



The Verbs Evolution Study on Dwelling Conceptual Field From the Shang Dynasty to the Spring-Autumn & the Warring States Period

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Abstract

The vocabulary of dwelling conceptual field is closely related to people's daily lives, and changed constantly with the development of different era. The essay takes the dwelling conceptual field verbs as background, the unearthed and handed-down documents as the study-objects to do reseach, in order to discuss the development and evolution about the members and the distributions of dwelling conceptual field verbs from the Shang Dynasty to the Spring-Autumn & the Warring States Period, expecting to provide some reference to the research of the history of Chinese language.

Key words: Dwelling; Evolution; Regulation; Reason

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INTRODUCTION

Chinese vocabulary system develops and changes constantly along with the various influencing factors including internal and external reasons for the language, such as development of the society and people's cognitive change. Taking the unearthed literature and the literature handed down from ancient times as the

investigation object, the paper is exploring the members evolution and distribution of dwelling conceptual field verbs and revealing the regulations and reasons. Dwelling conceptual field members include verbs expressing people living in a place temporarily or in a long-term.

We divided the span of the study into three periods, the Shang Dynasty, the Western Zhou period and the Spring -Autumn &the Warring States period. In conclusion, the used corpus of each period is as follows.

A. The available research data are the oracle bone and bronze inscriptions of Shang Dynasty in the first stage.

B. The focused literature in the Western Zhou Dynasty was the oracle bone and the bronze inscriptions of this period, the divinatory language of the *Book of Changes*, 15 chapters of the *Book of History* including *Dagao*, *Kang gao*, *Jiugao*, *Zicai*, *Zhaogao*, *Luogao*, *Duoshi*, *Wuyi*, *Junbi*, *Duofang*, *Lizheng*, *Guming*, *Kangwangzhigao*, *Feishi*, *Lüxing* and three parts of *The Book of Odes*, containing *Zhousong*, *Daya* and *Xiaoya*.

C. The literature investigation of the Spring-Autumn & the Warring States Period contains the bronze inscriptions, the Qin bamboo slips, the Chu bamboo and silk, the *Book of History* (*Wenhoushiming*, *Qinshi*), the *Book of odes* (*Guofeng*, *Shangsong* and *Lusong*), the *Zuo Commentary*, the *Analects*, the *Mo-tse*, the *Lao tzu*, the *Mencius*, the *Chuang Tzu*, the *Xuncius*, the *Han Feizi*.

1. THE SPECIFIC CASE OF THE DWELLING CONCEPTUAL FIELD VERB'S EVOLUTION

The dwelling conceptual field members in the Shang Dynasty are as follows, "Zhai" (宅), "Su" (宿), "Guan[Wan]" (馆[宛]), "Ci" (第), the use of these words are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
The Dwelling Conceptual Field Member in the Shang Dynasty

	Oracle bone inscriptions	Bronze inscriptions	Sum	Proportion (%)
Zhai(宅)	25	1	26	57.78
Su (宿)	15		15	33.33
Guan[Wan] (馆[宛])	2		2	4.44
Ci(夙)	2		2	4.44
Sum	44	1	45	100

We can make the following summary according to the statistical data of Table 1, in the Shang Dynasty, “Zhai” (宅) is the most important verb and is in the dominant position, appearing totally 25 times, its seen rate is 57.78%, and grammatical function is stronger than other members. The following member is “Su” (宿), appearing 15 times, seen rate is 33.33%, and its grammatical functions is weaker than “Zhai” (宅). “Wan” (宛) is a borrowed word, its original character is “Guan” (馆), its seen rate is 4.44%, “Ci” (夙) also accounts for 4.44%, the grammatical function is weak. In the aspect of syntax analysis, it would be different between “Zhai” (宅) and “Su” (宿) when they are all followed by place objects, “Zhai” (宅) could directly be followed by a place object, but “Su” (宿) could not, preposition must be used before it and followed by place object.

