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## Re-dating the seven early Chinese Christian manuscripts : Christians in Dunhuang before 1200

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## Chapter 5 An alternative chronology

To take the period of the Late Tang and Five Dynasties [*circa* 800-the 950s] as the watershed and divide the history of Chinese largely into two phases, ancient and modern, does not appear to be unreasonable. (以晚唐五代為界，把漢語的歷史分成古代漢語和近代漢語兩個大的階段是比較合適的。)

— Lü Shuxiang 呂叔湘 (1904-1998)<sup>1</sup>

In the medieval period [*circa* Tang China], the Chinese passive underwent new changes. The “*bei*” construction became more popular. (到了中古時期，被動式又有了新的發展。不僅“被”字句用得更普遍了。)

— Wang Li 王力 (1922-1996)<sup>2</sup>

One of the grammatical features that distinguish modern [post-tenth century] Chinese from ancient Chinese is: the order “*bei*ZV [*bei* + agent + verb]” represents the majority of the occurrences of the *bei* construction. (近代漢語語法區別於古代漢語的特點之一便是：被字句以“被ZV”式為主。)

— Yuan Bin 袁賓<sup>3</sup>

Historical linguists have already established that the Chinese language underwent significant changes in Tang China. By the ninth century or the putative disappearance period of the Tang church, Chinese morphology, semantics and syntax, as noted by Lü Shuxiang, had diverged to such a degree that the language had entered a new phase of development and already differed widely from the Chinese spoken and written by the Tang people when Aluoben arrived in Xi'an in 635. One grammatical aspect in particular, how the Chinese passive was conveyed, had been subjected to profound and profuse changes. In fact, as Wang Li and Yuan Bin have indicated, these changes are so conspicuous that they can be used to periodize the historical development of Chinese. This nugget of information tells us that the changes in the Chinese passive can shed light on the time at which a text was or was not composed.

On this premise the present chapter therefore relies on the usage of the Chinese passive in the texts under examination in order to determine the chronology of the manuscripts, *The Messiah Sutra* and *On One God*. The chapter commences by arguing the general premise that

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<sup>1</sup> Lü Shuxiang 呂叔湘 1985:1. How Chinese should be periodized is hotly debated among scholars. Some experts suggest that Old Chinese ended in the early Tang period, but many others are inclined to take the late Tang or the Tang collapse as the initial period of Modern Chinese. According to Dan Xu (2006:xii), for instance, the Chinese language is divided into four periods: (i) Old Chinese (eleventh century BCE – first century CE), (ii) Middle Chinese (first – tenth century), (iii) Modern Chinese (tenth – twentieth century), (iv) Contemporary Chinese (from twentieth century up to the present). For more details, see Guo Xiliang 郭錫良 (2013), Zhang Yuping 張玉萍 (1995), Jiang Jicheng 蔣冀騁 (1991, 1990), and Jiang Shaoyu 蔣紹愚 (1990:1-2).

<sup>2</sup> Wang Li 王力 2004:492.

<sup>3</sup> Yuan Bin 袁賓 1989:54.

the historical changes in the Chinese passive can be utilized to date old texts. After this had been established on a sound basis, the chapter examines the sorts of passives used in the two Christian texts in greater detail, demonstrating that they were newly composed no earlier than the Late-Tang and Five-Dynasties period. Finally, the chapter concludes that the two Christian manuscripts were produced somewhere between the ninth century and the early eleventh century and it once again underlines the point that these surviving manuscripts are authentic ancient documents.

### 5.1 Relying on the Chinese passive to date sources

Four clear features of the Chinese passive demonstrate that its use in a text is a pointer to certain developments in this grammatical form and therefore to the dating of the sources.

The first linguistic feature that needs making clear is that Chinese conveys passivity by employing passive markers, a fact that underlines that the Chinese passive was not an open system.<sup>4</sup> Throughout history only a few characters have been used as passive markers. These fourteen characters are those most often discussed: *yu* 於, *wei* 為, *jian* 見, *bei* 被, *shou* 受, *de* 得, *yu* 遇, *zao* 遭, *huo* 獲, *meng* 蒙, *chi* 吃, *jiao* 教, *rang* 讓 and *gei* 給.<sup>5</sup> However, not all these markers are uncontroversial. For example, Yuan Bin has recently contended that *meng* is a marker and it had been used since the first century.<sup>6</sup> In view of the historical period covered in this research, this chapter will discuss only the first four markers because, as will be shown, they were introduced long before the advent of Tang China and their status is beyond doubt.

The second trait of the Chinese passive is that there is a clear rise-and-fall curve in all markers. As will be shown, the markers listed above were not all introduced at the same time. *Yu* is the oldest and was used more than 3,000 years ago. *Wei* and *jian* emerged about 2,500 years ago. *Bei* was first used in the second century. Moreover, the markers were not used in the same period with equal frequency. In most delineated periods, one or two markers were preferred by Chinese users. At a particular time, they completely overshadowed other markers, especially the newly introduced characters. Gradually, as a new marker rose, it would dislodge its predecessor, becoming the dominant passive device. Understandably, this rise

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<sup>4</sup> This chapter does not tackle the passive without markers or the implicit passive. Examples are *keshi* 可食, that means edible or can be eaten, and *kejian* 可見, that means discernible or can be seen — for the latter, see Example 2 below. In addition, the sequence of the active can also express the passive. *Handan wei* 邯鄲圍 literally reads that Handan city besieges. Contextually, however, it means that Handan city is besieged. For more details about these passives, see Wang Li 王力 (2004:484), Wang Canlong 王燦龍 (1998), Lu Jianming 陸儉明 (2004), and Liu Guangming 劉光明 (2000).

<sup>5</sup> For more details and a sound list of these markers, see Zhang Yanjun 張延俊 (2010:49, 60-63).

<sup>6</sup> Yuan Bin 袁賓 2005.

was a very slow process and took a few centuries to complete. Nevertheless, in retrospect the process is clear, and the rise and subsequent fall of the markers is undeniable. As demonstrated below, the rise-fall curve has been mapped out by historical linguists.

The third peculiarity is that most passive sentences are clear and easily identifiable. A passive construction always contains a marker and a verb, that is, the basic core of the construction, into which other elements can be inserted and attached. Moreover, the structural or syntactic sequence of a passive construction is very strict and never changes. In the *yu* construction, as will be shown, the verb precedes the marker *yu*; but in the other three markers, the marker precedes the verb. There are no exceptions. This grammatical structure allows the passive construction to be sliced into several analytical segments that can be expressed in formulas for the purpose of generalization. Therefore, similar examples are labeled and dealt with under one formula in order to delve into the order of a certain passive marker. For instance, the above quoted formula 'PbeiAV' is just one of the common *bei* passive orders, that will be discussed in a moment. Unfortunately so far the abbreviations contained in these formulas have not been standardized. Therefore to avoid confusion, this chapter uses the full description, 'patient + *bei* + agent + verb'.

The fourth characteristic is that, in spite of the abovementioned stable structural sequence, as hinted above the passive construction or use of a certain marker did evolve as time lapsed. As will be explained, the construction invariably passed through a process from simplicity to complexity. When a marker was first used, its examples were simple and short, often containing a marker and a verb. Gradually, more elements were added, and the construction grew longer and more complex. In addition, as is the case in any language, new passive orders were occasionally introduced as time went on. That is, the complex orders emerged after the simple ones, but importantly not all the orders appeared in the same period.

The presence of these four features means that the passive in a text contains information about the time of the composition of the text. The more frequently a text employs a particular marker, the more likely it is that the text was created around the time at which that marker became the dominant passive device. The more complex the passive orders are, the later the source was probably made. When a new order is used in a text, this text had obviously been created after the emergence of that new order. By matching the passive use of a text with the spectrum of the evolution of the passive and investigating the appearance of the particular orders, therefore, we can determine to which period the text might belong.

The Chinese passive has already been successfully used to date sources, for instance, the dating of the work *The Qujingshihua* 取經詩話, an important picaresque novel based on Xuanzang's seventh-century pilgrimage to India. Scholars have believed that this text was composed between the eighth and the tenth century. However, relying on the Chinese passive use Yuan Bin has demonstrated that this text was created in a much later period. In his analysis, he explores the *bei* construction and pays particular attention to the simplicity-complexity process, or 'the *bei* construction with multiple clauses' in his terminology below. He found that the use of complex *bei* orders increased as time progressed. Before the seventh century, not a single *bei* construction was of the complex order. By the tenth century, the complex order represented 3 percent of *bei* passive examples. From the eleventh century and for centuries thereafter, the occurrence frequency of the complex order — the D value as Yuan Bin calls it — continued to rise: 29 percent in the thirteenth century and 30 percent in the fifteenth century. Comparing the specific use of the complex orders in *The Qujingshihua* (35 percent) with the general spectrum mentioned above, Yuan Bin concludes that "this source was created around the Yuan dynasty (*circa* thirteenth-fourteenth centuries)." (該書寫定於元代前後（約十三、十四世紀）。)<sup>7</sup> As his argument is so inspiring, this research quotes it at length:<sup>8</sup>

