows for

⁸ This example is a paraphrase of *Zuo, Zhao (Shi-san-jing, 2070 上)*. The temporal adverbial is identical to the one in *Zuo* which is not surprising since the structure of these temporal adverbials did not change since the Classical period.

⁹ "Circumstantial adverbials of place, time and manner appear to differ from the adverb class just considered (the AdvPs proper) in not being rigidly ordered with respect to one another". (Cinque (1999: 28))

¹⁰ This hypothesis is discussed by Tang (2001: 215), but is denied for Chinese: "Note further that, as shown in (21), repeated as (28), Cinque (1999) indicates that circumstantial adverbials cannot appear in any preverbal position unless they are in the so-called absolute initial position of the sentence:

(28) *John will tomorrow/here attend classes.

This is again not true for Chinese. Consider, for instance, the following sentences:

(29) (mingtian) ta (mingtian) keyi (mingtian) lai
 tomorrow he tomorrow can tomorrow come
 '(Tomorrow) He can come (tomorrow).'

¹¹ Tang (2001: 218) suggests "that, in Chinese, temporals and locatives may best be analyzed as being base-generated in three distinct preverbal positions."

Modern Mandarin in general also holds true for Han period Chinese. But in contrast to what Tang assumes for Modern Chinese, in Han period Chinese, temporal adverbials in the position between a modal and the matrix verb as in the following example are only very rarely found.

- (10) 豈可同日道哉！ (Shiji: 87; 2548)
 qi ke tong ri dao zai
 QUEST can same day talk FIN
 "Would it be possible to speak of that on the same day?"

In most of the very few examples found, the adverbial refers rather to a span of time as in example (11):

- (11) 今蒙氏，秦之大臣謀士也，而主欲一旦棄去之，
 臣竊以爲不可。 (Shiji: 88; 2568)
 jin meng shi, qin zhi da chen mou shi
 now Meng family, Qin SUB great vassal counsel nobleman
 ye, er zhu yu yi dan qi qu zhi, chen
 FIN, CON master wish one day discard remove OBJ, subject
 qie yi wei bu ke
 dare with make NEG possible
 'Now, the [members of the] Meng family were Qin's great vassals and counsellors, and if you, master, wish to discard them within one morning, I take the liberty to consider that impossible.'

While adverbials in this position are quite rare with complex temporal noun phrases, they are more common with simple time nouns which are more flexible concerning their position as in the following example:

- (12) 今將軍尚不得夜行，何乃故也！ (Shiji: 109; 2871)
 jin jiangjun shang bu de ye xing,
 today general even-if NEG can night go,
 he nai gu ye
 how then ancient FIN
 'If even the present general cannot go in the night, how, then,
 could the ancient one?'

1.3.2. The semantics of temporal adverbials

The following semantic analysis of TA is based on Reichenbach (1947: § 51) who, in his analysis of temporal categories, distinguishes between *speech time*, *reference time* and *event time* – which in the following will be categorised as *situation time*¹² – and many others who base their analyses on this distinction.¹³ This distinction refers to the time of utterance as *speech time*, to the time when the situation takes place as *event time*, and to the temporal standpoint of the sentence which can be different from or identical with *speech time* and *event time* as *reference time*. This last category *reference time* is introduced by Reichenbach to account for the complex tenses in English; in the simple tenses, 'present', 'past' and 'future', *event time* and *reference time* are identical, and accordingly a distinction of these two categories may be considered superfluous for their analysis.¹⁴

¹² I prefer the term *situation time*, since in recent linguistic studies of the situation types of the verb (e.g. Meisterernst 2003, 2004), the term *event* is employed exclusively to telic situations (e.g. according to Lyons (1977)), while the term *situation* can refer to all kinds of situations whether telic or not.

¹³ More recently Dowty (1982: 32) distinguishes only between *speech time* and *reference time*, since, according to him, *reference time* and *event time* are not different from each other: "So far there has been nothing corresponding to Reichenbach's *event time*. Rather, *event time* is not distinct from *reference time*."

¹⁴ According to Reichenbach the tenses will be represented by the above mentioned categories as follows:

Simple present:	S(peech time) = E(vent time) = R(eference time)	John studies now.
Simple Past:	(E = R) < S	John studied yesterday. (R = yesterday)
Simple Future:	S < (E = R)	John will study tomorrow. (R = tomorrow)

As far as Chinese is concerned, tenses are not marked morphologically and an unmarked predicate can only refer to either *situation time* or *speech time* – which of course do not need to be identical – without any *reference time* being involved. Nevertheless, the introduction of the category *reference time* seems to be justifiable by the fact that by means of temporal adverbials a point of time different from either *speech* or *situation time* can be referred to. Additionally, the introduction of this category for the analysis of point of time adverbials may be supported by Reichenbach's assumption that in the presence of positional adverbs like *now* or *yesterday*, which are clearly point of time adverbials, only the modification of *reference time* is possible.¹⁵

For my purpose, I will – within the narrative – distinguish between *speech time*, *situation time* – Reichenbach's *event time* – and *reference time* on the one hand; and on the other hand the category *TA*¹⁶ *time* will be introduced additionally because this seems to have some relevance particularly for the analysis of point of time adverbials.

These different categories are defined as follows:

1. *Speech time*: the time of utterance (in a narrative text such as the *Shiji* apparently only relevant in dialogue – speech –

Present Perfect:	$E < (S = R)$	John has studied by now. (R = now)
Past Perfect:	$E < R < S$	John had studied before the exam started. (R = the time the exam started)
Future Perfect:	$S < E < R$	John will have studied before the exam starts. (R = the time the exam starts, in the future)

This schema clearly shows that only in the complex tenses of English, all three categories are relevant.

¹⁵ See Reichenbach (1947, 1980: 294) "When a time determination is added, such as is given by words like 'now' or 'yesterday', or by a nonreflexive symbol like November 7, 1944', it is referred, not to the event, but to the reference point of the sentence. We say, 'I met him yesterday'; that the word 'yesterday' refers here to the event obtains only because the points of reference and the points of event coincide. We shall speak, therefore, of the *positional use of the reference point*; the reference point is used here as the carrier of the time position."

¹⁶ The term *TA time* is introduced in Harkness (1987: 80).