Table 2
The Dwelling Conceptual Field Members in the Western Zhou Dynasty

	Oracle bone in Zhouyuan	Bronze inscriptions	Book of changes	Book of history	Book of odes	Sum	Proportion (%)
Zhai (宅)	1	3		4	3	11	17.46
Su (宿)					6	6	9.52
Guan [Wan] ([宛])		1				1	1.59
Chu (处)		5	1		8	14	22.22
Bi (鬲)	1					1	1.59
Ju (居)			1	1	11	13	20.63
Zhi (止)					3	3	4.76
Xin (信)					2	2	3.17
Shi/Yi (尸/夷)		2				2	3.17
Ly (旅)			7		1	8	12.70
Yu[Yu] (宇[芋])					1	1	1.59
Lu (庐)					1	1	1.59
Sum	2	11	9	5	36	63	100

The members of dwelling conceptual field in the Western Zhou are as follows. They are “Zhai” (宅), “Su” (宿), “Guan[Wan]” (馆[宛]), “Chu” (处), “Bi”(鬲), “Ju” (居), “Zhi” (止), “Xin” (信), “Shi/Yi” (尸/夷), “Yu[Yu]” 宇[芋], “Lu” (庐). The use of these words are shown respectively in Table 2.

In the Western Zhou Dynasty, the dwelling conceptual field members increased, besides some verbs inherited from the Shang Dynasty, new verbs appeared, they are “Chu”(处), “Bi”(鬲), “Ju”(居), “Zhi”(止), “Xin”(信), “Shi/Yi”(尸/夷), “Lü”(旅), “Yu[Yu]”(宇[芋]), “Lu”(庐). “Ci”(夙) disappeared from the conceptual field, the word “Guan”(馆) still used “Wan”(宛) to express. “Chu”(处) appeared 14 times and was the highest frequency of 22.22%, it showed the strongest grammatical functions accordingly. The following word is “Ju”(居), totally 13 times, accounting for 20.63%, and its grammatical functions are weaker than “Chu”(处). They are followed by “Zhai”(宅) and “Lü”(旅), which are 11 times and 8 times respectively, the rate is 17.46% and 12.70%, the grammatical function of “Zhai”(宅) is weaker than that in the first period. “Su”(宿) appeared 6 times, accounting for 9.52%, whose grammatical function had changed compared with before. “止” appeared 3 times, accounting for 4.76%. Other members occupied rarely in the conceptual field, such as “Xin”(信), “Shi/Yi”(尸/夷), “Guan”(馆) “Bi”(鬲) “Yu[Yu]”(宇[芋]) “Lu”(庐). We can see that “Chu”(处) has replaced “Zhai”(宅) and became the primary verb to express meaning of dwelling in the Western Zhou period.

The members of dwelling conceptual field in the Spring-Autumn & the Warring States period are as follows. They are “Zhai”(宅), “Su”(宿), “Guan”(馆), “Chu”(处), “Ju”(居), “Zhi”(止), “Xin”(信), “She”(舍), “Yu”(寓), “Ji”(羁), “Ji”(寄), “Zuo”(坐), “Xi”(息), “Qi/Qi”(棲/栖), “Lü”(旅), “Ying”(营), “Ba”(茭), “Jiao”(郊), “Yin”(隐), “Fu”(伏), “Qiao”(侨), “Yu”(宇), “Lu”(庐). The use of these words is shown respectively in Table 3.

In the Spring-Autumn & the Warring States period, the members of the dwelling conceptual field greatly increased. Besides the old members, new members were as follows “She”(舍), “Yu”(寓), “Ji”(羁), “Ji”(寄), “Zuo”(坐), “Xi”(息), “Qi/Qi”(棲/栖), “Ying”(营), “Ba”(茭), “Jiao”(郊), “Yin”(隐), “Fu”(伏), “Qiao”(侨). In this period, the verb “Guan”(馆) was no longer represented by the character “Wan”(宛), but itself directly. The verb “Ju”(居) became the main member of the conceptual field, appeared totally 317 times, accounting for 50.32%, and its grammatical function enhanced compared with that in the Western Zhou period. The following verb was “Chu”(处), which is 118 times, accounting for 18.73%, “She”(舍) appeared 52 times, the rate is 8.25%, “Su”(宿) and “Guan”(馆) appeared 26 and 20 times respectively, accounting for 4.13% and

3.17%. The use of other words was less than those above, there were only 9 examples using “Zhai” (宅), making up about 1.43% of all the members. The grammatical

function of “Zhai” (宅) relatively reduced, the range of application became smaller, indicating that it had started dying off in the meaning of dwelling.