In the historical development of the *bei* construction, as illustrated in Table 2 [that is summarized in this research in the paragraph above], the "*bei* construction with multiple clauses" gradually emerged and was used with growing frequency. The period from the Late Tang and Five Dynasties to the Yuan dynasty [ninth-thirteenth century] witnessed a conspicuous increase in the use of this particular type. In other words, this use [of the "*bei* construction with multiple clauses"] seems to be a fairly reliable method to determine the date of the *bei* construction contained in the vernacular sources of this period [ninth-thirteenth century]. *The Qujingshihua* employs six examples of the "*bei* construction with multiple clauses". The D value [...] is 35 percent. This is close to the usage in *The Pinghua* and novels written in the Yuan and Ming dynasties [thirteenth-seventeenth century]. We know that Dunhuang vernacular works and Chan Buddhist collections are the most important [...] vernacular sources of the Late-Tang and Five-Dynasties period. As revealed by the data, however, the D value of these [Dunhuang] works is only between 3 and 5 percent. Therefore, it is very hard to believe that authors in this period [ninth-tenth century] could have used these *bei* passives [with multiple clauses] as frequently these occur in *The Qujingshihua* with the D value reaching as high as 35 percent. (從表二可以看出，在被字句發展歷史中，“多小句被字句”由無至有，從少到多，而晚唐五代至元代，正是此種句型的使用頻率明顯上升的時期。也就是說，辨別該時期口語文獻裡被字句的寫作時代，使用此項指標頗為合適。《取經詩話》中有 6 例“多小句被字句”[...]，D 值為 35%，與元代和明代上半葉的平話、小說作品接近。我們知道敦煌俗文學作品和禪家語錄乃是晚唐五代時期最重要 [...] 的口語文獻，而調查統計結果，其 D 值僅在 3% 至 5% 之間。很難想像，該時代的作者能寫出《取經詩話》中的這批被字句——D 值高達 35%。)

<sup>7</sup> Yuan Bin 袁賓 2000:545.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 548.

## 5.2 An overview of the passive use in *The Messiah Sutra* and *On One God*

All four characters, *yu*, *jian*, *wei* and *bei*, can be found in both *The Messiah Sutra* and *On One God* but only *wei* and *bei* are used as passive markers. As this observed use provides critical information about the creation of the two Christian texts, these uses will be examined in detail in Sections 5.3 and 5.4.

### 5.2.1 Occurrences of *yu*, *wei* and *jian*

*Yu*, *jian*, *wei*, and *bei* are very common characters. As do many other Chinese sources, the two Christian texts use all of them — see Table 5.1.

| Sources                  | Characters  |    |    |   |
|--------------------------|-------------|----|----|---|
|                          | Occurrences |    |    |   |
| <i>The Messiah Sutra</i> | 15          | 33 | 35 | 2 |
| <i>On One God</i>        | 77          | 86 | 29 | 9 |

Table 5.1 Occurrences of *yu*, *jian*, *wei* and *bei* in *The Messiah Sutra* and *On One God*

However, in these texts *yu* and *jian* are not used as a passive marker. In every instance, *yu* is a preposition, usually translated into English as: to, and in. *Jian* often functions as the verb, see. Occasionally, it is also used to replace the character *xian* 現, that means appear. See Examples 1 and 2, that are taken from *On One God*.<sup>9</sup>

- 1) 可 見 者 / 不 可 見 者 並 是 一 神 所 造  
*ke jian zhe bu ke jian zhe bingshi yishen suozao*  
Seeable and non-seeable are all created by one god.
- 2) 共 惡 魔 一 處 於 地 獄 中 永 不 得 出  
*gong emo yichu yu diyuzhong yongbudechu*  
 stay with demons in Hell and cannot ever get out

Turning to *wei*, it is frequently used as a verb (do or be) as well as a preposition (for or to). In Example 3 from *On One God*, however, *wei* is a passive marker, and the order is ‘*wei* + agent + verb’.<sup>10</sup> This is the only clear *wei* passive occurrence that I was able to identify.

<sup>9</sup> Lin Wushu 林悟殊 2003:350 (Cols.3-4), 386 (Col.404). I have tried my best to avoid using the English passive. Sadly, it is impossible to avoid the use of English passive sentences altogether. Therefore, this chapter underlines the Chinese passive parts that are being discussed. Hopefully, this technical solution will help to distinguish the questioning passive of the original Chinese from the passive of the English translations. Accordingly, the chapter re-typesets the original Chinese sentences so that the underlined parts in the originals, transcriptions and translations can easily be identified. In the transcriptions, the column breaking (/) is not indicated.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 366 (Col.178).

- 3) 是以 須知 名字 為 人 論說  
shiyi xuzhi mingzi wei ren lunshuo  
wei agent verb

So, [one shall] know that the [demon's] name is talked about by people.

### 5.2.2 Occurrences of *bei*

The character *bei* is used eleven times in total. Two examples are from *The Messiah Sutra*:<sup>11</sup>

- 4) 眾生 自 被 誑惑 乃 將 金 造象[像]  
zhongsheng zi bei kuanghuo nai jiang jin zaoxiang  
People were hoaxed by [pagans?], and therefore they used gold to create statues.

- 5) 被 鬼者 趁/ 鬼  
bei [?] guizhe chen gui  
[As for converts? who] are possessed by [suffer?] ghosts, the ghosts are cast out.

The other nine examples are found in *On One God*. Note that Example 12 uses *bei* twice.<sup>12</sup>

- 6) 欲作舍 [如] 基腳/不着地 被 風 懸吹 將去 如 舍腳牢 風 亦不能 懸/吹 得  
yuzuoshe [ru] jijiao buzhaodi bei feng xuanchui jiangqu ru shejiaolao feng yibuneng xuanchui de  
When a house is built, [if] the foundations do not touch the ground, it will be blown away by wind;  
if the house foundations are solid, the wind cannot blow it away.

- 7) 被 惡魔 迷惑 未得/曉中事  
bei emo mihuo weidexiaozhongshi  
[People] are confused by demons and do not know the truth.

- 8) 喻如 將 性兒子/ 被破[迫?] 充 賊  
yuru jiang xingerzi bei po chong zei  
Just like [forcing?] one's own son to become a thief.

- 9) 不周遍 却 被 嗔責  
buzhoubian que bei chenze  
As not everything has been properly considered, [he] is criticized by [the other people].

- 10) 若已 [是] 被 執捉 配與 法家/ 子 [仔] 細 勘問 從 初 [樹]上 懸高  
ruoshi bei zhizhuo peiyu fajia zixi kanwen cong shushang xuangao  
Should he be caught by [other people], the person will be taken to the court to be thoroughly  
interrogated and will be hanged high from the [tree].

- 11) 靈/柩 勿 從 被 偷 將去  
lingjiu wu cong bei tou jiangqu  
The coffin should not be stolen by [anyone].

- 12) 從 石忽人 被 煞 餘百姓 並 被/ 抄掠 將去 從[此] 散普[布] 天下  
cong shihuren bei sha yubaixing bing bei chaolue jiangqu cong[ci] sanbu tianxia

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 391 (Col.48), 400 (Cols.143-144).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 363-364 (Cols.154-156), 365 (Cols.168-169), 369 (Col.218), 371 (Cols.233), 373 (Cols.259-260), 376 (Cols.290-291), 381 (Cols.346-347), 382 (Col.362).

After the Jews were killed by [Titus?], the rest of the [Jewish] people were removed by [Titus?], dispersing all over the world ever since.

13) 亦有 波斯 少许人 被 迷惑 行与 魔鬼 等

yiyou bosi shaoxuren bei mihuo xingyu emogui deng

Moreover, there are a few Persians who are confused by [demons] and act like the demons.

Of these occurrences, all are clear with the exception of Examples 5 and 8. Example 5 adopts the old use of *bei*, 'be covered by'. This old use will be discussed in Section 5.3.1. In Example 8, the phrase *beipo* 被破 is gibberish. Given the context, it seems that *po* 破, that means break, can be replaced by *po* 迫, that means force. Therefore, Example 8 can be translated as 'It is similar to one's own son being forced to be a thief'. Nevertheless, since these two examples are ambiguous, they will not be used in this dissertation. Consequently, this dissertation has established nine *bei* constructions in the two Christian texts discussed.

### 5.2.3 Two remarks about the passives in the Christian texts

This overview raises two matters that require a detailed explanation.

Firstly, *bei* is the dominant passive marker used in them. In total, this research has discovered ten indisputable passive constructions. The markers *yu* and *jian* do not occur; the marker *wei* is used only once. The marker *bei* is employed nine times. In the matter of the dating of the Christian texts, we shall show what period this particular frequency of use best matches in the evolution spectrum of Chinese passive.

Secondly, not one but three *bei* passive orders of differing levels of complexity are used. As indicated below, the first two orders are '*bei* + verb' and '*bei* + agent + verb'. They are simple. In contrast, the third, '*bei* + verb + *jiangqu*' is fairly complex — *jiangqu* is an element that can be taken as a suffix. As will be demonstrated below, the first two orders are common whereas the last one is very rare and so far scholars have paid it scant attention. To determine the time of the creation of the two Christian texts, we need to have a clear understanding of these orders, particularly their emergence and the evolution of their use.

