Title:	Classification of oracle bones based on prior researches on their usages
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The contribution IRG N1346 submitted for Harbin meeting proposed as follows:

> Shuowen Jiezi (説文解字) is of little help to classify oracle bone characters for coding. It is better to classify oracle bones with their own natural classification.

The report from the old hanzi ad hoc group meeting at Harbin (IRG N1337) includes some discussion on the issue, rejecting the proposal because of the following reasons:

(a) Although it is true that there will be some oracle bone characters left unclassified with shuowen radicals, there will be unclassified oracle bones even with oracle bones' own natural classification, too. Oracle bones' own natural classification has no advantage over shuowen radicals classification.

(b) It is important to use a consistent method to classify old Chinese characters, including jinwen, Warring Kingdoms inscriptions and small seals, not just oracle bones. The most appropriate method for consistency is to use Shuowen Jiezi.

Japan believes that there were some misunderstanding, and the conclusion at the Harbin meeting was inappropriate for the issue. Detailed discussion follow:

1. The current consolidation work on oracle bone inscriptions seems to identify small details on shapes. To establish a set of oracle bone characters that is suitable for coded character set, we should eventually consider granularity, formulate the unification rule for oracle bones, and list representative glyphs for the code chart.

Ordering oracle bone inscriptions with shuowen radicals based on their graphical similarities to xiaozhuan is convenient for researchers who know Shuowen Jiezi well to look up a particular oracle bone inscriptions in a list. However, there are many cases that several oracle bone inscriptions having similar shapes to one particular xiaozhuan character have totally different meanings (so they should not be unified.)

If the unification rule was set under insufficient research on the actual usages, and the coded character set is developed based on the rule, the resulted coded character set would not facilitate users to write oracle bone texts using UCS. If we recognize such situation in a future, we can't change the unification rule later, because such change will destabilize the UCS.

Formulation of the unification rule for oracle bones should be based on the research on the usage of each oracle bone inscription.

2. With whole oracle bone sources in mind, Yinxu Jiaguwen Keci Leizuan (殷墟甲骨刻辞類纂) made some comprehensive researches on oracle bone usages, and determined identities of characters. It is the latest and largest material of that kind, published as a book. It took years to consolidate Yinxu Jiaguwen Keci Leizuan by the collective effort of oracle bone researchers in Jilin University (吉林大学), China. The author believes that Yinxu Jiaguwen Keci Leizuan is a very good reference when we need a usage-based classification of oracle bone inscriptions.

3. If IRG were to create its own classification that is consistent with known oracle bone sources independently from past researches such as this book, we would surely need at least the same expertise and time. It will be too much work for an ad hoc group under an international committee in the ISO/IEC standardization framework.

It will be a great accomplishment if the group could completes the oracle bone consolidation independently from the previous works in Yinxu Jiaguwen Keci Leizuan, based on the Shuowen radical, and consistently with known oracle bone usages. However, we need to remember that the goal of IRG old hanzi group is to establish a set of oracle bone characters suitable for coding in UCS (ISO/IEC 10646). Academic research activities themselves are not the scope of the old hanzi group nor IRG (nor any of the parent bodies.)

It is better to employ prior research results. The author believes Yinxu Jiaguwen Keci Leizuan best fits the purpose.

Based on the considerations above, the author proposes the followings to the old hanzi group again:

(a) For unification and coding purpose, the old hanzi group should follow oracle bones' own natural classification in Yinxu Jiaguwen Keci Leizuan (殷墟甲骨刻辞類纂). This is primarily because it is more suitable for a group as a part of the ISO/IEC standardization works and considerations regarding required workloads. Comparison between oracle bones' own natural classification and other classification (such as those from Shuowen Jiezi) from academic viewpoint doesn't matter.

(b) For the purpose to ensure the correspondence between oracle bones and Shuowen radicals (説文部首), it is more practical to create a list containing the information, e.g. a mapping table, as a separate deliverable from the set of oracle bone characters for coding.

(c) This paper discussed classification (unification) of oracle bone characters for coding. Ordering of the oracle bone characters in the final code chart is another issue. The oracle bone characters can be ordered in shuowen radicals, if it is needed.

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