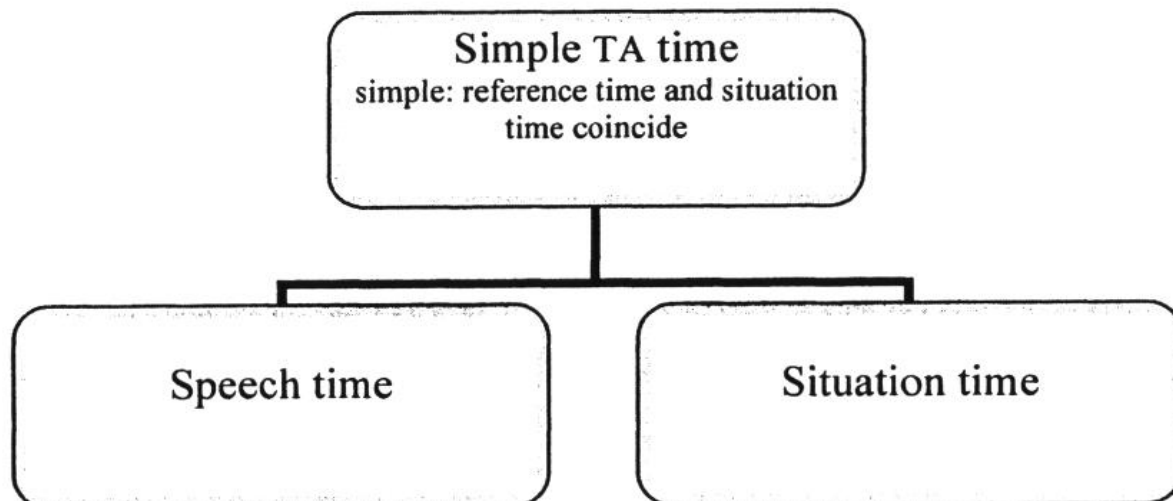
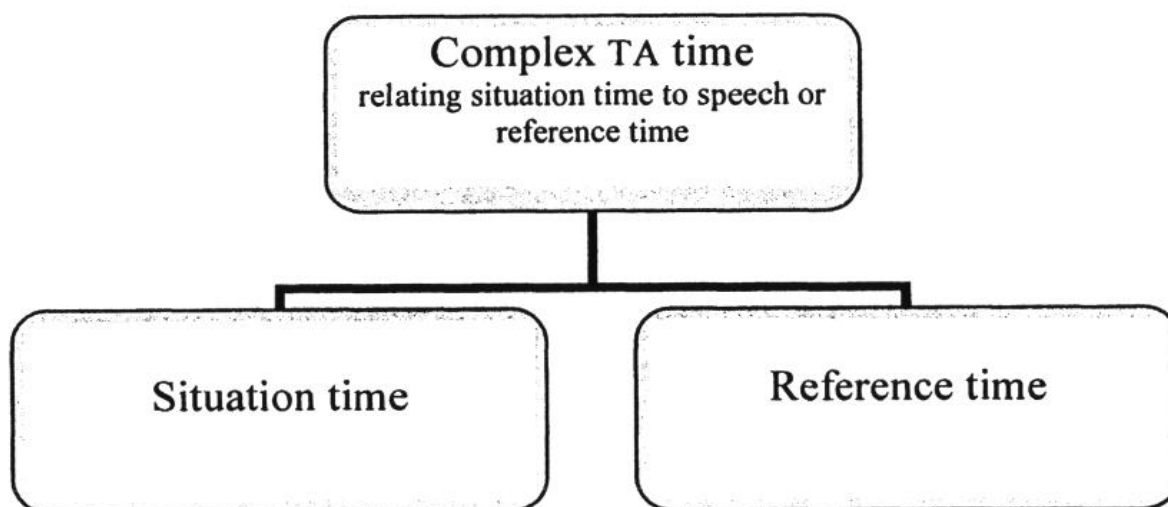
parts); the narrated situation can take place before, simultaneously to and after *speech time*.¹⁷

2. *Situation time*: the point of time the situation takes place at; it can be identical with and/or connected to *speech time* or to *reference time*.
3. *Reference time*: the temporal standpoint of the sentence; it can in general be identical to or different from *speech time* and *situation time*.¹⁸ In Chinese this category is only relevant in those TA which have a complex *TA time*, namely in which the *situation time* is related to some other time.
4. *TA time*: the time the TA – as a category separate from the above mentioned categories – refers to. The *TA time* can be distinguished into *simple TA time* – referring to only one point of the time axis – or *complex TA time* – relating one point on the time axis to a second reference point.

The interrelation of *speech time*, *situation time*, and *reference time* on the one hand and *TA time* on the other hand can be depicted as follows:

¹⁷ *Speech time* is the centre of Reichenbach's system, but in a narrative text it has either to be modified or to be restricted to the dialogue – speech – of the text.

¹⁸ According to Reichenbach's system, in English in the simple tenses *reference time* is identical with *situation (event) time* and in the simple present it is identical with both *speech time* and *situation (event) time*. See also note 14.

1) Simple *TA time*:2) Complex *TA time*:

The central category in this investigation is *situation time*, since *speech time* is, within the narrative, only in dialogue, – speech parts relevant for the temporal analysis¹⁹ and *reference time* is

¹⁹ Except for speech parts, the only parts in a historical text such as the *Shiji* which are connected to *speech time*, namely the time when the narrative has been produced, are those parts in which the author manifests himself. These parts are always

usually identical with *situation time* unless it is explicitly marked by a temporal adverbial as different from *situation time*. The general function of temporal adverbials is to give the point of reference to which the situation described is related be it identical or not with *situation (event) time* or *speech time*.

Semantically, three different kinds of temporal adverbials can be distinguished, which Smith (1997: 97) categorises as follows:²⁰

1. Deictic: "Deictic adverbials are oriented to the moment of speech: *today, tomorrow, now, last Thursday, etc.*"

- (13) 今日亡趙，明日惠及齊楚。 (Shiji: 46; 1902)
 jin ri wang zhao, ming ri huan ji qi chu
 now day lose Zhao, bright day trouble arrive Qi Chu
 'If we let Zhao disappear today, then trouble will arrive in Qi and Chu tomorrow.'²¹

The adverbials *jin ri* 今日 'today' and *ming ri* 明日 'tomorrow' each refer as deictic adverbials to a point of time in the present and in the future respectively. With *jin ri* 今日 *speech time*, *reference time* and *situation time* are identical, while with *ming ri* 明日 *speech time* precedes *reference time* and *situation time*. In common with all deictic temporal adverbials in the *Shiji* they are found in a part of the text containing speech.

explicitly marked as speech parts: They are introduced by *tai shi gong yue* 太史公曰 'The grand-historian remarks', as can be seen in example (40). In the reports of historical events which constitute the largest parts of a historical text, *reference time* and *situation time* precede in general the time when the narrative has been produced without being further connected to it. This time is usually not relevant for the temporal interpretation of the situations referred to in the narrative.

²⁰ Merkel (1988: 426) comments: "This classification is based on the concept of anchoring, i.e. a deictic is generally anchored to the time of speech (ST), a dependent is anchored to another given time in the context, and clock calendar adverbial can anchor to either ST or to some other context-dependent time."

²¹ This example is a paraphrase of *Zhanguo ce* 120/58/10.

- (15) 悼公元年正月庚申，欒書、中行偃弑厲公，葬之以一乘車。 (Shiji: 38; 1681)
 dao gong yuan nian zheng yue gengshen, luan shu
 Dao duke first year first month *gengshen*, Luan Shu
 zhonghang yan shi li gong, zang zhi yi yi sheng che
 Zhonghang Yan kill Li duke, bury OBJ with one vehicle carriage
 'On the day *gengshen* in the first month of the first year of duke Dao, Luan Shu and Zhonghang Yan killed duke Li and buried him with one carriage.'

In this example the independent temporal adverbial refers to a particular date in the past. Again, *reference time* and *situation time* are identical.

In a literary text such as the *Shiji*, real deictic adverbials in the sense that they refer to *speech time*, are not all that frequent; they are mainly confined to dialogue – speech – parts as in example (13), while in narratives they usually refer to a *reference time* not necessarily related to *speech time* as seen in the following example:

- (16) 七年，與魏王會平阿南。明年，復會甄。魏惠王卒。 (Shiji: 46; 1894)
 qi nian, yu wei wang hui ping'e nan. ming-nian,
 seven year, with Wei king meet Ping'e south. next year
 fu hui juan. wei hui wang zu
 again meet Juan. Wei Hui king die
 'In the seventh year he met with the king of Wei at the south of Ping'e. In the next year they again met at Juan. King Hui of Wei died.'

In this example the *reference time* is indicated in the first sentence by *qi nian* 七年 'the seventh year', an absolute TA mentioning the year.²³

²³ Calendar adverbials referring to the year in Ancient Chinese differ to a certain extent from calendar TAs indicating a year e.g. in English, since in Ancient Chinese a year always has to be related to a reign to be complete. But nevertheless they can be regarded as independent TAs.

The usually deictic *ming nian* 明年 'next year' is related to the time referred to by this absolute temporal adverbial and not to *speech time*.

For my purpose, I will reduce the two different categories of dependent adverbials – namely deictic and anaphoric – to the one category of dependent adverbials. They will be analysed within the above presented framework of *speech time*, *situation time* and *reference time* on the one hand, and *TA time* on the other hand.

