

RGC Ref.: A-HKU701/12

(please insert ref. above)

The Research Grants Council of Hong Kong
ANR/RGC Joint Research Scheme
Completion Report

*(Please attach a copy of the completion report submitted to the ANR
by the French researcher)*

Part A: The Project and Investigator(s)

1. Project Title (ANR Acronym)

New Approaches to the Mao Era (1949-1976): Everyday History and Unofficial Memory

2. Investigator(s) and Academic Department/Units Involved

	Hong Kong Team	French Team
Name of Principal Investigator <i>(with title)</i>	Professor Frank Dikötter	Professor Sebastian Veg
Post	Chair Professor	Professor
Unit / Department / Institution	Department of History, School of Humanities, The University of Hong Kong	French Centre for Research on Contemporary China Hong Kong
Contact Information	dikotter@mac.com	veg@ehess.fr
Co-investigator(s) <i>(with title and institution)</i>	Dr Wang Aihe (retired) Dr. Zhou Xun (Left)	Professor Michel Bonnin

3. Project Duration

	Original	Revised	Date of RGC/ Institution Approval <i>(must be quoted)</i>
Project Start date	01/03/2013		
Project Completion date	29/02/2016	28/01/2017	10/03/2016
Duration <i>(in month)</i>	36	47	
Deadline for Submission of Completion Report	28/01/2018		

Part B: The Completion Report

5. Project Objectives

5.1 Objectives as per original application

1. Inventory of unofficial sources for everyday history of the Mao era

Frank Dikötter, Sebastian Veg, Michel Bonnin, Aihe Wang, Xun Zhou

Deliverable:

Sourcebook of oral history documents on the Cultural Revolution (coordinator: Xun Zhou)

2. Inventory of forms of social action in contemporary China associated with the memory of the Mao era

Jean-Philippe Béja, Michel Bonnin, Aihe Wang, Xun Zhou

Deliverables:

Edited journal issue on memory and contemporary society (Proceedings of mid-term conference (Jean-Philippe Béja, Michel Bonnin); Database of independent films dealing with the Mao era (Sebastian Veg; postdoctoral researcher hired under the project).

3. Building up a network of young and confirmed scholars through a series of workshops and conferences

Frank Dikötter, Sebastian Veg, Jean-Philippe Béja

Deliverables:

Mid-project conference to be organized in CERI, Paris (coordinator: Jean-Philippe Béja); International Wrap-up Conference on the History and Memory of the Mao era (coordinators: Frank Dikötter, Sebastian Veg)

4. Providing a new approach to the everyday history of the Mao era

Frank Dikötter, Sebastian Veg, Michel Bonnin, Xun Zhou

Deliverables:

Monograph on the Cultural Revolution (Frank Dikötter); Edited volume issue on social history of the Cultural Revolution (Final output of the project; coordinated by Frank Dikötter, Sebastian Veg)

5.2 Revised Objectives

Date of approval from the RGC: _____

Reasons for the change: _____

- 1.
- 2.
3.

6. Research Outcome

Major findings and research outcome
(maximum 1 page; please make reference to Part C where necessary)

Reevaluating Chinese society under Mao

The present project aimed to break new ground in several disciplinary areas (access to new archives; field work with hitherto undocumented citizen memory groups), but more importantly to overcome disciplinary barriers between various approaches to unofficial

history of the Mao era by bringing together historians and specialists of memory. Does memory production change the understanding of historians? Can historians convince witnesses that their narrative is objective? More precisely: what are the mechanisms by which a new historical narrative becomes more widely shared within Chinese society? The strongly interdisciplinary team therefore carried out archival research, interviews and participant observation in citizen memory associations, compiling and analysing published testimonies or investigative writings, as well as independent documentary films devoted to the subject. The exchange and discussion of results between team members highlighted the complementary nature of their approaches.

The main objective of the project was to gain an overall understanding of the various sources of unofficial memory, which allow a reassessment of the everyday history of the Mao era. The main results can be summarized in three points.

1. Reevaluation of popular memory versus elite memory: elite memory about the Cultural Revolution is alive and well, and we know much about the persecution of party cadres and elite intellectuals, but the project has highlighted the flourishing of popular memory, which has focused on how ordinary people from all walks of life (agricultural workers, former landlords or business-owners, so-called 'rightists', etc.) also became victims of state-sponsored violence and persecution.

2. Social history of the Mao era: instead of focusing on court politics and the history of party members, the research team looked at the social history of ordinary people, and has been able to document both extraordinary degrees of coercion and violence by the state, but also an extraordinary degree of resistance and subterfuge from below.

