Identical Variants: Examples of Different Meanings in Ancient Chinese Texts

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“同文”和“異文”似乎是矛盾，然而由於中國文字的特殊性質，一個字不但可以有不同的意思，並且也可以代表不同的詞彙。這個現象偶爾見於傳世文獻，在出土文獻上更為繁見。本文從近十幾年公布的出土文獻中舉出兩個例子來討論這個現象，然後關於所謂“閱讀習慣”提出一些看法。

“Identical” “variants” seems to be a contradiction in terms, and yet due to the nature of the Chinese writing system, not only can a single character have different meanings, but it can also represent different words. This phenomenon is readily seen in Chinese literature, but is even more common in excavated texts. In this paper, I will examine two such examples found in recently published excavated texts, and will also go on to discuss their significance with respect to what has been called “reading customs.”

All are welcome!