

RGC Ref. No.:
UGC/FDS14/H06/19
(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)

Submission Deadlines:

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.

Part A: The Project and Investigator(s)

1. Project Title

Yuan Zhen's New Music Bureau Poetry as Memorial to the Throne: Music and Ritual as Means of Governance 以詩為疏：元稹新樂府詩禮樂教化闡微

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	Department of Chinese / The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong
Co-Investigator(s)	NA	NA
Others	NA	NA

3. Project Duration

	Original	Revised	Date of RGC / Institution Approval (must be quoted)
Project Start Date	1 st January 2020	NA	NA
Project Completion Date	31 st December 2022	31 st December 2023	15 th May 2023 (Approved by RGC)
Duration (in month)	36	48	15 th May 2023 (Approved by RGC)

Deadline for Submission of Completion Report	31 st December 2023	31 st December 2024	15 th May 2023 (Approved by RGC)
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4.4 Please attach photo(s) of acknowledgement of RGC-funded facilities / equipment.

NA

Part B: The Final Report

5. Project Objectives

5.1 Objectives as per original application

1. To reveal the advice on administration ultimately proposed in each poem, and how that is related to Yuan's central idea of using music and ritual as a means of governance;
2. To examine the innovations of Yuan's New Music Bureau poems, highlighting their function as memorials to the throne;
3. To investigate the poems' relation to the literary trends and the political and intellectual atmosphere of the mid-Tang.

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 three project objectives have been fully achieved. This project aimed at producing the first comprehensive and in-depth study of Yuan Zhen's 元稹 (779–831) New Music Bureau poetry. It proposes new findings, arguing that there is a central idea of music and ritual that connects the seemingly unrelated twelve poems, that the poet used these poems as a form of memorial, and that the genre characteristics of Yuan's poems are significantly different from those of Bai Juyi. It then evaluates whether the characterization "New Music Bureau Movement" is warranted. I have obtained a contract from Routledge and the manuscript is approximately 90,000 words.

The manuscript contains nine chapters. The first chapter explains the significance of the research, providing an overview of how this manuscript builds on existing scholarship and fits into the larger context of Tang studies. It lays the foundation for the other chapters that directly address the objectives of the project.

The second chapter analyzes the literary background that gave rise to the emergence of New Music Bureau poetry, tracing the development of its poetic predecessors and analyzing how it

culminated into its eventual form. It then discusses political and social elements that propelled the poets to create this new form of poetry and highlights Yuan's spirit of innovation. This chapter contributes to objective #3.

The third chapter surveys music and ritual as means of governance, highlighting the transforming power of music and ritual; the social and political background that brought Xianzong's attention to them; and literati perceptions of this issue. It contributes to objectives #1 and #3.

Chapters 4 through 8 present detailed analyses of Yuan's twelve New Music Bureau poems, which are classified into three major types: those on music, on ritual, and on benevolence. In examining the content and style of these poems, a comparative approach is adopted to analyze how Yuan's poems differ from those of Bai. The aim of the comparison is to highlight the main features of Yuan's works. These chapters contribute to objectives #1 & #2.

Chapter 9 summarizes the significant findings of this manuscript. In particular, it takes issue with the term "New Music Bureau Movement," arguing that Yuan and Bai's composition of New Music Bureau poetry is better understood as an experiment rather than a movement. It explicates the mechanism of Yuan's New Music Bureau poetry and discusses how Yuan used these poems as a type of memorial. Bai, however, adhered more closely to indirect social criticism in his New Music Bureau poetry. Finally, it evaluates the long-term influence of this literary experiment. This concluding chapter contributes to all three objectives.

