

The Development and Evolution of Interrogative and Rhetorical Questions in Archaic Chinese: A Study Based on *Shangshu*, *Zhouyi* and *Lunyu*

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ABSTRACT

In Archaic Chinese, there is a clear difference between the interrogative and rhetorical questions in the form of expression. In texts, there is a tendency to use more rhetorical questions than interrogative questions, such as *Shangshu* and *Zhouyi*. However, with the development and evolution of the Chinese language, the boundary between the two has gradually become blurred. In *Lunyu*, the two types can no longer be clearly distinguished in terms of form or usage tendency. This process is also accompanied by the expansion of the function of the interrogative words and the rise and fall of them.

Keywords: Archaic Chinese, Interrogative Questions, Rhetorical Questions, Semantic Reasoning, *Shangshu*

1. INTRODUCTION

The earliest in China was the rhetorical questions defined by Ma Jianzhong in *Ma's Grammar* [1]: "To ask without doubt". Since then, Lü (1990) [2] and Qi (2005) [3] have made relevant conceptual definitions and interpretations of interrogative and rhetorical questions. They believe that the difference between interrogative and rhetorical questions is mainly in the relationship between "doubt" and "question". The interrogative questions is "To ask with doubt", the rhetorical questions is "To ask without doubt". The "doubt(疑)" is a psychological attitude, and the "asking(问)" is a speech act (Ye 2016)[4]. According to the speaker's psychological attitude towards the state of affairs involved in the proposition, questions can be divided into: asking with full doubt, partial doubt and no doubt. The functions correspond to: interrogative, speculation and rhetorical questions, respectively. Therefore, in terms of meaning, interrogative and rhetorical questions can be distinguished. However, in terms of form, "interrogative and rhetorical questions are sometimes the same in sentence structure, and they must be distinguished by context" (Yang&He 2001:865) [5].

The article conducts an exhaustive analysis of interrogative sentences in *Shangshu* and counts 65 interrogative sentences. It is found that the main ways of

expressing questions in *Shangshu* are: interrogative pronouns, interrogative adverbs, modal particles, conjunctions, semantic reasoning, and also include the above the superposition of multiple expressions. *Shangshu* has been in existence for a long time, and the phonetic method of expressing questions has not been verified. Therefore, this article only deals with the expression methods of semantics and syntax.

2. INTERROGATIVE AND RHETORICAL QUESTIONS IN *Shangshu*

According to the relationship between "doubt" and "asking" in the question in *Shangshu*, two question types are distinguished: interrogative and rhetorical. There is no speculative question in *Shangshu*. In terms of quantity comparison, the use of two types in *Shangshu* tends to be rhetorical questions: 29 cases of interrogative questions, 36 cases of rhetorical questions. Within question types, there are different ways of expressing questions.

2.1 Interrogative Questions in *Shangshu*

The means to express interrogative questions in *Shangshu* are mainly interrogative pronouns, interrogative adverbs, some fixed phrases, and semantic inference. The first several types of questions with interrogative words are called marked interrogative

questions, and those that require semantic inference are called unmarked interrogative questions.

2.1.1 Marked Interrogative Questions

The interrogative pronouns in the questions in *Shangshu* mainly include: "Chou(畴), He(何), He(曷)", etc., which can be divided into five categories according to the content, for example:

About persons:

(1) 帝曰：畴咨若时登庸？

About objects:

(2) 禹拜曰：都！帝，予何言？

(3) 王其效邦君越御事，厥命曷以引养引恬？

About time:

(4) 有众率怠弗协，曰：时日曷丧？

About locations:

(5) 今尔何监？

About reasons:

(6) 尔谓朕：曷震动万民以迁？

Some fixed phrases such as "Ruyi(如台)", "Ruhe(如何)", "Ruozhihe(若之何)", are mainly used to inquire about situations, such as:

About situations:

(7) 大命不挚，今王其如台？

(8) 予思日孜孜。皋陶曰：吁！如何？

(9) 今尔无指告，予颠隳若之何其？

2.1.2 Unmarked Interrogative Questions

In addition to using interrogative pronouns to express interrogative, there are some questions in *Shangshu* that are semantically driven and do not appear in the syntactic form of interrogative expression methods. These sentences rely on context to express interrogative questions, for example:

(10) 帝曰：咨！四岳，有能典朕三礼？

(11) 下民其咨，有能俾乂？

(12) 曰：父师、少师，我其发出狂？吾家耄，逊于荒？

In the examples, the punctuations that express the questions are marked by the later proofreader. Therefore, in the absence of phonetic form and syntactic markers, the mood and meaning of the question are judged according to the context and semantics. These are the few interrogative sentences that do not have interrogative words and require semantic inference.