The '*bei* + verb' order:

- |                  |                      |                  |                  |                    |
|------------------|----------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| 4) 被 誑惑          | 9) 被 噴責              | 10) 被 執捉         | 12) 被 煞          | 13) 被 迷惑           |
| <u>bei</u> hoax  | <u>bei</u> criticize | <u>bei</u> catch | <u>bei</u> kill  | <u>bei</u> confuse |
| hoaxed <u>by</u> | criticized <u>by</u> | caught <u>by</u> | killed <u>by</u> | confused <u>by</u> |

The '*bei* + agent + verb' order:

- 7) 被 惡魔 迷惑  
bei demons confuse  
 confused by demons

The '*bei* + verb + *jiangqu*' order:

- 6) 被 風 懸吹 將去  
bei wind blow *jiangqu*  
 blown away *jiangqu* by wind
- 11) 被 偷 將去  
bei steal *jiangqu*  
 stolen *jiangqu* by
- 12) 被 抄掠 將去  
bei plunder *jiangqu*  
 plundered *jiangqu* by

### 5.3 The dominance of *bei* and the date of the two Christian texts

To get a better idea of the general dominance of *bei*, this section will trace the rise of *bei* that commenced in the second century. As a consequence of this study, this section will point out that *bei* probably did not rise as quickly in the seventh century as has been commonly thought. On the basis of the evidence available, it will argue that the increase in its use became more marked in the eighth century and thereafter. The section will demonstrate that it was in the Late-Tang and Five-Dynasties periods that *bei* eventually ejected *yu*, *wei*, and *jian* and became the dominant marker. On account of the particular frequency of the use of *bei* in the two Christian texts, they could not have been written before *bei* became the dominant marker.

#### 5.3.1 The emergence of *bei* in the pre-Qin period

The *bei* construction emerged before 221 BCE. Its earliest order was '*bei* + verb', the first order observed in the two Christian texts.

##### 14) The '*bei* + verb' order

國 一曰 被 攻 (戰國策)  
*guo yiri bei gong*  
bei verb  
 If the country is attacked one day by [enemies]

In this period, its use was very limited and hence examples are rare. *Bei* occurs much less frequently than any of the other three markers. As scholarly research has revealed, the dominant passive marker at that time was *yu*, first used in the oldest Chinese writings, the oracle bone script 甲骨文. Among 714 passive sentences before 221 BCE, the *yu*, *wei*, *jian*

and *bei* constructions represent 62.6, 24.8, 11.6 and 1 percent of use respectively. The common orders of the other three markers are:<sup>13</sup>

15) The 'verb + *yu* + agent' order

勞力者 治 於 人  
*laolizhe zhi yu ren*  
 verb *yu* agent

Those who labor with their physical strength are ruled by others.

16) The '*wei* + verb' order

管 蔡 為 戮  
*guan cai wei lu*  
*wei* verb

Guan and Cai were killed by [Zhougong].

17) The '*wei* + agent + verb' order

而 身 為 宋國 笑  
*er shen wei songguo xiao*  
*wei* agent verb

So he was ridiculed by the Song people.

18) The '*jian* + verb' order

比干 見 剗  
*bigan jian ku*  
*jian* verb

Bigan was ripped apart by [the King].

Pertinently, these *bei* examples are not explicit and are open to different grammatical interpretations. Wang Li argues that the '*bei* + verb' order (including Example 5 above found in *The Messiah Sutra*) adopted the very old use of *bei*, a verb, that means receive or suffer. Examples are:<sup>14</sup>

19) 被 其利  
*bei* *qili*  
receive his benefits

20) 被 八創  
*bei* *bachuang*  
receive eight wounds

21) 被 兵之患  
*bei* *bingzhihuan*  
receive war perils

22) 被 眾口之譖  
*bei* *zhongkouzhizen*  
receive people's slander

The difficulty in determining whether or not these examples are *bei* passive constructions also lies in how the elements should be understood in their relationship to *bei*. Paul A. Bennett suggests that "that so many Archaic words could function as either nouns or verbs means the part of speech of the element after *bei* is unclear."<sup>15</sup> The post-*bei* constituents in Examples 14, 19-22, he argues, appear to be nominal as well as verbal. For example, *gong* in Example 14

<sup>13</sup> Cao Fengxia 曹鳳霞 2012:154. Cao Fengxia examined the oracle bones, the metal inscriptions as well as fourteen sources. These sources, according to their traditional chronologies, are *Laozi* 老子, *Lunyu* 論語, *Guoyu* 國語, *Sunbin bingfa* 孫臏兵法, *Chunqiu zuoshizhuan* 春秋左氏傳 (Example 16), *Mozi* 墨子, *Guanzi* 管子, *Mengzi* 孟子 (Example 15), *Zhuangzi* 莊子, *Xunzi* 荀子 (Example 18), *Yanzi chunqiu* 晏子春秋, *Hanfeizi* 韓非子 (Example 17), *Liji* 禮記 and *Zhanguoce* 戰國策.

<sup>14</sup> Wang Li 王力 2004:497-498. Example 19 is used in *Mozi*, Examples 20 and 21 in *Zhanguoce*, and Example 22 in *Hanfeizi*. In the last three cases, *bei* can also all equally be interpreted as suffer.

<sup>15</sup> Paul A. Bennett 1981:75, original underline.

can be taken as a noun, attack. Therefore, Example 14 “could be translated as ‘if one day the state receives an attack’”.<sup>16</sup>

### 5.3.2 The rise of *bei* in the Han and Six-Dynasties period

The Han and Six-Dynasties period is an interesting stage in the history of the development of the Chinese passive. The *yu* construction began lose ground fairly rapidly. By the seventh century, it was rarely used. The *wei* construction became very common instead. After the first century, the ‘*wei* + agent + *suo* + verb’ order alone (Example 23) was used much more frequently than all the other passive orders combined. The position of the *jian* construction remained stable.

Meanwhile, the *bei* construction began to be used with growing frequency. The *bei* examples are clear. The basic order ‘*bei* + verb’ (Example 24) is frequently found. At this time, the *bei* construction grew more complex. New orders began to emerge. For instance, ‘*bei* + agent + verb’, the second order that appears in the two Christian sources, was introduced. Its first use is attested in Example 25, found in a petition submitted to the throne by Cai Yong 蔡邕 (133-192CE).<sup>17</sup> However, at this stage examples of this new order amount to only a handful. Tang Yuming contends that none of thirteen texts of the Han dynasty used the ‘*bei* + agent + verb’ order; among the 509 *bei* examples collected from eleven sources dating to the Six Dynasties, only thirty-five were used with the agent.<sup>18</sup> This suggests that this new order remained marginal until well toward the end of the sixth century.

#### 23) The ‘*wei* + agent + *suo* + verb’ order

為 兒女子 所 詐  
*wei ernüzi suo zha*  
*wei* agent *suo* verb  
 [I] was cheated by children and women.

#### 24) The ‘*bei* + verb’ order

忠 而 被 謗  
*zhong er bei bang*  
*bei* verb  
 [He] was loyal and yet was slandered by [others].

#### 25) The ‘*bei* + agent + verb’ order

臣 被 尚書 召問  
*chen bei shangshu zhaowen*  
*bei* agent verb  
 I was summoned and interrogated by the minister.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Examples 23-25 are cited from Wang Li 王力 (2004:491, 492, 494). Examples 23 and 24 occurs in *The Shiji* 史記.

<sup>18</sup> Tang Yuming 唐鈺明 2002:281.

As quantitative surveys have demonstrated, this general development was a fairly conspicuous feature in both Buddhist texts translated after the advent of Buddhism in the second half of the first century and in indigenous Chinese works — like the above canons, annals, philosophical works and political essays.<sup>19</sup> In the indigenous Chinese works, the ranking of the four markers is: *wei*, *jian*, *bei* and *yu*. Initially the frequency was only sketchily abstracted in modest surveys conducted by scholars like Tang Yuming who examined sources word by word in the 1980s.<sup>20</sup> Latterly, it has been confirmed and placed on a much more secure footing by computer-assisted studies, like Cao Fengxia's comprehensive doctoral research.

Cao Fengxia divides this span into four periods, the Western Han, the Eastern Han, the Wei-Jin period and the Northern and Southern dynasties and examines twenty-two sources in total. Surveying the occurrence of each marker in different periods, she finds that the occurrence frequency of each marker in different periods varies markedly. The proportion of the *yu* construction falls from 37, 16, 8 to 3 percent of the total passive constructions. The percentage of the *wei* construction rises from 38, 60, 57 to 54 percent; the ratio of the *jian* construction does not fluctuate very much and remains modest (23, 20, 24 and 30 percent). Pertinently the portion of the *bei* construction increases from 2, 4, 11 to 13 percent.<sup>21</sup>

In the translated Buddhist sutras, the ranking is: *wei*, *bei*, *jian* and *yu*. According to An Junli's research, for which he examined 452 Buddhist texts composed (translated) up to the year 589, *bei* was the second main passive device. An Junli writes:<sup>22</sup>

From Chinese Buddhist sources made from the Eastern Han to the Six Dynasties, we have collected 31 occurrences of “*yu*”, 831 examples of “*jian*”, 2,971 examples of “*wei*” and 1,498

<sup>19</sup> The first known translator is An Shigao 安世高, a Parthian missionary who arrived in Luoyang in 148. For more detail, see Erik Zürcher (2007:32-34).

