Abstract

Gong Zizhen (1792-1841) was born into a society that was slowly suffering from the threat of a forthcoming dynastic decline. With an unusually acute sense of crisis, he was thus determined to use all his knowledge to improve the contemporary society.

The purpose of this Honours Thesis is therefore firstly to examine the link between Gong’s political thought and his society, and secondly to analyse and assess his political thought.

Gong Zizhen’s essays serve as the main source for this study. In order to look at the matter from a wider perspective, sources related to the general history of the Qing Dynasty, to the philosophical development and the scholastic atmosphere of that particular period are also used, together with articles on Gong’s thoughts and his biographies.

Often regarded as one of the pioneer reformers for his courage to speak up and his sincerity to help the society, Gong Zizhen’s thoughts remain very controversial and are still actively discussed among scholars today.

This study on Gong’s political thought has shown that his ideas were well conceived and they accurately portray the problems of his society. Gong Zizhen had indeed lived up to his name as a pioneer reformer as his thoughts were to have great impact on later reformers, giving them the necessary inspiration towards building a better society.