

RGC Ref. No.:
UGC/FDS15/H17/21
(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

A Study of the Hong Kong Colonial Government's Policy to Chinese Burials (1945-1997)

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

Research Team	Name / Post	Unit / Department / Institution
Principal Investigator	Dr. Chau Chi Fung	History Department, Hong Kong Shue Yan University
Co-Investigator(s)	/	/
Others	/	/

3. Project Duration

	Original	Revised	Date of RGC / Institution Approval (must be quoted)
Project Start Date	1 Jan 2022	N/A	N/A
Project Completion Date	30 June 2023	31 Dec 2023	11 July 2023
Duration (in month)	18 months	24 months	11 July 2023
Deadline for Submission of Completion Report	30 June 2024	31 Dec 2024	11 July 2023

4.4 Please attach photo(s) of acknowledgement of RGC-funded facilities / equipment.

Part B: The Final Report

5. Project Objectives

5.1 Objectives as per original application

1. To examine the changing attitude and policy of the Hong Kong government on Chinese burials in the Post-World War II period ;
2. To analyse the cooperative relationships among Tung Wah Hospital, Chinese elites, and the Hong Kong government on the matter of Chinese burials in the Post-War period ;
3. To evaluate the impacts of these policies on the funeral culture of local Chinese inhabitants.

5.2 Revised objectives

Date of approval from the RGC:

Reasons for the change:

- 1.
- 2.
3.

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)

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 changing attitude and policy of the Hong Kong	√	100%

government on Chinese burials in the Post-World War II period		
2. To analyse the cooperative relationships among Tung Wah Hospital, Chinese elites, and the Hong Kong government on the matter of Chinese burials in the Post-War period	√	100%
3. To evaluate the impacts of these policies on the funeral culture of local Chinese inhabitants.	√	100%

6. Research Outcome

6.1 Major findings and research outcome

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

1. The relocation of cemeteries from urban areas to the New Territories

After the retaking of Hong Kong from the Japanese by the British, in view of the rapid population growth and limited availability of urban land for development, the government adopted a new policy of cemetery removal from urban areas to the New Territories. This began in 1947, with the government notifying the Hong Kong Chaozhou Chamber of Commerce that it would take back the association's cemetery in Kellet Bay on Hong Kong Island. Although the Chamber of Commerce requested a postponement, the government refused. Later, the chamber acquired land at Wo Hop Shek and Sandy Ridge and rebuilt the cemeteries there (Chiu Chow Chamber of Commerce, 1951, pp. 14–17). As part of the removal of cemeteries from urban areas, the government established public cemeteries in Wo Hop Shek in the New Territories and built the Wo Hop Shek branch of the Kowloon–Canton Railway (completed in 1950) to allow people to transport the remains of their relatives to the cemetery there for burial.

In 1968, the Urban Council said that “the justification for concentrating burials in these major government cemeteries is that a better degree of control can be maintained over burials, the cost to the public is kept down and a profusion of small cemeteries is avoided” (HKRS 41-2-851).

2. The regulation of funeral parlours as a new “dead space” in Hong Kong

During and after the Chinese Civil War, a large number of refugees flooded into Hong Kong, significantly increasing the demand for funeral services. Many funeral service providers (e.g., Changsheng Dian) in urban areas were housed in residential buildings, with some handling the corpses without proper care, thus posing a severe sanitation problem. To improve the situation, the Hong Kong government decided to regulate the operation of funeral homes. In March 1947, the Urban Council passed “Ordinance No. 1 of 1935 (Public Health [Sanitation])” to regulate the daily operations of funeral homes. The by-law defined funeral parlours as private mortuaries that handle human remains. Any operator engaged in this business needed to obtain a license issued by the Urban Council. Implementing this by-law made it possible for Chinese people to hold funerals only in hospitals, religious places (mainly Christian churches), and funeral parlours, virtually changing the traditional custom of having Chinese funerals at home in Hong Kong’s urban areas. From then on, since many non-Christian Chinese families thought holding a funeral in a hospital was shameful, funeral parlours became urban death spaces for Hongkongers’ funeral activities.

3. The government’s role in promoting cremation

In the 1950s, the government began to consider using cremation to solve the problem of relocating Chinese cemeteries. In June 1951, the government ordered the removal of the Kelley Bay cemetery, which was run by the Tung Wah Hospital, to the Wo Hop Shek cemetery. However, due to the limited space in the Wo Hop Shek cemetery and the high transportation fees, it was proposed that all the dead bodies would be cremated. However, the proposal received stern opposition from many Chinese members of the hospital’s management board, who believed that the practice violated traditional Chinese etiquette and customs. They suggested that all family members of the corpses needed to consent to cremation before it could be carried out. As a result, the removal project was delayed and only completed in 1959 (Li, p. 199). In the 1960s, the government promoted cremation as a means of solving the limited number of cemeteries and began building the Cape Collinson Crematorium (completed in 1962) for public use. To promote cremation, during 1963 and 1964, the government arranged for over 200 chairpersons and members of Kaifeng, Clan and District Associations, and religious organisations to visit Cape Collinson Crematorium. In addition, 5,000 copies of a colourful booklet on the crematorium were published (HKRS 41-2-851). The Urban Council aimed to increase the rate of cremation from 25% to 35% by 1985 (HKRS 41-2-851). The government also adopted several policies and measures to promote cremation, including reducing cremation fees, which resulted in the cremation rate rising to 70% by 1990.

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

The initial version of this study has been finalized and is anticipated to undergo revisions before being published in an academic journal focused on research in Hong Kong history. Following the necessary revisions, the study aims to shed light on the impacts of the Hong Kong colonial government on the lives of its people by utilizing official archival materials stored at the Hong Kong Public Records Office. These materials, which have been largely untapped by the academic community, provide valuable insights into the livelihoods of Hong Kong residents during the early post-war era. Through this research project, I aspire to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of Hong Kong's colonial history, thereby enabling the academic community to render a more equitable evaluation.

7. Layman's Summary

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

After the British restored their rule over Hong Kong in August 1945, they were determined to rebuild Hong Kong. To solve the land problem, the government continued the practise from before World War II of moving urban cemeteries to the city's outskirts, building cemeteries such as Wo Hop Shek and Sandy Ridge in the New Territories to house the relocated remains of the deceased.

It is worth noting that after the Second World War, the government strengthened its control over the management of death in the interests of sanitation and, therefore, removed most of the Chinese cemeteries run by Tung Wah Hospital and native associations in urban areas. These measures reflected the government's changing attitude and policy towards Chinese volunteer associations.

Another government measure to strengthen its management of death was the regulation of funeral parlours. In March 1947, the Urban Council passed "Ordinance No. 1 of 1935 (Public Health [Sanitation])" to oversee the daily operations of funeral homes. Due to the insufficient number of cemeteries, the government played an essential role in cremation in the 1960s.

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)						
		✓		周子峰	近代史研究		no	Yes	no

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)
/	/	/	/	/	/	/

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

(Please elaborate)

N/A

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
/	/	/	/
/	/	/	/
/	/	/	/

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

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	1(still under review)	/	/	/	Type	No.

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
The output is still under review by a peer-review journal.	The output is still until review.