<sup>20</sup> Tang Yuming's study on the Chinese passive has been fairly influential and has frequently been quoted by scholars like Chao Li (2007). All his papers were recently republished. Note that Tang Yuming also examined a few Chinese Buddhist texts. For more details, see Tang Yuming 唐鈺明 (2002:251-304).

<sup>21</sup> According to Cao Fengxia's division of Chinese, the Western Han belongs to the Archaic Chinese. But her division does not impact on the analysis of the evolution of the Chinese passive. Moreover, Cao Fengxia offers a convenient summary of each period. For the numbers, see Cao Fengxia 曹鳳霞 2012:82, 91-92, 121,140. In addition, the twenty-two sources are The *Shiji* 史記, The *Xinshu* 新書, The *Huainanzi* 淮南子, The *Yantielun* 鹽鐵論, The *Xinxu* 新序 (the Western Han); The *Wuyue chunqiu* 吳越春秋, The *Hanshu* 漢書, The *Lunheng* 論衡, The *Qianfulun* 潛夫論, The *Xinlun* 新論, The *Fengsutongyi* 風俗通義 (the Eastern Han); The *Sanguozhi* 三國志, The *Baopuzi neipian* 抱朴子內篇, The *Soushenji* 搜神記, The *Xinji souchenji* 新輯搜神記, The *Huayang guozhi* 華陽國志 (the Wei-Jin period) and The *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語, The *Nanqishu* 南齊書, The *Songshu* (Vols. 81-90) 宋書, The *Shuijingzhu* 水經注, The *Yanshi jiaxun* 顏氏家訓 and The *Qimin yaoshu* 齊民要術 (the Northern and Southern Dynasties). The period Cao Fengxia examines extends to Sui China. Nevertheless, as attested by the above sources — The *Qimin yaoshu* was compiled in the first half of the sixth century and she does not investigate the non-Buddhist Chinese sources made in Sui China.

<sup>22</sup> An Junli 安俊麗 2010:170. Meanwhile, she (2010:034) claims that there are 377 *jian* passive. I think that 377 is a typographical error. Whatever the case might be, this error does not impact on the analysis.

occurrences of the “*bei*” passive. They represent 0.6, 15.6, 55.7 and 28.1 percent of the overall occurrences respectively. In this period, therefore, the most common marker was “*wei*”, followed by “*bei*” and “*jian*”, and the last one was “*yu*”. 在漢魏六朝漢文佛經中我們蒐集到的標誌被動句分別為“於”字式 31 處、“見”字式 831 處、“為”字式 2971 處、“被”字式 1498 處，分別占總數的 0.6%、15.6%、55.7%、28.1%。所以該時期“為”字式佔有絕對優勢，其次是“被”字式、“見”字式，最少的是“於”字式。

As these two scholarly surveys show, the uses of passive markers in both types of sources were very similar. Despite its slight difference in occurrence, *bei* was clearly finding growing favor. In the non-Buddhist sources, *bei* represented 13 percent of the passive sentences. In the translated Buddhist texts, the rise is more obvious: *bei* was one of the main passive indicators, second only to *wei*.

### 5.3.3 The dominance of *bei* in the Late-Tang and Five-Dynasties period

The Sui, Tang, Five-Dynasties and early Song period witnessed dramatic changes in the Chinese passive. As suggested above, *yu* became obsolete. It was only preserved in some proverbs and in the sources written in Classical Chinese. *Wei* and *jian* were both increasingly less used. The use of the order ‘*wei* + agent + *suo* + verb’ shrank so much that it “fell into disuse” by the ninth and tenth centuries.<sup>23</sup>

As the other forms were eclipsed, *bei* became ever more common. It “asserts [asserted] itself everywhere since the Tang period.”<sup>24</sup> Examples can be found in a range of different styles of writings like annals, poems, essays, translated Buddhist sutras as well as common Buddhist stories. New *bei* orders were also introduced, and one is the third order used in the Christian sources, ‘*bei* + verb + *jiangqu*’, that will be discussed in Section 5.4. Moreover, since the ninth century, as observed by scholars like Wang Li and Yuan Bin (who are quoted at the very beginning of this chapter), the increase in the use of the ‘*bei* + agent + verb’ order, that was relatively rare before the seventh century, had been impressive, achieving the position of the most common passive form by the mid-tenth century.<sup>25</sup>

That is to say, from the seventh century the rise of *bei* and the consequent fall of the other three markers are undeniable. Nevertheless, *bei* probably did not rise either as much or as quickly as has often been suggested. In the seventh century, the growth of *bei* was fairly

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<sup>23</sup> Chao Li 2007:106.

<sup>24</sup> Alain Peyraube 1989:353.

<sup>25</sup> Between the first half of the fifth and the sixth century, according to Yuan Bin 袁賓 (1989:54), less than 30 percent of the *bei* constructions were of the ‘*bei* + agent + verb’ order. By the seventh century and thereafter, more than 50 percent of *bei* cases adopted this order.

negligible. At least, its rise is not conspicuous in works written in Classical Chinese. For instance, the official history of Sui China, *The Suishu* 隋書, submitted to the Tang throne in 636, uses the four markers 558 times. The majority are the *wei* constructions (348), and the dominant passive order was ‘*wei* + agent + *suo* + verb’ (314). The *yu*, *jian* and *bei* passives occur 12, 76 and 122 times respectively. Compared to its sixth-century usage, *bei* had increased only a little bit, representing 21 percent of all passives.<sup>26</sup> A similar pattern can also be found in the contemporary Buddhist sources. In Xuanzang's dictation of his own sixteen-year pilgrimage to India edited by his disciple Bianji 辯機 in 646, the *wei* construction occurs fourteen times and the marker *bei* only three times.<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, *bei* was being used in some newly translated sutras, albeit on a limited scale, as late as the 660s. In the part of *The Diamond Sutra* translated from Sanskrit into Chinese by Xuanzang in 660-663 (about 10,000 Chinese characters), *bei* is conspicuous by its absence.<sup>28</sup> This would seem to indicate that the sixth-century trend in the use of the passive markers kept up its momentum well into the seventh century and even in the seventh century the rise of *bei* remained fairly modest.

This situation was to change in the eighth century in which a more clearly discernible increase can be seen. This growth has been quantitatively mapped out by Tang Yuming who has studied three important poets who wrote in that century, Li Bai (701-762), Du Fu (712-770) and Bai Juyi (772-846) — see Table 5.2.<sup>29</sup> In the poems of Li Bai and Du Fu, about 40 percent of all passive cases are instances of *bei*. In the works composed by Bai Juyi, *bei* continued to rise, and its growth was more obvious. In Bai Juyi's essays, that contain a fair number of pieces written in the Classical Chinese style, *bei* occurs almost as frequently as *wei*. In Bai Juyi's poems, *bei* was clearly the dominant marker, representing 71 percent of all the passive examples. In all these three authors' poems, *yu*, *jian* and *wei* occur once, ten and thirty-five times respectively in total.<sup>30</sup>

Toward the end of this period, *bei* unequivocally eclipsed the other three markers. Table 5.2 shows that nine out of ten examples are *bei* constructions. In *The Zutangji* 祖堂集, a collection of the early Chan Buddhists' biographies composed by the two monks, Jing 靜 and Yun 筠, in Quanzhou (a southeastern Chinese port) in 952, *wei* and *bei* were used five and

<sup>26</sup> All data about the *Suishu* are cited from Tang Yuming 唐鈺明 (2002:299).

<sup>27</sup> Wu Fuxiang 吳福祥 2007:4. This source is *The Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions* 大唐西域 and has been mentioned in Footnote 44 of Chapter 3.

<sup>28</sup> Of the four markers, Xuanzang relied exclusively on *wei*. Sadly, Peng Jianhua 彭建華 (2012) does not offer the detailed numbers. This sutra is known in Chinese as *The Jingangjing* 金剛經.

<sup>29</sup> For the first two lines of Table 5.2, see Cao Fengxia 曹鳳霞 (2012:161). The rest of the data are quoted from Tang Yuming 唐鈺明 (2002:298, 299, 301).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 301.

seventy-three times respectively, and there is not one single occurrence of the *yu* and *jian* constructions. After the tenth century, *bei* maintained its momentum. In *The Gu zunsu yulu* 古尊宿語錄, another Buddhist biography compiled in 1138, *wei* occurs three times but *bei* is found 248 times, representing 98 percent of all passive sentences. *Bei* has retained its predominance to the present day.

#### 5.3.4 Discussions

These findings suggest that the texts, *The Messiah Sutra* and *On One God*, cannot have been newly created before *bei* attained its predominance.

The most obvious conclusion is that the two texts were not created by Aluoben in 635. It is now an established fact that the marker *bei* was introduced later than *yu*, *wei* and *jian*. Its use rose steadily from the second century. However, it had still only achieved a modest pace by the seventh century. As suggested by *The Suishu* compiled in 636 and Buddhist sutras translated by Xuanzang around the 650s, the *bei* construction was still not being used in impressive numbers. The *wei* construction still retained its predominance. *Yu* and *jian* were still being used but only on a modest scale. The increase in *bei* was still not marked in the early seventh century. The *bei* constructions at that time represent 21 percent of all passive sentences. As said, a more clearly defined rise in the use of *bei* can be seen only from the eighth century and thereafter.

