

RGC Reference HKUST601-HSS-12
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**The Research Grants Council of Hong Kong**  
**Prestigious Fellowship Scheme under the Humanities and Social Sciences Panel**  
**Completion Report**  
*(for completed projects only)*

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**Part A: Project and Award Holder**

**1. Project Title**

*The early modern economy at the two ends of Eurasia: A comparative study of the GDP of the Yangzi Delta and the Netherlands in the early nineteenth century*

**2. Award Holder and Academic Department/Unit Involved**

Name/Post	Unit/Department/Institution	Contact Information
Bozhong Li Chair Professor	Division of Humanities The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology	bzhli@ust.hk

**Part B: The Report**

**5. Workplan**

**5.1 Workplan as per original application**

1. 2011-12: Major tasks: update my knowledge of Western European economic history, collect comparable historical materials and studies in Europe and the USA, and refine my use of System of National Accounts methods on Chinese and Dutch historical materials. I will spend the summer in Europe and the USA to discuss with the scholars and collect data and will also use university funds to invite some scholars to visit Hong Kong as well.

2. 2012-13: Major tasks: data collecting and processing. I will collect a variety of newly available materials mainly from libraries, archives and academic institutions in China, in particular Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, Hangzhou, Suzhou Taiwan and Japan.

3. 2013-14: Major tasks: write a book as the final product of the project. In the process of the writing I will consult economists, accountants and other experts some of whom live outside Hong Kong.

5.3 Realisation of the workplan

*(maximum 2 pages; please state how and to what extent the work as stated in the workplan has been achieved; give reasons for under-achievements and outline attempts to overcome problems, if any)*

Since this research is pioneering and nobody has tried before, there are no readily available data and no systematic comparable statistics with which to compare the Netherlands and the Yangzi Delta in the early nineteenth century. Therefore, I have to comb through numerous first hand sources to create comparable indices of economic performance. This job is time-consuming requiring in normal circumstances months or years.

These first-hand sources are stored mainly at the archives and libraries in mainland China, Taiwan, Europe and the USA. I had spent the year of 2011-12 collecting the materials, but I had only covered 50% of the most essential data by so far, which represent virtually all the data that I can access electronically or through the libraries and archives available in Hong Kong. The other 50% of the data I needed were much more difficult to cover, because they are either scattered in the massive central archives. These "new" materials are very important to my research. Unfortunately, many such sources are not indexed and even not well categorized. Others are classified as "precious works" and are not available to be xeroxed, scanned or photographed, and can only be hand copied. To collect these materials, a one-year extension was needed and RGC has finally approved an 8-month extension.

The work as stated in the workplan has been achieved quite well. As a result, the major tasks of the research plan have been achieved, which are:

- (1) Collecting, processing and analyzing archival and library data
- (2) Meeting with colleagues from Europe and the USA who are working in the field of Western European economic history
- (3) Consulting economists, accountants and other experts to make a better use of the System of National Accounts and a more reasonable global comparison of the economies of the Yangzi delta and the Netherlands.

To achieve the tasks, I have done the following works during the project period:

(1) Data collection

I spent considerable amount of time in libraries and archives in mainland China and the USA, including the National Library and the Library of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (both in Beijing), the libraries of University of Michigan (USA), Tsinghua University and Peking University (both in Beijing), Fudan University (in Shanghai), Zhejiang University (in Hangzhou), Academica Sinica (Taipei) and so on, where I collected rich materials needed of the first hand which are crucial to this research.

(2) Communication with colleagues

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I attended conferences, meetings, seminars and workshops which were held in Hong Kong, mainland China, Taiwan, Europe and the USA. In these occasions I met leading scholars who are working in the fields related to this project. The communications with them were very helpful.

### (3) Paper writing

With the progress of the research, I have completed nine articles, five conference papers and seven lecture papers which will be the core of the book that I am working on.

## 6.3 Realisation of the dissemination plan

*(maximum 2 pages; please state how and to what extent the output as stated in the dissemination plan has been achieved; give reasons for under-achievements and outline attempts to overcome problems, if any)*

I. A draft of three core chapters of the planned book has been finished (in English), but modification are needed, in particular in the improvement of the English expression. Some parts of them have been published or accepted by academic journals. The remaining two chapters are expected to be finished by March 31 2016.

II. Nine articles, five conference papers have been completed which will be the core of the book.

### 1. Articles (published)

(1) The Early Modern Economy of the Yangzi Delta in a New Perspective. In *Social Sciences in China* (Beijing), Vol. XXXVI, No. 1, February 2015, pp 91-99 (this journal is considered the Top academic journal in social sciences in PRC).

