SHA Ding's literary writings started about thirty years ago. He was one of the young left-wing writers of China. His compositions were considered to be representative of the more advanced literary writings of the age.

SHA Ding has always lived up to his reputation of creative realism in his work. For these fifty years, he has worked diligently in composing stories and has learned humility from the works of Lu Xun and Mao Dun. Through his diligent study to improve himself, he has gained success in literary creativity.

Up to present day, SHA Ding has written three novels, two midium-length novels and thirteen short stories collections. Besides these, he has also written poems, prose writings, short articles, feature articles, literary criticisms and reports, totalling more than two hundred in all.

In all his literary works, there is one novel which is most representative of his writings. It is "Gold-panning" (淘金记). This novel, published in 1941, received favourable comments from the literary circles. It had the anti-Japanese war as the background. He described the village of Si-Chuan and the life there with great liveliness. He exposed the bureaucrats, the 'bullies' and the feudal lords of those days, how they had made use of the chaos in the country to gain enormous profits through all kinds of deceitful undertakings.

The theme of the novel is to criticize such corrupt and evil people who, for example, forced a poor widow to give up her family graveyard, after they had heard there was gold there. The author revealed the
ugly side of human nature.

The name Sha Ding may not be familiar to many readers in Singapore, mainly due to the lack of patronage of his novels and to the lack of interest in the study of his literary works. The main purpose of the present academic exercise is to revive interest in his most 'favoured' novel "Gold-panning" as the starting point for examining his literary writings. With this study, it is hoped that Sha Ding will gain his rightful status as a fine modern Chinese novelist -- a status which has eluded him for so many years.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Mr. Tan Hai Lan (陈海兰先生) for guiding and offering me constructive criticism during the process of this Exercise.