

RGC Ref. No.:  
UGC/FDS14/H20/19  
(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**

Prabhākaramitra's Buddhist Translation Team

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

Research Team	Name / Post	Unit / Department / Institution
Principal Investigator	Dr SIU Sai Yau / Assistant Professor	School of Translation and Foreign Languages/ The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong
Co-Investigator(s)	Dr SIU Sai Cheong / Associate Professor	School of Translation and Foreign Languages/ The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong
Others		

**3. Project Duration**

	Original	Revised	Date of RGC / Institution Approval (must be quoted)
Project Start Date	1 January 2020	-	N/A
Project Completion Date	31 December 2022	31 December 2023	Approved by RGC on 22 May 2023
Duration (in month)	36 months	48 months	

Deadline for Submission of Completion Report	31 December 2023	31 December 2024	
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4.3 Please attach photo(s) of acknowledgement of RGC-funded facilities / equipment.

N/A

### **Part B: The Final Report**

#### **5. Project Objectives**

5.1 Objectives as per original application

1. Exploring the organization of Prabhākaramitra's Buddhist translation team;
2. Investigating the translation strategies adopted by Prabhākaramitra's team with the Buddhist scriptures rendered by the team;
3. Discussing the team's role in the development of Buddhist translation teams in medieval China; and
4. Developing an online full-text searchable corpus (Sanskrit-Chinese) of the Buddhist texts translated by Prabhākaramitra, which will serve as a digital knowledge base of the Buddhist translation activities in medieval China, to assist people to develop a better understanding of Chinese literature, history, and philosophy.

5.2 Revised objectives

Date of approval from the RGC: N/A

Reasons for the change: N/A

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 four project objectives have been fully achieved. The details are as follows:

#### **Objective 1: Exploring the organization of Prabhākaramitra's Buddhist translation team**

A detailed analysis was conducted on team organization, covering: (1) the initiation of the translation project, (2) organizational and management structure, and (3) operational procedures. Using research frameworks developed by Andrew Chesterman, we investigated the determining factors in team establishment, including Prabhākaramitra's commitment to disseminating Mahāyāna Buddhism, support from King Gaoping for travel from Western Regions to Chang'an, and patronage from Emperor Taizong. This

revealed how social networks and intercultural communication influenced team formation and operations.

### **Objective 2: Investigating the translation strategies adopted by Prabhākaramitra's team**

Through examination of Buddhist records from the CBETA Chinese Electronic Tripitaka Collection, including the *Continuous Biographies of Eminent Monks* and various translation records, we identified the team's core translation principles: (1) uncovering profound teachings through systematic textual analysis, (2) preserving original fidelity using plain prose, and (3) maintaining detailed and systematic collaborative translation through clear division of labor (see Section 6.1 for details of translation strategies). Comparative study with Kumārajīva's translations of *Mūlamadhyamakārikā* revealed distinct methodological differences in approaches to Buddhist text translation.

### **Objective 3: Discussing the team's role in Buddhist translation teams' development**

We completed a comprehensive analysis of team-based translation evolution from the Eastern Han to the Tang Dynasty, identifying three distinct categories: small-scale, large-scale, and elite translation teams. The research demonstrated that Prabhākaramitra pioneered elite translation teams by successfully integrating traditional practices with innovative approaches under Emperor Taizong's patronage. This groundbreaking model significantly influenced the emergence of Xuanzang's translation team and subsequent generations of translation organizations in the Tang Dynasty. These findings have been published in two monographs: *The Evolution of Team-Based Buddhist Scripture Translation in Tang China: United in Dharma* (Springer) and *A History of Collaborative Buddhist Scripture Translation in Medieval China* (Chung Hwa Book Co.).

### **Objective 4: Developing an online full-text searchable corpus**

We successfully developed the online historical database and digital corpus of Buddhist scriptures. These digital resources are accessible through an innovative, centralized web-based knowledge hub that integrates specialized research tools with advanced AI techniques for Buddhist textual analysis and Sanskrit-Chinese term mapping. This integrated platform has enhanced the accessibility and efficiency of studying Prabhākaramitra's translation history.