(2) Before the Great Divergence? Comparing the Yangzi Delta and the Netherlands at the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century (co-authored by Bozhong Li and Jan Luiten van Zanden). In *The Journal of Economic History*, Volume, Issue 4, December 2012, pp 956-989. Published by Cambridge University Press (this journal is considered the Top academic journal in economic history in the Western world).

(3) An Early Modern Economy in China: A Study of the GDP of the Huating-Lou Area, 1823–1829. In Billy K.L. So eds. *The Economy of Lower Yangzi Delta in Late*

*Imperial China*. Routledge Taylor & Francis Group (London & New York), 2012, pp.133-145.

(4) 經濟史中的GDP研究與歷史國民帳戶系統 (The GDP approach in economy history and the Historical System of National Account). In陳志武 (Zhiwu Chen), 龍登高 (Denggao Long) & 馬德斌 (Debin Ma) eds. 量化歷史研究 (第一輯)(The study of quantitative history, vol. 1). Zhejiang University Press (Hangzhou), 2014.

(5) 早期經濟全球化進程中的中國 (China in early economic globalization). In 清華國學院 (The Tsinghua Academy of Chinese Learning) eds: 全球史中的文化中國 (Cultural China in global history). Peking University Press (Beijing), 2014.

2. Articles (accepted)

(1) Economic history in China. Will be published as a book chapter in the *Routledge Handbook of Global Economic History* (Francesco Boldizzoni & Pat Hudson ed.), Routledge, 2015.

(2) "The Daoguang Depression" and the 1823 Flood--Economic Decline, Climatic Cataclysm and the Nineteenth-Century Crisis in Songjiang. Will be published in *Etudes chinoises* (Paris), 2015.

(3) 史料與量化：量化方法在史學研究中的運用討論之一 (Historical Materials and Quantitative Research: A study of qualitative methods in economic history). Will be published in 清華大學學報 (人文社會科學版) (Journal of Tsinghua University-Philosophy and Social Sciences) (Beijing), 2015.

(4) 西歐何以成功？--評範·贊登的《通向工業革命的漫長道路：全球中的歐洲經濟，1000-1800年》 (Why did West Europe succeed? A review of Jan Luiten van Zanden's *The Long Road to the Industrial Revolution: The European Economy in a Global Perspective, 1000-1800*). Will be published in 中國經濟史研究 (Researches In Chinese Economic History) (Beijing), 2015.

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

During the project period, I was invited to give lectures which are related to the project research at different academic institutions in Hong Kong and major universities in mainland, which include:

1. Seek for a Better Understanding of the Past-A New Approach in the Study of Early Modern Economy of the Yangzi Delta. Shanghai University of Finance and Economics (Shanghai), 19 December 2013.

2. 江南近代早期經濟研究的新途徑 (New approach in the study of early modern economy of the Yangzi Delta), Huazhong Normal University (Wuhan), 16 December 2013.

3. 中國的早期近代資訊革命----明清商業資訊傳播方式的創新 (China's Early Modern "Information Revolution" - Innovations of Means of Communication of Commercial Information in Late Imperial China), HKUST Public Humanities Lecture, Hong Kong Museum of History, 10 November 2013.

4. 早期經濟全球化時代的中國與東亞世界 (China and East Asian world in early economic globalization), Honorary Lecture in the Fudan *Guanghua* Outstanding Scholar in the Humanities Lecture Series, Fudan University (Shanghai), 21-26 October 2013.

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5. 經濟史中的GDP研究與歷史國民帳戶系統 (The GDP study in economic history and the Historical System National Accounts), Tsinghua University (Beijing), 14 July 2013.

6. 江南經濟發展水準與西方發達國家經濟發展水準的“大合流” (The “great convergence” of the Yangzi Delta and the Western developed countries in economic development), Honorary Lecture in the Huang - Robert A. Mundell Lecture on Economics, Chinese People’s University (Beijing), 19 December 2012.

7. 經濟全球化歷史進程中的中國 (China in historical process of globalization), HKUST Public Humanities Lecture, Hong Kong Museum of History, 21 April 2012.

Part of one of the lecture papers titled 量化史學中的比較研究 (Comparative study in Quantitative history) was published online and widely read. originally published in 東方歷史評論 (Oriental History Review)

(<http://www.aiweibang.com/yuedu/dushu/1324844.html>) and then copied by 中國社會學科網 (Chinese Social Sciences Net)

([http://www.cssn.cn/lxx/sxpy/201409/t20140901\\_1311656.shtml](http://www.cssn.cn/lxx/sxpy/201409/t20140901_1311656.shtml)) in 2014.

I have accepted the invitations to give lectures related to the project research in UK and Australia, which are scheduled respectively on 20 July, 2015 at the University's Centre of Development Studies, University of Cambridge and June 2016, in *the Chuan Han-sheng* Lecture Series at University of Queensland.