In glaring contrast, the use of the passive in *The Messiah Sutra* and *On One God* diverges from this common trend. Unlike those early-seventh-century sources that employ many *wei* sentences, a sizeable number of *yu* and *jian* case plus a small number of *bei* passives, the two Christian texts confine themselves almost entirely to the *bei* construction, adopting it almost exclusively as the only passive indicator. Among the ten passive examples analyzed in Section 5.2, only one case is the *wei* construction, and the other nine are *bei* constructions. No instance of the *yu* or *jian* passive occurs. As a non-native Chinese speaker newly arrived in the Tang capital in 635, neither Aluoben, nor indeed his collaborators, can single handedly have almost completely discarded all the other three markers. Moreover, as newcomers in the sophisticated world of Tang culture and literature, they would not have been in a position to introduce the new linguistic practice of relying so heavily on *bei*, a construction that only achieved real currency among Tang Chinese at a later period.

The second relevant point revealed by this analysis is that the two Christian texts cannot really have been created earlier than the Late-Tang and Five-Dynasties period by which time *bei* had become the dominant passive marker. From the eighth century, as demonstrated in the above, the rise of *bei* is clear cut and irrefutable, and subsequently changes in the Chinese passive become obvious — see Table 5.2. The use of *yu* and *jian* had almost disappeared. *Wei* continued to fall whereas *bei* was making its presence felt everywhere. In poems composed by Li Bai and Du Fu, four out of ten passive constructions contain *bei*. In Bai Juyi's poems, composed two or three generations later than those of Li Bai and Du Fu, *bei* was used much more frequently than *yu*, *jian* and *wei*. Seventy percent of all passive examples are *bei* constructions. Toward the middle of the tenth century, *yu* and *jian* died out, *wei* did still occur sporadically but more than 90 percent of all occurrences use *bei*. By this time *bei* had irrevocably usurped the positions of the other three markers to become the dominant device in the Late-Tang and Five-Dynasties period. By the early eleventh century, *bei* seems to have become the only passive marker resorted to by Chinese users.

| Markers<br>Sources %                             | <i>Yu</i> | <i>Jian</i> | <i>Wei</i> | <i>Bei</i> | Percentage of <i>bei</i> |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----------|-------------|------------|------------|--------------------------|
| Archaic sources (1600BCE - 24CE)                 | 632       | 367         | 199        | 17         | 1%                       |
| Sources (25 - 618)                               | 225       | 1804        | 649        | 471        | 15%                      |
| Suishu 隋書 (636)                                  | 12        | 76          | 348        | 122        | 21%                      |
| Li Bai's Poems 李白詩 (701-762)                     | 0         | 0           | 6          | 4          | 40%                      |
| Du Fu's Poems 杜甫詩 (712-770)                      | 0         | 9           | 13         | 14         | 39%                      |
| Bai Juyi's Essays 白居易文 (772-846)                 | 1         | 5           | 12         | 11         | 38%                      |
| Bai Juyi's Poems 白居易詩 (772-846)                  | 1         | 1           | 16         | 44         | 71%                      |
| The two Christian texts (dates to be determined) | 0         | 0           | 1          | 9          | 90%                      |
| Zutangji 祖堂集 (952)                               | 0         | 0           | 5          | 73         | 94%                      |
| Gu zunsu yulu 古尊宿語錄 (1138)                       | 0         | 0           | 3          | 248        | 98%                      |

Table 5.2 Pre-twelfth-century usage of passive markers, *yu*, *jian*, *wei* and *bei*

In view of these data, the use of the passive in *The Messiah Sutra* and *On One God* matches the right end of the spectrum surprisingly well. The proportion of the use of *bei* in the two Christian sources is 90 percent. This percentage is much higher than its use in the poems of

either Li Bai or Du Fu. It also exceeds the passive usage in Bai Juyi's poems and essays, coming close to occurrences of the passive in the mid-tenth century source, *The Zutangji* (94%).

The third important point is that, if we pursue this argument in even greater depth, *The Messiah Sutra* and *On One God* could not have been redactions of earlier texts. From what has been said above, the rise of *bei* was not comet-like but part of a slow process. The evidence shows that this marker became the dominant device around the Late-Tang and Five-Dynasties period. Given the frequency of its occurrence in the two Christian texts (90 percent), it would have been a very strange exercise had some people deliberately redacted all the original passive sentences that contained the other three markers, *yu*, *wei* and *jian*. In other words, the two Christian sources must have been newly created around the time when *bei* was the dominant marker.

In short, the two Christians texts were not composed before *bei* became the dominant passive marker. This conclusion, especially the theme of the new creation, becomes even more tenable when one looks at the '*bei* + verb + *jiangqu*' order.

#### 5.4 The '*bei* + verb + *jiangqu*' order and the date of the two Christian texts

At the outset, it must be said that the '*bei* + verb + *jiangqu*' order was a rare sequence. Its use was so limited that only two examples (Examples 41 and 42) have been collected from all the pre-eleventh century sources, Buddhist and non-Buddhist, examined above and analyzed by mainstream scholars.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, the study of these two examples is a very new development. They were first briefly mentioned only after 1990 when Cao Guangshun had investigated the sequence that is commonly transcribed as '*verb* + *jiang* + *qu* / *lai*'.<sup>32</sup> To date, this rare passive order has remained almost entirely unknown. In fact, as to be shown, this passive order has not yet even been properly identified, transcribed and generalized.

In its attempts to understand the use of this peculiar order in the two Christian texts, this section has taken advantage of CBETA, a free, open, online database of Chinese Buddhist

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<sup>31</sup> These two examples are cited from Lin Xinping 林新平 (2006:199), Zhang Meilan 張美蘭 (2003:287), Wu Fuxiang 吳福祥 (1996:329), He Leshi 何樂士 (1992a:240, 1992b:160) and Feng Chuntian 馮春田 (1992a: 312).

<sup>32</sup> Cao Guangshun 曹廣順 1995:54-55, 1990:132. Cao Guangshun has dealt with only one example, Example 42. In this coalescence, the character *lai* 來 means come. It is an antonym of *qu*, that means go. In the field, these two characters are often taken as deictic directionals. In addition, as discussed below, this common formula should be changed to '*verb* + *jiangqu*' or '*verb* + *jianglai*'. For more details about this coalescence as well as about Cao Guangshun's contribution, see Wei Peiquan 魏培泉 (2013:876), Liu Jian *et al.* 劉堅等 (1992:64-65), and Wu Zhenyu 武振玉 (1991).

canons and sources.<sup>33</sup> It has collected as many examples of the construction as possible, mapping out the path by which this order had developed by the time when the Christian manuscripts were sealed off inside Dunhuang Cave 17. The development of this passive order, this section argues, re-confirms that the two Christian manuscripts were newly created no earlier than the Late-Tang and Five-Dynasties period.

#### 5.4.1 The pre-seventh-century coalescence between the ‘*bei* + verb’ order and *jiangqu*

Although historically the ‘*bei* + verb’ order had coalesced with the phrase *jiangqu* in the fifth century, pre-seventh-century examples are rare. So far, I have only found two examples in three individual sources, the earliest of which is dated 405.

Example 26 is found in *The Dazhidulun* 大智度論, a 100-roll Buddhist text translated by Kumarajiva 鳩摩羅什 in 402-405. It occurs in a verse consisting of seven characters in each line. This example is also quoted by the third source *The Xiuxi zhiguan zuochan fayao* 修習止觀坐禪法要, composed by a monk called Zhiyi 智顗 in the late sixth century.<sup>34</sup>

26) 如人 被 縛 將去 殺 災害 垂至 安可眠  
 ru ren *bei* fu *jiangqu* sha zaihai chuizhi ankemian  
*bei* verb *jiangqu* verb

If someone is (to be) tied, taken away and killed, how can he sleep when [such as] calamity is imminent?

The second source in which this construction is found is *The Sifenlü* 四分律, a sixty-roll Chinese version of The Dharmaguptaka-vinaya made in 410-412. It uses the coalescence ‘*bei* + verb + *jiangqu*’ in ten sentences. Although all these sentences are slightly different, they do appear to be variations of one sentence. In particular, all the *bei* constructions look very

<sup>33</sup> This database is maintained by the Chinese Buddhist Electronic Texts Association 中華電子佛典協會, an NGO established in 1998. Its primary source comes from *The Taisho Tripitaka* 大正新脩大藏經, a definitive edition of Chinese Buddhist canons edited by Takakusu Junjiro and others in the 1920s. Thus far, this database has collected 0.2 billion plus characters and keeps expanding by incorporating many other sources including tombstone inscriptions and local gazetteers. For more details, visit its official website: <http://www.cbeta.org/>. Moreover, this section also studies a few examples that I came across when I was reading Chinese vernacular and historical sources in my leisure time.