2. TEMPORAL ADVERBIALS IN THE *SHIJI*

In the following, the semantic and syntactic constraints on the employment of the different temporal adverbials (TA) will be discussed. The analysis will concentrate mainly on temporal adverbials consisting of complex noun phrases on the one hand and of prepositional phrases with *yi* 以 'at, according to' on the other hand. Temporal adverbials consisting of a single time noun such as *ye* 夜 'night, every night', *shi* 時 'at that time, from time to time, etc.' will not be analysed thoroughly here since they do not necessarily refer to a singular occurrence of a situation; they can also be employed in a sense different from that of purely temporal adverbials i.e. a frequentative or iterative sense for instance.²⁴ A few of the different functions of time nouns are very concisely illustrated below: For example the time noun *ye* 夜 'night, every night', in its function as a temporal adverbial mainly indicates a point of time while e.g. the time noun *ri* 日 'day, daily' in the same function mainly refers to a habitual or iterative situation and not to the singular occurrence of a situation. These different functions which simple nouns can take on may be demonstrated by the following examples with the time noun *shi* 時 'at that time, from time to time':

²⁴ A precise analysis of time nouns in their function as temporal adverbials requires further studies which cannot be given here.

- (17) 當是時，詔捕諸時在旁者，皆殺之。(Shiji: 6; 257)
 dang shi shi, zhao bu zhu shi zai pang zhe,
 at this time, decree seize all at-the-time be-at side NOM,
 jie sha zhi
 all kill OBJ
 'At that time he decreed that all those who were near him
 then had to be arrested and he had them all killed.'

In this example *shi* 時 'at that time, then' refers to a particular point of time as it does in complex noun phrase TAs while in the following example it refers – in common with the preceding time nouns *ri* 日 'day, daily', *yue* 月 'month, monthly' and the following *sui* 歲 'year, yearly' – to a habitual situation and not to a situation of a particular occurrence:

- (18) 日祭，月祀，時享，歲貢，終王。(Shiji: 4; 136)
 ri ji, yue si, shi xiang,
 day ji-sacrifice, month si-sacrifice, season xiang-sacrifice,
 sui gong, zhong wang
 year gong-sacrifice, end king
 'The *ji*-sacrifice was presented daily, the *si*-sacrifice was
 presented monthly, the *xiang*-sacrifice was presented
 seasonally and the *gong*-sacrifice was presented every year,
 and in the end the sacrifice for (the enthronement of) the king
 was presented.'

Regarding prepositional phrases as temporal adverbials, besides *yi* 以 'at, according to', different prepositions can be found in phrases referring to a particular point on the time axis. These are mainly *dang* 當 'at' and *yu* 於 'at' which also refer to the point of time the situation actually takes place at.²⁵ Regarding *dang* 當 'at', it is

²⁵ Temporal PPs with the preposition *yu* 於 'at' are not very frequent, the preposition mostly appears in combination with the temporal adverb *jin* 今 'now'. Their normal position is preverbal but they can adopt sentence-initial position as well.

mainly employed in temporal adverbials such as *dang shi shi* 當是時 'at this time', which, although they can theoretically be deictic referring to *speech time*, usually refer in the *Shiji* to a *reference time* previously indicated in the narrative, as in example (19):

- (19) 二十五年，晉伐翟，翟以重耳故，亦擊晉於齧桑，晉兵解而去。當此時，晉彊... (Shiji: 39; 1648)
 er shi wu nian, jin fa di, di yi chong'er gu,
 two ten five year, Jin attack Di, Di with Chong'er reason,
 yi ji jin yu niesang, jin bing jie er qu.
 also strike Jin at Niesang, Jin army dissolve CON leave.
 dang ci shi, jin qiang
 at this time, Jin strong
 'In the 25th year Jin attacked Di and Di, because of Chong'er, in its turn struck against Jin at Niesang, the army of Jin dissolved and disappeared. At this time, Jin was strong ...'

But there are also a few exceptions to be found in the *Shiji* where a PP with *dang* 當 obviously refers to *speech time*; these all appear in speech parts of the text, as in the following example (20):

- (20) 當今之時，山東之建國莫彊於趙。(Shiji: 69; 2247)
 dang jin zhi shi, shan dong zhi jian guo
 at now SUB time, mountain east SUB establish state
 mo qiang yu zhao
 no-one strong PREP Zhao
 'At the present time, of the states established in Shandong none is stronger than Zhao.'²⁶

All these prepositional phrases refer to a closed temporal domain, meaning, to a temporal domain the boundaries of which are clearly

²⁶ This example is a paraphrase of *Zhanguo ce* 218/113/10.

indicated, and which only holds during the time the temporal adverbial refers to. Contrastively, prepositional phrases with *cong* 從 'from', *you* 由 'from' and *zi* 自 'from' refer to the point of time a situation starts from, and those with *zhi* 至 'until' refer to the point of time at which a situation terminates. Although these prepositional phrases also refer to a point of time, they all refer to an open temporal domain in which only either the initial or the final point is indicated as in the following example:

- (21) 趙括自少時學兵法。 (Shiji: 81; 2447)
 Zhao Kuo zi shao shi xue bing fa
 Zhao Kuo since few time study weapon art
 'Zhao Kuo studied the art of war since he was young.'

This example clearly shows that, although a point of time is indicated by a temporal adverbial with the preposition 自 'from', this TA only indicates the initial point of the situation the verb phrase refers to – on a timeline the farthest point on the left –, no final point of the situation is indicated and accordingly the situation can hold infinitely. The temporal domain the verb phrase refers to is only partly bounded and accordingly it is an open domain. Since these prepositional phrases differ semantically and – to a certain extent – syntactically from those temporal adverbials that refer to the point on the time axis at which a situation actually takes place they deserve a separate investigation.

2.1. An analysis of the syntax and semantics of noun phrases as temporal adverbials (TA)

2.1.1. Temporal adverbials in sentence-initial position

Noun phrase temporal adverbials can adopt sentence-initial or preverbal position. In sentence initial position, they refer either to a time of fixed identity, an absolute / independent time such as a date

– these are calendar temporal adverbials –, or to a dependent time – these are dependent temporal adverbials. In the first category, calendar TAs, the *TA time* is obviously only related to the *situation time*, without any other time being involved; it indicates a concrete singular point on the time axis the truth value of which always remains the same, meaning they have a fixed identity. In the second category – dependent TAs – the (simplified) *TA time* relates the *situation time* to some other time, the point indicated depends on a previously established point of time and its truth value changes according to the previously established point of time. As the following investigation will demonstrate, temporal adverbials can be divided into those with simple and those with complex *TA time*.

a) Calendar temporal adverbials in sentence-initial position

According to Renaud (1986), calendar adverbials belong to those adverbials that refer to moments of time²⁷, which can be of different extension: They can refer to a specific single day, by mentioning the date, or to a certain time of the day, to a month, a year or even a longer period. But independently of how long the extension of the moment of time may be, it is always represented in its entirety, viewed from an external perspective and explicitly placed on the time axis. Most of the calendar adverbials in sentence initial position in the *Shiji* express what Renaud calls intervals *des intervalles*, namely years, months and days. What Renaud calls instances *les instants*, moments in hours, minutes and seconds, are very unlikely

²⁷ Renaud (1986: 289) writes "Les moments : Ce sont des dates absolues telles que *1932 nian 6 yue 10 ri xiawu 3 dianzhong* "à 3 heures de l'après-midi le 10 juin 1932" ou des dates relatives telles que *mingtian* 'demain' ... Elles réfèrent à des grandeurs physiques *repérables directement sur l'axe de temps*. Elles commutent avec *shenme shi-hour* 'quand' pour former des phrases interrogatives." The second category of moments mentioned by Renaud, "les dates relatives" do not belong to the category of absolute temporal adverbials but to that of dependent ones and are discussed below.