2.1.3 Overview of Interrogative Questions in *Shangshu*

The choice in expressing the interrogative question has a certain internal tendency in *Shangshu*: It tends to use marked interrogative questions, with the number reaching 25 cases, and seldom uses semantic reasoning without question markers to express interrogatives, only 4 cases.

The interrogative words "He(何)" and "He(曷)" are more multifunctional and frequent in interrogative expression. "He(何)" can ask about objects, locations and situations, and "He(曷)" can ask objects, time and reasons. These two interrogative words in *Shangshu* are used frequently, with 8 times and 9 times respectively. In all, the two accounts for 58.62% of the interrogative questions, which is more than half.

In addition, the number of interrogative words in asking about situations is also relatively large, i.e. 8 cases, and most of them are fixed phrases in form.

2.2 Rhetorical Questions in *Shangshu*

The expressions of rhetorical questions in *Shangshu* mainly include rhetorical conjunction, interrogative adverbs, and unmarked semantic inference. However, these rhetorical questions are different from interrogative sentences in that there are fewer rhetorical markers than interrogative markers, and they are often composed of interrogative words plus other components such as auxiliary verbs or require certain semantic reasoning. The form characteristics of the rhetorical questions are partially overlapped with those of the interrogative questions.

These rhetorical questions in *Shangshu* can only be divided into two types: rhetorical markers and those without rhetorical markers. The semantic of rhetorical markers does not diversity.

2.2.1 Rhetorical Markers

The rhetorical markers in *Shangshu* mainly include the rhetorical conjunction "Shen(矧)", the rhetorical adverbs "He/Hai(曷/害)", "Qi(岂)", and "Qi(其)", including the compound forms of these rhetorical adverbs and auxiliary words: "Hegan(曷敢)", "Heqi(曷其)", "Qigan(其敢)" etc., for examples:

(13) 今不承于古，罔知天之断命，矧曰其克从先王之烈？

(14) 予曷敢不于前宁人攸受休毕？

(15) 呜呼！曷其奈何弗敬！

(16) 予迓续乃命于天，予岂汝威？

(17) 惟天不畀允罔固乱，弼我，我其敢求位？

The rhetorical conjunction "Shen(矧)" generally appears at the beginning of the latter clause, as in Example (13). As an rhetorical conjunction, "Shen(矧)" appeared concentrated in *Shangshu*, and was rarely seen in the literature since then. The modal verb "Gan(敢)" often appears in rhetorical questions, and it is combined with other question words to mean "question without doubt". At this time, the subject is generally the first person "Yu(予)" or "Wo(我)". This is because the subject-oriented "Gan(敢)" indicates courage is self-knowledge of the subject (speaker), and generally does not raise questions. Therefore, it appears in the context of the question to express one's own opinions and does not require the listener to answer. This is a rhetorical question. E.g.:

(18) 予曷敢不于前宁人攸受休毕？

(19) 今我曷敢多诰？

Examples (18) and (19) are all expressing the speaker's point of view "I dare not do something".

2.2.2 No Rhetorical Markers

Unmarked rhetorical sentence refers to a rhetorical sentence without specific forms of the rhetorical mood. Some are in the form of interrogative sentences, and some are in the form of declarative sentences. The rhetorical mood is derived by semantic inference, for example:

(20) 帝曰：吁！嚚讼，可乎？

(21) 能哲而惠，何忧乎驩兜？何迁乎有苗？何畏乎巧言令色孔壬？

(22) 古我先王暨乃祖乃父胥及逸勤，予敢动用非罚？

Example (20) is a rhetorical question in the form of yes-no question with the interrogative particle "Hu(乎)" at the end of the sentence. Example (21) is a rhetorical question in the question form of the interrogative word "He(何)". Examples (22) is in the form of declarative sentence without any question markers.