<sup>34</sup> [http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T25n1509\\_017](http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T25n1509_017). All the examples collected from the CBETA database are referred by their URLs because the CBETA’s URLs indicate enough biographical information. In the above link, for instance, Example 26 is quoted from Roll 17 of *The Dazhidulun*, a source that is numbered 1509 and contained in Volume 25 of The Taisho Tripitaka. For Zhiyi’s quotation, see [http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/zh-cn/T46n1915\\_001](http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/zh-cn/T46n1915_001).

similar. All ten occurrences can therefore be as assumed to be one example. For the convenience of further discussions, I quote three sentences.<sup>35</sup>

27) 若 為 力勢 所 持。 若 被 繫縛 將去。

ruo wei lishi suo chi, ruo bei jifu jiangqu

wei agent suo verb bei verb jiangqu

[He] can be held by the strong, or be tied and taken away by [someone].

28) 若 為 強力 所 持去。 若 被 繫 將去。

ruo wei qiangli suo chiqu, ruo bei ji jiangqu

wei agent suo verb bei verb jiangqu

[He] can be held away by the strong, or be tied and taken away by [someone].

29) 或 為 強力者 將去。 [或] 被 縛 將去。

huo wei qianglizhe jiangqu, [huo] bei fu jiangqu

wei agent verb bei verb jiangqu

[He] can be taken away by the strong, or be tied and taken away by [someone].

These examples show that the ‘*bei* + verb’ passive order was being combined with *jiangqu* before the Tang period. However, none of these instances is of the ‘*bei* + verb + *jiangqu*’ order because in each example *jiangqu* is used as a verbal phrase, meaning take (bring) away and is inserted between these two actions. In Examples 27-29, the verbal function of *jiangqu* is highlighted by the context. Comparing the first parts of Examples 28 and 29, for instance, it is easy to see that both parts have the same structure, the above-mentioned ‘*wei* + agent [+ *suo*] + verb’ order, that depicts one and the same event — someone is taken away by strong people. Clearly, the action (take away) is coded by *chiqu* (under-dotted in Example 28) and by *jiangqu* (under-dotted in Example 29). In these examples, *chi*, *chiqu* and *jiangqu* are used interchangeably as synonymous verbal phrases.

Actually, the *bei* construction in all these examples is of the ‘*bei* + verb1 + verb2’ order that contains a fairly common syntactic phenomenon, the serial verb construction, in which two or more verbs or verbal phrases can be strung together in a single clause to indicate a single event and concurrent or causally related events.<sup>36</sup> Usually, the serialization follows the time sequence. Verbs are clustered together without any intervening conjunction; for example, tie,

<sup>35</sup> This work was compiled Yeshe 耶舍. The three examples are quoted from the pdf version released by CBETA ([http://buddhism.lib.ntu.edu.tw/BDLM/sutra/chi\\_pdf/sutra11/T22n1428.pdf](http://buddhism.lib.ntu.edu.tw/BDLM/sutra/chi_pdf/sutra11/T22n1428.pdf)). This pdf version is paginated. The examples are found on pages 151, 200 and 203. The other examples including their page numbers are: 或為強力者所執。或被縛將去。 (P.230); 或為強力者所執。或被縛將去。 (P.231); 若為強力者所執。或被縛將去。 (P.241); 或為強力者所執。或被縛將去。 (P.241); 或為強力者所將去。或被繫閉將去。 (P.264); 或為強力者所執。若被繫縛將去。 (P.272); 若為強力者所執。若被繫縛將去。 (P.272).

<sup>36</sup> The verb serialization is found in many languages — e.g., (She will) go get (a taxi). For more detail, see Waltraud Paul (2008), Stephen Matthews (2006), Huei-Ling Lin (2004), and Chan Yin-wa (1997), and Li Yafei (1991).

take away and kill in Example 26. Apart from its use in the *bei* construction, linguists have shown that this verb serialization is also seen in the *wei* and *jian* constructions, and examples of the *wei* and *jian* passive constructions with verb serialization do occasionally occur in Chinese historical annals and translated Buddhist texts made earlier than the Tang period.<sup>37</sup>

This observation on verb serialization is a prelude to a difficult question: How should these examples be formulated, labeled or transcribed? The general practice is to divide *jiangqu* into *jiang* and *qu* and transcribe this passive order as ‘*bei* + verb + *jiang* + *qu*’, in which *jiang* is taken to be an auxiliary verb and *qu* a directional (complement).<sup>38</sup> This segmentation is helpful in understanding the grammaticalization of *jiang* and *qu* — providing an explanation of how *jiang* and *qu* lost their verbal status and were transformed into an auxiliary and a complement.

Nevertheless, considering this analysis of the verb serialization, the common formula ‘*bei* + verb + *jiang* + *qu*’ does not seem to hold water. In all these examples, *jiangqu* is used as one of the serialized verbs to code one of the actions in the whole event. That is say, it is the phrase *jiangqu* combined with the ‘*bei* + verb’ order. It is not the two individual characters, *jiang* and *qu*, that are coalesced with the ‘*bei* + verb’ order. In fact, if we recognize *jiangqu* as two elements (individual characters), not every example makes any sense at all. For instance, *jiangqu* in Example 26 can only be divided as *jiangqu* (Division 1). The other two divisions (Division 2 and Division 3) do not make any sense at all — vertical bars indicate the division.

Division 1: 被 | 縛 | 將去 | 殺  
*bei fu jiangqu sha*  
 tie take-away kill

Division 2: \*被 | 縛將 | 去殺  
*bei fujiang qusha*  
 tie-take away-kill

Division 3: \*被 | 縛 | 將 | 去 | 殺  
*bei fu jiang qu sha*  
 tie take away kill

Therefore, the phrase *jiangqu* must be seen as one syntactical unit that cannot be divided into ‘*jiang* + *qu*’, even though the phrase consists of the character *jiang* and the character *qu*.

<sup>37</sup> For instance, Xiao Lirong 肖麗容 (2012: 43, 44, 56, 64, 65, 70, 72, 76, 84, 87, 89, 93) has collected 59 ‘*jian* + verb1 + verb2’ cases in the historical accounts composed between 25 and 618. For more detail, see also Cao Fengxia 曹鳳霞 (2012:109, 127, 134, 142, 146, 151, 168).

<sup>38</sup> For this practice, see Lin Xinping 林新平 (2006:199), Wu Fuxiang 吳福祥 (1996:329), Cao Guangshun 曹廣順 (1995:54-55, 1990:132), and He Leshi 何樂士 (1992b:160).

Consequently, all examples must be transcribed as ‘*bei* + verb + *jiangqu*’. In simple words, the coalescence cannot be labeled ‘*bei* + verb + *jiang* + *qu*’ but must be identified as ‘*bei* + verb + *jiangqu*’.

#### 5.4.2 Unclear examples in the seventh century

In the seventh century, the ‘*bei* + verb’ order coalesced with *jiangqu* would seem to have been developing into what is called here the ‘*bei* + verb + *jiangqu*’ order. Within comparison with the scarce number of the pre-Tang examples, its usage increased and the coalescence became complex. The agent was initially inserted between the marker and the verb – see Examples 30 and 31. At this stage of its development, the phrase *jiangqu* appears to have been losing its verbal status.

However, not everything is yet cut and dried and these seventh-century examples are still unclear. As shown by my punctuation of Example 32, *jiangqu* still retained its primary verbal meaning, and all occurrences, especially Example 31, can be interpreted as the *bei* construction plus serialized verbs. In total, I have found five examples in three sources.

The first source is *The Foshuo tuoluoni ji jing* 佛說陀羅尼集經 translated by the Indian missionary Atigupta 阿地瞿多 in 654, in which *jiangqu* is attached to the *bei* construction twice.<sup>39</sup>

- 30) 遂 被 鬼神 偷盜 將去  
sui bei guishen toudao jiangqu  
bei agent verb *jiangqu*  
Then, [offerings are] stolen and taken away by the ghosts and gods.

- 31) 被 比止[丘] 搦 將去 枷鎖縛  
bei biqu nu jiangqu jiasuofu  
bei agent verb *jiangqu* verb  
[He is] seized, taken away and bound by shackles by Bhiksu.

The second text is *The Fayuanzhulin* 法苑珠林, a collection of pious Buddhist stories compiled by Shi Daoshi 釋道世 in 668. It produces two examples. One quotes Example 26. The other

<sup>39</sup> Example 30: [http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T18n0901\\_008](http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T18n0901_008); Example 31: [http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T18n0901\\_010](http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T18n0901_010).

(Example 32) is contained in a sentence that recounts Xu Shancai's adventure on his way home in 619:<sup>40</sup>

- 32) 道逢胡賊。 被 捉 將去。 至 幽州 南界 胡賊凶毒所。  
dao feng huzei, bei zhuo jiangqu, zhi binzhou nanjie huzeixiongduosuo.  
bei verb jiangqu

On the way, [he] came across barbarian bandits, was caught and taken away [by the bandits] to the southern border of Binzhou where their filthy den was located.

This punctuation is that offered by the CBETA database. However, the following new punctuation is equally valid. In this punctuation, *jiangqu* is a verb:

- 道逢胡賊 被 捉 。 將去 至 幽州 南界 胡賊凶毒所。  
dao feng huzei bei zhuo, jiangqu zhi binzhou nanjie huzeixiongduosuo.  
bei verb, jiangqu

On the way, [he] came across barbarian bandits and was caught [by the bandits]. And [he was] taken away to the southern border of Binzhou where their filthy den was located.