to be found in Ancient Chinese texts.²⁸ These temporal phrases can be quite complex, showing an exact date consisting of several temporal units and forming complex modifier-head phrases, with the right-most element as their head and the preceding elements as their modifiers and they can be connected with the following clause by the connector *er* 而 as in the following example (10):

- (22) 熊勇六年，而周人作亂，攻厲王，厲王出奔彘。
 xiong yong liu nian, er zhou ren zuo luan,
 Xiong Yong six year, CON Zhou man make revolt,
 gong li wang, li wang chu ben zhi
 attack Li king, Li king go-out flee Zhi (*Shiji*: 40; 1693)
 'In the sixth year of Xiong Yong the people of Zhou revolted,
 they attacked king Li and king Li fled to Zhi.'²⁹

In complex temporal NPs, containing more than one temporal unit, like Year X, the Xth month, day X, the temporal unit with the larger scope always precedes and is subordinated to the one with the smaller scope. The point of time the temporal phrase refers to can be located on either point of the time axis in the past, present or future. Very often calendar adverbials are employed to order historical situations chronologically and accordingly they refer to points of time in the past. Though they are usually found in sentence-initial position, absolute temporal adverbials are very unlikely to be the topic of the sentence, because the sentence-initial position is the normal position of calendar noun phrases in historical reports. They can rather be regarded as adverbials establishing the frame of the following situation.

²⁸ This is due to the fact that there is no zero in the ancient Chinese calculation system. See Renaud (1986: 290): "Les anciens systèmes chinois de computation du temps, semblent confirmer ces remarques. En effet, à notre connaissance, dans ces systèmes qui ignoraient le zéro, tous les termes désignaient des intervalles (ou des durées) mais jamais des instants."

²⁹ This structure will be discussed in more detail below.

In the following examples (15), (23), (24), (8) and (25), the syntactic structure of the temporal adverbial is a complex modifier-head construction, with the right-most element as its head (in (23) and (24) the day, and in (25) the time of the day) and – insofar as indicated – the month, the year and the name of the ruler as its modifiers.³⁰ In all these cases the TAs locate the situation unambiguously at a particular point of the time axis – *situation time* and *reference time* are identical – and the *TA time* is simple, without being related to some other time.

(23=15) 悼公元年正月庚申，欒書、中行偃弑厲公，葬之以一乘車。 (Shiji: 39; 1681)

dao gong yuan nian zheng yue gengshen, luan shu
 Dao duke first year first month gengshen, Luan Shu

zhonghang yan shi li gong, zang zhi yi yi sheng che
 Zhonghang Yan kill Li duke, bury OBJ with one vehicle carriage
 'On the day *gengshen* in the first month of the first year of duke Dao, Luan Shu and Zhonghang Yan killed duke Li and buried him with one carriage.'

In example (23) as in the next (24), a quite concrete date is given.

(24) 夏五月癸丑，王死申亥家。 (Shiji: 40; 1708)

xia wu yue guichou, wang si shen hai jia
 summer five month guichou, king die Shen Hai house

'On the day *guichou* of the fifth month in the summer, the king died in Shen Hai's house ...'

³⁰ This analysis of a complex temporal noun phrase corresponds to the general analysis of complex noun phrases in Chinese according to which noun phrases are always head final and consequently it seems to be the most plausible for Ancient Chinese. For a different point of view regarding corresponding constructions in English see Dowty (1982: 39) who doubts that they can always be regarded as one and the same syntactic constituent.

In this example the concrete date – without the year – of the king's death is mentioned. The year has to be calculated according to the preceding narrative. Important historical events are frequently referred to by the exact date if it is available.

(25=8) 乙卯夜，棄疾使船人從江上走呼曰... (*Shiji*: 40; 1708)
 yimao ye, qiji shi chuan ren cong jiang shang zou hu yue
 yimao night, Qiji order boat man from Jiang above run shout say
 'At night of the day *yimao*, Qiji ordered a boats man to run on
 the bank of the Jiang and to shout...'

In this example, a specific day and the time of the day are indicated, but not the year or the month which have to be assumed from the context. Accordingly, it is incomplete and has to be connected to a particular time location in order to be interpreted properly.³¹ But even without further specifications, the temporal adverbial clearly refers to a singular situation happening at a particular date and in a particular year. In general, calendar adverbials in Ancient Chinese texts never refer to an absolute year, fixed by an abstract calendar, but to the year of a reign and accordingly all calendar adverbials which do not include the name of the ruler are incomplete. But even if Ancient Chinese calendar adverbials differ slightly in their linguistic representation of dates from e.g. English calendar adverbials, they can certainly be regarded as independent just as well as they can be e.g. in English.

Quite similar but less concrete than calendar adverbials are a good deal of noun phrase adverbials consisting of a modifier-head construction with the head noun *shi* 時 'time'. In these adverbials *shi* 時 can be analysed as replacing a more specific temporal noun such as e.g. *nian* 年 'year', *yue* 月 'month' etc., and the modifier can be analysed as referring to a period of time of fixed identity which does not need to be

³¹ This is a general characteristic of calendar adverbials. See Harkness (1987: 79) who claims "Many of these ..., are essentially incomplete. We have already mentioned, for example, that references to points in cyclic systems of dividing time always require to be tied to a time location in order to be interpreted properly."

related to any other *reference time* to be interpreted properly. The period of time referred to by the modifier of *shi* 時 is – despite its fixed identity – of unspecified extension and is viewed in its entirety from an external perspective as a point of time. Since they refer to singular date-like points of time and are not related to any other *reference time* or to *speech time*, they, similar to calendar adverbials, seem to be independent. Just as calendar adverbials they normally appear in sentence-initial position.

(26) 宋襄公時星隕如雨。 (Shiji: 27; 1344)

song xiang gong shi xing yun ru yu

Song Xiang duke time star fall-down like rain

'At the time of duke Xiang of Song the stars fell down like rain.'

(27) 高后時，酷吏獨有侯封，刻轢宗室，侵辱功臣。

gao hou shi, ku li du you hou feng, ke

high queen time, harsh official alone have Hou Feng, penetrate

li zong shi, qin li ru gong chen

oppress clan house, encroach-upon disgrace success minister

'At the time of the noble queen, only Hou Feng could be regarded as a harsh official, he harassed the royal house and attacked and disgraced the successful ministers.'

(Shiji: 122; 3132)

(28) 素居廣平時，皆知河內豪姦之家，及往，九月而至。

(Shiji: 122; 3148)

su ju guangping shi, jie zhi he nei hao jian

still live Guangping time, all know he within mighty corrupt

zhi jia ji wang, jiu yue er zhi

SUB family when go, nine month CON arrive

'At the time when he still lived in Guangping, he [already] knew all the mighty and corrupt families of Henei, and when he went there he arrived in the ninth month.'