5.4 Summary of objectives addressed to date

Objectives (as per 5.1/5.2 above)	Addressed (please tick)	Percentage Achieved (please estimate)
1. To reveal the advice on administration ultimately proposed in each poem, and how that is related to Yuan's central idea of using music and ritual as a means of governance.	✓	100%
2. To examine the innovations of Yuan's New Music Bureau poems, highlighting their function as memorials to the throne.	✓	100%
3. To investigate the poems' relation to the literary trends and the political and intellectual atmosphere of the mid-Tang.	✓	100%

6. Research Outcome

6.1 Major findings and research outcome

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

This research has several new findings. It argues that there is a central thread of music and ritual running throughout Yuan Zhen's New Music Bureau poems, and that he used these poems as memorial to present his political advice to the emperor and the ministers. It also proposes that the term "New Music Bureau Movement" is a misnomer, for Yuan's poems differ significantly from those of Bai. Lastly, it evaluates the long-term influence of this literary experiment both within and beyond China. The findings have materialized into one manuscript, one book chapter, and a paper presentation in a Research Retreat.

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

(Maximum half a page)

This research presents new findings on the distinctive features of Yuan Zhen's New Music Bureau poems, which make these poems stand out in comparison to his other Music Bureau poems with old titles that are also considered "New Music Bureau poetry" in Guo Maoqian's 郭茂倩 (fl. 1084) *Yuefu shiji* 樂府詩集 (Collection of Music Bureau Poetry), the most influential collection of Music Bureau poetry compiled in the Song dynasty. Exploring the main features of Yuan's Ancient Music Bureau poems, which differ significantly from the twelve New Music Bureau poems examined in this project, has great potential to expand our understanding of Yuan Zhen as a literary figure, of this important poetic genre, and of literary experimentation in the Tang. In fact, a new FDS proposal, "Diversity and Innovation: A Close Reading of Yuan Zhen's Ancient Music Bureau Poetry" (UGC/FDS14/H07/24), was submitted to the RGC early this year and has been approved. This new project aims to identify the important distinguishing characteristics of Yuan's Ancient Music Bureau Poems, examine their similarities with and differences from those of his precursors and contemporaries, and compare the relative strengths and weaknesses of close reading and contextual analysis in literary appreciation, thus providing a lens to examine the nature and development of the genre during the mid-Tang.

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 and in-depth analysis of Yuan Zhen's 元稹 (779–831) New Music Bureau poems. These works have major historical, cultural, and literary value, but have largely been overshadowed by those of Bai Juyi's 白居易 (772–846). While Bai's poems are celebrated for his simple and direct style, those of Yuan are criticized for being abstruse and overloaded with historical and literary allusions. This research proposes several new findings. It argues that Yuan's twelve New Music Bureau poems form an organic whole held together by the elements of music and ritual, and supported by the underlying value of benevolence. It examines how he made use of the genre to memorialize the throne on governance. It further investigates the distinctive features that set his poems apart from those of Bai, thus challenging the term "New Music Bureau Movement" in literary history. Ultimately, this study reveals Yuan's role in the revival of Confucianism, highlights his belief in the significance of music and rites in cultivating an orderly society, and sheds light on the New Music Bureau experiment in mid-Tang and its impacts.

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)						
2025				Mei Ah Tan	“New Yuefu Poems: Bai Juyi and Yuan Zhen,” in Victor Mair and Zhenjun Zhang, eds. <i>Routledge Handbook of Traditional Chinese Literature</i>	June 2023	N	Y	NA
	2023		Under revision	Mei Ah Tan	Yuan Zhen's <i>New Music Bureau Poetry: Music and Ritual as Means of Governance</i>	N	N	Y	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)
	NA (a paper was presented at a research seminar, mentioned in “Other Impact.”)					

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

The research experience has contributed to the teaching and learning of Chinese literature, culture, and history. Music Bureau poetry is a significant poetic genre often introduced by modern anthologies of Chinese literature immediately after the two crucial sources of Chinese literature: the *Songs* and *The Elegies of Chu*. This poetic genre has been highly celebrated for its social criticism, which demonstrates how poetry could act as a means to observe the quality and effectiveness of rule. The New Music Bureau poems present a new height of experimentation with this genre, and they are often introduced in literature classes under the heading of “New Music Bureau Movement.”

