

**Research Assessment Exercise 2020**  
**Impact Case Study**

**University:** The Chinese University of Hong Kong

**Unit of Assessment (UoA):** 30 - Chinese Language and Literature

**Title of case study:** Research, Study, Education and Promotion of Ancient Chinese Texts

**(1) Summary of the impact** (indicative maximum 100 words)

The Department has developed the research of ancient Chinese texts to be accessible for a wide audience worldwide through setting up an electronic database and other means. Moreover, the ancient texts were also reintroduced to secondary school students and teachers following staff advice to the government, which allows a wider understanding and appreciation of ancient texts.

**(2) Underpinning research** (indicative maximum 500 words)

The Department has undertaken research on different aspects of ancient Chinese texts. In this case study, the impact of the following research contributions will be presented:

1. **The Chinese Ancient Texts Database (CHANT) and the transmission of ancient texts:** Led by Prof. Ho Che Wah and being the first of its kind in Hong Kong, CHANT consists of seven digital traditional and excavated ancient Chinese texts databases and includes more than 80 million characters. It has become a standard reference and is currently subscribed by users in 15 countries across Asia, Asia Pacific, Europe, North America and Scandinavia, and attracted more than 2 million accesses in the last 6 years.

Books and research articles frequently refer to the CHANT database, present the latest contributions to the database, and investigate the transmission of ancient texts through the centuries. CHANT generated the Ancient Chinese Text Concordance Series which has published about 80 volumes. Another example is the book *Xunzi with Parallel Passages Found in Pre-Han and Han Texts* (2005) [1] which traces out and interprets the differences in different versions of Xunzi's texts. Following the previous research activity, the research project *A Study of the Intratextuality and Intertextuality of Xunzi: A New Attempt at Dating Ancient Chinese Texts* which is carried out under a grant with a volume of HKD 380k has been set up. Another example is Prof. Shen Pei's *Mawangdui Textual Criticism Supplementary Study* (2018) [2] which provides a guideline for the editing and reading of the Mawangdui silk manuscripts of the Han Dynasty. The guideline has been referenced in later research of other scholars, and is expected to serve as a reference identifying best practices for the analysis of newly excavated texts.

2. **Confucian classics research:** Research in this area is conducted by Prof. Poon Ming Kay through individual contributions in the form of journal articles such as *Life Wisdom of Confucius* (2011) [3] and *Moral Integrity of Confucius and Mencius* (2017) [4], as well as through the three externally funded research projects *A Research on Yan Shigu's Study of the Confucian Classics* (2014-2015), and *Secularization of a Canon: the Reception of Chu Ci in late Ming Period (ca.1500-1644)* (2015-17), *Literary Commentaries and the Reconfiguration of Knowledge: Re-canonizing Confucian Classics in the Late Ming* (2019-20). Research in this area has been recognised as highly relevant by researchers and funding agencies alike, which is reflected by the frequent presentations of colleagues at high level conferences, as well as the considerable amount of external funding attracted.

3. **Learning and teaching of Chinese language:** The Department set a local trend of ancient text research in the context of Hong Kong school education. The journal article *A Study on Hong Kong New Senior Secondary School Chinese Language Elective Course Cases* (2012) [5] was published by Department colleagues as part of this work. Textbook publishers as well as the Curriculum Development Council have referred to work by the Department and consulted staff members on questions of curriculum design.

**(3) References to the research** (indicative maximum of six references)

[1] Ho, C. W. (2005). *The Xunzi with Parallel Passages from Other Pre-Han and Han Texts* (《荀子》與先秦兩漢典籍重見資料彙編). The Chinese University Press: Hong Kong. ISBN: 978-962-996-249-4.

[2] Shen, P. (2018). Mawangdui Textual Criticism Supplementary Study (馬王堆帛書校讀拾補). *Shang Gu Han Yu Yan Jiu* (上古漢語研究), (2), 35-45.

[3] Poon, M.K. (2011). *Life Wisdom of Confucius* (孔子的生活智慧). Infolink Publishing Ltd: Hong Kong. ISBN: 9789881961969.

[4] Poon, M.K. (2017). Moral Integrity of Confucius and Mencius (孔孟出處進退的風骨觀). *Cong-Meng Monthly* (《孔孟月刊》), 56(3/4), 6-12.

[5] Poon, M. K. (2012). A Study on Hong Kong New Senior Secondary Chinese Language Elective Subject "Novels and Culture" (香港新高中中國語文選修課程「小說與文化」研究). *Multi-exploration on Chinese Language Teaching Theories and Pragmatics* (《國語文教學理論與實務的多元探索》), pp. 97-114). Wu-Nan Book Inc.: Taiwan. ISBN: 9789571165233.

**(4) Details of the impact** (indicative maximum 750 words)

Research of the Department has impacted a variety of stakeholders: From secondary school students, over local residents in Hong Kong, to lifelong learners and students outside of the Chinese studies subject area.