In example (28), the time noun *shi* 時 is modified by a complete sentence. In the examples (26), (27) the TA specifies only the *situation time* as a singular point of time on the time axis without any other time being involved; the *TA time* is simple. (28) differs from the examples (26) and (27) insofar as the temporal structure which is additionally marked by the adverb *su* 素 is clearly more complex than in the preceding ones. The adverb *su* 素 indicates that a situation has started in the past and still holds at *reference time* and accordingly two different points of time are involved in this temporal adverbial with complex *TA time* which, as a whole, can still be regarded as independent since the period of time which is indicated by the modifier of *shi* 時 is singular and fixed, and specified similar to a genuine calendar adverbial. In contrast to dependent TAs, these TAs do not have to be related to some other *reference time* in the preceding narrative to be interpreted properly.

b) Dependent / anaphoric temporal adverbials in sentence-initial position

Syntactically dependent temporal adverbials differ from calendar adverbials insofar as they show a greater variety. They can appear as modifier-head constructions with the time noun *shi* 時 'time' as head and a modifier which relates the *TA time* to some other *reference time* such as *shi* 是 'this (the above mentioned)' or *qi* 其 'that (related to the above mentioned)', indicating simultaneity; or they can occur – in different syntactic constructions – with *hou* 'after' or *qian* 前 'before'³² which indicate posteriority and anteriority respectively and accordingly relate the *situation time* to some other *reference time*. Besides these temporal adverbials, in general all temporal adverbials modified by the anaphoric pronoun *qi* 其 'its, his, her, their; that' – not only those with the head noun *shi* 時 – have to be regarded as dependent TAs. In contrast to independent adverbials,

³² Temporal adverbials with *hou* 後 are quite frequent in the *Shiji* while they are rare with *qian* 前.

they relate the *situation time* to some other *reference time*, indicated before in the narrative.

(29) 是時六國皆稱王。 (Shiji: 33; 1546)

shi shi liu guo jie cheng wang

this time six state all call king

'At this time the six states all called themselves 'kingdoms).'

(30=14) 其時兩弟及兩婚家亦各自坐他罪而族。

qi shi liang di ji liang hun jia yi

that time two younger-brother and two marry family also

ge zi zuo ta zui er zu (Shiji: 122; 3150)

each self accuse other crime CON extinguish-the-whole-clan

'At that time both younger brothers with their respective in-laws were themselves accused of another crime and were extinguished together with their whole clan.'

In example (29) the temporal adverbial consisting of the time noun *shi* 時 and the deictic pronoun *shi* 是 'this'³³ relates the *situation time* to the time indicated in the preceding narrative, but within the TA there is no other time involved.³⁴ In (30) which repeats (14) the

³³ This pronoun has in Late Archaic Chinese the characteristics [-long distance]. See Djamouri (2001: 169). According to Djamouri (2001: 170), it indicates that the locutionary agent wants to express a relation of adequacy between the subject of the discourse and the moment of utterance: "Toutes les fois que le locuteur veut exprimer une adéquation entre le JE de discours et l'instant d'énonciation, il emploiera *shi*". Regarding the employment of *shi* 是 in temporal adverbials, it apparently serves to emphasise a relation of simultaneity between the *situation time* and some other *reference time* indicated before in the narrative. Temporal adverbials with *shi* 是 are frequently found in the *Shiji*.

³⁴ See Harkness (1987: 80) who claims: "For TA which contain a time and involve the relationship of simultaneity, the time contained in the TA is also the *TA time*. With TA which involves a time and a temporal relationship other than simultaneity, the *TA time* is necessary different from the time contained in the TA." I will refer to the first case with the term 'simple *TA time*' and to the second with the term 'complex *TA time*'.

situation seems to be quite similar. Syntactically, both examples differ only in the employment of the pronoun: In (29) it is the deictic pronoun *shi* 是 which modifies the time noun while in (30) it is the anaphoric pronoun *qi* 其 'its, his, that'.³⁵ Although the *TA time* in example (30) with *qi* 其 is still simple, the semantic implications seem to be slightly different to those TAs modified by the deictic pronoun *shi* 是 'this', since *qi* 其 as a possessive pronoun functions as an explicit marker of a subordinating relation and accordingly focuses more on a dependency relation than *shi* 是. Contrastively to (29) and (30), in example (31) two different times are explicitly represented within the temporal adverbial: the time represented by *ming nian* 明年 'next year' has to be tied to the time represented by the anaphoric *qi* 其 in order to be interpreted properly and accordingly the *TA time* is a complex time.

- (31) 是歲元朔六年也。其明年，騫爲衛尉，與李將軍俱出右北平擊匈奴。 (Shiji: 123; 3167)
 shi sui yuanshuo liu nian ye. qi ming nian, qian
 this year yuanshuo six year FIN. its bright year, Qian

³⁵ The *Gudai Hanyu xuci cidian* (1999: 406), lists among others two different functions of the pronoun *qi* 其 which are relevant here: 1. Its function as a possessive pronoun, and 4. Its function as an anaphoric pronoun. Temporal adverbials with *qi* 其 are comparably rare in the *Shiji* and almost non-existent in Classical Texts. There is no instance of *qi shi* 其時 as a temporal adverbial either in the *Zuo zhuan* (where only one instance of *qi ming yue* 其明月 'the next month of that' is found (*Zuo*: B10.7.9./339/16) or e.g. in the *Xun zi* or the *Lunyu*, and only one in a PP with *yi* 以 in the *Meng zi* (*Meng*: 4.13/24/25). In contrast to adverbials with *shi* 是, those with *qi* 其 apparently imply a greater distance to *situation time* and *reference time* and are usually confined to past contexts similar to *na* 那 'that' which, as Chao (1968: 544) states, "usually, though not necessarily, refers to the past". Since in a narrative text both temporal adverbials refer to past contexts most of the time, possibly in these cases the viewpoint of the author of the *Shiji* and accordingly *speech time*, is made clear by the employment of the pronoun.

wei weiwei, yu li jiangjun ju
 become minister-of-defence, with Li general together

chu you bei ping ji xiongnu
 go-out You bei ping attack Xiongnu

'This year was the sixth year of the era *Yuanshuo*. In the next year, Qian became minister of defence and together with the general Li he set off from Youbeiping to attack the Xiongnu.'

In the first sentence, a dependent temporal phrase serves as the subject of the sentence and an absolute (calendar) temporal phrase serves as the predicate of the sentence. The sentence-initial temporal adverbial *qi ming nian* 其明年 'its next year, the next year of that' explicitly relates the temporal adverbial to the time expressed by the preceding sentence and accordingly two different times are relevant in the TA: 1. the *reference time* indicated in the preceding sentence and explicitly referred to by the anaphoric pronoun *qi* 其 and the *situation time* indicated by *ming nian* 明年 'next year'. Although the semantic differences between a temporal adverbial such as in (31) and e.g. *ming nian* 明年 'next year' alone may seem to be insignificant, examples like these clearly demonstrate that, even in a language such as Chinese without a morphological differentiation of tenses, subtle temporal relations can be expressed by the temporal adverbials employed.

Contrary to the temporal adverbials above, the syntactic analysis of temporal adverbials with *hou* 後 'after' (or its antonym *qian* 前 'before') is less clear. In the linguistic literature, different analyses for *hou* 後 are proposed, e.g. as a preposition, a noun, a postposition.³⁶ The categorisation of *hou* 後 entails different analyses for the preceding or following temporal phrase. Because of the

³⁶ See e.g. He Le shi, Ao Jinghao, Wang Kezhong et al. (1985: 224), who analyse it as a preposition in combination with temporal noun phrases. For an overview of locative phrases and a classification of locative words in Modern Chinese see Peyraube (1980: 53, 77).

variety and complexity of phrases with *hou* 後, a precise analysis of the syntactic constraints of *hou* 後 cannot be given here and has to be postponed to a separate investigation. In general, within temporal adverbials with *hou* 後 and *qian* 前 the *situation time* is related to a *reference time* which is either preceding (with *hou* 後) or following (with *qian* 前) *situation time* and consequently in all these examples, the *TA time* is complex.

- (32) 後一歲，張湯亦死。 (Shiji: 122; 3147)
 hou yi sui zhang tang yi si
 afterwards one year Zhang Tang also die
 'A year later Zhang Tang died as well.'

- (33) 其後二年，漢擊走單于於幕北。 (Shiji: 123; 3167)
 qi hou er nian, han ji zou chanyu yu mu bei
 its afterwards two year, Han attack flee Chanyu at desert north
 'Two years after that, Han attacked the Chanyu, the Chief of the Huns, and made him flee to the north of the desert.'