Table 3
The Dwelling Conceptual Field Members in the Spring-Autumn & the Warring States Period

	Bronze inscriptions	Qinbamboo slips	Chu bamboo slips	Book of History	Book of Odes	Zuo Commentary	Analects	Mencius	Chuang Tzu	Lao tzu	Xuncius	Han Feizi	Motse	Sum	Proportion (%)
Zhai(宅)	1		6		1	1								9	1.43
Su(宿)			1		5	10	2	3	1		1	3		26	4.13
Guan(馆)						18		2						20	3.17
Chu(处)	5	1	22		7	31		5	17		5	7	18	118	18.73
Ju(居)		56	54		5	61	12	40	26	3	31	18	11	317	50.32
Zhi(止)					1	1		1						3	0.48
Xin(信)					2	4								6	0.95
She(舍)		5				26		3	8			4	6	52	8.25
Yu(寓)		2	1					1				1		5	0.79
Ji(羈)						2						4		6	0.95
Ji(寄)		20				1			1					22	3.49
Zuo(坐)									1					1	0.16
Xi(息)								1						1	0.16
Qi/Qi(棲/栖)									2				1	3	0.48
Lv(旅)		2	6			1						3	1	13	2.06
Ying(营)								1						1	0.16
Ba(芘)					1	1								2	0.32
Jiao(郊)						1		1						2	0.32
Yin(隐)						2	3		3		6	1		15	2.38
Fu(伏)						1						2		3	0.48
Qiao(侨)			1									1		2	0.32
Yu(宇)			1											1	0.16
Lu(庐)						1						1		2	0.32
Sum	6	86	92		22	162	17	58	59	3	43	45	37	630	100

2. THE REGULATION OF THE DWELLING CONCEPTUAL FIELD VERBS EVOLUTION

The evolution of dwelling conceptual field members follows certain rules, as follows,

2.1 The Flourish and Replacement of the Vocabulary

The flourish and replacement of the vocabulary refers to the same function of the verbs during the diachronic changes. We can see that the members of dwelling conceptual field increase over time.

We will find that there is always a part of the members which is inherited from the former period, no matter comparing the verbs from the Shang Dynasty to the Western Zhou Dynasty or from the Western Zhou Dynasty to the Spring-Autumn & the Warring States period, the verbs show apparent inheritance, and the growth of the number of members is on the basis of the original members of the previous stage. *The Sequel Paper of the History of Chinese Vocabulary and Grammar* by Jiang Shaoyu (2012) referred that

if a member disappears, there will always be other components used to express the concept and replace it in the language as long as the concept continues to exist. But the replacement is not just a simple one-to-one, some replacement is one to a

few...some is a few to one... some is disyllabic and polysyllabic words to monosyllabic word... a phrase to monosyllabic word... some replacement is another phenomenon that originally there are a few members to express the same concept, then one of the members had disappeared, of course, replacing other ingredients is not necessarily.

For example, the verbs “Zhai” (宅) and “Su” (宿) have always existed during three period, which is a sign of strong inheritance, but more often part of the members inherited from the original, the other members disappeared from the conceptual field, and some new members joined in the conceptual field over time.

2.2 The Characteristics of the Gradual Variability

The dwelling conceptual field members are different from the ones of previous period, and would develop in the process of inheritance, it shows the characteristics of gradual change during the vocabulary development. In the way of word-formation, Chinese vocabulary is expressing characteristics of the trend from analysis to comprehensive. Jiang Shaoyu said in the book named *The Compendium of the Ancient Chinese Vocabulary* (Jiang, 1989), “This so-called from analysis to comprehensive refers to the same semantics, using a word to express in ancient Chinese language turns into using two word phrases, or splitting into two words to express later.” In the development of Chinese vocabulary, it is general tendency to develop from the analysis to the comprehensive, but we must analyze specifically different words. In this paper, the investigation of the dwelling conceptual field members from the Shang Dynasty to the Spring-Autumn & the Warring States period, mainly for the presentation of monosyllabic word, the development trend from the analysis to the comprehensive have not showed, embodies the characteristics of Chinese vocabulary during this period. The vocabulary of any language will change in different eras, but some changes are significant, others slow, and it will not mutate in order to guarantee people’s normal communication.