**1. The CHANT Database and Ancient Chinese Text Concordance Series**

The impact of the CHANT database and series is twofold: Firstly, it is used by scholars around the world for the preparation of journal articles and books, which are in turn read by a wide audience. Prof. Kern from Princeton Univ., who said using both is “a daily necessity”, attested that “CHANT is one of the few truly indispensable research tools in premodern Chinese studies today”. His colleague Prof. Hunter “immediately became a regular user because of its user-friendly interface and amazing collection of carefully transcribed digital texts... of course there are also other databases available elsewhere, but each of them ... proves inferior to CHANT” [1].

Secondly, research related to the database has proven to attract public interest in public lectures and seminars, as it is accessible without specialist knowledge, and connects current research to highschool level knowledge of ancient texts of event attendees. As an example, research on texts was presented through a range of public lectures e.g. *How to Use Electronic Ancient Texts Database—Using 'The Xunzi' Study as an Example* at the Open University of Hong Kong and *Anecdotes of Classical Chinese Lexicon* seminar of the Education Bureau Hong Kong (2018) each attracting 200+ non-specialist audience comprised mostly of university students of various

subjects and lifelong learners, achieving the feat of attracting a very diverse audience, despite the topic being very niche and about an ancient text that is not currently studied by school students. The significance and reach on promoting traditional Chinese culture and global knowledge interaction, as demonstrated by the database, are recognised by the Overseas Impactful Award for Sinology awarded by Yuelu Academy and three other institutions in 2018.

## 2. Confucian classics

Research on the Confucian classics has traditionally been an active area of research in the Department. Surrounding this research are public lectures held in the Department by colleagues on related topics, for example, one teacher commented on one of the public lectures: “A lot of students used to think ancient texts are dull and unattractive, but Prof. Poon’s lecture completely changed that preconception. The talk is hugely enjoyable and thought provoking.” [2]

Also, Prof. Poon’s book *Life Wisdom of Confucius* has generated vast impact in schools through promoting Chinese traditional culture. The book is introduced to 320k+ secondary students as it listed as a reference book by schools to study Chinese culture [3]. The editor praised, “Not only are they available in major bookstores, but they are also highly appreciated by academic teachers ... statistics showed about 8-10 secondary schools have purchased this book as a compulsory reading book for S3 or S4 students. Each school has ordered more than 100 books each time, and this is a significant achievement ... according to teachers, students feel at ease and extremely interested to read this book”. Moreover, the popularity of the book generated commercial impact for the publisher: “It has been printed five times in a row, with a total of 5400 copies.” [4]

## 3. Learning and teaching of Chinese language

Our staff members have been active in researching the role of ancient Chinese texts in the teaching of the Chinese language. Research output of the Department has been received very positively, and led to Prof. Ho serving as a committee member of the Curriculum Development Council of the Education Bureau from 2011-15. As a result, the role of ancient texts in the secondary education curricula has been substantially strengthened. One change that reflects the new found importance of ancient texts for the curriculum are 12 model essays on ancient texts that were included in the curriculum in the secondary education curricula redesign of 2018, impacting 320k+ secondary students. [5]

Moreover, the research output of the Department influenced the creation of teaching materials for secondary schools. This influence is exerted through consultation of staff members by textbook editors. In rare cases research output of the Department is directly quoted in textbooks, as can be seen in the 2014 edition of *New High School Chinese Language* and the 2015 version of *New Senior High School Chinese Language*.

The Department also presented research in an event series on the topic of *Hong Kong New Senior Secondary School Chinese Language Elective Course Novels and Culture* for local secondary school teachers. [6]

## (5) Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

[1] Supporting letter from Prof. Martin Kern, the Chair of the Department of East Asian Studies from Princeton University. It can corroborate the impact of CHANT database and Ancient Chinese Text Concordance Series.

[2] Supporting letter from Mrs P.S. Hsu, the Acting Head of Chinese Language of St. Paul's College. It corroborates the significant reach of the ancient Chinese text lecture on students and teachers.

[3] Writers Training programme is a perennial programme and is organised by Standing Committee on Language Education and Research and Ming Pao for P1 to S3 students. It corroborates the reach of the book *Life Wisdom of Confucius*. <https://www.writerstraining.com/> 《孔子的生活智慧》 /

[4] Supporting letter from Law Kwok Hung (羅國洪), the chief editor at Infolink Publishing Ltd. It corroborates the reach and the number of copies sold of the book *Life Wisdom of Confucius*.

[5] A report evidencing Prof. Ho advising on the inclusion of ancient texts in curriculum when he was serving as a Chinese Language Education committee member of the Curriculum Development Council. It can be found in Sing Tao Daily (21 November 2014):  
<http://std.stheadline.com/daily/article/detail/213159/%E6%97%A5%E5%A0%B1>

[6] The list of events and details are in the website of Training and Teaching Resources for Chinese Language Education, the Education Bureau (中學中國語文-培訓課程教學資源). Chinese only:  
<https://www.edb.gov.hk/tc/curriculum-development/kla/chi-edu/resources/secondary-edu/lang/teacher-training.html>

All links in section 5 accessed 18/10/19