3. Evolution of the public sphere today and challenges to the CCP's monopoly of the historical narrative: crucial historical episodes like the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution have become easier to discuss in public in recent years, although the most recent trend seems to suggest a rollback of these advances.

Potential for further development of the research and the proposed course of action
(*maximum half a page*)

In total, three conferences were organised, a database produced and a string of publications were published, opening up a vast potential for further development. In particular, the French team which was more concerned with popular memory and the many ways in which the Cultural revolution is remembered, will have to continue the ever-changing politics of the People's Republic, as over the course of the project we first witnessed a relative degree of opening up rapidly followed by a clamp-down. We are now in a state where discussions about the Cultural revolution have been virtually banned. On the other hand, the HKU team was more concerned with using sources of popular memory to look at the history of the Cultural revolution in a different light. The amount of new material that has come to light, in particular from the party archives, but also from oral interviews, as well as the questions raised by the research team so far - for instance the extent of popular resistance from below and the extent to which the command economy was undermined by villagers during the final years of the Cultural Revolution - are begging for much more research. In practical terms, members of both the French team and the HKU team will continue to publish the results of their research over the next couple of years, and probably beyond.

7. The Layman’s Summary

(describe in layman’s language the nature, significance and value of the research project, in no more than 200 words)

Much of the research published on the Mao era has so far relied on official publications. In recent years, however, there has been a gradual opening of archival sources, as well as significant developments in oral history. This project has used these new sources to highlight the extent to which ordinary people also became victims of state-sponsored violence and persecution, as the Cultural Revolution was not confined to party members and elite intellectuals alone. On the other hand, while the research team was able to document the extent of coercion and violence by the state against ordinary people, it also brought to light an extraordinary degree of resistance and subterfuge from below. And finally, members of the research team were able to trace the recent changes in the ways in which crucial historical episodes like the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution have been discussed in public in the PRC in recent years.

Part C: Research Output

8. Peer-reviewed journal publication(s) arising directly from this research project

(Please attach a copy of each publication and/or the letter of acceptance if not yet submitted in the previous progress report(s). All listed publications must acknowledge RGC’s funding support by quoting the specific grant reference.)

The Latest Status of Publications				Author(s) <i>(bold the authors belonging to the project teams and denote the corresponding author with an asterisk*)</i>	Title and Journal/ Book <i>(with the volume, pages and other necessary publishing details specified)</i>	Submitted to RGC <i>(indicate the year ending of the relevant progress report)</i>	Attached to this report <i>(Yes or No)</i>	Acknowledged the support of this Joint Research Scheme <i>(Yes or No)</i>	Accessible from the institutional repository <i>(Yes or No)</i>
Year of publication	Year of Acceptance <i>(For paper accepted but not yet published)</i>	Under Review	Under Preparation <i>(optional)</i>						
(1)							yes	no	no
(2)							yes	yes	no
		(3)					no	yes	no
(4)							yes	no	no
(5)							yes	no	no
(6)							yes	yes	no
		(7)					no	yes	no
		(8)					no	yes	no

Common sense indicates that a long title with publication details cannot be listed very effectively in a table with no less than ten rows. Much as I would like to respect the format devised by the RGC, I have used instead numbers listed in the table above to refer to the following publications by members of the HKU team ONLY (for publications by members of the French team see the French report):

- (1) Dikötter, Frank, 'The Silent Revolution: Decollectivisation from Below during the Cultural Revolution', *China Quarterly*, no. 227 (September 2016), pp. 796-811.
- (2) Dikötter, Frank, *The Cultural Revolution: A People's History, 1962-1976*, London and New York: Bloomsbury, 432 pp., 2016 (cased), translations in Chinese, Korean, Brazilian Portuguese, Spanish, Polish and Dutch.
- (3) Dikötter, Frank, 'The Second Society' in Sebastian Veg (ed.), *Popular Memories of the Mao Era*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2018 (submitted and accepted by publisher).
- (4) Wang Aihe, 'Apolitical Art, Private Experience, and Alternative Subjectivity in China's Cultural Revolution', *China Perspectives*, no. 4 (April 2014), pp. 27-36.
- (5) Wang Aihe, 'From Totalitarian to Utilitarian: The Coupling of Mao's New Man and the Liberal Old Self', *Society*, no. 53 (2016), pp. 188-203.
- (6) Wang Aihe, '文革中的地下藝術:無名畫會' (Underground Culture during the Cultural Revolution: the *Wuming* Painting Group), *Ershiyi Shiji 二十一世紀*, (August 2016), pp. 99-118.
- (7) Wang Aihe, 'Visual Memory, Personal Experience, and Public History' in *Popular Memories of the Mao Era*, in Sebastian Veg (ed.), *Popular Memories of the Mao Era*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2017.
- (8) Wang Aihe, *Painting and Being: Underground Art during China's Cultural Revolution*, book manuscript completed, to be submitted.