There is only one case in the whole *Shangshu* where the interrogative mood is marked by the sentence ending mood particle. This is the more prominent feature of the *Shangshu* interrogative system: the interrogative particle system is underdeveloped, the form is relatively simple, and the interrogative pronouns are relatively rich. There are more interrogative particles in the *Shijing*, such as: "Zai(哉)", "Qi(其)", "Hu(乎)", "Yan(焉)", "Yi(矣)"[6]. This may be related to the stylistic styles of the two texts are different. As a compilation of official documents, the

language style of *Shangshu* is more serious. As a collection of poems, *Shijing* is inclined to dance and sing. The language must be different from *Shangshu*, which is difficult to compare.

2.2.3 Overview of the Rhetorical Questions in Shangshu

Rhetorical questions in *Shangshu* have a tendency to be used in two types, i.e. rhetorical markers and no rhetorical markers. Depending on whether there is a marker or not, each type still has its own frequency of use.

Among the expression forms with rhetorical markers, the rhetorical conjunction "Shen(矧)" and the rhetorical adverb "He(曷)" are the most commonly used markers, 9 cases for each. Here, "He(曷)" differs from the interrogative pronoun "He(曷)", semantically, "He(曷)" in the rhetorical sentence is used to ask about affair reasoning and can only be used as an adverbial; Syntactically, "He(曷)" in the rhetorical question cannot generally be used independently, and it needs to be used with other words to form a phrase or compound word, such as "Hegan(曷敢)" and "Heqi(曷其)" in the examples (14) (15).

Rhetorical questions without markers are partly the same in form as the interrogative questions, using the same interrogative words, as in the example (21); or there is no interrogative word, and the form is the same as the declarative sentence, as in (22) example. All of these need to use context and semantic reasoning to judge whether it is an interrogative or a rhetorical question.

2.3 Summary

According to the above analysis, the question system of *Shangshu* is mainly composed of two types of semantic functions: interrogative and rhetorical questions, and there is no speculative question. In terms of form, interrogative and rhetorical questions have their own tendency to use formal markers. Interrogative sentences tend to use interrogative pronouns such as "Chou(畴)", "He(曷)", "He(何)" and "Ruyi(如台)", "Ruhe(如何)", "Ruozhihe(若之何)" to ask questions about persons, objects, time, locations, reasons, situations; There are also a few interrogative sentences without interrogative words, which need to be judged by semantic reasoning or empirical induction. In most cases, rhetorical questions are also marked with rhetorical words, such as "Shen(矧)", "Hegan(曷敢)", "Heqi(曷其)", "Qi(岂)", "Qigan(其敢)"; Rhetorical questions without markers are more complicated than interrogative questions because there are some rhetorical questions of the interrogative markers need to be discerned carefully.

3. OVERVIEW OF INTERROGATIVE AND RHETORICAL QUESTIONS IN *Zhouyi*

The interrogative and rhetorical questions in modern Chinese have fuzzy boundaries (Li 2013) [7]. The fundamental difference between these two lies in function but not in form. Therefore, the boundary between rhetorical questions and interrogative sentences is similar to many other classifications, not always clear-cut (Guo 1997) [8]. However, according to the analysis, the interrogative and rhetorical questions in *Shangshu* are not only different in semantic function, but also have a clear boundary in form. In other words, interrogative and rhetorical questions can be distinguished by the markers in the sentences. Whether this conclusion can be extended to Archaic Chinese, whether Archaic Chinese has such a universality needs further verification, so I tried to examine the expression forms of interrogative and rhetorical questions in *Zhouyi* in the same period: there are 9 cases of interrogative questions in *Zhouyi*, accounting for 21.95%, and 32 cases of rhetorical questions, accounting for 78.05%. It is obvious that there is a tendency to use rhetorical questions.

The expression forms of rhetorical questions in *Zhouyi* are quite diverse, such as rhetorical questions without markers that require semantic inference. These forms of rhetorical questions that are the same as those in *Shangshu* will not be repeated.