#### 5.4 Summary of objectives addressed to date

<b>Objectives</b> (as per 5.1/5.2 above)	<b>Addressed</b> (please tick)	<b>Percentage Achieved</b> (please estimate)
1. Exploring the organization of Prabhākaramitra's Buddhist translation team	✓	100%
2. Investigating the translation strategies adopted by Prabhākaramitra's team with the Buddhist scriptures rendered by the team	✓	100%
3. Discussing the team's role in the development	✓	100%

of Buddhist translation teams in medieval China		
4. Developing an online full-text searchable corpus (Sanskrit-Chinese) of the Buddhist texts translated by Prabhākaramitra	✓	100%

## 6. Research Outcome

### 6.1 Major findings and research outcome

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

The key findings of this project are detailed in our monographs *The Evolution of Team-Based Buddhist Scripture Translation in Tang China: United in Dharma* and *A History of Collaborative Buddhist Scripture Translation in Medieval China* (see Part C), along with other research outputs and project websites.

Our research demonstrates Prabhākaramitra's pivotal role in establishing the first elite translation team model in Tang China. Through systematic analysis of the CBETA Chinese Electronic Tripitaka Collection, particularly the *Continuous Biographies of Eminent Monks* and original prefaces, we trace three groundbreaking translation projects of his team at the Daxingshan Monastery and Shengguang Monastery between 629 and 633.

The organizational analysis explores three successive projects of Prabhākaramitra and discusses their significance in the emergence of elite collaborative Buddhist translation in late medieval China: Project 1 (the *Ratnaketuparivarta*) introduced rigorous personnel selection through the “Eight Preconditions” (*babei* 八備) and “Ten Branches” (*shike* 十科), culminating in an elite team of 19 translators; Project 2 (the *Mūlamadhyamakārikā*) established direct imperial oversight through senior court officials like Fang Xuanling; and Project 3 (the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*) consolidated the specialized division of translation roles and responsibilities.

Our analysis of Prabhākaramitra's translation strategies reveals a sophisticated methodological framework characterized by specialized roles: Huicheng and his collaborators conducted verification of meanings (*zhengyi* 證義), Xuanmo and his collaborators managed language translation (*yiyu* 譯語), while Huiming, Falin, and other translation experts handled text composition (*zhuiwen* 繕文). This systematic process integrated face-to-face translation (*xiangdui fanyi* 相對翻譯) with thorough review procedures, enhanced by “supervising translation” (*jianyi* 監譯) under court officials like Xiao Jing. Such a collaborative method represented a significant departure from the earlier stages of Buddhist scripture translation in China, where translation work was typically conducted by individual monks or smaller, less structured teams.

Significantly, Xuanzang built upon and enhanced Prabhākaramitra's innovative framework, introducing more specialized roles based on translators' expertise and maintaining a more substantial personal involvement in the translation process due to his exceptional bilingual proficiency. This evolutionary progression, from Prabhākaramitra's initial systematic approach to Xuanzang's refined methodology in Chang'an, established the foundation for the formalized imperial translation system in Tang China.

To provide a comprehensive overview of Prabhākaramitra's translation projects and their innovations, we present the comparative analysis in the following table:

	First Translation Project	Second Translation Project	Third Translation Project
Text	<i>Ratnaketuparivarta</i> (寶星陀羅尼經)	<i>Mūlamadhyamakārikā</i> (般若燈論釋)	<i>Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra</i> (大乘莊嚴經論)
Period	629–630	630–632 (Zhenguan,	632–633 (Zhenguan,

