

THE EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG
FACULTY OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Research Output/Impact/Knowledge Transfer Prize
for the Dean’s Research Fund 2019/20

Brief Introduction of Awardee’s
Research/KT Publication/Study/Output and Future Research/KT Development

Awardee (Dept):	Dr Pei Qing, Assistant Professor (SSC)
Publication Title/KT project:	The Strange Flight of the Peacock: Farmers' Atypical Northwesterly Migration from Central China, 200BC- 1400AD

A. *Briefly introduce your research/KT publication/study/output for which you have received the prize.*

A common Chinese proverb—“A peacock flies southeast”—could describe the normative idea of the southeasterly spread of agriculturalists as a trend in historical China. Indeed, northwest China was the least attractive place to agriculturalists because of its much harsher climatic conditions. Previous research on the historical northwesterly movements of Chinese farmers has relied on isolated case studies and suggested a variety of causes. This study is the first attempt to bridge geographical and historical methodologies considering the influences of climate change to supplement current ideas about Chinese migration. This study surveyed 195 individual cases of northwesterly migration of agriculturalists from central China and along the Silk Road Region from 200 BC to 1400 AD, comparing historical records of these migration cases to extensive paleoclimate data. We found statistical evidence that the northwesterly movements of farmers increased when the climate was drier. The historical records were consulted to explain this seemingly atypical pattern. We conclude that the agriculturalists’ northwesterly migration increase during dry periods mainly as a response to the southward invasion of northern nomads, which was also a result of increased aridity. These conclusions add to the growing literature that indicates climate change as a central driver in intergroup conflict, having geopolitical implications. Forward-looking strategies relating to trade and immigration in the region, including the One Belt and One Road Initiative, should consider the shrinkage of rainfall under the potential threats of global warming. Increased aridity could have sizable effects on political, social, or economic structures far from north-central China.

B. How you used/will use your prize and perhaps its usefulness to your research/KT development?

First, I deeply appreciate the support of the prize to me to further polish my research in the future. To polish my current research, I plan to use this esteemed grant in three aspects: field trip, hired service and knowledge transfer.

The data is fundamentally important to the quantitative analysis. So far, the records in the field of historical geography and environmental humanities in China have scattered across the nation. Meanwhile, the digitized work of these historical records just begins in China at present. It will be necessary to collect the records in person by myself through the field trip. Then, I will quantify those collected historical records into data format by using the high-performance computer. Thus, field trip will be necessary for my future research.

However, due to the current pandemic conditions, I will also rely on hired service from overseas to collect data for me. This could also save the time and avoid the troubles due to the pandemic at the moment.

Last but not least, my research aims to have international impacts in academia and lay public. So far, I have two patents and hope to make more contribution to knowledge transfer.

C. Expected research/KT outcomes/outputs/impacts arising from this prize.

First, the project will collect up-to-date and precise records at specific historical periods. These datasets could be used and referred by scholars and lay public to explore more on the socio-economic impacts of climate change.

Second, I will also submit the socio-economic data series to International Institute of Social History and Allen-Unger Global Commodity Prices Database to improve the current collection on past Chinese data. These two databases are online platforms that allow researchers to access and download the archived data for their own studies, which will enlarge the impacts of my research in academia.

Third, I aim to publish at least one paper in peer-reviewed journals as the project output.