In both examples, the temporal phrase following *hou* 後 serves to count the interval of time between *reference time* and *situation time*. In example (33), this dependency relation is explicitly marked by the anaphoric pronoun *qi* 其.³⁷

2.1.2. Sentence-initial temporal adverbials without overt subject

All preceding examples show an overt subject following the temporal adverbial. But since in Chinese the subject is not obligatorily

³⁷ Syntactically, in (32) *hou* 後 can apparently be analysed as a preposition while in (33), since it is preceded by *qi* 其 which as a pronoun usually precedes a noun phrase, it has to be analysed as a noun. A solution for the question which syntactic status can generally be assigned to *hou* 後 requires a thorough investigation of all the syntactic structures with *hou* 後, an analysis too complex to be given here.

visible in the surface structure of the sentence, many sentences with temporal phrases in sentence-initial position do not have an overt subject. Two different kinds of temporal adverbials in sentences without an overt subject can be distinguished: The first have the structure: NP NP_{Time} VP and the second have the structure NP_{Time} VP. In the first structure, usually the first NP refers to a reign and the second to a particular date during this period. Regarding the syntactic status of the first NP, without an overt subject it is difficult to determine whether it refers to the subject of the sentence (usually the name of a ruler) or whether it serves as the modifier of the second, the temporal NP_{Time}, in a complex modifier-head NP: (a) [_S NP_{Subj} [_{VP} NP_{Time} VP]] or (b) [_S [_{TA} NP NP_{Time}] (NP_{Subj}) VP]]. But genuine preverbal TA noun phrases such as those discussed above are comparably rare – e.g. dates in preverbal position are usually realised as prepositional phrases – and additionally the temporal adverbials in sentences without an overt subject are structurally and functionally identical with those in sentences with an overt subject. Consequently, I subsume them under the category of sentence-initial temporal adverbials and assume that a possible subject would usually appear following the adverbial. In the second structure only the NP_{Time} precedes the VP, no NP which could possibly refer to the subject is present. In these cases as well, the subject NP has to be assumed following the NP_{Time}.

a) Calendar adverbials

Two contrasting examples, with and without an overt subject will provide some evidence for the hypothesis that the first NP has to be analysed as the modifier of NP_{Time}:

- (34) 平公十二年，秦惠王卒。 (Shiji: 33; 1547)
 ping gong shi er nian, qin hui wang zu
 Ping duke ten two year, Qin Hui king die
 'In the twelfth year of reign of duke Ping, king Hui of Qin died.'

The structure of both examples is identical independently of their having an overt subject or not.

- (35) 康公九年卒，子匭立，是爲景公。 (Shiji: 33; 1546)
 kang gong jiu nian zu, zi yan li, shi wei
 Kang duke nine year die, son Yan enthrone, this become
 jing gong
 Jing duke
 'In his ninth year, duke Kang died (literally: In duke Kang's
 ninth year, he (duke Kang) died), his son Yan was
 established, he became duke Jing.'

In these examples the temporal adverbial is an independent calendar adverbial. A great deal of instances without an overt subject in the *Shiji* are of the structure exemplified in (35) and they are analysed according to the structure (b) [_S [_{TA} NP NP_{Time}] (NP_{Sub}) VP]]: the temporal adverbial is analysed as appearing in sentence-initial position.

Similar to these adverbials are – as already mentioned – those with the time noun *shi* 時 as in the following example:

- (36) 爲少年時，嘗與張次公俱攻剽爲群盜。
 wei shao nian shi, chang yu zhang ci gong ju
 be few year time, once with Zhang Ci duke together
 gong piao wei qun dao
 attack plunder become gang robber (Shiji: 122; 3144)
 'At the time when he was young, he used to attack people and
 to steal from them together with duke Zhang Ci and they
 became a gang of robbers.'

Here the complex temporal phrase consists of a modifier-head phrase with a VP as modifier and the time noun *shi* 時 as head. The sentence is additionally marked by the adverb indicating past tense (and which can also indicate habitual aspect) *chang* 嘗 'once, once habitually'.

Comparable to TAs with the time noun *shi* 時 are those in which – as in the following example – the TA refers to an era; in this

example the head of the complex noun phrase is the relational noun *zhong* 中 'middle'.

- (37) 元狩二年中，代公孫弘爲丞相。 (Shiji: 109; 2873)
 yuanshou er nian zhong, dai gongsun hong
 yuanshou two year middle, replace Gongsun Hong
 wei cheng xiang
 be vice chancellor
 'In the middle of the second year of the era *Yuanshou*, he (Li Cai) replaced Gongsun Hong as vice chancellor.'

b) Dependent adverbials

The following dependent temporal adverbials all belong to the second category: NP_{Time} VP; no noun phrase liable to an analysis as subject of the sentence is present.

- (38) 是歲也，滅陳而縣之。 (Shiji: 40; 1718)
 shi sui ye, mie chen er xian zhi
 this year FIN, destroy Chen CON district OBJ
 'As for this year, he destroyed Chen and made it his district.'

In this instance the temporal phrase is followed by the final *ye* 也, the most prominent function of which is to mark a nominal predicate. If temporal phrases with the final *ye* 也 appear in a sentence with an overt subject, they always precede the subject as in example (39):

- (39) 是歲也，張湯死而民不思。 (Shiji: 30 ; 1434)
 shi sui ye, zhang tang si er min bu si
 this year FIN, Zhang Tang die CON people NEG think
 'This year / It was this year that Zhang Tang died but the people did not miss him.'

These examples can certainly be regarded as cases where the temporal adverbial is topicalised.³⁸

In all preceding instances, in both the calendar adverbials (examples (34) – (37)) and the dependent adverbials (examples (38), (39)) the *TA time* is simple, while it is complex in the following example (40):

- (40) 太史公曰：神農以前尚矣。 (Shiji: 26; 1256)
tai shi gong yue: shennong yi qian shang yi
 great historiographer duke say: Shennong CON before high FIN
 'The Grand Historian remarks: Before Shennong was high antiquity.'

In (40) within the temporal adverbial consisting of a name referring to a period of time and *qian* 前 'before', two different times are related: the *situation time* indicated by *qian* 前 precedes the *reference time*, indicated by the name *Shennong* and consequently, the *TA time* is complex as it is generally the case with the temporal concepts of *qian* 前 'before' and *hou* 後 'after'.

2.1.3. Temporal noun phrases in preverbal position

In preverbal position complex temporal noun phrases are quite infrequent. Calendar temporal noun phrases are extremely rare in this position and the same holds true for complex phrases with the time noun *shi* 時 and with *hou* 後 'after' or *qian* 前 'before'. The normal position for these adverbials seems to be the sentence-initial position. On the contrary, temporal adverbials consisting of simple nouns such as those indicating the time of the day like *ye* 夜 'night', *zhao* 朝 'morning' are frequently found in preverbal position,

³⁸ Maybe temporal adverbials followed by the final *ye* 也 can be analysed as predicates comparable to those with *er* 而 following the temporal adverbial. See also note 46.

although they are not restricted to this position. The fact that complex noun phrases are apparently quite rare in preverbal position raises the question which syntactic elements are generally allowed in this position and how adverbials consisting of a simple noun in preverbal position have to be analysed syntactically. Maybe nouns such as *ye* 夜 'night', *zhao* 朝 'morning' have to be analysed as belonging to the category of aspecto-temporal adverbs which can be either deictic or non-deictic when in preverbal position.³⁹

a) calendar TA

- (41) 我甲戌築而征徐戎，無敢不及，有大刑。
 wo jiaxu zhu er zheng xu rong, wu gan bu
 I *jiaxu* build CON attack Xu barbarian, NEG dare NEG
 ji, you da xing
 arrive, have great punishment (Shiji: 33; 1524)
 'On the day *jiaxu* we, having built [the fortifications], will attack the Xu barbarians and do not dare not to be in time, [if so], there will be a hard punishment.'