	(Zhenguan, 3rd–4th year)	4th–6th year)	6th–7th year)
Location	Daxingshan Monastery (大興善寺)	Shengguang Monastery (勝光寺)	Shengguang Monastery (勝光寺)
Main contributors	Prabhākaramitra (chief), Huicheng, Xuanmo, Huiming, Falin	Prabhākaramitra (chief), Huicheng, Huilang, Fachang, Tanzang, Zhishou, Huiming, Daoyue, Sengbian, Sengzhen, Zhijie, Wenshun, Falin, Lingjia, Huizi, Huijing, Xuanmo, Sengjia, Gupta	Prabhākaramitra (chief), same team as the second project with the addition of Li Baiyao for documentation
Translation process	Face-to-face translation, verification of meanings by Huicheng and others, manuscript composition by Huiming and others, meticulous text review	Emphasis on proofreading and editing, supervised translation by court officials, reduction in team size for focused quality	In-depth study and translation, collation of text by Huijing, interpretation of regional dialects by Xuanmo, oversight by court officials
Output	10 volumes, 13 chapters (63,882 words)	Commentary included with verification system	13 volumes, 24 chapters
Innovation	Introduction of face-to-face translation, comprehensive review, and refinement of text	Core strategy of thorough examination of text and preservation of essence, continued emphasis on proofreading and editing	First appearance of “collating the text” ( <i>Zhuiwen</i> 繕文), refining the translated text as part of the process
Oversight	Imperial support garnered, with no specific officials mentioned in this project	Supervising translation by Fang Xuanling, Du Zhenglun, and Li Xiaogong, continuous support by Xiao Jing	Supervising editing and collation by Xiao Jing, oversight of translation by Fang Xuanling and Du Zhenglun

To facilitate broader access to these findings, we have also developed a comprehensive online portal featuring a full-text searchable Sanskrit-Chinese corpus of Prabhākaramitra’s translations. This digital platform includes interactive visualization tools for analyzing translation team networks, methodologies, and term mappings, serving as a valuable resource for researchers studying Chinese literature, history, and philosophy.

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

This research on the Buddhist translation team in Early Tang China, with particular focus on Prabhākaramitra’s pioneering elite model, opens up several promising directions for further investigation. Building on our current findings about elite translation teams, we

propose expanding our research scope to examine both collaborative and independent translation practices throughout medieval China. This would include investigating previously unexplored translation teams and applying Chesterman's causal model to analyze the historical and cultural factors influencing translation activities.

A key development would be the creation of the "Buddhist Translation Nexus", a comprehensive digital platform integrating historical materials with modern analytical tools. This platform would feature interactive visualization capabilities for mapping translator networks, full-text search functionality for historical documents, and sophisticated annotation tools. Through this digital infrastructure, we aim to facilitate deeper analysis of translation team structures and methodologies across different periods, from the Tang Dynasty through the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing periods.

Furthermore, we plan to strengthen our theoretical framework by incorporating norm theory from Translation Studies and actor-network theory for analyzing text dissemination processes. This integration of contemporary theoretical approaches with historical research would provide new insights into medieval translation practices. This follow-up investigation will explore understudied aspects of Buddhist scripture translation, examining the relationship between translation strategies and organizational structures, the contributions of independent translators such as An Shigao, and the evolution of translation practices beyond the Tang Dynasty.

## 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 research project examines the collaborative translation practices of Buddhist scriptures in medieval China, with a focus on Prabhākaramitra's groundbreaking translation team during the early Tang Dynasty. Through a combination of traditional historical research methods and digital humanities approaches, we explored how Prabhākaramitra established the first elite translation team model and developed systematic procedures for translating complex Buddhist texts from Sanskrit into Chinese. This study underscores his innovative organizational structure, which significantly influenced Xuanzang and subsequent translation teams.

The findings have been disseminated through two scholarly books and multiple academic platforms. To support the research, we developed digital tools that analyze Prabhākaramitra's translation techniques and team management strategies, offering valuable insights into historical translation practices. These tools and findings have also been integrated into university courses and public lectures, enabling students, researchers, and the general public to engage with historical translation research in more accessible and interactive ways.

This project's importance lies in its dual contributions to historical understanding and contemporary Translation Studies. It highlights how Prabhākaramitra's collaborative methods established a foundation for systematic Buddhist translation in China, while also providing lessons applicable to modern translation practices. Moreover, the research demonstrates the value of merging traditional scholarship with digital technologies, offering fresh perspectives on cultural interaction and intellectual exchange in medieval Asia.

