

RGC Ref. No.: UGC/FDS14/H06/17 <hr/> (please insert ref. above)

**RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL
COMPETITIVE RESEARCH FUNDING SCHEMES FOR
THE LOCAL SELF-FINANCING DEGREE SECTOR**

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (FDS)

Completion Report
(for completed projects only)

<p><u>Submission Deadlines:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Auditor's report with unspent balance, if any: within six months of the approved project completion date. 2. Completion report: within 12 months of the approved project completion date.
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Part A: The Project and Investigator(s)

1. Project Title

Literary Movement and Political Instrument: Yuan Zhen's Transformation of Imperial Documents

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

Research Team	Name / Post	Unit / Department / Institution
Principal Investigator	Dr Tan Mei Ah/Associate Professor	Chinese/The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong
Co-Investigator(s)		
Others		

3. Project Duration

	Original	Revised	Date of RGC / Institution Approval <i>(must be quoted)</i>
Project Start Date	1 st January 2018	NA	NA
Project Completion Date	31 st December 2020	31 st December 2021	31 st May 2021
Duration <i>(in month)</i>	36	48	31 st May 2021
Deadline for Submission of Completion Report	31 st December 2021	31 st December 2022	31 st May 2021

Part B: The Final Report

5. Project Objectives

5.1 Objectives as per original application

1. To examine the innovations of Yuan's imperial announcements and proclamations
2. To analyze the effect of the political and social situations on these writings
3. To explain how Yuan managed to maximize the usefulness of imperial documents
4. To analyze the relation of Yuan's writings to the intellectual movements of the time, in particular the promotion of ancient-style prose
5. To discuss the effects of Yuan's writings

5.2 Revised objectives

Date of approval from the RGC: NA

Reasons for the change: NA

5.3 Realisation of the objectives

(Maximum 1 page; please state how and to what extent the project objectives have been achieved; give reasons for under-achievements and outline attempts to overcome problems, if any)

All the project objectives have been achieved. This project aims to produce a book manuscript on Yuan Zhen's 元稹 (779–831) imperial announcements and proclamations. The manuscript is completed and was submitted to a well-known publisher in the field. A preliminary contract was given (appendix I) and a reviewer's report has been received recently with suggestions for revision (appendix II). The revised manuscript will be submitted to another renowned academic publisher who has expressed interest in seeing a proposal (appendix III). The completed manuscript in its current form contains ten chapters. The first chapter, "Prelude," explains the significance of Yuan Zhen's imperial documents in literary and political history, giving a full picture of how the book is structured and how the real nature of these works and their innovations will be addressed. The second chapter, "Yuan Zhen as a Poet-Official," details Yuan's life and his career path, focusing on less-discussed aspects that were key to the development of his personality, political beliefs, and literary practice; it also analyzes how they affected his composition of imperial documents. These two chapters lay the foundation for the other chapters that directly address the objectives of the project. The third chapter, "Survey of

Imperial Documents,” describes the genre characteristics of imperial documents. This chapter shows the standard practice of writing and its essential role in governance. It lays out the background against which Yuan made his innovation, thus contributing to objectives #1 and #3–5. The fourth chapter, “A Confucian Roadmap for Rule,” explains the rhetoric Yuan employed for promoting Confucian ideas as a means of governance. It addresses objective #1–4. The fifth chapter, “The Politics of Language,” examines the use of imperial documents as a political instrument to uphold the authority of the state and to maintain the status quo with military governors. This chapter addresses objectives #1–3, and #5. The sixth chapter, “A Struggle for Power,” discusses the use of these documents in power struggles and the effects such use had on the political situation, thus addressing #1–3, and #5. The seventh chapter, “The Personal in the Political,” analyzes how Yuan’s imperial documents could have been influenced by his personal sentiments, which also led Yuan to abuse his power and use imperial documents as a tool to attack his opponents. It also discusses the effects of his writing in the political arena. The chapter addresses #1–3, and #5. The eighth chapter, “Revolution of a Genre,” analyzes Yuan’s innovation in terms of literary form and his use of political rhetoric, which addresses all the objectives. The ninth chapter, “Yuan Zhen and the Literary Movement,” discusses the effects of Yuan’s imperial documents on the promotion of ancient-style prose, which addresses #1, #4, and #5. The tenth chapter, “Epilogue,” discusses Yuan’s ambition and contributions, and sums up the significance of his imperial documents and of the present study.

5.4 Summary of objectives addressed to date

Objectives <i>(as per 5.1/5.2 above)</i>	Addressed <i>(please tick)</i>	Percentage Achieved <i>(please estimate)</i>
1. To examine the innovations of Yuan’s imperial announcements and proclamations	✓	100%
2. To analyze the effect of the political and social situations on these writings	✓	100%
3. To explain how Yuan managed to maximize the usefulness of imperial documents	✓	100%
4. To analyze the relation of Yuan's writings to the intellectual movements of the time, in particular the promotion of ancient-style prose	✓	100%
5. To discuss the effects of Yuan’s writings	✓	100%

6. Research Outcome

6.1 Major findings and research outcome

(Maximum 1 page; please make reference to Part C where necessary)

This study reveals that the innovations of Yuan's imperial documents mostly concerned politics rather than literature, and that his writing was not as truthful as he claimed. Its philological and social-historical approach shows that rhetoric played an essential role in these documents. The major research outcome is a complete manuscript of 362 pages, double-spaced.