In general, there are almost no rhetorical markers in *Zhouyi* that overlap with *Shangshu*. The rhetorical markers in *Zhouyi* mainly include the rhetorical construction "He N Zhi You (何 N 之有)" (Wang 1987)[9] and rhetorical pronouns. "An/Ande (安/安得)", the rhetorical conjunction "Kuang (况)", for example:

(23) 苟错诸地而可矣。藉之用茅，何咎之有？

(24) 久非其位，安得禽也。

(25) 天且弗违，而况於人乎？况於鬼神乎？

Compared with *Shangshu*, *Zhouyi* also tends to use more rhetorical questions than interrogative questions, and the expressions of rhetorical questions are more diverse, and the judgment of rhetorical questions is more dependent on context. The proportion of rhetorical questions without markers is very large. In 32 cases, only 10 cases of rhetorical questions are marked with specific words, and 22 cases are easily confused in form and require semantic reasoning.

In addition, *Zhouyi* has more types and numbers of mood particles than *Shangshu*, such as "Hu (乎)", "Zai (哉)" and "Ye (耶)", and some can be used with other interrogative words, such as example (25).

4. OVERVIEW OF INTERROGATIVE AND RHETORICAL QUESTIONS IN *Lunyu*

Lunyu was written slightly later than *Shangshu*, and the questions in it are more complicated than those in *Shangshu*. There are not only two types of questions but also speculation questions, which makes it more difficult to judge the types of questions. *Lunyu* contains a large number of interrogative and rhetorical questions. A total of 126 interrogative questions, accounting for 48.28%, and 135 rhetorical questions, accounting for 51.72%. Although there are more rhetorical questions than interrogative questions in number, the gap between the proportions of the two has been narrowed, unlike *Zhouyi* and *Shangshu*, which obviously tend to use rhetorical questions.

In addition to the difference in the number of uses, the expressions of the two types of questions in *Lunyu* have also been greatly changed, with rhetorical markers added, such as rhetorical adverbs "He (盍)", "Xiqi (奚其)" and "An (安)":

(26) 子曰：盍各言尔志？

(27) 孔子曰：仲叔圉治宾客，祝鮀治宗庙，王孙贾治军旅。夫如是，奚其丧？

(28) 安见方六七十如五六十而非邦也者？

Although new rhetorical markers and mood particles have been added in *Lunyu*, the number of rhetorical questions that require semantic reasoning and those have the same form as interrogative questions is increasing. This is different from *Shangshu* and *Zhouyi*. The markers of interrogative and rhetorical questions in *Shangshu* almost do not overlap. The two types of questions are clearly demarcated in form. The rhetorical questions are marked by "Shen (矧)" and "Hegan (曷敢)", "Heqi (曷其)", "Qi (岂)", "Qi (其)" and other markers, these cannot express interrogative questions; Although the number of rhetorical questions in *Zhouyi* is far more than the number of interrogative questions, many of them are using interrogative words. The boundary between interrogative and rhetorical questions is gradually blurred compared with *Shangshu*. In *Lunyu*, most of the forms of interrogative and rhetorical questions are the same, and at the same time speculation questions appear, the validity of meaning and formal standards are impacted. The boundary of interrogative and rhetorical questions shows a trend from clear to gradually blur.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on previous discussion, we can make a conclusion about the development and evolution of interrogative and rhetorical questions in Archaic Chinese, especially in the text of *Shangshu*:

(1) There are different forms of expression in the interrogative and rhetorical questions in *Shangshu*. The interrogative questions is mainly expressed by interrogative pronouns, which can express a variety of meanings, such as ask questions about persons, objects, time, locations, which is as early as in *Shangshu* basically covers the scope of the meaning of interrogative pronouns; this text tends to use marked rhetorical questions, which is mainly affected by its stylistic content.

(2) From *Shangshu* to *Zhouyi* and *Lunyu*, the question markers system has undergone certain changes: the rise and fall of interrogative words, such as the decrease in the use of "He(曷)", and the addition of "Xi(奚)", "He(盍)" [10]; The members of the rhetorical markers also have replacements, i.e. "Chou(畴)" change to "Shui(谁)" and "Shu(孰)", "Shen(矧)" disappears, and the synonymous word "Kuang(况)" appears.

(3) As time evolves, the boundary between interrogative and rhetorical questions in these texts gradually blurs. It was possible to judge the type of question based on markers in the beginning, but it gradually became difficult even through the combination of meaning and form. Although the vocabulary has changed, the function of the marker has also been expanded, which can express both interrogative and rhetorical questions. Therefore, in the development of modern Chinese, it is necessary to focus on rhetorical questions in the field of pragmatics, which itself is also the expansion of semantic and syntactic issues to the pragmatic level in the diachronic development of Chinese.

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