³⁹ The following may serve as an example for a preverbal temporal adverbial *ye* 夜 'night, nightly' as a deictic adverbial referring to the particular occurrence of a situation:

- (i) 鄭安平夜與張祿見王稽。
 zheng anping ye yu zhang lu jian wang ji
 Zheng Anping night with Zhang Lu see Wang Ji
 'In the night Zheng Anping and Zhang Lu met Wang Ji.'

In preverbal position these temporal adverbs do not necessarily refer to the singular occurrence of a situation, but they can also refer to habitually reoccurring situations as can be seen in example (18). Accordingly they cannot be regarded as purely deictic adverbs; they behave similarly to those aspecto-temporal adverbs which can be analysed as either temporal adverbs which are deictic or as aspectual adverbs which are non-deictic.

- (42) 昆吾氏，夏之時嘗爲侯伯，桀之時湯滅之。
 kunwu shi, xia zhi shi chang wei hou bo,
 kunwu family, Xia SUB time once be marquis hegemon,
 jie zhi shi tang mie zhi
 jie SUB time Tang destroy OBJ (Shiji: 40; 1690)
 'The Kunwu family, at the time of the Xia, they were the
 hegemon under the marquis, and at the time of Jie, Tang
 destroyed them.'

Since this structure is extremely rare, and calendar adverbials in preverbal position are usually realised as prepositional phrases, examples like these possibly have to be regarded as marked cases in which the subject is topicalised. In example (42) the predicate is additionally marked by the adverb *chang* 嘗 'once' which indicates past tense.

b) dependent TA

The deictic temporal noun phrase *jin ri* 今日 'this day, today' can appear in both preverbal and sentence initial position with the preverbal position apparently being more frequent.⁴⁰ Semantic differences between both positions are difficult to determine, possibly they are a question of emphasis.

- (43) 吾今日見老子，其猶龍邪。
 wu jin ri jian laozi, qi you long ye
 I now day see Laozi, MOD like dragon FIN
 'Today I saw Laozi, is he perhaps like the dragon?'

⁴⁰ But there are examples for this adverbial in sentence-initial position as well:

- (i) 今日大王尊官之，令護軍。
 jin ri da wang zun guan zhi, ling hu jun
 now day great king honour office OBJ, order guard army
 'In these days the great king conferred a high position on him and ordered him to control the army.'

- (44) 項王今日亡，則次取足下。 (Shiji: 95; 2622)
 Xiang wang jin ri wang, ze ci qu zuxia
 Xiang king now day perish, then next take sir
 'But if king Xiang will perish today, then they will seize you
 as the next, sir.'

2.2. The syntax and semantics of prepositional phrases with *yi* 以 as temporal adverbials (TA)

Temporal PPs with the preposition *yi* 以 are confined to preverbal position and very often they are employed to form independent calendar adverbials. Their employment as temporal adverbials apparently has been derived from the basic meaning of *yi* 以 'take, use' (*yong* 用) via a prepositional meaning 'with, within': 'subject takes the day X to do > subject within the day X does'. The semantics of the preposition may originally have included the notion of a 'choice',⁴¹ which can be supposed in examples (45) and (47), but not in example (9) here repeated as (46). They are tied more closely to the VP than sentence-initial NP temporal adverbials, but comparable to NP temporal adverbials they can refer to a point (interval) of time in the past, the present and the future.⁴² Exact dates, when found in preverbal position, are usually expressed by PPs with *yi* 以, but there are a few exceptions to this general constraint of the language of the Classical and the Han periods as shown e.g. in example (41). PPs with *yi* 以 can form both calendar and dependent TAs. In the following two examples (45), (46) the temporal adverbial refers to a fixed point of time, at which a singular situation takes place, while in (47) it refers to the date of a habitual situation, which is regularly performed at one particular point of time.

⁴¹ See von der Gabelentz (1881, 1960: 281) who assumes that the time indicated is chosen or that it is possibly the cause of the situation.

⁴² According to Unger (1989: 189) TAs with *yi* 以 frequently refer to a point of time in the future.

2.2.1. Temporal adverbials in preverbal position

a) Calendar TA

- (45) 帝乃以庚寅日誅重黎，而以其弟吳回爲重黎後。
 di nai yi gengyin ri zhu chongli, er yi qi
 emperor then at *gengyin* day execute Chongli, CON with his
 di wu hui wei chongli hou
 younger-brother Wu Hui make Chongli successor
 'Then the emperor executed Chongli on the day *gengyin* and
 employed his younger brother Wu Hui as Chongli's
 successor.' (Shiji: 40; 1689)
- (46) 惠公以九月卒，子圉立。 (Shiji: 39; 1660)
 hui gong yi jiu yue zu, ziyu li
 Hui duke at nine month die, Ziyu enthrone
 'Duke Hui died in the ninth month and Ziyu was enthroned.'

In the *Shiji*, usually when the month of someone's death is mentioned, the non-prepositional temporal phrase is to be found in sentence-initial position (see the parallel example (35)). There is no obvious semantic difference expressed by indicating a date with a preverbal PP but there may exist a difference of focus.

While in the preceding examples the temporal adverbial refers to the singular occurrence of a situation, this is not the case in the following examples, in which the temporal adverbial refers to a habitually reoccurring situation which regularly takes place at a particular point of time.

- (47) 漢家常以正月上辛祠太一甘泉 ... (Shiji: 24; 1178)
 han jia chang yi zheng yue shang xin si tai
 Han house always at first month high *xin* sacrifice Great
 yi ganquan
 One Ganquan
 'The house Han used to sacrifice to the Great One in Ganquan
 in the first month at the day *xin* of the higher decade ...'

In this instance, habituallity is additionally marked by the adverb *chang* 常 'constant, usual' preceding and accordingly having scope over the TA.

In (48), the temporal adverbial refers to a particular time of the day, again in a – this time unmarked – habitual situation.

- (48) 宮殿中當臨者，皆以旦夕各十五舉聲，
禮畢罷。 (Shiji: 10; 434)
Gong dian zhong dang lin zhe, jie yi
Palace palace middle ought funeral-wailing NOM, all at
dan xi ge shi wu ju sheng, li bi ba
morning evening each ten five raise sound, rite finally stop
'Those who have to lament in the palace, all of them, in the
morning and in the evening, should raise their voices fifteen
times each, and then the ritual will finally cease.'

Temporal adverbials such as in (48) consisting of one or two time nouns and indicating a repeated or a habitual situation are very often found preverbally comparable to bare temporal NPs without a preposition.⁴³

b) dependent TA

In the following example (49), the dependent TA is related to a *reference time* indicated in the preceding narrative by the deictic pronoun *ci* 此 'this'. The *TA time* is simple.

⁴³ As in the following example:

- (i) 梁王恐，日夜涕泣思慕，不知所爲。 (Shiji: 108; 2858)
liang wang kong, ri ye ti qi si mu, bu zhi suo wei
Liang king fear, day night tear weep think love, NEG know REL do
'The king of Liang is afraid and day and night he weeps and thinks of those
who he loves, but he does not know what to do.'

- (49) 絳侯綰皇帝璽，將兵於北軍，不以此時反。
 (Shiji: 57; 2072)
 Jiang hou wan huang xi, jiang bing yu
 Jiang marquis coil-up imperial seal, command soldier at
 bei jun, bu yi ci shi fan
 north army, NEG at this time revolt
 'The marquis of Jiang got hold of the imperial seal and commanded the soldiers in the northern army but however at this time he did not revolt.'

In example (50), the TA appears in a speech part and has to be interpreted as deictic. The deictic pronoun *ci* 此 refers to *speech time*; the *TA time* is simple.