The third source is *The Dasheng xianshi jing* 大乘顯識經 rendered into Chinese by Dipoheluo 地婆訶羅 in 680:<sup>41</sup>

- 33) 如 被 劫賊 執捉 將去, 作 如是言  
ru bei jiezei zhizhuo jiangqu, zuo rushiyan  
bei agent verb jiangqu  
If [you are] caught and taken away by robbers, say something like this.

### 5.4.3 Emergence in the eighth century

As far as can be ascertained from the sources, the '*bei* + verb + *jiangqu*' order first appeared in the eighth century. From five sources below, I have gathered seven occurrences.

The first source is *The Genben shuoyiqieyoubu pinaiye* 根本說一切有部毘奈耶, the Chinese version of The Mūlasarvāstivāda-Vinaya. Although there are three occurrences, they seem to be one usage. I quote all the three occurrences:<sup>42</sup>

- 34) 見 一大木 被 截 將去  
jian yidamu bei jie jiangqu  
bei verb jiangqu

<sup>40</sup> Example 32: [http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/ko/T53n2122\\_065](http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/ko/T53n2122_065). While quoting Example 26 in Roll 71 ([http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/ko/T53n2122\\_071](http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/ko/T53n2122_071)), this source incorrectly writes *bei* 被 as *bi* 彼: 如人彼[被]縛將去殺.

<sup>41</sup> [http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T12n0347\\_002](http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T12n0347_002)

<sup>42</sup> [http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T23n1442\\_002](http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T23n1442_002). All the three examples occur in Roll 2.

[He] saw that a huge log had been cut away by [someone].

- 35) 見 一大木 被 截 將去  
*jian yidamu bei jie jiangqu*  
*bei verb jiangqu*

[He] saw that a huge log had been cut away by [someone].

- 36) 遂 被 他人 斬截 將去  
*sui bei taren zhanjie jiangqu*  
*bei agent verb jiangqu*

[The huge log] had been cut away by someone.

The second text is *The Genben shuoyiqieyoubu pinaiye posengshi* 根本說一切有部毘奈耶破僧事, The Saṅghabhedavastu of The Mūlasarvāstivāda-Vinaya, that contributes one example:<sup>43</sup>

- 37) 必 被 國王 盡取 將去  
*bi bei guowang jinqu jiangqu*  
*bei agent verb jiangqu*  
[My possessions] all will be taken away by the king.

The third source is *The Genben shuoyiqieyoubu pinaiye yaoshi* 根本說一切有部毘奈耶藥事, The Bhaiṣajya-vastu of The Mūlasarvāstivāda-Vinaya, that contributes one more case:<sup>44</sup>

- 38) 象 被 風 吹 將去  
*xiang bei feng chui jiangqu*  
*bei agent verb jiangqu*  
The elephant was blown away by wind.

The fourth text is *The Jingang banruo jing jiyANJI* 金剛般若經集驗記. However, Example 39, like Example 32, is ambiguous.<sup>45</sup> It can also be interpreted as the ‘*bei* + verb1 + verb2’ order.

- 39) 被 捉 將去。吐蕃鎖著。  
*bei zhuo jiangqu, tufan suozhe*  
*bei verb jiangqu*  
[He was] caught by [Tibetans] and taken away by [Tibetans] to Tibet and was locked up.

The fifth source is a petition containing an example:<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> [http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T24n1450\\_013](http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T24n1450_013)

<sup>44</sup> [http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T24n1448\\_013](http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T24n1448_013)

<sup>45</sup> [http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/X87n1629\\_001](http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/X87n1629_001)

40) 臣 國內 庫藏 珍寶 及 部落 百姓 物 並 被 大食 徵稅 將去  
 chen guonei kucang zhenbao ji buluo baixing wu bing bei dashi zhengshui jiangqu  
 bei agent verb jiangqu

The valuables in the treasury of my country and the possessions of the tribes and the people, all were levied as taxes by the Arabs.

These examples provide important information that helps in understanding the emergence of the ‘*bei* + verb + *jiangqu*’ order.

The first point that should be emphasized is that both the authorships and provenances of these different texts reveal that its use kept rising in an upward curve. All these sources stem from the eighth century. The first three texts belong to a series of Sanskrit Buddhist sutras entitled The Mūlasarvāstivāda. They were brought back to China and were translated in Xi’an and Luoyang by Yi Jing 義淨 (635-713), another eminent Chinese pilgrim who embarked on his journey to India in 671 and finally returned to China in 695.<sup>47</sup> The very first is dated 703. The other two were made no later than 712 when advancing age prevented Yi Jing from taking on more work.<sup>48</sup> The fourth source is an anthology of stories collected by pious Buddhist believers. It was written in Xinzhou 梓州 where its author, Meng Xianzhong 孟獻忠, was serving as an official in the southwestern province of Sichuan 四川 in 718. The fifth source is the petition sent by Naluoyan 那羅延, the king of Jumi 俱蜜 (present-day Tadjikistan), who requested the assistance of the Tang court to resist the invading Arabs. This petition was submitted in 719.<sup>49</sup> The different times and places of production, authors and styles suggest that the order under discussion seems to have been spreading in the eighth century.

Even more importantly, by the eighth century the ‘*bei* + verb’ order combined with *jiangqu* no longer seems to have been constrained by the principle of semantic resemblance, whereas, before this time, the coalescence had unquestionably been governed by this principle. In every clear pre-eighth-century example, all verbs share one same semantic feature: the movement of the hand. The verb *fu* in Example 26 means to tie something with ropes; *jifu* in Example 27 to fasten something with ropes; *toudao* in Example 30 to steal something away; *nuo* in Example 31 to take something in hand; *zhuo* in Example 32 to catch; *zhizhuo* in

<sup>46</sup> Wang Qinruo 王欽若 1013/1989:4040.

<sup>47</sup> Tansen Sen 2006:31. Many of Yi Jing’s works can be matched to the Sanskrit originals discovered in India and Central Asia. For more details about Yijing and his works, see South Coblin (1991), and Wang Bangwei 王邦維 (1996).

<sup>48</sup> Wang Bangwei 王邦維 1996:20, 22, 25.

<sup>49</sup> Wang Qinruo 王欽若 (1013/1989:4040). It is unknown whether this petition was sent directly from Central Asia or had been drawn up by ambassadors in the Tang capital.

Example 33 to hold in one's hand. In all the examples, *jiangqu* is an action, take away, that also contains the semantic feature, the movement of the hand.

However, by the eighth century this semantic constraint dissipated and seems to have been discarded. Henceforward *jiangqu* could be freely attached to other verbs. With the exception of Example 37 *qu* 取, in which it means get something in hand, all the other verbs in the eighth-century examples do not share the same semantic feature with *jiangqu*. In Examples 34 and 35, *jie* means to chop, an action that also involves the movement of the arm. The same can be said of *zhanjie* in Example 36, that can also be translated as to chop. Examples 38 and 40 are even more convincing illustrations of this semantic freedom. In Example 38, *chui* means to blow. As indicated by this character's right element 口 (mouth), the action, blow, has nothing to do with hand. In Example 40, *zhengshui* means levy tax; the agent is not a human but a government.

Taken as a group, these observations indicate that the '*bei* + verb + *jiangqu*' order underwent significant changes in the eighth century. In comparison with all the earlier examples, as its use expanded, both the agent and the action become more abstract and consequently the range of verbs with which could be used expanded. The phrase *jiangqu* lost its earlier verbal nature. It had become a verbal complement that can be equated with the English particle 'away' and attached to such verbs as break, cast, drop, melt, slip and wither. This use of the '*bei* + verb + *jiangqu*' order only emerged in the eighth century.

#### 5.4.4 Limited use between the ninth century and the eleventh century

As far as my data indicate, the use of the '*bei* + verb + *jiangqu*' order still remained fairly dormant in the ninth century. Besides the two frequently quoted cases (Examples 41 and 42), I have only been able to find four new cases in three sources created between the ninth century and the eleventh century.

- 41) 窠 被 奪 將去  
       ke *bei* duo *jiangqu*  
       *bei* verb *jiangqu*  
       [My] nest was snatched away by you.

- 42) 久後 總 被 俗漢 弄 將去 在  
       jiuhou zong *bei* suhan nong *jiangqu* zai  
                   *bei* agent verb *jiangqu*  
       Eventually, all will be fetched away by the vulgar men.

The first source, *The Shimen zijinglu* 釋門自鏡錄, contains one example:<sup>50</sup>

- 43) 羊 即 被 牽 將去  
yang ji bei jian jiangqu  
bei verb jiangqu  
The sheep was pulled away by [the butcher].

The second text, *The Xuansha shibei chanshi guanglu* 玄沙師備禪師廣錄, uses two cases.<sup>51</sup>

- 44) 被 他善惡業果 拘 將去  
bei tashan'eyeguo ju jiangqu  
bei agent verb jiangqu  
[You] are seized away by retribution for deeds, good and bad.
- 45) 明朝 後日 盡 被 識情 帶 將去  
mingzhao houri jin bei shiqing dai jiangqu  
bei agent verb jiangqu  
Quickly, all will be taken away by early desires.