## 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)						
2024				SIU Sai Yau	The Evolution of Team-Based Buddhist Scripture Translation in Tang China: United in Dharma (SpringerBriefs in Religious Studies). Singapore: Springer. 80 pages.	No	Yes Attachment I	Yes Appendix I	Yes <a href="https://researchdb.hsu.edu.hk/view/publication/202400073">https://researchdb.hsu.edu.hk/view/publication/202400073</a>
2024				SIU Sai Yau	《中古中國佛經協作翻譯史》(A History of Collaborative Buddhist Scripture Translation in Medieval China). Hong Kong: Chung Hwa Book Company. 218 pages.	No	Yes Attachment II	Yes Appendix I	Yes <a href="https://researchdb.hsu.edu.hk/view/publication/202200125">https://researchdb.hsu.edu.hk/view/publication/202200125</a>

### 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)
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2024	AI and Digital Buddhism: Prabhākaramitra and Beyond	GILT Research Centre Seminar Series - Multilingualism and Multiculturalism	No	Yes	Yes Appendix II	Yes
2022	Digital Chinese History: The Teaching of Cultural History in the Age of Big Data	The 2nd Greater Bay Area History Education Symposium	No	Yes	Yes Appendix II	Yes
2020	Technology for Chinese Studies: Artificial Intelligence and other Computational Tools	第2回関西デジタルヒストリー研究会	No	Yes	Yes Appendix II	Yes

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

The research findings have been incorporated into multiple undergraduate courses at The Hang Seng University, including TRA1224 Living in Buddhism - In Dialogue with Bilingual Sūtras, TRA2121 Cultural Issues in Translation, and TRA3152 Translation and Sanskrit Buddhist Scriptures. These courses provide students with hands-on experience in analyzing Buddhist texts and applying digital humanities approaches. The research has also been disseminated through various academic talks, workshops and conferences, including “An Introduction to the History of Buddhist Scripture Translation: From Tripitaka to Motion Pictures” at the Official Languages Division, Civil Service Bureau, HKSAR (2020), “Technology for Chinese Studies: Artificial Intelligence and other Computational Tools” at Kansai Digital History Study Group (2020), “On the Integration of Digital Humanities and Buddhist Scripture Translation” at the Hong Kong Translation Society (2021), “Digital Chinese History: The Teaching of Cultural History in the Age of Big Data” at the Department of History, Hong Kong Shue Yan University (2022), “Decoding Ancient Voices: A New Framework for Understanding the Translation Discourses on Buddhist Scriptures in Medieval China” at UCL Centre for Translation Studies (2023), and “AI and Digital Buddhism: Prabhākaramitra and Beyond” at the GILT Research Centre (2024). In addition, knowledge transfer has extended to secondary education through a guest lecture at Ju Ching Chu Secondary School, where we introduced students to the history of Buddhist scripture translation, cultural interaction between China and the Western Regions, and translation procedures in Tang China, along with the aid of interactive IT techniques. Please refer to Appendix III for more information.

**11. 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
N/A			

## 12. Other Impact

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

The project has generated significant impact through institutional collaborations with Fo Guang Vihara Hong Kong (香港佛光道場), the Centre for Humanistic Buddhism (人間佛教應用研習中心), and the Research Centre for Translation of Buddhist Texts (佛學文獻翻譯研究中心) at The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong. These partnerships have enabled the practical application of research methodologies, including textual analysis approaches, digital research methods, and innovative applications in Buddhist Studies. With funding support from the Faculty Development Scheme (FDS), the collaboration has facilitated the implementation of research findings in real-world contexts and contributed to the advancement of Buddhist Translation Studies through technological integration and methodological innovation, particularly through the development of digital tools for analyzing Prabhakaramitra's translation history. Please refer to Appendix IV regarding the tools.

## 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		3	2		Type	No.
					- Academic Talks/Work shops	4
					- Course Developme nt	3
					- Digital Research Tools	2

## 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
N/A	