

OLD CHINESE IN THE EXCAVATED LATE ARCHAIC SCRIPT:  
PROBLEMS OF WORKING WITH COMPETING IDEAS IN  
RECONSTRUCTION

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ABSTRACT

Excavated bamboo or wooden manuscripts dating from the 5th to 3rd centuries BCE have now become important new sources of data for Old Chinese phonology. The ways these sources are interpreted are necessarily based on methodological assumptions for Old Chinese reconstruction. So when debated issues in the latter are involved, disparate observations about the same materials turn out to manifest differences in the methodologies themselves. The study of Old Chinese through excavated manuscripts seems to become further complicated by considerations of the nature of the ‘pre-Qin’ archaic script and the provenances of the manuscripts. In response to these problems, as argued in this article, it is essential to recognize that the writings from the ancient Chu and Qin regions, notwithstanding the impressive range of graphic variability reaffirm the logographic nature of the Chinese writing system. The imperial ‘script-unification’ of the Qin dynasty was primarily an orthographic standardization in accordance with the norms of the old

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Qin region, whereby distinct regional variants were purged and preexisting internal variants were diminished. This by no means implicated such a drastic change in the writing system as a syllabary transforming to a logography. It is therefore necessary that the principles of OC reconstruction should be applied consistently to both the excavated archaic-script writings and transmitted early Chinese textual sources. It should be maintained first of all that the *xiesheng* (shared-phonophorics) and *Shijing* (the Book of Odes) rhymes in principle converge on a single phonological system, even though the actual history of the former is most probably older than the latter. This leads us to suppose about the OC vowel system that the Rounded Vowel Hypothesis does not hold, and that excavated texts have not yielded any data suggesting otherwise. Instead, this article suggests an alternative analysis of Middle Chinese (MC) *-w- < \*-w-* which can explain the problem in the conventional OC rhyme classification concerning the Hypothesis. In the same vein, Chu and Qin writings in each case exhibit the early Chinese *xiesheng* series which had been received until that time; the regional variants thereof can complement each other as evidence for the Old Chinese phonology. When elements of dialects are found sporadically in the late archaic script, whether in Chu or Qin manuscripts, one may reasonably suspect that they reflect dialect-borrowings layered within the Old Chinese language.

#### KEYWORDS

Old Chinese, Archaic Chinese script, Logographic writing, Chu and Qin manuscripts, Old Chinese Vowel system, Old Chinese dialects

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The early Chinese writings on bamboo and wooden slips as sources of data for Old Chinese (OC) phonology date from the late fifth to the late third centuries BCE. The great majority of the texts on bamboo or wooden slips discovered so far are from the Chu 楚 state and the pre-imperial Qin 秦 state and Qin dynasty. The Qin manuscripts have been excavated mostly in Hubei province in the areas that previously had belonged to the Chu state, which then became subjugated by Qin since around 280 BCE. Qin and Chu writings are distinguished from each other by their textual contents as well as by script styles.

出土後期古文裏的上古音：  
適用構擬的幾種爭論點當中的一些問題

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提要

出土戰國簡牘文獻及文字今已成為上古音研究之重要新資料。此資料的解釋基礎於上古音構擬方法論而後者有著不少論爭點，因此對同一材料的多數研究之間結果相差頗大，這其實是對方法論的異見的表現。出土文獻的音韻研究還需要考慮到所謂先秦古文字的性質與文獻的考古發現地域以及它對古漢語方言的啓示，使得其研究課題更複雜。面對著此問題本文認為我們必須認識到：簡牘上的楚文與秦文，其中雖有較大量的異體異鈎字，也重新確定中國文字之語素文字性質。秦皇朝的“書同文”政策主要是用字及正字規定上的標準化。是按照舊秦國地域的書寫習慣，其效果是一方面除去秦以外地域的異構字，另一方面減少其地域之內已有的異體字。此事在中國文字歷史演變上並沒有引起像從音節文字到語素文字那樣本質的轉變。所以上古音構擬的基本原則應該對於出土古文與傳世文獻及文字一律得適用。其原則之一是，諧聲字系統形成的史實比詩經成書更早而兩者所反映的音系却成為一個內部一致的音系。根據此原則我們推定‘圓唇元音假設’嫌不妥當。出土文獻裏也未曾有反證的依據。本文則用一個  $MC -w- < * -w-$  的異分析來對待其假設對通行上古韻部分類的批評。而且簡牘楚文與秦文各顯示戰國時期傳承到的上古諧聲系統，其中的地域差別可以相補來當作上古音的證據。出土文獻偶爾有的方言成分，這也許是上古漢語方言之間接觸的結果，就是單一上古語言之內存在的語音及詞匯層次。

關鍵詞

上古音 古文字 語素文字 簡牘秦、楚文 上古元音 古漢語方言