The third source, *The Jingdechuandenglu* 景德傳燈錄, quotes Examples 42 and 44 in Rolls 9 and 18 respectively. It also contributes one new example:<sup>52</sup>

- 46) 恁麼 即 被 生死 拘 將去 也  
nenmo ji bei shengsi ju jiangqu ye  
bei agent verb jiangqu  
So, [you] will be seized away by life and death.

Arguably, the 'bei + verb + jiangqu' order did not enjoy a meteoric rise in terms of frequency after its emergence in the eighth century. However, the small number of the examples does imply that this order did not develop at all. In fact, there were some interesting changes.

Firstly, undoubtedly this passive order was spreading. Example 41 is from Dunhuang manuscript P.2653, in which a swallow reasons with an invading bird to evacuate her nest. The manuscript is one later fragment of *The Yanzifu* 燕子賦, a rhymed work created no earlier than the early eighth century.<sup>53</sup> Example 42 is found in the above-mentioned Buddhist source *The Zutangji* made in 952 on the southeastern coast of China. The source, *The Shimen zijinglu*, is a biography of monks composed by Huaixin 懷信 in Xi'an around the 810s. The

<sup>50</sup> [http://www.cbeta.org/result/normal/T51/2083\\_002.htm](http://www.cbeta.org/result/normal/T51/2083_002.htm).

<sup>51</sup> Examples 44 and 45: [http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/X73n1445\\_003](http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/X73n1445_003).

<sup>52</sup> [http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T51n2076\\_021](http://tripitaka.cbeta.org/T51n2076_021)

<sup>53</sup> For dating this source, see Yan Tingliang 顏廷亮 (1998) and Jian Tao 簡濤 (1986).

second text, *The Xuansha shibei chanshi guanglu*, was republished in 1080. It is a collection of stories and catechetical lectures given by Xuansha shibei, a Buddhist master from the southeastern Chinese coastal city of Fuzhou 福州, who died in 908. The last document is one of the primary sources of the history of Chan Buddhism in China. It was compiled by Shi Daoyuan 釋道原 in the eastern Chinese city of Suzhou 苏州 in 1004. In comparison with the eighth-century sources, most of which were produced in the Tang heartlands, these post-eighth-century sources are more interesting because they were made and used over a wider area, one that stretched from the eastern Pacific coasts of China to Central Asian oases. This is an indication that the geographical area over which the ‘*bei* + verb + *jiangqu*’ order was spreading and was consequently being used by more people from the ninth century and thereafter.

The second change that meets the eye is that its use was becoming complex. Cases from this period often inserted an agent between the marker *bei* and the verb — see Examples 42, 44, 45 and 46. Even more importantly, abstract concepts could now also be used as the agent. Before the ninth century, the agent, whether explicit or implicit, was either human (like the king in Example 37) or a concrete noun (like the wind in Example 38). Not a single eighth-century example contains an abstract, inanimate concept as the agent. However, in the ninth century, the order did begin to incorporate abstract nouns as agents. In Example 44, humans are restrained by considerations of the retribution that would be incurred by good and bad deeds. In Example 45, humans are being led astray by earthly desires. In Example 46, the agents are life and death. All these abstract concepts are personified and transformed into agents that could initiate an action like humans. This is a new development. It seems that the connection between the verb and *jiangqu* was being less strongly felt in the ninth century than it had been in the eighth century. In fact, as more and more examples could be inserted with an agent, the bond between the verb and *jiangqu* tended to loosen. The phrase *jiangqu* appears to have completely lost its verbal status. It was beginning to sound purely and simply like an ending, whose presence or absence did not impinge on the integrity of the meaning very much.

#### 5.4.5 Discussions

The development of the ‘*bei* + verb + *jiangqu*’ order offers further support to the observations made above about the time at which the two Christian texts were created.

The first point that should be emphasized is that history of the emergence of the ‘*bei* + verb + *jiangqu*’ order strongly suggests that the two Christian texts were created after the eighth century. As has been demonstrated, this particular passive order did not emerge before the eighth century. The pre-eighth-century examples of the ‘*bei* + verb + *jiangqu*’ order were invariably restrained by the principle of the same semantic domain. The verbs all shared one semantic feature, the movement of a hand. For example, *fu* means to tie (using your hands). In essence, these early cases are of the *bei* construction with two or more serialized verbs that indicate a whole process or concurrent events. In the eighth century, this principle was compromised. The semantic restriction was lifted. Verbs that preceded *jiangqu* were no longer required to share the same semantic feature with it — examples are *cui* 吹, that means to blow, and *zhengshui* 徵稅, that means to levy taxes. The phrase *jiangqu* lost its verbal status and was transformed into a functional ending that can be equated to the English particle ‘away’.

Pertinently, all the occurrences in *On One God* do not differ from many post-seventh-century examples, and none resembles a pre-eighth-century example. Take for instance, Example 6, in which *jiangqu* is attached to the verb *chui* 吹. The agent is the wind, and the action (blow) does not share any semantic feature with *jiangqu*. Hence, the principle of one semantic domain has been violated, and *jiangqu* in Example 6 is no longer an independent verb but a verbal ending that can be removed without altering the meaning of the sentence. In other words, Example 6 is not the ‘*bei* + verb1 + verb1’ order but the ‘*bei* + verb + *jiangqu*’ order.

The second point that shall be drawn is that the particular use of this rare order is a very strong argument that *The Messiah Sutra* and *On One God* were not redactions of earlier texts. After its emergence, the ‘*bei* + verb + *jiangqu*’ order continued to develop and its use seems to have increased, especially around the early eleventh century. Examples can be found in sources made throughout the whole Tang Empire. However, its use remained fairly limited well up into the twelfth century. Most sources use only one occurrence.

In spite of its limited use, this order does occur three times in *On One God*. All these examples are clear. Given this frequency of occurrence, it would have been strange should an individual have suddenly shown a marked preference for this order, thereby intentionally employing it in *On One God*. It would be an even more extraordinary step to assume that someone deliberately replaced or redacted the original passive sentences inserting this rare order instead. The most plausible explanation of the occurrences of this order in the Christian texts is that it was naturally adopted conforming to the then generally accepted practice of using it.

That is to say, the two Christian texts were not redactions of pre-eighth-century texts. They were newly created texts that were produced at a certain time after the ‘*bei* + verb + *jiangqu*’ order was established in the eighth century.

## 5.5 Conclusion

These discussions shed great light not only on the dating of the manuscripts, *The Messiah Sutra* and *On One God*, but also on their authenticity.

First and foremost, the manuscripts, *The Messiah Sutra* and *On One God*, were made between the ninth century and the early eleventh century. As we have stated in the Introduction to this dissertation, it stands to reason that neither manuscript can possibly have been composed before the texts were created. The creation of a text determines the *terminus post quem* of a manuscript. As the two Christian texts were most likely created in the Late-Tang and Five-Dynasties period by which time *bei* had become the dominant passive marker, we can conclude that the manuscripts must have been produced no earlier than this period. Furthermore, we also claim that the sealing of Dunhuang Cave 17 is the *terminus ante quem* of all the documents. Hence, the Christian manuscripts were created before the early eleventh century.

The second point that should be made is that the use of the Chinese passive is another irrefutable indicator that *The Messiah Sutra* and *On One God* were not forged by a modern hand.

In the early twentieth century, few Chinese scholars had made any attempt to trace the evolution of the Chinese passive. As a matter of fact, much of our knowledge about the Chinese passive is very new. The historical, descriptive method of studying Chinese was not introduced into China before first-generation scholars like Lü Shuxiang and Wang Li, who are quoted at the opening of this chapter, had completed their education in the West around the 1930s. Systematic descriptions of using the four markers were only undertaken as late as the 1980s, when second-generation scholars like Tang Yuming painstakingly perused ancient Chinese sources word for word. A detailed, synchronic and diachronic study of the rise and fall of all the markers was not produced until recently when computer software enabled scholars to build corpuses and analyze the changes more precisely. Despite these developments, ‘*bei* + verb + *jiangqu*’ order still remains largely unnoticed. It was first reported post-1990. So far, as shown in Section 5.4, only two examples have been analyzed with any

frequency, and this order has not yet even been properly identified. Many examples have not so far been fished out the oceans of sources.

In other words, much of our knowledge about the Chinese passive, particularly how the Chinese passive changed in the period of Tang China, was still a mystery in the early twentieth century. Therefore, no forger at that time could have displayed such outstanding ingenuity that he would have been able to use the four markers exactly as the people in the Late-Tang and Five-Dynasties period did. It is simply inconceivable that any forger could have been so extremely well read he would have come across, let alone have known how to use, the rare ‘*bei + verb + jiangqu*’ order.

In sum, the Chinese passive has passed through clearly traceable changes throughout history. These changes are helpful in dating sources. The use of the passive reveals that *The Messiah Sutra* and *On One God* can be shown to be neither redacted early texts nor modern forgeries. Very probably, the texts were newly created not earlier than the Late-Tang and Five-Dynasties period. In a nutshell, the two Christian manuscripts were not produced before the putative disappearance of the Tang Church.

Admittedly, this dating deviates starkly from the conventional chronology. Nevertheless, it seems even more plausible when one examines the historical presence of Dunhuang Christians that is sketched in the next chapter.