2.3 The Change of Seen Rate

Ratio change refers to the changes in the number of the same word used in different stage. The dwelling conceptual field member “Zhai” (宅) occupied the highest utilization rate of 57.78% in Shang Dynasty, and the member usage of the conceptual field has changed in Western Zhou period, the new member “Chu” (处) accounted for the highest rates of 22.22%, but as to the member “Zhai” (宅) inherited from the Shang Dynasty, its seen rate reduced, accounting for 17.46%. The seen rate of “Ju” (居) increased, up to 50.32% in the Spring-Autumn & the Warring States period, the highest rate member “Chu” (处) of the conceptual field in Western Zhou Dynasty dropped to 18.73%, the seen rate of “Zhai” (宅) continued to reduce to 1.43%. This proves that the member’s seen rate is constantly changing during the three periods in dwelling conceptual field.

2.4 The Change of the Word Grammatical Function

From the synchronic perspective, the members of the same conceptual field seem to have the same or similar grammatical features. Being the predicate in the sentence is the primary syntax functions of verbs in the dwelling conceptual field. Most verbs are followed by space objects and introduced by the preposition “Yu” (于), the prepositional phrase “Yu (于)+ space objects” could do as adverbial before verbs, also could do as complement after verbs, and become a kind of idiomatic or fixed collocation. On the contrary, some verbs act as predicate separately, which is the main grammatical functions, so there are some similarities as well as some differences in the dwelling conceptual field.

The combinative relationships are often different between new and old members from the same historical phase. Grammatical function changes refer to the identical words increasing or decreasing syntactic functions in different stages from the perspective of diachronic observation. It will be a different combination in various historical periods of the same word. Combination of the words change reflects changes in many aspects of the words, such as semen, meaning domain, grammatical meaning and function. In the Shang Dynasty, for example, the words “Zhai” (宅) and “Su” (宿) were both members of the dwelling conceptual field, having strong grammatical function compared with the other members, both were the core members in the conceptual field and gradually changed into non-core ones. Their grammatical function was relatively weakened when they developed in the Western Zhou Dynasty, and then to the Spring-Autumn & the Warring States period.

2.5 The Structural Change of Vocabulary System

The vocabulary is systemically, and has mutual influence on each other, as a general rule, if a word frequency gradually reduces in the corresponding conceptual field, it will be back slowly to the edge even leave the conceptual field, and there will be other words stepping into the vocabulary system, or a word will be used more frequently if it has obtained the leading status competing with other members in the same conceptual vocabulary. This is very closely with the change of words in distribution said by Jiang Shaoyu. *The Sequel Paper of the History of Chinese Vocabulary and Grammar* (Jiang, 2012) pointed out

The change of the distribution refers to each member in the conceptual field domain of the position is not exactly the same at the same time, there are some differences including the semantic and combination relationship between them, although they are all the basic synonymous semantic units, therefore they could not replace each other in any situation. When it develops to another historical period, not only the members of the conceptual field has changed, but also the members position even in the same conceptual field, this is the change of the distribution.

“Ju” (居) is just a word of this type, a large number of “Ju”(居) appeared in the literatures of the Spring-Autumn & the Warring States period, and it became the core members of the conceptual field, on the contrary, “Zhai” (宅) and “Su” (宿) became non-core members gradually in the same conceptual field. It proves a dying word is often associated with the expanding application scope of another one.

3. THE CAUSES OF THE DWELLING CONCEPTUAL FIELD MEMBERS EVOLUTION

The dwelling conceptual field members constantly develop and change during three different periods, this is the outcome of its own and external factors.

3.1 The Self-Development of Chinese Vocabulary

Chinese vocabulary keeps happening internal metabolism, vocabulary development has its internal regularity, and the change of one word will affect other words in a conceptual field.

3.1.1 *The Extending of Words*

New members generally come from new conceptual field or extend to new derived words of other members in the conceptual field. Jiang Shaoyu pointed out in the book named *The Ancient Chinese Vocabulary Compendium* that “Extension is based on the associative action resulted from the meaning of development”. “Chu” (处) is the member of the dwelling conceptual field, its original meaning is to stay, and extended meaning is to live. “Qi” (棲/栖) is another example, the meaning of birds staying and resting extending the human living.