- (50) 君何不以此時歸相印，讓賢者而授之 ...
 jun he bu yi ci shi gui xiang yin, rang
 prince why NEG at this time return chancellor seal, give-way
 xian zhe er shou zhi
 virtuous NOM CON give OBJ (Shiji: 79; 2423)
 'Why don't you at this moment / now return the seal of a chancellor and retreat in favour of someone virtuous that it will be handed over to him ...'⁴⁴

The following example (51) is one of the not infrequent examples with a prepositional TA without an overt subject. Since the TA is an independent calendar adverbial, the *TA time* is simple.

- (51) 以元朔五年爲輕車將車，從大將軍擊右賢王 ...
 yi yuanshuo wu nian wei qing che jiangche,
 at yuanshuo five year become light carriage leader-of-carriage,

⁴⁴ This example is an almost identical parallel of *Zhanguo ce* 81/37/9.

cong da jiangjun ji you xian wang
 follow great general attack right virtuous king
 'In the fifth year of the era *Yuanshuo* he became charioteer of
 the light carriages and he followed the great general to attack
 the wise king of the right ...' (Shiji: 109; 2873)

In examples like this, with a prepositional temporal adverbial with the preposition *yi* 以 the subject has to be assumed in the position preceding the TA, since the preverbal position is the normal position for these PPs.

3. TEMPORAL PHRASES CONNECTED BY *ER* 而

The conjunction *er* 而 can adopt different functions of which the most frequent is to connect two clauses with different subjects or two VPs with an identical subject. *Er* 而 not only serves to connect two clauses or VPs but also to subordinate the first clause or VP in relation to the second, and accordingly the first VP serves as modifier of the second VP. Analogous to a VP, a NP adverbial can also be connected with the following VP by *er* 而.⁴⁵ This suggests that an adverbial may be regarded as a subordinated predicate, connected with and modifying the following matrix VP of the sentence.⁴⁶ Similar to post verbal duration phrases that sometimes function as predicates of the sentence, a sentence-initial temporal phrase

⁴⁵ Wang Haifen et al. (1996: 71).

⁴⁶ These cases, though different as far as the position of the adverbial is concerned, may provide some evidence for a proposal Cinque (1999: 29) made: "Just as DPs have, in addition to attributive adjectives (in pre-NP position), predicative adjectives (small, or reduced relative, clauses) as their most deeply embedded constituents in the NP, so clauses should have "attributive" adverbials (in pre-VP position) and "predicative" adverbials as their most deeply embedded constituents in the VP. This parallelism strictly implies, according to Nilsen, that the postcomplement circumstantial adverbs are actually "predicates", predicated of the VP." See also note 38.

connected with the following sentence by the connector *er* 而 can also be analysed as a predicate. This assumption may be supported by the fact that in general NPs indicating a particular point of time can appear as the predicate of a sentence, as in the following example (52), where the date is expressed by a noun phrase predicate followed by the final *ye* 也 which is typical for sentences with a NP-predicate:

- (52) 是歲元朔六年也。 (Shiji: 123; 3167)
 shi sui yuanshuo liu nian ye
 this year yuanshuo six year FIN
 'This year was the sixth year of the era *Yuanshuo*.'

Apparently this structure serves to focalise an expression of time indicating a date. The following instances may serve as examples for temporal adverbials subordinated by *er* 而:

- (53) 十二世而晉滅中國之虞。 (Shiji: 31; 1448)
 shi er shi er jin mie zhong guo zhi yu
 ten two generation CON Jin extinguish middle land SUB Yu
 'After twelve generations (It was the twelfth generation and) Jin extinguished Yu in the Middle lands.'

In this example the predicate hypothesis is supported by the fact that a full sentence including a subject follows the temporal adverbial subordinated by *er* 而. The following example is syntactically quite different from the preceding one. In (54) a prepositional phrase with *yi* 以 is subordinated by *er* 而, the subject is absent, but probably has to be assumed to precede the prepositional phrase.

- (54) 蠻夷俗貪漢財物，今誠以此時而厚幣賂烏孫，
 招以益東，居故渾邪之地... (Shiji: 123; 3168)
 man yi su tan han cai wu, jin cheng yi ci
 Man Yi usually greedy Han wealth thing, now if-really at this

shi er hou bi lu wusun, zhao yi yi
 time CON generous present bribe Wusun, invite with more

dong, ju gu hunye zhi di
 east, rest old Hunye SUB region

'The Man and Yi-barbarians used to be greedy for the goods of the Han, and if we at this moment generously bribe the Wusun with presents to invite them to go further eastwards to live in the old Hunye region ...'

5. CONCLUSION

Syntactically, temporal adverbials locating a singular occurrence of a situation on the time axis can be realised by genuine adverbs, by nouns, by complex noun phrases and by prepositional phrases. In this investigation, complex noun phrase temporal adverbials and prepositional phrases with *yi* 以 'at' are at issue. As far as complex noun phrase TAs are concerned, for most of them and particularly for calendar adverbials their normal position is apparently the sentence initial position. As has been demonstrated, this constraint can also be applied to sentences with a temporal adverbial consisting of a complex NP of the type NP_{name} NP_{time} in which theoretically the first NP can be analysed as the subject but which according to the constraint mentioned are analysed as complex temporal noun phrases, NP_{time}, in sentences without an overt subject. In the infrequent instances in which a noun phrase temporal adverbial of the kind as, for instance, *er yue* 二月 'two months, the second month' appears in preverbal position and cannot be analysed as a duration phrase, it often has to be analysed as referring rather to a span of time, for instance 'within two months' than to a point of time. Contrastively to complex noun phrase TAs, simple time noun TAs are frequently found in preverbal position which leads to the assumption that they possibly have to be analysed as genuine aspecto-temporal adverbials. Since they are employed in different

contexts and often refer e.g. to a habitual or reoccurring situation and not a singular occurrence situation their syntactic and semantic constraints deserve a separate analysis which has been left out here. As far as prepositional temporal adverbials with the preposition *yi* 以 are concerned, their normal position is apparently the preverbal position. Obviously when a date, a calendar adverbial, is found preverbally it is – in contrast to those in sentence initial position – realised as a prepositional phrase with *yi* 以.

Semantically, both noun phrase adverbials and prepositional temporal adverbials can express independent and dependent temporal adverbials. As independent adverbials we consider those that refer to a time of fixed identity which can e.g. be a date or a reign. Also those complex temporal phrases with the time noun *shi* 時 'time' as their head and a date-like – independent – expression as their modifier can be considered independent; they usually refer to a particular period of time. As far as dependent adverbials are concerned, only those that are found in dialogue – speech – parts of the text can be regarded as real deictic adverbials in the sense that they refer to *speech time*. In all other cases they refer to a *reference time* indicated in the preceding narrative. In most of the temporal adverbials the *TA time* is simple and *reference time* and *situation time* coincide; this is the case for all calendar adverbials, time nouns modified by the deictic pronouns *shi* 是 or *ci* 此 'this' and for complex noun phrases with the time noun *shi* 時 as their head and a dependent expression as their modifier. In TAs consisting of a NP and of one of the relational words *hou* 後 'after' and *qian* 前 'before' the *TA time* is – according to the semantic concept of these words – complex and relates *situation time* to a *reference time* different from it. This is also the case for some of the temporal adverbials which consist of a NP modified by the anaphoric pronoun *qi* 其 'its, his, their; that' which occasionally serves to relate the *situation time* explicitly to a preceding *reference time*. As the examples have shown, the temporal categories established by Reichenbach *speech time*, *event time*, for my purpose modified to *situation time*, and *reference*

time are all relevant for the analysis of temporal adverbials indicating a point of time in Han period Chinese and these temporal adverbials can – despite the lack of a morphological distinction of different tenses – serve to express even subtle temporal nuances in a narrative.

CORPUS

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