6.2 Potential for further development of the research and the proposed course of action

(Maximum half a page)

The manuscript is undergoing revision after receipt of the reviewer's report. A new proposal will be sent to a renowned academic publisher which has expressed interest in seeing a proposal. In response to the reviewer's recommendation to centralize the arguments on one particular domain, Chapter Nine may be taken out and developed into a separate article. The title of the book manuscript will also be revised to "Rhetoric as a Political Instrument: Yuan Zhen's Imperial Documents."

7. Layman's Summary

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

This project is the first comprehensive analysis of Yuan Zhen's 元稹 (779–831) imperial documents. It surveys their nature, Yuan's reinvention of the genre, and his use of rhetoric as a political instrument and literary movement. The contents cover various aspects of mid-Tang politics and literature, and complement the scholarship on Tang political and literary history. Since Yuan was Bai Juyi's companion and the initiator of many literary innovations, a study of his imperial documents, which were highly praised in official histories but have been neglected in modern scholarship, enriches our understanding of mid-Tang China.

Part C: Research Output**8. Peer-Reviewed Journal Publication(s) Arising Directly From This Research Project**

(Please attach a copy of the 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) (denote the corresponding author with an asterisk*)	Title and Journal / Book (with the volume, pages and other necessary publishing details specified)	Submitted to RGC (indicate the year ending of the relevant progress report)	Attached to this Report (Yes or No)	Acknowledged the Support of RGC (Yes or No)	Accessible from the Institutional Repository (Yes or No)
Year of Publication	Year of Acceptance (For paper accepted but not yet published)	Under Review	Under Preparation (optional)						
			Reviewer's report received and a new proposal to be submitted to another renowned publisher	Dr Mei Ah Tan	Rhetoric as a Political Instrument: Yuan Zhen's Imperial Documents	NA	Yes (appendices II and III)	Yes	NA

9. Recognized International Conference(s) In Which Paper(s) Related To This Research Project Was / Were Delivered

(Please attach a copy of each conference abstract)

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 RGC (Yes or No)	Accessible from the Institutional Repository (Yes or No)
August 2021	Confucianism for State Governance in the Mid-Tang: A Study of Yuan Zhen's Imperial Documents	The 23rd Biennial Conference of the European Association for Chinese Studies	NA	Yes (abstract and ppt; appendices IV and V)	Yes (acknowledged both in the ppt and in the oral presentation)	Yes. https://researchdb.hsu.edu.hk/view/publication/202100349

10. Whether Research Experience And New Knowledge Has Been Transferred / Has Contributed To Teaching And Learning

(Please elaborate)

This research takes a philological and socio-historical approach to examine the influential genre of imperial documents in medieval China. The research experience has contributed to my teaching at HSUHK. Philology concerns the study of the language, which is a fundamental element in the study of literature. This contributes in particular to my teaching of CHI 2002 “Practical Chinese Grammar” and CHI 5000 “Thesis.” The socio-historical approach concerns the study of history and culture, which is beneficial to my teaching of CHI 1005 “Introduction to Chinese Culture” (for native Chinese speakers) and CHN 1008 “Introduction to Chinese Culture” (taught in English for non-Chinese speakers). The research experience takes into reference Sinological research output and this also contributes to my design and teaching of two new modules that concern Sinology, including CHI 3016, “Sinological Studies Overseas” at the bachelor’s level and CHI 6003, “Essentials of Sinology” at the master’s level.

11. Student(s) Trained

(Please attach a copy of the title page of the thesis)

*Please refer to appendix VI

Name	Degree Registered for	Date of Registration	Date of Thesis Submission / Graduation
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
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12. Other Impact

(e.g. award of patents or prizes, collaboration with other research institutions, technology transfer, teaching enhancement, etc.)

This research experience that relates closely to Sinological studies has contributed to the design and development of the HSUHK master's programme in Chinese, for which I have assumed the post of Programme Director. One of the unique features of the MA-CHI programme is its inclusion of Sinological studies. This new master's programme has been offered since September 2022. I participated in the programme design and have also taken up teaching duties in the relevant module.

13. Statistics on Research Outputs

	Peer-reviewed Journal Publications	Conference Papers	Scholarly Books, Monographs and Chapters	Patents Awarded	Other Research Outputs (please specify)	
No. of outputs arising directly from this research project	NA	One	One scholarly book manuscript under revision	NA	Type	No.
					NA	NA

14. Public Access Of Completion Report

(Please specify the information, if any, that cannot be provided for public access and give the reasons.)

Information that Cannot Be Provided for Public Access	Reasons
5.3 and Part 6, and the appendices	They contain personal correspondence or not-yet-published research findings.