This research entails literary appreciation and exposition of the Confucian ideas of music and ritual; it also provides plentiful information on various aspects of pre-Tang and Tang China. The literary, cultural, and historical elements have informed my teaching at HSUHK, including CHI 1005 “Introduction to Chinese Culture” (for native Chinese speakers), CHN 1008 “Introduction to Chinese Culture” (taught in English for non-Chinese speakers), CHI 3016 “Sinological Studies Overseas” at the bachelor’s level, and CHI 6003 “Essentials of Sinology” at the master’s level. The research experience, especially the use of a philological approach, also enhanced my teaching of CHI 2002 “Practical Chinese Grammar,” whereas the philological and social-historical approaches strengthen my supervision of final-year theses (CHI 5000 “Thesis”) and my teaching of research methods in Sinology.

This research has generated a book chapter “New Yuefu Poems: Bai Juyi and Yuan Zhen” that is included in Victor Mair and Zhenjun Zhang, eds. *Routledge Handbook of Traditional Chinese Literature* (forthcoming in early 2025). This handbook will likely serve as a textbook or a reference book and is aimed especially at English readers; the new knowledge has thus been transferred into teaching materials.

The academic manuscript can also serve as a reference book, especially for Chinese literature, including lower-division survey classes and upper-division classes on Tang poetry. In order to ensure the accessibility of the manuscript, it will be published open access.

To reach out to the general public, I have also composed a newspaper article on the appreciation of New Music Bureau poetry, scheduled to be published by *Sing Tao* on the 2nd of January 2025 for “The Third Chinese Quiz Competition for Bilingual Elites in Hong Kong 第三屆全港華文雙語菁英問答比賽 that is organized by Sing Tao News Corporation Limited with the support of the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR).

11. Student(s) Trained
(Please attach a copy of the title page of the thesis)

Please refer to Appendix I for students trained.

Name	Degree Registered for	Date of Registration	Date of Thesis Submission / Graduation
	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Chinese	2019	May 2021
	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Chinese	2017	May 2021

	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Chinese	2019	May 2021
	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Chinese	2019	May 2021
	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Chinese	2019	May 2021
	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Chinese	2017	May 2021
	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Chinese	2020	May 2022
	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Chinese	2018	May 2022
	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Chinese	2018	May 2022
	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Chinese	2020	May 2022
	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Chinese	2020	May 2022
	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Chinese	2020	May 2022
	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Chinese	2019	May 2023
	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Chinese	2021	May 2023
	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Chinese	2019	May 2023
	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Chinese	2021	May 2023
	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Chinese	2019	May 2023
	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Chinese	2019	May 2023
	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Chinese	2019	May 2023
	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Chinese	2021	May 2023
	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Chinese	2022	May 2024
	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Chinese	2020	May 2024
	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Chinese	2022	May 2024
	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Chinese	2022	May 2024
	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Chinese	2020	May 2024

12. Other Impact

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

This research explores the central concepts of music and ritual as means of governance. Music and ritual are essential components of traditional Chinese culture, and they still play a role in modern society. Music and ritual are particularly noteworthy in how they constitute a form of cultural identity, and their study sheds light on the critical function the two have fulfilled over centuries in strengthening cultural power, which in turn also has an impact on state power. The research experience has enhanced my teaching of various subjects that cover Chinese culture, literature, and Sinology. For example, I have provided guidance on a final-year thesis that analyzes the unclear cultural boundary that defines “frontier poetry,” especially when foreign customs and fashions could be seen not just along the border but also in the central plain. This is an example of how cultural studies and literature are related.

My research on this topic has inspired me to investigate what constitutes cultural identity, and it generated a paper, “Music as a Form of Cultural Identity in the Chinese Tradition” that was presented in the Research Seminar for SHSS Research Retreat, HSUHK, 2023 (Appendix II) for intellectual exchange with colleagues and external guests from academic circles. The paper contributes to the research development of the School of Humanities and Social Science for “Identity Studies Research Cluster.”

Philological and contextual approaches, as well as the use of international research output on Chinese studies, have also contributed to the development of the master’s degree programme in Chinese at HSUHK, 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 overseas in the core curriculum. New Music Bureau poetry is a fine example to illustrate how the close reading of New Criticism that assumes a place of importance in Sinological studies may not be the most effective way of appreciating this type of genre that is related closely to the social and historical background from which it arose.

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	NA	2	NA	Type	No.
					Presentation at a research seminar	1

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
NA	NA