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1. 甲骨文是什么文字？

中国古代曾流行过用龟甲和兽骨占卜的习俗，就是把龟甲或兽骨加以烧灼，观察烧灼后形成的裂纹的形状并据以判断吉凶。在许多新石器时代晚期的遗址里，都曾发现有卜骨。80年代在河南舞阳县贾湖新石器时代遗址曾发现距今约8000年的带有契刻符号的甲骨。但人们通常所说的甲骨文是指商代（约公元前1600～约前1100年）的今人可以释读的卜骨上的契刻文字。

甲骨文代表商代的文字，距今已有3000多年的历史了，但是直到上个世纪末本世纪初才被发现并确认为是商代的文字。甲骨的最早发掘者是河南安阳县小屯村附近的农民。那里是中国古代商朝国都的遗址，农民在田地里耕作时常常掘出一些龟甲和兽骨。然而他们只是把捡拾到的甲骨作为药材卖给药店并名之曰“龙骨”。1899年，北京著名的金石学家王懿荣有一次患病，从中药店购得的药材里偶然发现龙骨上刻有“文字”。王以其深厚的古文字知识对龙骨上的文字进行了鉴定，认为是商代的文字。从此，甲骨文才为人们所知。

王懿荣死后，他所藏甲骨为刘鹗所得。刘鹗又经多方收集，到1903年已获甲骨5000余片。他从中选出1058片进行拓印，并于当年出版了第一部甲骨文著录《铁云藏龟》。第二年，著名学者孙诒让根据《铁云藏龟》撰写的《契文举例》问世。这是第一部研究甲骨文的专著。

甲骨文从发现至今已有近100年的历史了。据专家统计，近100年来从安阳小屯及其附近出土甲骨共计10万片左右。这10万片甲骨是属于商代盘庚迁殷以后从武丁到帝乙时期，前后约200多年。甲骨主要出自殷墟，但其他地方也有发现。70年代在陕西原西周遗址曾两次出土甲骨，也包括有字甲骨。这说明甲骨不是殷墟所独有，也不仅仅限于商王朝。

殷墟出土的甲骨文代表商代文字。从已出土的甲骨文中发现的字数已超过5000，其中经过考释已经能释读的有1700多个。但这5000多甲骨文字并不是甲骨文的全部，除尚未出土的之外，还有相当数量的甲骨在当时或后来被毁坏了，包括一部分被人们当做药材服用了。

甲骨文字的结构是颇为复杂的，“六书”均可在甲骨文字中找到实例。因此，从甲骨文字的数量和字的结构，可以看出甲骨文已经是相当发展和成熟的文字体系。这说明甲骨文虽然是距今有3000多年历史的古老的文字，但它还不是中国最古老的文字，距文字的源头还有着一段相当长的时间。

甲骨文也称作卜辞,因为它是用来占卜的。而当时的文字也正是依靠甲骨这种特殊的材料才得以保存下来。甲骨上的文字绝大多数是用刀刻上去的,也有少部分是写上去的。由于商代统治者十分迷信,无论做什么事都要进行占卜,所以甲骨文的内容可以说是无所不包,是商代社会生活的真实记录,对研究商代的历史和社会有着非常重要的价值。

1. What Is *Jiaguwen*?

Divination with tortoise shells and animal bones was in vogue in ancient China. When a piece of shell or bone was burnt, fortune or luck could be told by studying how it cracked. Such shells and bones have been found in many sites of the Neolithic Age. In the 1980s, 8000-year-old inscribed shells and bones were unearthed in Jiahu, Wuyang County, Henan Province, one of the Neolithic Age sites. However, the term *jiaguwen* (oracle bone inscriptions) refers to the writing of the Shang Dynasty (c.1600—c.1100 B.C.) deciphered by modern Chinese scholars.

Jiaguwen, the Shang Dynasty writing, has a history of more than three thousand years. However, it was not discovered and identified as such until the threshold of the twentieth century. The first excavators of the oracle bones were farmers near Xiaotun Village of Anyang County, Henan Province. The place is the old site of the capital of the Shang Dynasty. The villagers often found pieces of tortoise shells and animal bones while working in the fields. They collected and sold them to the pharmacy as traditional Chinese medicine called “dragon bones”. In 1899, Wang Yirong, a well-known paleographer in Beijing, was ill and bought some Chinese medicine in which he accidentally and surprisedly discovered that some “dragon bones” bore inscriptions. With his profound knowledge in paleography, he determined and established that they were the Shang Dynasty writing. Since then *jiaguwen* has become widely known.

After the death of Wang Yirong, his collection of oracle bones came into the possession of Liu E. Liu made further efforts to enlarge his collection and by 1903 he had obtained as many as over 5000 pieces. In the same year he picked out 1058 pieces from his entire collection to make rubbings, with which he published the first selection of *jiaguwen* entitled *Tie Yun Cang Gui* (*A Collection of Oracle Bones by Liu E*). The next year, Sun Yirang, a then noted scholar, completed his *Qiwen Juli* (*Decipherment of Some Inscribed Characters*), which was the result of his research work on *Tie Yun Cang*