3.1.2 *The Breeding and Differentiation of the Chinese Characters*

The breeding and differentiation of the Chinese characters are also an important way to create new meanings, such as the dwelling conceptual field member “Zhai” (宅), *Interpretation of Chinese characters* (Xu, 1963) makes an explanation to the verb which means human live. “Zhai” (宅) is breeding character of “Tuo”(托). “Tuo”(托) generally use to express “entrust to the care of sb” or “rely on”, the meaning of “lodge” is only used as a noun. The meaning of dwelling stress makes the body to reside, then the propagate meaning of the word is “Zhai” (宅) later.

3.1.3 *Semantic Overlapping*

Buddhism and Medieval Chinese Vocabulary Study (Zhu, 1992) pointed out

The so-called meaning refers to the mutual penetration on the meaning of different words when they are in the same relations of combination or paradigmatic. The penetration may result in one or more increase of new meanings or completely change of the meaning.

The word meaning developed beyond the scope of the original, extended meaning and borrowed meaning,

is no longer a single word meaning movement isolated within the system but change of word meaning influenced by other related words. The dwelling conceptual field member “Ba” (芟), for example, means grassroots, its original meaning is the grass roots. Zhou-Li said “Midsummer guide living”, Kong Yingda explained “She” (舍) means living on the grass. Because “Ba” (芟) was used together with “She” (舍), its semantics incline to “She” (舍), and it is infected with new meaning of stay and accommodation.

3.1.4 *The Influence of the Vocabulary System*

Chinese vocabulary constitutes a system itself, and has self regulation mechanism. Words will limit and influence each other. *The History of Chinese* (Wang, 2004) pointed out “the phonetics and grammar of systemic about a language is easy to realize, only the vocabulary is usually being ignored. It is believed that every word is fragmented in the vocabulary system, words are closely linked together actually.” The development and change of a word can affect the changes of the other ones in the vocabulary system, forming a new balance system.

3.2 *The Factors Beyond the Chinese Vocabulary*

3.2.1 *The Influence of the Chinese Phonetics*

The phonetics, vocabulary and grammar are influencing each other in the Chinese system.

The changes of the phonetics, inevitably have the influence on vocabulary. *Linguistics for Chinese Learners* (Ye, 1997) pointed out that

the Chinese phonetic system had simplified ever since the middle ancient, such as the disappearance of the voiced consonant and the entering tones rhyme tail, etc.. The characteristics of differences reduced in the phoneme system, increasing the proportion of the homophone words in Chinese. In order to distinguish the meaning of the words, the Chinese vocabulary developed the form of disyllabization.

In addition, the monosyllabic words increase new semen to the word through the way of variant pronunciation, which is also an expression of the phonetic changes impact on vocabulary.

3.2.2 *The Influence by the Chinese Grammar*

There are similarities in terms of grammatical function, but also subtle differences in the dwelling conceptual field. The development and change of the word grammatical function in every period will lead the other conceptual field members to the change of the meaning and grammatical functions, etc..

3.2.3 *The Influence of Social Development*

The development of the society have a considerable influence on the change of language, every change of social system along with the disappearance of some old things and appearance of some new things, which will lead to the generation of new words and the old words dying out, but generally the new words will enter or exit the vocabulary system with the lineage of social system.

Because of the development of scientific technology and economy, and the constant emerge of new things, some corresponding words will be produced, at the same time, part of the vocabulary that could not adapt to the development of productivity will be eliminated.

3.2.4 People's Psychological Factors

Chinese Common Word Evolution Research (Li, 1999) referred to

of course, the influence of cognitive factors on the evolution of language vocabulary is various, in fact the fundamental reasons of words development and change of meaning are the cognitive factors...human beings classify all things in the world, and form the process and ability of concept, This is called categorization in cognitive research. It is the result of categorization of the world when the meaning formation of linguistic form and people understands it. (Zhang, 1998, p.50)

In this sense, the disappearance of some words in the history is also the result of the human capacity development of categorization.

With the development of the society, people have new understanding on the objective things and phenomena, promoting the development of the polysemy of words as well. People's psychological factors of nostalgia, the pursuit of novelty, simplicity and elegance will have restrictive influence on the use of Chinese vocabulary, thus they would have a marked impact on the development of vocabulary.

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