9. Recognized international conference(s) in which paper(s) related to this research project was/were delivered (Please attach a copy of each delivered paper. All listed papers must acknowledge RGC's funding support by quoting the specific grant reference.)

Month/Year/Place	Title	Conference Name	Submitted to RGC (indicate the year ending of the relevant progress report)	Attached to this report (Yes or No)	Acknowledged the support of this Joint Research Scheme (Yes or No)	Accessible from the institutional repository (Yes or No)

No 'papers' were 'delivered' at international conferences, but talks were given, and they are listed as follows:

Frank Dikötter:

- 'Mao Zedong and the Cult of Personality', Conference on the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Cultural Revolution, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 8 January 2017.
- 'The Cultural Revolution: An Introduction', Conference on the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Cultural Revolution, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 6 January 2017.
- 'The Cultural Revolution: A People's History', Singapore Writers Festival, Singapore, 11 November 2016.
- 'The Cultural Revolution: A People's History', The Hong Kong Literary Festival, Hong Kong, 5 November 2016.

- 'The Cultural Revolution: A People's History', The China Forum, Washington, 20 October 2016.
- 'The Cultural Revolution: A People's History', University of Warsaw, Warsaw, Poland, 14 October 2016.
- 'The Cultural Revolution: A People's History', Dublin History Festival, Dublin, 24 September 2016.
- 'The Cultural Revolution: A People's History', Foreign Correspondents' Club, Shanghai, 12 September 2016.
- 'The Cultural Revolution: A People's History', Edinburgh International Book Festival, Edinburgh, 17 August 2016.
- 'The Cultural Revolution: A People's History', Asia Society, Hong Kong, 29 June 2016.
- 'The Cultural Revolution: A People's History', Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris, 6 June 2015.
- 'The Cultural Revolution: A People's History', Bristol Festival of Ideas, Bristol, 28 May 2016.
- 'The Cultural Revolution: A People's History', Oxford University, Oxford, 9 May 2016.
- 'The Cultural Revolution: A People's History', London School of Economics, London, 5 May 2016.
- 'The Cultural Revolution: A People's History', Asia House, London, 5 May 2016.
- 'The Cultural Revolution: A People's History', Princeton University, Princeton, 28 April 2016.
- 'The Cultural Revolution: A People's History', Harvard University, Cambridge, 26 April 2016.
- 'The Cultural Revolution: A People's History', The Cato Institute, Washington, 25 April 2016.
- 'The Cultural Revolution: A People's History', The Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Palo Alto, 31 March 2016.
- 'The Silent Revolution', Keynote Speech, Conference on the Cultural Revolution, Fudan University, Shanghai, 9 January 2015.
- 'The Silent Revolution', Conference on the Long 1970s, London School of Economics, 18 December 2014.
- 'The Silent Revolution', Conference on the Cultural Revolution, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris, 16 December 2014.

Wang Aihe:

- 'Archaeology of the Image: Visual Memory, Personal Experience, and Public History', Everyday Life during the Cultural Revolution, 1966-1976, workshop within the framework of an ANR-RGC collaborative project entitled New Approaches to the Mao Era (CEFC-HKU), Hong Kong, 26-27 November 2015.
- 'Apolitical Art, Private Experience, and Alternative Subjectivity in China's Cultural Revolution', Popular Memory of the Mao Era and its Impact on History, an ANR-RGC collaborative project entitled New Approaches to the Mao Era (CEFC-HKU), Paris, 15-16 December 2014.
- 'Private Art during China's Cultural Revolution', Hong Kong Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences, Interdisciplinary Lunchtime Seminar, the University of Hong Kong, 4 November 2014.
- 'Underground Art during Mao's Cultural Revolution', School of Chinese, the University of Hong Kong, 1 November 2013.

10. Student(s) trained *(Please attach a copy of the title page of the thesis.)*

Name	Degree registered for	Date of registration	Date of thesis submission/ graduation

11. Other impact *(e.g. award of patents or prizes, collaboration with other research institutions, technology transfer, etc.)*

Frank Dikötter's monograph entitled *The Cultural Revolution: A People's History* was specifically mentioned in the citation by Leiden University on the conferment of an honorary doctorate to him in February 2017.