

Grammar Revision 1: Subordinations

Subordinations of noun phrases have the form NP₁ NP₂ or NP₁ *zhī* 之 NP₂. In many cases, they can roughly be translated as “the NP₂ of NP₁”, e.g. 人之臣 “a(nother) man’s minister”, 王之國 “the king’s state” or “the state of the king”, 山之陽 “the southern slope of the mountain”. Subordinations can be used to express the following semantic relationships between noun phrases:

I. Ownership

1. NP₁: owner, NP₂: possession

兄之室 the elder brother’s house

2. NP₁: person / thing, NP₂: thing belonging to NP₁

公之足 the duke’s feet

3. NP₁: thing, NP₂: spatially related thing or part of NP₁

海內 [people] inside the [four] seas

西門之外 outside the western gate

4. NP₁: person / thing, NP₂: characteristic fact (property, appearance, emotional state, nature etc.)

天之高 the altitude of heaven
酒肉之味 the taste of ale and meat

II. Designation of the Part of a Whole

1. NP₁: entire group / structure, NP₂: part

三之一 [one of three:] one third
五分之三 [three of five parts:] three fifths

III. Determination of Nature

1. NP₁: material, NP₂: object that consists of this material

木人 wooden (man:) statue
犀玉之杯 goblet made from rhinoceros horn and jade

缺甃之崖 cliff of crumbling brick walls

2. NP₁: characteristic feature, NP₂: thing / person defined by this feature

堯舜之君 a prince like Yao and Shun
股掌之臣 ministers [serving] like legs and hands

3. NP₁: [not defined], NP₂: something / somebody created by or related to NP₁

玉人 [man who has to do with jade:] jade carver

罪人 criminal
刑名之家 [philosophical] school concerned with punishments and designations
鳥卵 bird’s eggs

4. NP₁: space, location, NP₂: something originating from or being at the place designated by NP₁

池魚 fish in a pond
塗之人 men on the streets

5. NP₁: period or point in time, NP₂: person or thing connected with NP₁

古人 / 古之人 the men of antiquity
今日之事 today’s endeavours / projects

IV. Identity

- NP₁: exemplar / name, NP₂: general designation, class

魯國 the state of Lu
呂氏 the Lü family / Mr Lü
吳越之國 the states of Wu and Yue

V. Measures and numbers

一車薪 one cartload of firewood
三年之喪 mourning period of three years
千金之資 a fortune of one thousand [pieces of] gold

VI. Logical subject (*genitivus subiectivus*)

- NP₁: logical subject of the action or event referred to by NP₂

人之過 other men’s faults
父母之愛 [the love of parents:] parental love

VII. Logical object (*genitivus obiectivus*)

- NP₁: logical object or beneficiary of the action or event referred to by NP₂

國之利 benefits for the state
天下之害 harm for the realm