



EARLY CHINA SEMINAR
LECTURE SERIES

***Xiaoyao* and *shuchi*: Some Special Uses of Alliterative and Rhyming
Binomes in the Transmitted and Excavated Documents**

「逍遙」與「舒遲」：傳世與出土文獻中連綿詞的幾種特殊用法

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Some of the usages of alliterative binomes in Old Chinese have been all too often overlooked by scholars. A binome (or bi-syllabic compound) in early archaic Chinese (Old Chinese) is a compound consisting of two relevant morphemic units by and large undecomposable in meaning and pronunciation. In the words of Qing dynasty philologist, Wang Niansun 王念孫 (1744-1832), “*the two characters of a reduplicative expression (binome) both have the same meaning; one cannot separate them and denote them differently*”. However, some divisive applications of the binomes in Old Chinese, which is hidden behind the texts, have been overlooked by scholars. There are texts found among the transmitted Classics or inscribed on excavated documents, especially in verse, which exhibit particular uses of alliterative and rhyming binomes that do not necessarily follow the principle of non-separation. Through the analysis of how binomes such as *e’nuo* (graceful and pliant), *xiaoyao* (free and unfettered) and *shuyi* (deliberate and reverent), are used in variegated forms within received canonical texts, bronze inscriptions, as well as bamboo and silk manuscripts, the present paper testifies how their variants and several related expressions can help us better understand the inscriptional texts discovered on recently unearthed manuscripts. By the same occasion, this allows for a reinterpretation of passages from the received classics, which had previously been misunderstood or misinterpreted.

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